

Happenings

Three Quarters of a Century: Cause for Celebration

Deborah Fertuck

Four Canadian university schools of nursing recently celebrated their 75th anniversary.

In 1919 the University of British Columbia founded the first degree course for nurses in the British Empire. In 1920 programs were established at McGill and the Universities of Toronto and Western Ontario. In 1994 and 1995 the occasion was marked by events at all four institutions.

University schools of nursing face particular challenges in today's climate of health-care reform. Slogans reflecting this theme were reproduced on stationery, posters, and banners.

The schools initiated their celebrations with birthday parties and receptions for students and faculty as well as colleagues from clinical settings, other university departments, and community colleges. There were cake- and ribbon-cutting ceremonies, group photographs, and exchanges of congratulatory messages.

Each school dedicated its annual International Nursing Research conference to the anniversary. These are held by and for alumnae, adjunct faculty, and the nursing community to discuss such ideas as health-care trends and the links between hospitals and the community.

Alumnae played a key part in planning the events – symbolizing the fact that alumnae support has ensured the continued success of all four schools. An opportunity for them to reminisce was provided in a commemorative issue of the McGill alumnae newsletter, which featured photographs old and recent as well as memories from around the world.

Deborah Fertuck, M.Sc., N., is a faculty lecturer in the Undergraduate Program of the School of Nursing, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec.

Joan M. Gilchrist was honoured by two schools for her role in the development of nursing in Canada. Western Ontario presented Professor Gilchrist with an honorary doctorate, while McGill renamed a conference series for her. McGill also named a learning resource centre for Dr. F. Moyra Allen, to commemorate her important contributions to nursing.

A University of Toronto celebratory dinner featured faculty "roasts" and the screening of a videotape on the history of the school. Anecdotes were traded at a luncheon attended by 150 people, including alumnae and former professors.

At the University of Western Ontario, a luncheon for 135, including alumnae from the past 50 years, featured *The Lady with the Hammer*, a play about Florence Nightingale. Faculty members dressed in costumes from 75, 50, and 25 years ago added to the historical flavour.

The UBC celebrations featured period dress as well. Students and faculty members wore styles from a particular era, and guests were treated to an exhibition of dolls in period costume. At an alumnae dinner on May 12, Florence Nightingale's birthday, a book outlining the history of the school was presented by its authors, Ethel Warbinek and Glennis Zilm. The UBC School of Nursing also held a public lecture series.

Partnerships with communities, public support, and the role of the family were prominent themes. A McGill display on nursing and family health travelled around Montreal, while a public exhibition on campus featured photographs, newspaper clippings, and publications from the past 75 years.

Two of the schools linked past and future by naming new heads. Dr. Katharyn May was welcomed as dean of the UBC School of Nursing, while Dr. Laurie Gottlieb took on the directorship of the McGill school.

The work of faculty, students, and alumnae in mounting these anniversary events testifies to the strength and dedication of our nursing communities. This is certainly something to celebrate.