

Dr. Stirling McDowell ACER-CART President 1996-1997 Biography



Dr. Stirling McDowell was a Saskatchewan educator who made an enormous contribution to the development of education and the teaching profession in Canada.

Born in Nipawin in 1931, Stirling McDowell graduated from Regina Central Collegiate and the Saskatoon Normal School. He began teaching in the 1950s in Outlook and Rosetown. In 1957 he joined the staff of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation as an Executive Assistant. He became Assistant General Secretary in 1966 and General Secretary in 1967. He served in this position for 15 action-packed years before moving on to become the Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, a position he held for 10 years.

Throughout his career, Dr. McDowell was at the forefront of educational development. He made cooperation in the solving of educational problems a Saskatchewan tradition. He helped to develop the province's system of bi-level bargaining for teachers. He was also instrumental in completing the 1978 Education Act and instituting a minimum four-year, teacher-training program in Saskatchewan. For seven years he chaired the Saskatchewan Universities Commission, and in 1995, he chaired the independent commission on compensation for Saskatchewan MLA's. On numerous boards, committees, and commissions, he provided valuable leadership with a sound sense of history and a mind fearless in the breaking of new ground.

Stirling McDowell was also a scholar of note. He earned B.A, B. Ed and M. Ed degrees from the University of Saskatchewan, as well as a Ph.D. in educational administration from the University of Alberta. His thesis topic was, appropriately enough, "The Dynamics of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation". Few people could match his encyclopedic knowledge of Saskatchewan communities and the province's political and educational history. His clear analysis and deep insight into complex situations made him much in demand as a speaker, not only provincially, but also nationally and internationally.

Dr. McDowell retired to Saskatoon after completing a last challenging assignment for the Canadian Teachers' Federation in 1993, as a delegate to the founding convention of Education International in Stockholm. In retirement, he remained active, serving as president of both the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan and the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers.

Stirling McDowell received numerous honours during his lifetime. He was a life member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Canadian Education Association, and the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan. He was presented with the Canadian Teachers' Federation Special Recognition Award in 1993. In 1997, he was awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, the province's highest honour.

Dr. McDowell passed away in Saskatoon on February 4, 2002. He was survived by his wife, Kathleen, and their three children, Donna, Diane and David, all of Saskatoon.