



ON THE FRONT COVER

ANNA K. FUNG, Q.C.

By Maria Morellato

Anna Fung is a woman of action who deeply cares about both her profession and her community and who has enthusiastically devoted her life to each. Now the president of the Law Society of British Columbia, Anna is known not only for her decisive leadership and her sharp intellect but also for her strong work ethic, her compassion and her fun-loving disposition. A tireless and fearless trailblazer, Anna is the first Chinese-Canadian president in the history of the law society as well as the first in-house counsel to be elected to that position. In addition to serving as president, she is a well-respected senior lawyer in the energy sector and a highly regarded role model for younger professionals in the Asian community.

Anna was born and partially raised in Hong Kong. Her Chinese name is Wai Sum Fung, appropriately meaning “wisdom with heart”. Her father, Sing Tak Fung, married her mother, Siu Fung Shum, in the 1950s during challenging economic and political times in China. Originally teachers in Canton, Anna’s parents had moved to Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Japanese invasion and the Chinese Cultural Revolution with the hope of providing a better life and greater opportunities for their family. Anna was the first of their six children.

Anna’s early childhood in Hong Kong was happy and busy. Anna’s father became a tailor, specializing in custom-made suits. He and his wife ran a small business out of their home in a high-rise apartment building near Kowloon Harbour. The Fungs lived in a three-bedroom apartment and sublet two of their three bedrooms to other tenants in order to generate additional income for their family. The Fung children and their parents shared a single bedroom. Anna recalls, with delight, that her family also shared an assortment of pets with their other tenants, including cats, dogs, birds,

fish, a turtle and a monkey. They also shared a single bathroom, but Anna is less effusive about this fact. She recounts, with a nostalgic note in her voice, how she thought nothing of trekking up and down eight flights of stairs every morning (the building had no elevator) to fetch coffee for her dad from the street vendor on the corner.

Although the Fungs lived very modestly in Hong Kong, Anna vividly recalls the thousands of street people around her who were much less fortunate, some of whom would regularly come to their door begging for rice. The extreme poverty on the streets of Hong Kong had a profound impact on Anna, who resolved during these formative years to devote her time and talents to improving the lives of others.

Anna's immigration to Canada at the age of ten was initiated by her paternal grandfather, Fong Fook, who had come to this country as a child labourer to work in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. His offer to sponsor Anna's family was met enthusiastically by Anna's parents, who were becoming increasingly worried about their ability to afford good quality schooling in Hong Kong for their, then, five children: Anna, Jenny, David, Hoily and Jimmy.

Anna first arrived in Vancouver, in the middle of a heavy snowstorm, in February 1969. She was thrilled not only with seeing snow for the first time but also with the discovery that, since no other tenants shared the house her grandfather had rented on the edge of Chinatown, she was to share her bedroom only with her sister Jenny. Anna remembers her grandfather's broad grin when she ingenuously asked him, "How many other families will be living with us?"

Anna began to excel academically almost immediately upon settling in Vancouver, notwithstanding that she spoke no English. She started her education in Canada by riding the bus every day to Henry Hudson School in Kitsilano, which at that time was the only school in the Lower Mainland that provided a "New Canadian Class" for immigrant students. After just four months of learning English, Anna seamlessly began the fifth grade at Admiral Seymour Elementary School, an east Vancouver school adjacent to the Raymur development. When she was 13 years old, tragedy struck the Fung family when Anna's mother fell ill and died suddenly. Anna became a great source of support to her father as she assisted in the raising of her siblings, particularly the youngest, Wayne, who was only 2½ years old at the time. Despite this great loss and the adversity that surrounded her and her family in the months and years that followed, Anna remained positive, determined and focused—personal attributes that continue to define her today and that shed some light on the reasons underlying her many professional successes. Anna thoughtfully remarks that her mother's sudden

death taught her “the important lesson of living each and every day to its fullest”.

