

speaking notes

Joy Bowen-Eyre
Chair
Board of Trustees

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CBE Legacy Award | Catherine McLeod

The CBE Legacy Award celebrates public education in Calgary and the individuals who have contributed to our communities. In every corner of the city, across the country and beyond, our alumni have made a lasting impact.

Public education makes a difference in our communities, our country and our world. Legacy Award recipients will embody the work of the public education system and represent the legacy of the CBE: preparing students for life, work and inspiring life-long learning.

Success at the CBE is highly personal, with each student defining how they learn best and our teachers working to recognize the unique talents and gifts of each student. We want to acknowledge the individuals who continue this work, who use their unique talents to make our world better, the former students who are our legacy.

It is my great pleasure today to honour Catherine McLeod with the CBE Legacy Award.

In 1969, Cathy McLeod was the first profoundly deaf student to attend CBE in a fully integrated program. Her parents fought hard for the right for her to attend school with hearing students.

Cathy's nominator wrote passionately and reminded us how our approach to special needs education has changed. Accepting a deaf student into the regular program was certainly uncharted and uncomfortable territory for the CBE, or any school district in the 1960s and 70s.

Cathy McLeod attended John Ware School and graduated from Dr. E.P. Scarlett High School in 1975.

After high school graduation, Cathy went on to complete a bachelor of arts degree from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. and a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Los Angeles.

Her most recent position as Director at the NCOD California State University, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services – Northridge is a high profile position that has significant impact in both the hearing and deaf worlds.

learning | as unique | as every student



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As a student at John Ware School, Cathy joined the regular program and attended all classes. With no supports or assistive technologies in place, she relied on the patience of her teachers and fellow students to help her. While Cathy's profound deafness meant she had no hearing at all, she was a strong lip reader and helped others to understand how to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired.

At Dr. E.P. Scarlett High School, Cathy was able to have a range of experiences including joining the girls basketball team. At that time, much discussion between school staff occurred as to whether someone who was deaf could be on a team - "what if she didn't hear the whistle?" However, some staff members, who were wise beyond the times, believed that it was important that she be included. And, in fact, there were many funny moments when she did not, in fact, hear the whistle and carried on down the court with the ball.

Her coaches, her principal, her teachers and fellow students all had a great admiration for Cathy. They learned not to be fearful of someone who had a significant disability. She demanded that they look at her when they talked and that she had a right to learn what other students learned. She insisted that people see her for who she was, not as "that deaf girl". This was not always easy at a time when people with disabilities were often invisible. While she felt excluded and isolated at times, she always had a positive attitude and a terrific sense of humour.

After graduation, Cathy went on to Gallaudett University - the only deaf university in the world. Since that time, she has had a variety of positions related to advocacy for the deaf. She is considered to be a strong role model within the deaf and hearing community.

Here are some key highlights of Cathy's career that we would like to share with you today.

Upon graduation from Gallaudet, she moved to Los Angeles and volunteered as the Assistant Games Director for the 1985 World Games for the Deaf (now known as Deaflympics) in Los Angeles. The committee were able to secure many of the sites used in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

For 13 years, Cathy worked for a non-profit organization called Greater Los Angeles for the Deaf (GLAD) overseeing employee placement, human services and advocacy programs.

Cathy was also the Director and Principal Investigator of a federal grant from the Office of Special Education Program in the United States. The primary goal of this program was to support post-secondary success for deaf and hard of hearing individuals across the United States by increasing access to postsecondary programs, with a focus on retention, persistence and graduation rates for this targeted population.

Cathy is an excellent example of the type of graduate we want our students to be – one who exemplifies the results of not only academic success, but of character and personal development.

The mission of the Calgary Board of Education is for is that each student, in keeping with his or her individual abilities and gifts, will complete high school with a foundation of learning necessary to thrive in life, work and continued learning.

Students like Cathy, who persevere, push boundaries and help show us what is possible will ensure that our school system and society continue to evolve and become more inclusive.

While she no longer lives in Calgary, her work has impacted the lives of deaf students around the world as she focuses on accessibility for all deaf and hearing impaired people.

Thank you, Cathy, for being here with us today.