

## *~ Tribute ~*



### **Tribute to Sheila Margaret Davies**

**March 11, 1925 – August 27, 2017**

**Founder, Children's International Learning Centre**

Everyone should be so lucky as to meet someone who creates a legacy, a lasting impression on the community and lives by example of doing. I was fortunate enough to meet someone like that when I began volunteering with the Children's International Learning Centre (CILC) in the early 1990's (yes, I'm dating myself) and met the founders of the CILC, Mrs. Sheila and Dr. Doug Davies.

As enthusiastic and active supporters of the Hamilton-Wentworth United Nations Association and after reading an article in a UNICEF newsletter about an 'Information Centre on Children's Culture', the Davies' thought that Hamilton would benefit from having a centre which was similar to the one set-up in New York. However, the dream of the local organization would have interactive programmes and not just static displays set-up to reflect observance of special occasions. The programmes' intent was to emphasize the connections and similarities among cultures while celebrating the exciting differences.

On a personal level, there was concern of the lack of education in schools that connected her children with people and their activities in the rest of the world. There was the feeling that the more children know about others from different parts of the globe, the more they can understand and empathize with humans' many ways of dealing with the world.

Thus, the (CILC) was established in October 1970 by Sheila and Dr. Doug Davies to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of the United Nations. During the course of two decades, the CILC grew in leaps and bounds under the stewardship of the founders. In the early 1970's the CILC received approval from the Director of the Hamilton Board of Education for school classes to visit. In 1988, the CILC was incorporated as a registered charitable not-for-profit organization. And, after many years of operation at the YWCA in downtown Hamilton the CILC moved to 100 James St. S., Hamilton in 1990.

It was at the James St. location where I met Mrs. Davies. I never called her Sheila, as I grew up old school and from a culture where you called your elders by their title or "Auntie" or "Uncle". So, Mrs. Davies she will always remain to me.

At the time I started volunteering, the CILC was partnering with the Hamilton Central Lions' Club to do a joint televised auction. So, I rolled up my sleeves---because as volunteers of the CILC, you know it requires lots of elbow grease to keep it going---and did as directed by Mrs. Davies. From those first volunteer duties, I progressed to other volunteer roles such as display designer, programme guide and serving on the Board of Directors. I was also a CILC employee in my early CILC days when Mrs. Davies applied for a job grant to have me work alongside the Conservator where I learned much about the CILC collection.

I remember standing on counters while she directed me from below to make sure that lettering on display boards were as straight as could be. From my perspective, it looked straight, but she had a very discerning eye which caused things to be moved a millimeter to the left or right, up or down. She would spend a long time fluffing up the traditional outfits of dolls and moving this object here and there for best vantage point when setting-up displays. Now, for people who know me, that critical eye from Mrs. Davies just reinforced my own quirks of exactness and making sure the CILC displays are exhibited at their best. After all, our displays show off our vast collection of artifacts, many of which Mrs. Davies and friends donated to the CILC. Side note, we now have over 10,000 artefacts of: household items, textiles, artwork, clothes and dolls. We are also applauded by returning visitors to the CILC who give compliments on the displays which get better and better each year. So, to the numerous CILC display volunteers, I can honestly tell you that I learned from the best when it comes to how meticulous I am regarding the 'look' of the displays.

To be a programme guide may seem daunting at first as I witnessed by observing Mrs. Davies capability in leading a class through the now entitled 'Festivals of Light' programme. When it was my turn to guide a programme I declined because I realized the importance of the CILC message and didn't want to portray any incorrect information. I was not to worry though because Mrs. Davies gently took over my section until I was ready to impart the information to the participants.

When I'm researching grants and I check the archives, I will come across proposals that were hand-written back in the day by Mrs. Davies with precise penmanship. She had pages and pages of information that would have taken hours and hours to compile. She was so thorough because she wanted the CILC to continue to spread its message of respect for all people by being awarded generous grants.

Mrs. Davies was not only active in the CILC's activities, but in her home church, MacNeill Baptist Church and community organizations such as the Hamilton Mundialization Committee, UNICEF and the Hamilton-Wentworth UN committee. Being the youngest volunteer of the CILC at the time, I was amazed at her boundless energy to give her gift of time to all these wonderful organizations for someone who was four decades older than me. She was a shining example of giving back to the community.

Another long-time CILC volunteer passed on a little anecdote of a conversation which Mrs. Davies had with her husband Dr. Davies. She asked him if she was a 'steamroller' because apparently there were some CILC volunteers who saw her in this light. I think that this was probably because she made sure things got done to her satisfaction because the CILC has a good reputation to uphold in the community. His soft reply to her was "yes, but a gentle one!" For some, she may have seemed to be a 'steamroller' but to me, she was a wonderful mentor and someone to look up to. When she spoke with you, she had this habit of tilting her head to one side and wore a wide smile surrounded by her 'apple' cheeks. You got the sense that she wasn't just listening but was really absorbing what you were expressing.

With a child-like wonder for embracing new things and a wonderful curiosity to learn about and from others she exuded a charming personality. At her 'Celebration of Life' service last September, two songs sang to her nature, "Jesus loves the little children" and "Let peace prevail." The service reinforced to me all the wonderful attributes of Mrs. Davies, especially, not asking, but by doing as example.

Therefore, even though, I often times have many long days at the CILC, the effort is worth it to continue the legacy which Mrs. Davies has left us. As the CILC grows in new and exciting ways, those involved with the organization still make sure that the programmes remain true to the initial dream of Mrs. Davies of emphasizing the connections and similarities among cultures while celebrating the exciting differences as reflected in our current mission statement: “Promote respect for diversity and awareness of our world community through guided discovery and interactive artistic programmes.”

There are fond memories all over the CILC which Mrs. Davies had a hand in which I see daily. I am so thankful for the reminders and for the honour of knowing such a remarkable person. It is a privilege to continue the work which started as a dream.

With fond remembrance and gratitude,



Lana Lowe,  
CILC Executive Director  
1996-Present