Anna’s exceptional intelligence became vividly apparent during her university days at UBC. By the time she finished her bachelor of arts degree with majors in English and French, Anna had earned a series of scholarships and awards for her academic excellence and had placed in the top 10 per cent of students in the Faculty of Arts in each of her four undergraduate years. Anna continued to excel at law school, where she graduated on the Dean’s List. Anna was affectionately teased by her fellow law students about having memorized the DLRs, as she was always so well prepared for class and so quick and incisive in her responses to the professors’ questions. But academic excellence is not all Anna is remembered for during her law school years. She successfully led her team to victory during the infamous law students’ Trike Race. Fellow bencher Jane Shackell, Q.C., recalls how Anna was “perfectly suited to be a rider, with her small stature and stern determination, and she withstood being pelted with all kinds of refuse” (which, Anna advises, included “slimy green Jell-O”). Characteristically, Anna nonetheless completed the messy race with a beaming smile, which was captured in a perfect “Kodak moment” for posterity’s sake. Anna’s trike-racing abilities were only exceeded by her singing and dancing debut as Huey the “Super Supreme Court Judge” who, along with fellow jurists Dewey and Louie, wowed the audience at 1982–83 UBC Law Revue. She is also remembered, along with classmates Jane Shackell and Marina Morgan, as one of the scantily clad lady jurists in the following year’s production of “Best Little Courthouse in Texas”.

Following law school, Anna clerked at the British Columbia Court of Appeal. She then articulated at Davis and Co. and had the good fortune to junior exceptional lawyers, including Marvin Storrow, Q.C., Alec Robertson, Q.C., “Ace” Henderson, Q.C., and John Hunter, Q.C. Mr. Justice Henderson, formerly a judge with the Supreme Court of British Columbia and now a judge with the Grand Court of the Cayman Islands, recalls Anna’s “real respect and love for the law in its pure form” and describes her as a “lawyer’s lawyer”. He reflects on how “the world is full of people who are about to do great things” but how Anna “actually follows through, completes what she sets out to do, and does it exceptionally well”. In addition to practising at Davis and Co., Anna also practised law at McCarthy Tétrault. There she met Sholto Heberton, Q.C., who has remained a mentor and friend over the years. Sholto describes Anna in a manner that resonates with so many of us: “She is just a terrific person, a great communicator, very hard working and always well prepared” with “impeccable work habits and a great sense of humour”.

Anna currently practises as senior legal counsel and chief privacy officer at Terasen Inc. Mr. Justice David Masuhara was vice-president, legal and regulatory affairs, when he and Steve Richards first recruited Anna in 1993 to join their in-house legal team for what was then B.C. Gas Inc. Judge Masuhara describes Anna's "strong team spirit", how "no task was ever too big or too small for her" and how she would "readily move outside her comfort zone and forge ahead fearlessly with any assignment, seeing it through to its completion". With admiration, he speaks of Anna's ability to "gather people up and bring them together", not only for work-related purposes but socially as well. Steve Richards, who was Anna's immediate supervisor at Terasen and worked closely with her for 13 years, echoes these sentiments, describing Anna as a "superb lawyer and wonderful human being" who leads "easily, naturally and by example".

Anna has indeed led easily, naturally and by example within the corporate counsel community. She has been a director and president of the Canadian Corporate Counsel Association and remains an active member today. She has lectured at universities and presented frequently at conferences on corporate ethics and professional responsibilities. In 2004, Anna was awarded the R.V.A. Jones Canadian Corporate Counsel Award for her significant contributions to the corporate counsel community and to the association.

Anna's community service record is nothing less than exemplary. She was a director and committee member for the Legal Education and Action Fund ("LEAF") both locally and nationally for a number of years. While with LEAF, she worked to advance law and policy affecting women's rights, and coordinated initiatives addressing *Charter* issues impacting Aboriginal peoples. Anna's advocacy and volunteer efforts have also extended to serving the disabled. As a director and then president of Autism B.C., she focused on raising awareness and funding for better care and services in support of parents with autistic children, in addition to addressing the housing needs of adults with autism. Bethan Everett, who succeeded Anna as president of the association, notes: "Anna had a profound influence on the success of the association's fundraising efforts and in helping the association become one of the most effective and service-oriented non-profits in the province."

A colleague and dear friend, Christine Elliott, accurately observes that "Anna seems to rise to the top of any organization she joins". This was clearly the case when Anna first volunteered her time to the People's Law School. An enthusiastic supporter of free public legal education, Anna served as a volunteer director of the board for an unprecedented 13 years and as the chair of the organization for four years. Gordon Hardy, executive director of the People's Law School, remarks that Anna's commitment

to the success of its public legal education initiatives was unflagging, particularly with regard to programs for immigrants, an area in which the People's Law School has been a pioneer. Gordon explains how during Anna's years as chair, the People's Law School faced very difficult financial challenges, but her leadership was "decisive and did much to ensure the school not only survived but became stronger than ever".

