



PUBLIC INTEREST



2017 Public Interest Award Winner - Northern Alberta

Nominated by John Wodak, Seniors' Action and Liaison Team Chair

## CECILY MILLS

Cecily was born in Sherbrooke, Québec and studied in a one-room school in French until Grade 5. After high school, she enrolled at Marianopolis College, where she received a BSc in Biology before earning a Master's degree in Microbiology at McGill's McDonald College. She then taught for several years at Marianopolis before doing doctoral studies at the University of Alberta (1969 – 71). She then returned to her alma mater for four years before returning to Alberta in 1975.

In Edmonton, Cecily taught high school for six years at J.H. Picard French Immersion School and seven years at Caritas, a private high school. She also volunteered to teach ESL at the Tutor Bank, through them she taught immigrant women in their homes, there being no daycare available at the time.

While teaching high school biology, Cecily sent each class for a hands-on field experience in ecology at Ministik. She educated parents as well as students during family camping trips which she organized, to Kananaskis, Waterton, Writing-on-Stone and Dinosaur Park. And there were the train trip she organized to Vancouver's Expo 86 and five-day backpacking expeditions near Saskatchewan Crossing.

Cecily lived in Central America for ten years (1992 – 2002), an experience which strongly influenced her activities after her return to Edmonton. When she is not occupied with her many volunteer activities, she supports all the arts in Edmonton – music, theatre and film – both financially and by her attendance at events.

## SERVICE

*“Cecily is a retired high school science teacher who spent three years in Nicaragua with Witness for Peace. During that time she lead 13 delegations of North Americans on visits to that country. Later, she spent three years in a remote Mayan village in Guatemala teaching high school. She is here to speak about the work of Change for Children, a group that works with people in many of the less developed countries of the world. Please feel free to speak with Cecily after the service and look at the display she has brought today.”*

*Steinhauer-Southminster United Church newsletter, June 2003*

Cecily’s volunteer work includes two main components: the environment and Central America. In Central America, she has been a teacher, election observer, interpreter and resource person for charitable missions. Her most recent trips to the region, in 2016 and 2017 have been to Ecuador and Guatemala with the Change for Children organization, and to El Salvador with the Rainbow of Hope for Children.

On the environment side, Cecily has participated in many efforts to educate the public and protect the environment: she continues to work with the Council of Canadians’ “Water is a Human Right” campaign; she has written articles for the Parkland Post (one, on Canadian mining companies’ abuse of human rights in Central America has an obvious connection to her other main interest); she has lobbied City Hall and written to the media on local issues such as the protection of agricultural land in northeast Edmonton, the preservation of Mary Burley Park in Boyle-McCauley, and the cosmetic use of toxic pesticides and herbicides. She is also on record as being strongly opposed to all proposals to build a nuclear plant in Alberta.

A strong sense of social justice is evident in all of Cecily’s work. While still working full-time as a teacher, she volunteered with KAIROS and has been a member of Development and Peace since 1975. In recent years, she has been active in the Social Justice Institute, the Friends of Medicare, Habitat for Humanity, the Sombrilla International Development Society, and with the Edmonton Salvadoran community.

Cecily’s participation in SALT is greatly valued. We are proud to nominate her for a Public Interest award.