

News from Dalhousie Libraries

Marlo MacKay, Communications Coordinator, Dalhousie University Libraries

A Very Happy Retirement to Dean of Libraries Donna Bourne-Tyson!

After two terms as Dean of Libraries and 11 years of impressive leadership and service to Dalhousie and the community, **Donna Bourne-Tyson** is retiring on August 14.

Donna joined Dalhousie in 2011 as the University Librarian, making significant contributions to both physical and digital services, collections, and spaces at Dalhousie. Since Donna's arrival, the Dalhousie Libraries expanded with the addition of two new stand-alone spaces, the Kellogg Library Learning Commons in the Collaborative Health Education Building, and the Wallace McCain Learning Commons. Additionally, all five of the Dalhousie Libraries underwent renovations, increasing student study spaces wherever possible, including significant renovations to the MacRae and W.K. Kellogg Health Sciences libraries.



Donna was instrumental in establishing a hub of the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation at the MacRae Library, a Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Legacy Space, and the soon-to-be launched Indigenous Community Room in the Killam Library, and the position of Indigenous Services Librarian. Other new roles created under her leadership include digital archives, scholarly communications, knowledge synthesis, and data services.

She played a leadership role in the creation of university policies and supporting services for copyright, records management, data access, and research data management. In 2013, the Dal Libraries took on the responsibility for instructional technology — Brightspace, Urkund, Panopto and other critical online teaching tools which have served Dal well throughout the last two years of the pandemic. The Libraries also took on the management of classroom technologies, continuing the Dal Libraries' model to provide excellent services and support in both virtual and physical learning environments.

Under Donna's leadership, Dalhousie has made significant gains in the digital world. The Dal Libraries' capacity to provide eResources, online instruction, and services has grown exponentially. Donna recently co-chaired the process to develop Dalhousie's Digital Strategy, a plan that will lead to a seamless digital student experience, increased digital literacy for all Dalhousieans, and equitable access to digital systems and training.

In 2019, Donna received the Ken Haycock Award for her remarkable range of board roles in regional, national, and international associations and consortia, for founding and shepherding multiple new organizations, and for her leadership and dedication as an ambassador and role model for librarianship.

This year, she was honoured with the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) Award for Distinguished Service to Research Librarianship.

While Dean of Libraries, Donna made significant contributions to research librarianship through her leadership and engagement in national and international organizations. Donna served as Chair (2017–2019), Vice-Chair/Chair elect (2015–2017), and Treasurer (2009–2011) of the Council of Atlantic University Libraries, in addition to leading a diversity of initiatives and committees. The same is true at a provincial level within the Novanet consortium, having served as Chair and Vice-Chair.

She was CARL President from 2017–2019, preceded by terms as Vice-President/President-Elect (2015–2017) and Treasurer (2012–2015), leading CARL through a period of dramatic evolution in the world of research libraries and preparing us well for the pandemic era.

Donna served as Vice-Chair of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (2011–2014) and most recently as an elected member on the inaugural Board of Directors of the Digital Research Alliance of Canada (2020–2022). She has also continued to represent the Canadian library perspective and enhanced international alignment as a board member of the International Association of University Libraries (IATUL) serving as Treasurer (2019–2021) and Secretary (2022). She also brought the IATUL conference to Dalhousie in 2016, welcoming librarians from across the globe to our campus.

She was a founding member of the BlueSky Network, a partnership of public, academic, and First Nations libraries in Northern Ontario. Representing the Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA), she was one of the original members of The Partnership, Canada's national network of provincial and territorial library associations. She also co-chaired the Interim Board during the founding days of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA).

Please join us in congratulating Donna on her outstanding career and accomplishments and thanking her for her time at Dalhousie, as we wish her the very fondest of farewells.

Happy Retirement, Joan Chiasson!

The Dalhousie Libraries is bidding farewell to one of its longest-serving employees, **Joan Chiasson**.

Joan's career with the Libraries began in 1981 as part of the Government Documents department. With the increase of electronic publication of government materials and further restructuring in the Libraries to meet changing needs, Joan moved to the Archives and Special Collections unit in 2012-2013. There she learned to provide reference assistance for another set of specialized



collections. She also learned new standards for cataloging materials, this time for processing archival collections and mediating thesis deposits for DalSpace, the university's institutional repository.