Anna has also found time to be a leader, role model and mentor in the Asian community. She is the immediate past president of the Association of Chinese Canadian Professionals (B.C.), which has implemented programs to mentor Chinese youth and to address legal, health and other issues affecting the Chinese community. Under Anna's tutelage, the association has also instituted career workshops for Chinese youth as well as professional development workshops for its members. Mr. Justice Randall Wong speaks proudly of Anna, underscoring her profile as an important leader and mentor in the Asian community. He astutely describes her style of leadership as one that strikes a balance between "respect for tested tradition and reformist tendencies".

One would think that with all of Anna's professional commitments and volunteer work, she would have little time for family and friends. Not so. Anna has been a constant source of love, guidance and support for her niece, Tanya, who lived with Anna during Tanya's teenage years. Anna warmly remarks that seeing Tanya graduate from high school was one of the most satisfying moments of her life. Anna's "significant other" is Brent Munro, a lawyer at SaskTel, whom she met years ago on the Board of the Canadian Corporate Counsel Association ("CCCA"). (Brent coyly remarks that Anna is one of his "CCCA benefits.") When Brent first met Anna, he was astounded not only by the large number of good friends in Anna's life but also by the "diversity of friends and interests she has outside the practice of law". He notes that Anna's closest friends range from "judges to bus drivers" and that her interests are equally broad, ranging "from the arts to skiing, from playing golf to being an avid hockey fan". How well does Anna ski and golf? Brent comments that Anna "is a far more skilled downhill skier than I can ever hope to be". He recounts with amusement how, one day, "I lost her on the mountain when I stopped momentarily to tighten a boot. Off went the petite little dynamo, assuming I'd be right behind her." Unfortunately, he was not. He affectionately recalls that it took him quite some time to catch up, after "Anna ditched me on the mountain". As for golf, Anna is known for her tendency to win the "ladies' longest drive" prize at tournaments. But it is not just about excelling in whatever she does. For Anna it is about enjoying life—and it is also about friendship. Madam Justice Linda Loo observes that "almost every weekend—except

when it's raining or she can go skiing, Anna arranges a golf tee-time...and plays golf. The fact that that she still allows me to play with her despite little improvement on my part is another wonderful facet of Anna. She keeps her friends for life."

Anna's excellence as a lawyer and her commitment to serving both her profession and community causes has earned her great respect. It is no surprise that Anna was among the first graduates of the law school class of 1984 to be appointed Queen's Counsel (in April 2000). Anna was first elected as a bencher of the law society in 1998 and served on and chaired numerous committees, including the Credentials Committee, the Equity and Diversity Committee and the Discipline Committee. Fellow bencher Art Vertlieb, Q.C., has served on committees with Anna and comments on how impressed he has been with Anna's "genuinely democratic style" of leadership and consensus building, which he describes as a "real gift". Colleague and friend Sandy Jakab, who has worked with Anna on law society and CCCA matters, observes how Anna "does not hesitate to take on thorny issues...in public ways", how she is "the master of the 'can-do' attitude" and how she is often the "electron that energizes any group she is in as a positive motivating leader".

Anna is the fourth woman to lead our profession's governing body as "president"; recently retired Court of Appeal Justice Mary Southin, Karen Nordlinger, Q.C., and Trudi Brown, Q.C., previously held the title of "master treasurer". As president of the law society, Anna will focus, among other priorities, on improving the society's responsiveness to its public interest mandate. For example, the current complaint process will be thoroughly reviewed and revised. Anna plans to initiate dialogue both within the profession and with the public at large "to improve communications for purposes of better understanding the needs and expectations of those we serve" as well as "addressing access to justice issues". This year, Anna will be implementing a program aimed at continuing to build the law society's relationships with community groups. She also intends to more actively revisit the continuing legal education requirements among practitioners, believing that "if we are to continue to have the right to self-govern, we must be satisfied that as lawyers we are keeping up to date with the changes in the law and continually enhancing our competence and skills".

Anna's story is not only one of an exceptional, self-made woman rising to the heights of her profession despite the tangible and intangible obstacles that inevitably present themselves to women, and women of visible minorities. It is also about her integrity in staying true to what she values most in her life, never forgetting where she came from and empowering the communities that have supported and defined her. In choosing to do so,

Anna has galvanized, taught and magnified the meaning of true professionalism and public service.

Not to be forgotten is the fact that she has also stayed true to her resolution many years ago on the streets of Hong Kong. She is effecting positive change. She is making a real difference.



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