

ARBOS AWARD

HELEN MOLLOY'S STORY

2021 ARBOS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION



Throughout Helen Molloy's journey, she discovered her true passion is education and literacy. As an educator Helen has been a strong advocate for substitute teachers' rights. Her hard work and dedication advocating for these rights is why she's been chosen as the recipient of the 2021 Arbos for Contributions to the

Professional Organization.

Her journey into teaching began in theatre with a dream to become a professional mime. She received her bachelor of arts in theatre from the University of Regina in 1978 and moved to Ontario to study at the Canadian Mime Theatre, before returning to Regina to pursue a career in miming.

In the '80s she began working at the Credit Union Central. Later she attended evening classes to obtain her Diploma of Associate in Administration in 1992. Then life took an unexpected turn when Helen was laid off. Her severance turned out to be a blessing because it afforded her the opportunity to travel throughout North America for six months by motorcycle. Following some soul-searching, Helen decided to return to school to obtain her bachelor of education from the University of Regina in 2000.

Her first two and half years of teaching were spent with temporary contracts in Uranium City, Mossbank and Moose Jaw. She was also involved with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation as a school representative in Uranium City and Moose Jaw and through her participation on a number of committees.

In 2002 Helen returned to Regina and began substitute teaching at the Regina Public School Board and Regina Catholic School Board. She expanded her leadership skills in 2007 as president of the Regina Public School Substitute Teachers' Association. Helen proudly served as a career substitute teacher up until she retired in 2020. According to colleagues she has been a strong ally, giving a voice to teachers who felt marginalized or invisible.

"Helen is a model of perseverance and resiliency," says Jeff Perry, president of the Regina Public School Teachers' Association. "Her moral compass would not let her give up or be sidetracked. She was never willing to let a wall, a policy or someone's personal opinion stop her."

As a result of her tenaciousness with the government and the STF, Helen helped ensure substitute teachers have access to workplace insurance for injuries. Prior to 2014 substitute teachers were not included in Workers' Compensation; now thanks in large part to Helen's advocacy, they are.

"I know Helen wishes she could have done more for substitutes provincially but she has helped to ensure substitute teachers have been included in conversations with the Federation and the government for the past decade," says Perry. "When these changes are in place, know that it is part of Helen's legacy."



A CONVERSATION WITH HELEN MOLLOY

When did you decide to become a teacher?

One of my favourite childhood activities was “playing school” with neighbourhood friends. Though my initial university education took me in a different direction, the desire to promote literacy and education was always in the back of my mind. My life experiences have introduced me to so many different people and places that have enhanced my own learning. After returning from my travels, I was able to turn my childhood playtime into a grown-up profession.

What was your most memorable teaching moment?

There was a grade nine student who was in his first week of high school. When he saw me in the hallway, he called out, “Ms. Molloy!” as he comes to give me a hug. I was his only link between elementary school and high school, one of the hidden blessings of being a substitute teacher. His adjustment was hard, but he knew I was there and would turn up on occasion and that high school would be o.k.

Why are you so passionate about supporting substitute teachers?

In the first years of Council, I would often return deflated because I had not been able to help councillors and the Federation understand the fundamental needs of substitute teachers. Over the years, councillors have come to understand that what’s good for substitute teachers is also good for all teachers. The strength of any community rests in how we treat our most vulnerable, and substitute teachers are amongst the most vulnerable within the teaching community.

In your role advocating for substitute teachers, what are you personally most proud of?

Substitute teachers have so much to contribute. It was ludicrous to me that substitute teachers were only considered members of the STF on the days they worked. This award demonstrates that things are improving and that substitute teachers are being included. Many of my colleagues know my perseverance helped create better conditions for substitute teachers, like gaining access to Workers’ Compensation. To me, it’s not important people know I helped; what is important is that substitute teachers have rights!

What advice would you give to substitute teachers today?

You are teachers! You deserve all the rights and privileges the STF has worked hard to obtain for teachers over the decades. When you are in that classroom for one or two days, you are the teacher. You have a unique privilege to share something extra with students that only you can. With rights and privileges come responsibilities: read and know your contract. Each division has their own unique substitute contract. Be involved in your profession. There are always committees and ways that individuals can contribute to the collective. I didn’t plan to be a career substitute teacher; but it’s been a place where I have been able to make a difference. Hopefully in the future, the STF can negotiate a provincial contract for substitute teachers. See, I’m still advocating.