The primary highlight of her varied career has been the people she has worked with over the years, particularly **Shelagh Keene, June Tasker, Jane Archibald, Andrew Finch, Sharon Longard, Geoff Brown, Phyllis Ross, Donna Bourne-Tyson, Michael Moosberger, and Courtney Bayne.**

Outside of the Libraries, Joan is skilled at needlework and costume design. She has had a long association with a local medieval group and has created many beautiful medieval gowns and costumes for fellow society members.

Thank you, Joan, for over 40 years of dedicated service to the Dalhousie Libraries. We wish you all the very best for your next set of adventures in retirement!

Happy Retirement, Gail Fraser!

We extend our best wishes to **Gail Fraser**, the Dal Libraries' Manager of Acquisitions, Metadata and eResources, who will retire after a career of more than forty years on campus.

Gail started working at Dalhousie University as a Library Assistant in August 1980, doing serials check-in at the Kellogg Health Sciences Library. Over the next dozen or so years, she moved to the Cataloguing department and then to Acquisitions, advancing into new roles and responsibilities. In 2001, Gail was offered the opportunity to become Head of Serials & Acquisitions at the Kellogg Library.



Gail has shared her skills and knowledge with library colleagues at Dalhousie and across the region. From 2013–16, she served as Treasurer of the Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA). She was actively involved with the Novanet Acquisitions/Serials Service Group, serving as Co-Chair from 1996–97 and then as Chair from 2008–09.

We thank Gail for her dedication and contributions to the Dal Libraries and the university over an incredible 42 years! Her colleagues throughout the Libraries wish her health and happiness as she moves into this new phase in life.

Launch of the Ko'jua Okuom

Ko'jua Okuom: Dal's new Indigenous community room offers a space for reflection and celebration

(This story originally appeared in Dal News.)

Samantha Adema, Dal's Indigenous Services Librarian and master of ceremonies for last Tuesday's celebration, recalled how excited she felt when she first heard about the initiative to develop an Indigenous community room in 2020.



Samantha Adema & Catherine Martin

"I'm Mi'kmaw, I grew up here in the city, but I'm a member of Sipekne'katik, where my dad is from. I remember when I first came to university how out of place I felt," she said. "When I started here as a librarian, I saw my own experiences reflected back in the feedback we received from Indigenous students. Students reported that they wanted to see more representation of their culture in the library, more visibility of Indigenous resources, and more culturally relevant programming. With that in mind, I think that this room is an excellent step in breaking down some of those barriers."

"I really want this to be a space for L'nu [Mi'kmaq] students, and the community, to feel represented and at home at Dalhousie," she added.

Dancing place

The room's name, **Ko'jua Okuom**, refers to an Indigenous dance of friendship.

"The Mohawk gave us that dance in friendship and peace, dancing together as partners," explained **Elder Thomas Christmas**, who performed a smudging ceremony and blessed the new name.



Elder Thomas Christmas

"Some people call the Ko'jua the two-step or the friendship dance. It's a dance of getting together and acknowledging somebody and it's an important aspect of our people when they celebrate. It's fun, it gets your heart pumping, it gets people talking, and it's beautiful," he added.

Catherine Martin, Dal's director of Indigenous community engagement, opened the event by singing a traditional Mi'kmaq welcome song while playing her drum. "The drumbeat represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth, or the heartbeat of our mother," Martin explained. "That's something we've all heard; we know that language very well because our mother taught us. We're always told in Mi'kma'ki to speak from the heart."



Catherine Martin leads Dal President Deep Saini & others into the event

Decolonizing spaces, rebuilding trust

While in the past libraries, museums, and other memory institutions have often exploited and profited from Indigenous culture and knowledge and denied Indigenous people access to their spaces, efforts are now underway to decolonize these spaces and repair broken trust in the name of reconciliation.

