

## **Gerry Bracewell: Guide Outfitter, Pioneer, Matriarch Book Summary**

*Gerry Bracewell: Guide Outfitter, Pioneer, Matriarch* was released to celebrate Gerry's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 11th 2022. This book builds on the story told in Gerry's memoirs, *Gerry, Get Your Gun*, with previously unreleased stories and poems written by Gerry as well as stories written by the female guides who were inspired by Gerry. As the first female hunt guide in BC in 1945 and then the first female guide outfitter, Gerry was a big inspiration to many women breaking into a male-dominated industry.

Gerry Bracewell was born into an era of patriarchal society in 1922 but from a young age, it was clear Gerry wasn't going to follow the path society dictated for her. Gerry missed most of the conventional patriarchal stereotyping and lived more on the wild side, in nature away from society and in a matriarchal lifestyle.

Gerry read about the Wild West with Annie Oakley, the female hunter and trick shooter, and other international female hunters as far back as the Greek and Roman times. Gerry read about international hunters travelling from Europe to the mountains of BC to hunt the unique big-game animals that lived out West. These stories sparked her imagination. Gerry learned how to trap, shoot, hunt and became a young entrepreneur selling the meat she had hunted.

Throughout her school years, Gerry fantasized about living in the mountains of British Columbia, where it seemed all her desires to live the western lifestyle would be fulfilled. Gerry was clear on her interests, goals and purpose in life, she was going to live in the mountains. As soon as grade school was out, Gerry travelled west and got a job in the world famous hunting mecca, the Chilcotin Mountains, first working on a cattle ranch then branching into hunt guiding.

As with all clarity of interests, goals and purpose, the pieces fell into place. Under the mentorship of KB Moore who became her father-in-law, Gerry became a horse expert, a mountain rider, a rancher, then a big-game hunter then a hunt guide outfitter, conservationist and steward of the land. In the 1940s, Gerry was the first female hunt guide in British Columbia, then just a few years later, the first female guide outfitter in BC.

In the Cariboo-Chilcotin area, Gerry soon developed strong relationships with many of the First Nations families, learning about their lifestyles, including the role of women in leadership, decision making and living from the land. As she got to know them better, Gerry worked with many native guides who were vital to the guide operation.

While riding range, running cattle drives and guiding hunters, Gerry had her first two boys who she taught the ways of horses, hunting, guiding and conservation. As well as being hunt guides, Marty and Barry went into the logging industry. Later, she had two more boys, Kevan and Alex, who learned all these same skills and went on to become guide outfitters themselves.

The four sons in turn taught their kids about horses, hunting, guiding, outfitting and conservation of the land. This brought a fourth generation of Bracewells and Moores to the Chilcotin guiding business. As access to the Chilcotin region increased, conservation became an increased priority. Recognizing the needs of the environment and her responsibility as a guide outfitter to look after the land she was benefiting from, Gerry was quick to take her conservation to the next level. Now, wildlife transplants and more detailed population counts were needed. Through Gerry's work, wildlife population numbers in her guide territory increased.

Gerry was an active participant in the community. Some of her contributions included saving the Tatlayoko post office and campaigning for a new school house. Gerry was also active in the formation of a guide outfitters association, which improved conservation throughout the province and gave the guide outfitters better opportunity to work together to benefit the wildlife of British Columbia.

In the 1990s, one Bracewell guide outfitting business grew into two, bookending what became known as the Chilcotin Ark, an area of international ecological importance for its habitat and wildlife biodiversity. Now Gerry and her family had the exclusive guiding rights to a large proportion of the

world famous hunting areas of the Chilcotin Mountains that had been receiving international hunters since the 1860s. Here, First Nations guides were also a part of the guiding program, sharing their traditional knowledge of the land with guides and guests.

Throughout her time as a guide outfitter, Gerry and her family were connecting hunters and non-hunters to nature, implementing conservation and stewardship of their guide outfitting territory, instilling personal development in every person they came in contact with through nature's challenges, focused training from horse packing and shoeing, stalking grizzly bears, calling in a moose, wildlife management and wildlife habitat balance.

The matriarchal leadership role Gerry played was a fine balance, teaching four boys to become capable, self-reliant and independent and live as equals with the females in their lives. The women drawn to the two guide territories had the same dreams and desires as Gerry, to live alongside nature without society's restrictions on what is deemed suitable for women. Throughout her years as a guide outfitter, Gerry has been a huge inspiration to new and upcoming female guides, both hunt and non-hunt.

This culture of learning from a capable, independent female is the concept of matriarchal leadership and society that has been ongoing for tens of thousands of years. Gerry will continue to inspire female hunt guides long into the future.

This book is just one more way of sharing Gerry's story and inspiring more women to get involved in hunting and guiding.

You can find out more about *Gerry Bracewell: Guide Outfitter, Pioneer, Matriarch* and her first book, *Gerry, Get Your Gun*, on Gerry's website, [gerrybracewell.com](http://gerrybracewell.com)