

Dr. Eileen Wallace: A CFUW Member Since 1947



Eileen Wallace joined CFUW as a member of CFUW St. Thomas from 1947 to 1953. During this time, she was a founding member of the St. Thomas County library which served 80-90 schools in the region. Upon moving to Fredericton in 1955, she was introduced to Jean Argue at a CFUW Fredericton tea and continued her membership in CFUW as a member of CFUW Fredericton. This year, 2018, marks her 71st year as a member of CFUW. In recognition of her “trailblazing achievements in bilingual education and for her outstanding impact on children’s literacy”, Dr. Wallace is receiving the Order of New Brunswick (Bibliographical Notes, 2018 Order of New Brunswick).

Eileen moved to Fredericton at the age of 11. Upon graduating from Fredericton High School, she received the only two scholarships awarded to women attending a post-secondary institution—the Martha J. Harvey Scholarship valued at \$50 and the UNB Alumni Scholarship valued at \$55. In Eileen’s words, “that was a lot of money at that time”. Tuition at the University of New Brunswick was \$100. Eileen graduated from the University of New Brunswick in 1944 with first class honours in French and Mathematics. She then attended the University of Toronto where she obtained her bachelor’s degree in library and information science followed by her attendance at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor where she obtained her master’s degree in library and information science. From 1953-1955, Eileen studied in England and 1960-1961 saw her in Paris at the University of Paris La Sorbonne where she majored in French and Mathematics. While at La Sorbonne, Eileen stayed in Reid Hall, which was the American University Women’s Residence. Eileen achieved a Certificate of Achievement and was granted the Diplome de Francais Usuel.

In 1955, Eileen returned to Fredericton where she joined the staff of the New Brunswick Teachers’ College as a librarian and a teacher of library science. Eileen shared her story of how she became a member of the staff of Teachers’ College. She was looking for employment in the area of library science and was informed that there were two positions available, one at the Teachers’ College and one at the Department of Education. She was encouraged to accept the position at Teachers’ College as her

expertise in library science was most needed there. While at Teachers' College, Eileen's teaching assignment consisted of teaching 12 classes of children's literature a week, this being a compulsory course for students complete their teaching degree and certification.

In 1973, the Teachers' College amalgamated with the University of New Brunswick Marshall d'Avray Hall. At this time, Eileen became the first professor of children's literacy and library science and the first head of the University's Education Resource Centre.

Recognizing that there were few children's books at the University at this time, Eileen developed her own collection of children's books in both French and English. Eileen recalls going to yard sales and sourcing out all places where she might acquire children's books. As she built her collection, she often loaned these books to teachers in rural areas of New Brunswick so they would have access to children's literature during the completion of their compulsory children's literacy course. Not all teachers were able to attend courses at the University of New Brunswick so Eileen packed butter boxes with these children's books, loaded them in her car and travelled to locations in Carleton County where she taught her children's literacy course, loaning each teacher a box of books to use during the time they were enrolled in her course. Each butter box held books in a particular subject area; for example, one subject area was 'miniature people' and held such books as "The Borrowers". One of the activities for Eileen's children's literacy course was every student enrolled had to read 3-4 books to a child and then record the child's reaction to the books. For example, if the book was "Rosie's Walk", teachers might report that those children under age 4 or 5 couldn't see what would be happening next.



Upon her retirement in 1989, the Eileen Wallace Children's Literature Collection was gifted to the Harriet Irving Library, University of New Brunswick. "This collection represents one of Canada's largest publicly accessible resources for studying how children interact with books and stories. The collection has now grown to more than 17,000 books and microfiche, the largest collection east of Toronto's Osborne collection and the only collection that tracks the history and legacy of print culture for children and

young adults in Atlantic Canada (Biographical Notes, 2018 Order of New Brunswick Recipients).

Eileen's philanthropic work specific to children's literature and the Harriet Irving Library, UNB Fredericton Campus, encompasses two funds she has established at UNB: (a) the Eileen Wallace Research Fellowship in Children's Literature which awards \$5000 yearly to an author engaged in research and (b) a fund established to assist in the costs associated with purchases of children's publications by Atlantic Canada authors and costs associated with the hiring of a person responsible for maintaining the current collection housed at the Harriet Irving Library. Eileen remains an active member of the children's literature collections' advisory committee.

Eileen has been and continues to be an active CFUW Fredericton member. Her background in literature, library work, drama and her extensive travel experience in most European countries, Asia including China, and North America including Mexico and her knowledge gleaned from working and attending university in Paris and England collectively attest to her being a valued and respected member of CFUW Fredericton. She says she loves all things associated with history and seeing different places. Eileen shared numerous stories articulating her tales of travel, renting cars and touring. She also shared stories about her involvement with the CFUW Fredericton Book Fair, especially in its initial stages when she drove the truck around picking up books, setting up and helping to organize the Book Fair, arranging lunches for Club meetings and accepting the position of vice president one year only to find herself suddenly in the position of president. Eileen has devoted, and continues to devote, much time, energy and expertise as a member of the CFUW Fredericton Book Club, Libraries and Creative Arts Committee, Education and Scholarship Committee and the CFUW Fredericton Book Fair, where she has assisted throughout its 53 years of operation. Eileen is our CFUW Fredericton "go to" person whenever we need information relative to past CFUW Fredericton events. She is an active participant at our Book Club gatherings often enriching our book reading experiences with her personal stories. Her work on the Libraries and Creative Arts Committee has been instrumental in recognizing the needs of rural school libraries and in arranging for CFUW Fredericton funds to be provided to these schools to enhance reading opportunities for all students. Her work with the Education and Scholarship Committee has assisted in the creation of our numerous CFUW Fredericton scholarships. Eileen indicated that over the years she has encouraged other women to come to CFUW Fredericton events and many of them have become members. Eileen also reminisced about the opportunity she had some years ago to attend an IFUW convention in Australia as part of the CFUW delegation and of her opportunity to take advantage of an extensive tour of countries arranged by a delegation member from British Columbia. In addition to her involvement with CFUW Fredericton, Eileen's past activities included the New Brunswick Drama, Story Fest, Meals on Wheels and numerous other groups.

When Eileen was asked about what changes she saw in the CFUW Fredericton Club, she remarked that over the last several years most everyone seems to be new to the Club. She indicated she used to drive a few members to meetings. Most times now she drives herself but occasionally she and a CFUW Fredericton friend go out to lunch and other events together. When Eileen was asked what concerns her most about today's

schools, she remarked that “. . . we are going backwards. There are no elementary school libraries and not any teacher librarians. I always liked to teach by a theme; for example, if the theme was ‘puppies’, the students would read several books on puppies and report and draw pictures, etc.”

The Biographical Notes of the 2018 Order of New Brunswick Recipients state, “Eileen is a noted educator and philanthropist whose passion for literacy has changed the early childhood education landscape in New Brunswick.

Eileen is a friend to all, a Life Member of CFUW Fredericton, a devoted educator, an avid reader and a mentor for many teachers throughout her years. Her love for children’s literature is evident throughout all her work as a scholar and an educator.

In 1998, Eileen’s outstanding contribution to the education of children was recognized when the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick presented Eileen with the Early Childhood Literacy Award. In 2001, Eileen received an honorary Doctors of Letters from the University of New Brunswick in for her lifelong commitment to literacy, childhood education and humane values.

Eileen will be 95 in January 2019.

Jean Fisher, Past President, CFUW Fredericton
Sharon Crabb, Past President, CFUW Fredericton