"We want the Ko'jua Okuom to be a place for advancing Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation at Dalhousie," says **Elaine MacInnis**, Associate Dean of Library Services and Head of the MacRae Library. "To that end, the Ko'jua Okuom has been designed with Indigenous colleagues to celebrate and honour Indigenous culture in an environment where all can learn more about Indigenous customs and traditions through events and collections of Indigenous books, art, and artefacts."

Dal President **Deep Saini** reflected in his remarks at the event on how the strength of relationships with Indigenous communities is fundamental to the university's success.

“Dalhousie has an obligation to redress historical and ongoing systemic inequalities, further reconciliation, and build integrity in all our relationships with Canada’s First Nations,” he said. “The opening of the Ko’jua Okuom is one way we are demonstrating this commitment.”

A special collection

Another highlight of last week’s opening was the introduction of an extraordinary new collection of books and other materials received by Dal Libraries from the Prosper family of Ottawa.

Jim Prosper, a survivor of the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie, became an ardent researcher of colonialism, aboriginal treaties, rights, and sovereignty in his retirement years, meticulously curating an impressive collection of materials over twenty years. Upon Jim’s move to a senior’s residence and the subsequent downsizing of the family homestead, Jim’s son, Ron, wanted to see his father’s treasured book collection go to a university near his father’s birthplace, choosing to donate the collection to Dalhousie.

Ron Prosper, who attended the event with his wife, Lorna, and his brother, Rob, spoke at the launch as well.

“My father very much wanted to be here today, but his health prevented him from coming. It has been a two-year project for us to get my father’s books to Dal — a monumental task with nearly three quarters of a ton of books making their way here from Ottawa,” explained Prosper. “My father is an extraordinarily generous man, and a kind, amazing father, which belies his early days. He is resilient and he chose education, and turned that into a productive, wonderful life. This book collection is very much a testament to who he is.”



Ron Prosper



Books from the Prosper collection, as well as other books relating to Indigenous culture and history, are available on the shelves in the Ko’jua Okuom. A few of the rare books in the Prosper collection are also featured in secure display cases donated by the Halifax Foundation that currently exhibit part of **Catherine Martin’s** basket collection (on loan). Framed lithographs of the Dummer and Mascarene treaties (also from the Prosper collection) are hung

on the walls and plans for a large meeting table to be commissioned by an Indigenous artisan are in the works.

From gathering place to study space

The university is currently seeking a donor to fund an extensive HVAC renovation so that smudging can take place in the room, a key component of having a decolonized, welcoming space.

The Libraries' Indigenous Program Planning Team has beading and dance workshops, lectures, and film screenings planned for this coming academic year. Room booking information will be available soon, which will allow others at Dalhousie and community members to hold events with Indigenous themes in the room. When the room is not being used for events, it is a study space open to everyone.

"We hope that the Ko'jua Okuom introduces new opportunities for Indigenous communities in Mi'kma'ki to engage with Dalhousie in a space that supports and advances Indigenous ways of knowing," says **Donna Bourne-Tyson**, dean of Dalhousie Libraries. "We are grateful to **Elder Thomas Christmas** for naming the room, to **Catherine Martin** for her guidance every step of the way, and to the **Prosper family** for donating such a valuable collection that perfectly supports the aspirations for the space."

In Search of His Roots: Residential school survivor Jim Prosper's extraordinary book collection finds new home at Dal

[\(This story originally appeared in Dal News.\)](#)

When **Jim Prosper** was born in 1925, his mother was eighteen and not married. As was common for a young woman in that situation at the time, she gave up her son for adoption. Jim lived the first five years of his life in a Halifax orphanage, and in 1930 became a resident of the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie, which was the same year it opened. He lived there until he was 18.

Upon leaving the residential school, Jim, a proud Mi'kmaw, served in the Second World War. When he returned to Mi'kma'ki, Jim attended St. Francis Xavier for two years to study engineering, followed by two more years at the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology (which later became the Technical University of Nova Scotia and then Dalhousie's Faculty of Engineering) to complete his engineering degree. Jim is believed to be the first Indigenous engineering graduate from both institutions.



After a distinguished career that included being a lead engineer on Cold War intelligence projects, Jim retired in 1984. It was during this period of retirement that Jim decided to spend his time researching his genealogy in the hope of learning more about his mother and finding anything he could about his father. He made many visits back to the East Coast from his home in Ottawa, travelling to First Nations communities in the region and talking with the people who lived there.

