

## Etta St. John Wileman Award Winner Interview

It is with great honour that the editors of *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* bring you a special series of interviews with past Etta St. John Wileman award winners. The Etta St. John Wileman Award for Lifetime Achievement in Career Development is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who have devoted their lives within their professions; devoted their lives to the enhancement of career development practice, administration, research and education; and personify the role of researcher, educator, author, practitioner, and career leader.

These individuals have all contributed in their own way to the identity of the career development profession in Canada. It is through these interviews that our readers will get to see different perspectives, and perhaps gather some inspiration for their own work and career development.



### Marilyn Van Norman

Award Winner  
2007

Marilyn Van Norman was the first award recipient of the Etta St. John Wileman Award in 2007. She has over 30 years of expertise and knowledge in career development, student services, and career centre and student services management. Marilyn is the author of numerous books and articles on career development. Through her hard work and dedication to her field, she has received many prestigious awards; such as the Award of Merit, Outstanding Contribution, Life Membership CACEE; The Contribution to Career Counselling, Ontario

College Counsellors; and The Joan Foley Award for Significant Contributions to Enhancing Student Life.

Marilyn is a highly respected professional and considered by many to be a veteran of the career development field in Canada. She is a wealth of information and is ready to converse on the topics she is most fond of. We are pleased to be able to bring you a short interview with this highly recommended woman.

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**CJCD:** Hi Marilyn. Starting off, can you tell the readers a little about your own career development?

**Marilyn:** My career began as a RN working in a Montreal hospital ICU. From there I got into Health Promotion in schools and subsequently in a CEGEP (Pre-university college) in Montreal. I attained a B.A in 1978 from Concordia University. My position in Health Services led to one in Student Development and ultimately to my being Director of Student Services at that CEGEP.



A move to Toronto in 1982 saw me joining the staff of the Career Centre at the University of Toronto as Manager of Administrative Services. Shortly thereafter, I

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became Assistant Director and then Director. I was with the Career Centre for twenty years and during that period had the immense pleasure of Chairing NATCON in partnership with HRDC (Human Resources and Development Canada) and The Counselling Foundation of Canada from 1987-2002. I attained an M.A. at OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) while working at the Career Centre.

My next career move was as Director of Student Services at the University of Toronto. In 2007, I took early retirement from the University of Toronto. Then in 2008, I began working as a consultant part-time for CERIC and The Counselling Foundation of Canada.

I have been fortunate in receiving a number of awards during my career in addition to the Etta St. John Wileman Award – Award of Merit, Outstanding Contribution, Life Membership CACEE; Contribution to Career Counselling, Ontario College Counsellors; The Joan Foley Award for Significant Contributions to Enhancing Student Life, University of Toronto.

**CJCD:** You started out as an RN. What moved you to decide to complete a B.A.?

**Marilyn:** I was working in student development at Vanier College and felt that a Bachelor of Arts would be helpful to my work and career.

**CJCD:** Throughout your career, as you undertook different positions, have there been mentors that have influenced your career development?

**Marilyn:** I have been very fortunate to have had a number of mentors in my career who have had significant impacts on me and my career.

**CJCD:** How did they influence you?

**Marilyn:** Through their guidance, insight, and example I was able to keep my career moving in the direction I wanted. I am very grateful to all of them and have tried to pay it forward with people I have mentored along the way.

**CJCD:** Did you search out these individuals specifically as mentors or did they become mentors over time?

**Marilyn:** Both.

**CJCD:** It sounds like you received many benefits from having mentors in your life. Would you recommend that career practitioners find a mentor for themselves?

**Marilyn:** Absolutely! Mentors can play a very significant role in career development, work satisfaction, and personal growth.

**CJCD:** Moving onto the next question. Being a plethora of information and experience yourself, what do you consider is the important milestones in Canadian career development?

**Marilyn:**

- 1851: YMCA opened in Montreal
- 1905: Etta St. John Wileman – strong advocate for employment services
- 1918: Employment Service Council of Canada was formed as a result of Etta's work
- 1943: Gerald Cosgrove and Frank Lawson worked together through the YMCA to provide career development services to young men
- 1949: UCPA formed – now called CACEE
- 1959: Frank Lawson formed The Counselling Foundation of Canada
- 1975: NATCON began – from 1987-2002 NATCON was done as a partnership between the University of Toronto, HRDC and The Counselling Foundation of Canada
- 1997: ContactPoint/OrientAction was launched as an on-line resource for career development practitioners
- 1980: Stu Conger formed CCDF
- 2003: Career Development Standards and Guidelines were established
- 2004: CERIC was launched
- 2007: Cannexus – Canada's largest bilingual national conference on career development.

In addition to this, all of the work done by researchers such as



Norm Amundson, Nancy Arthur, William Borgen, Charles Chen, Sandra Collins, Edwidge Desjardins, Liette Goyer, Roberta Neault, Bryan Hiebert, Kris Magnusson to name just a few.

**CJCD:** From your perspective, what are some of the current career development thinking and/or research in being done in Canada today?

**Marilyn:** The issue of embedding hope and resilience into career development thinking.

**CJCD:** Sounds interesting. For anyone wanting to find out more about these areas, what individuals would you recommend they look up and follow?

**Marilyn:** Norm Amundson, Spencer Niles, and Tannis Goddard.

**CJCD:** We talked about historical milestones, and current thinking and research. Now I like to ask you what you think are the challenges facing career development in Canada?

**Marilyn:** The main challenges facing career development in Canada to me are decreasing funding, a lack of public awareness and appreciation of the potential impact of career development services, and the replacement of retiring career professionals. Other challenges include stratification of the industry, technological advances and the integration of career education into public schools and the resulting effect on the work of career professionals.

**CJCD:** What, in your opinion, can current career practitioners do to help overcome some of these challenges?

**Marilyn:** We all need to work together to enhance the profile of career development in Canada. The

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more people are aware of the benefits of career development, the higher the profile will be. Advocating for integrating career development into the K-12 curriculum is one step towards both increasing the profile, but more importantly introducing students to the life long process of career development.

**CJCD:** Wise words indeed. If you could look into a crystal ball and see what the future holds for career development in Canada, what would that future look like to you?

**Marilyn:** What the future holds for career development in Canada..... Boundary-less, protean careers, and transformational workplaces.

What would it look like or what would I like it to look like. The latter is easy to answer – I would like to see the majority of Canadians taking advantage of well-funded and recognized career development services.

**CJCD:** Lastly, do you have any advice for up-and-coming career development practitioners and researchers?

**Marilyn:** Work together to ensure on-going funding for career development services and to enhance the profile of career development in Canada. Always stay on top of current literature and research. And be entrepreneurial and agile in your own career. Contribute to RRSPs.

**CJCD:** Thank you very much Marilyn for your wonderful insight and information about your own career development. Hopefully your words will help someone in their own career path or spark an interest.