

Highlights of Nellie McClung's Career

Who was Nellie McClung?

A few years ago, Nellie McClung was chosen the fifth most famous Manitoban. We might wonder why? Nellie Mooney was born in 1873 in Ontario. Seven years later, she and her family moved west to the Wawanesa. They built a home, cleared the land and farmed. At 16, Nellie was teaching in a country school, Hazel School, near Manitou. In Manitou, she met and married a local druggist, Wesley McClung. Their first four children were born there. In 1911, they moved to Winnipeg where their youngest son, Mark, was born. In 1914, Nellie and Wes moved to Alberta and then, in 1932, to Victoria to retire. Her story sounds like so many other people's stories. Why, then, do we remember her as an important person.

Nellie McClung: The Best Selling Author.

Nellie McClung was a best selling Canadian author. Her first book, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, was published in 1908. It was a best selling book. She wrote 16 books in all. She also wrote for newspapers and for magazines.

Nellie McClung: The Outstanding Speaker.

When Nellie became well known as a writer, she was asked to speak about her books. She was an excellent speaker and became very popular. Soon, she began to speak about other topics. For instance, she believed that women should be able to vote. She gave speeches on that. She made speaking tours to other provinces and the United States. She was asked to give talks well into her late 60's.

Nellie McClung: The Campaigner for the Vote for Women.

Nellie and her family moved to Winnipeg in 1911. Nellie and a group of women (and some men) in Winnipeg organized the Political Equality League (PEL). The purpose of the group was to change the law so women could vote. They also wanted better living conditions for women and children. They tried to talk Premier Roblin into supporting the vote for women. He refused. They tried to show him the poor working conditions faced by women in factories. He ignored them.

Nellie McClung: A leader of the Women's Parliament.

In 1914, the women in the Political Equality League, held a Mock Parliament (Women's Parliament). They put on a play at the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg. The play made fun of Premier Roblin. Nellie played the part of the Premier. Everyone said she was brilliant. A little later, an election was called. The Liberals, who Nellie supported, lost that election. Soon another election was called.

Nellie McClung: Continuing the Campaigns in Manitoba and Alberta.

The McClung family had moved to Alberta in Dec. 1914. Nellie went back to Manitoba to campaign in the last week before the 1915 election. A new Premier (Norris) was elected. The people in Manitoba signed petitions prepared by the PEL for the vote for women. A law was passed for women to vote. They were the first in Canada to have the right. In Alberta, Nellie began working to help women there gain the vote. In 1916, they did.

Nellie McClung: A Member of the Alberta Legislature, 1921-1926.

Nellie won an election and became a member of the Alberta Legislature. She was in the Legislature until the election in 1926.

Nellie McClung: A Member of the Famous Five (The Person's Case), 1927 - 1929. In 1927, Nellie McClung

and four other women began another fight. Women in Canada were not persons under Canadian Law. The women did not like this. They contacted people in government and the courts. Two years later, women were declared to be persons in Canada!

Nellie McClung: Working for Canadians. Nellie went to many meetings to represent Canadian people.

- Nellie went to the Woman's War Conference in Ottawa in 1918.
- Nellie was Canada's lone female delegate to a church conference in England in 1921.
- She represented Canada at the League of Nations in Geneva in 1938.
- From 1936-1942, she was the only female appointed to the first Board of Governors of the CBC.

Nellie McClung: Helping Others Gain Rights.

She spent much of her life writing and speaking to help others.

She thought and wrote that:

- Japanese Canadians who could not vote in the 1930's and 40's should have the right.
- Canada should accept Jewish refugees or at least the children before World War 11.
- That every Canadian should have the same pay if they did the same work.
- Women should have the right to be ministers in the United Church.

Who was Nellie McClung?

She was a speaker, author, teacher and legislator. She used her talents, determination and energy to bring about change in society. Nellie never stopped caring about and speaking for people who did not have a voice of their own.