Through his visits, Jim eventually learned who his mother's family was, meeting people who knew his mother and who could also tell him about his father — believed to be an American sailor. When he visited these communities and got to know the people, Jim kept hearing the same thing everywhere he went: "This reserve is shrinking, the land is being taken away."

This topic ignited a passion in Jim, and he soon became an ardent researcher of colonialism, aboriginal treaties, rights, and sovereignty. That's when he began curating an impressive book collection — one that has now found a new home at Dalhousie.

"My father was the hardcopy Google before Google," says **Ron Prosper**, one of Jim's three grown children. "For my dad, it was important to have hard copies of everything. He never got into digital, and he never wanted to leave information behind. He had to own the book; it wasn't enough that he could borrow it from a library."

Book dealers on 'speed dial'

Jim amassed his extraordinary book collection over twenty years, dealing with some of the most well-known antiquarian book sellers in Canada. "He had antiquarian book dealers on speed dial," says Ron. The most unique books in Jim's collection are bibles, hymnbooks, and catechisms in Mi'kmaq, some dating to the late 1800s.

Eventually, Jim's book collecting slowed down, and once he reached his nineties, it became challenging for him to continue living alone. His family helped him move to a senior's residence — where, at 97, he still lives — and then came the difficult job of packing up the homestead.

*From the library of
Earl James (Jim) Prosper*



A proud Mi'kmaq, Jim Prosper is a World War II veteran, the first Indigenous graduate of engineering from Saint Francis Xavier (1946–1949) and the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology (1949–1952). Placed into a children's orphanage at birth, Jim was subsequently raised at the Shubenacadie Residential School upon its opening in 1930. A professional engineer, Jim is also an ardent researcher and student of Aboriginal treaties, rights, and sovereignty. This donation is from his collection.

Artwork provided by Chelsea Brooks, Indian Brook Reserve.

Ron knew his father’s book collection was special, having seen how much love and effort he had put into curating it. “I knew that if the collection was ever going to

survive intact, there were very few institutions that would have the capacity to take it on. I felt that a university, being an institution devoted to learning, would be the best place for the collection. I also wanted to take it somewhere close to my father’s birthplace, and that was how I decided upon donating the collection to Dalhousie,” says Ron.



Exceedingly rare and old

Phil Laugher, a Digital Asset Technician in the Dalhousie Libraries with a twenty-two-year background in the antique book trade, assessed Jim’s collection and says it is one of the most thorough he’s ever encountered. “This collection was developed through a meticulous effort. It was a true labour of love in both the quality and quantity of the materials. There are 100-year-old items in pristine condition, and in some cases, only two other libraries in the world have some of these titles,” says Laugher.



The exceedingly rare and old books will be securely housed in Dalhousie Libraries Special Collections, while the more contemporary books will be found on the shelves in the newly launched **Indigenous Community Room**, found on the first floor of the Killam Memorial Library in the **Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Legacy Space**. The room, collaboratively designed with members of the Indigenous

community at Dalhousie, creates a welcoming gathering place for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty to host and attend Indigenous ceremonies and events.

“Things just could not have gone better,” Ron says, of the process of donating more than 700 books from his father’s collection to the Dalhousie Libraries. “There were so many people with the right expertise working on this donation at Dalhousie, and the timing of the donation coinciding with the opening of the Indigenous Community Room in the Killam Library, it’s all part of the wonderment of how this unfolded.”

Jim was not able to travel to the official opening Indigenous Community Room on Tuesday morning where his collection was being introduced to the Dalhousie community, but Ron and some members of his family were honoured guests at the event, with Ron giving remarks about his father.

“There is a unique story behind each of the collections that our donors give to the Dalhousie Libraries,” says **Donna Bourne-Tyson**, dean of Libraries. “The genesis of this particular collection and how it supported **Jim Prosper’s** understanding of his family and his Mi’kmaq heritage makes it a very special and moving story. We are honoured to be entrusted with the preservation and sharing of this collection.”