

EILEEN MCCARTHY AND PETER FERREN 2018 AWARD OF DISTINCTION RECIPIENTS

Eileen McCarthy, a long-time teacher, counsellor and social justice advocate at Notre Dame College School and Peter Ferren, President of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education and former Director of Education for one of Niagara Catholic's predecessor Boards, have been selected as the 2018 recipients of the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction.

Eileen spent 36 years as a teacher at Notre Dame College School, and embraced the principles of the school's founding Holy Cross Fathers, teaching the virtues of education in faith, academic excellence and commitment to social justice. She recognized that a teacher's personal faith journey had a profound impact on students and sought to ensure all teachers had the opportunity to continue to grow in faith, and sought ways to bring social justice to life for her students.

Eileen passed away in December 2011 at the age of 70.

Peter Ferren was the founding President of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, serving in that capacity since the Foundation was incorporated in 1996. In addition to his more than 20 years of service to the Foundation, Peter left an indelible mark on Catholic education in Niagara and throughout Ontario as Director of Education for the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Peter was the driving force behind a number of innovations in Catholic education in Ontario, including leading the only transfer of three schools from a public board to a Catholic board, which allowed Catholic high school students to be able to receive a Catholic secondary school education in their communities. Under his Directorship, the Spiritual Centre and Outdoor Education Program (SCOEP), now known as Journey Retreat, was formed.

Niagara Catholic Board Chair Father Paul MacNeil credited both Eileen McCarthy and Peter Ferren for their long-standing contribution to Catholic education in Niagara.

"Catholic educators are at the very heart and soul of Catholic education, and in both Eileen McCarthy and Peter Ferren, we see people who dedicated their lives to ensuring outstanding Catholic educational opportunities across Niagara Catholic," said Chair MacNeil. "Their servant-leadership is truly an example to those of us who are actively involved in Catholic education today. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank Peter and Eileen – through her family – for being two of the pillars of Catholic education in Niagara."

Director of Education John Crocco made note of the very personal way in which each brought their faith to life for students and staff.

“We are truly honoured to recognize the late Eileen McCarthy and Peter Ferren as the 2018 recipients of the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction,” said Mr. Crocco. *“Eileen was one of the most exceptional examples of a person who lives their faith through their actions as you would see. She exemplified all that Catholic education is meant to be – true to her faith, passionate about spreading the Word of God and a true servant-leader. Peter has also been a tireless advocate for Catholic education, devoting much of his career to ensuring Catholic students in Niagara could attend a Catholic school close to home, and then, through his retirement, serving to better the lives of current students through his leadership on the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education. Through their unique gifts and talents, Eileen and Peter each played integral roles in ensuring a solid foundation for Catholic education in Niagara today. On behalf of the students, staff, family and alumni of Niagara Catholic, we thank them for their decades of service, and pledge to honour their legacy by continuing their good work now and in the future.”*

Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to approximately 24,000 students throughout Niagara; from Kindergarten through graduation.

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Eileen McCarthy

Eileen McCarthy was a passionate advocate for Catholic education and social justice.

For those who knew her, Eileen's name was synonymous with Catholicity and Catholic education. Throughout her a 36-year teaching career in Niagara, Eileen's priority was serving the students at Notre Dame College School, but her influence spread far beyond that. In fact, her influence has had provincial, national and international impact.

Eileen embraced the principles established by the Holy Cross Fathers when they founded Notre Dame College, and believed passionately in education in the faith, academic excellence and a commitment to social justice.

Eileen believed that faith must be a tangible aspect of a Catholic school, and that Catholic educators must play a role in ensuring that Catholic schools offer students something public schools cannot. She recognized that a teacher's personal faith journey had a powerful impact on students, and directed her attention to teacher faith formation throughout Niagara Catholic. As an extension of that, she created courses on Catholic education and social justice for the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association's Religious Education program. Countless Catholic teachers across Ontario have benefitted from Eileen's passion and influence.

Eileen instilled in students the importance of striving for their academic best, but knew that future success was about more than achieving a spot on the Honour Roll. In her role as a guidance counsellor, Eileen relied heavily on faith, encouraging students to look beyond just having a lucrative career. Rather, she encouraged students to look inward at what they felt they were being called to be, because the true measure of a person's success extends beyond the size of their paycheque.

Eileen was also passionate about social justice. She led a group of teachers to sponsor a family of refugees from South Asia, and travelled extensively to developing nations. Notably, Eileen visited with new teachers in Antigua, witnessed the impact of student fundraising through the Annual Pilgrimage had on a community in Peru, learned more about the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) in Kenya and lived in Tanzania for two years, working with the Bishop of Rulenge. She served on the National Board for CCODP for eight years, including two as President, and oversaw the creation of *Journey of Solidarity*, a book chronicling the (then) 25-year history of Development and Peace in Canada. She served as a resource person and contributor on the Social Affairs Commission of the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chair of the Social Justice Committee for St. Kevin's Parish and on the Board of Directors for the Hope Centre in Welland. Eileen died in December 2011, but her legacy lives on through the endowments she created. The Eileen McCarthy Scholarship for Social Justice was established in 2014 to recognize a graduating student from Notre Dame College School who exhibits an appreciation for Catholic education and who embodies Catholic Social Teachings. She also left funds to establish a rescue house for girls and women in Kitali, Kenya.

Peter Ferren

Peter Ferren has left an indelible mark on Catholic education in Niagara and in Ontario.

A graduate of St. Michael's College, Peter began his career teaching in Timmins, Ontario, before moving to Niagara. He was hired by the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board in 1979 to succeed Alexander Kuska as Director of Education. During his years as Director of Education, Peter was instrumental in securing the transfer of three schools from the public board to the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board - the only school board in Ontario to do so. Those schools became Lakeshore Catholic High School, Saint Michael Catholic High School and the Father Fogarty campus of the Continuing Education department.

A year after that, Peter led the Board in an evaluation and development of school systems project. The result was an action plan which contained 127 recommendations, most of which were implemented during his tenure.

Peter recognized the value of students connecting with their faith, and under his Directorship launched the Spiritual Centre and Outdoor Education Program (SCOEP), which continues today as the Journey Retreat for Grade 8 students. In 1994, he was recognized by his peers in the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association with B.E. Nelligan Award of Merit for his contributions to Catholic education.

Peter has continued to serve Catholic schools and students throughout his retirement years. In 2007, he co-authored the book *Catholic Education: A Gift from the Past, a Present for the Future (1842-2007)* with Don Lefebvre. Peter is the founding President of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, and has held the role since its inception in Niagara in 1996. Under his guidance, the Foundation has assisted hundreds of Niagara Catholic students, whether through the financial support of scholarships for post-secondary education, or by assistance to allow them to participate in programs at school they may not otherwise have been able to join. Through the Foundation, Niagara Catholic launched a capital campaign to provide high schools with turf fields.

Peter has been, and continues to be, a stalwart and unselfish supporter of Catholic education in Niagara and throughout Ontario.