

# MEMORIAL LEGACIES



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Your legacy, your stories, our future

## Keeping Company with Sharks

Shannon Breen finds her way at the MI

**A**s a lawyer, W. Gary Rowe, QC (BComm'66) may have had some experience “swimming with sharks” – at least figuratively. Thanks to his legacy gift, Mr. Rowe helped make it possible for a Marine Institute student to swim with sharks, literally!

A shark enthusiast from a young age, St. John's native and Marine Institute student Shannon Breen found a way to dive into her passion through scholarship support; she is a recipient of the W. Gary Rowe, QC Scholarship, among several others.



MI student Shannon Breen

Mr. Rowe, a graduate of Memorial University who practiced law in St. John's for over three decades, established the scholarship through a legacy gift to Memorial University, creating an endowment to make scholarships available for undergraduate students on the St. John's, Marine Institute, and Grenfell campuses.

Shannon knew early on that she wanted to study marine biology, but the bachelor's degree she started at Memorial wasn't quite the right fit. She took a gap year backpacking in Europe, but on arriving home she still had the urge to travel. She set out once again – this time to southeast Asia. That trip made all the difference.

“I went to Asia for three months, and during that trip I went to Thailand and Indonesia,” said Shannon. “In Indonesia, there was a nonprofit that I had been following for years. They're a shark conservation group, and they happened to have a week-long expedition at the time that I was planning to go.”

The organization works with shark fishermen in Indonesia, helping them move toward ecotourism and away from fishing for vulnerable species. “I thought it would be perfect, and I did that for a week. They take shark fishing boats and then guide people on snorkeling tours swimming with sharks,” said Shannon. “Communities that rely on sharks for income cannot sustain this practice as populations decline toward extinction, which would ultimately lead to economic hardship. This project addresses the issue proactively by providing an alternative, sustainable source of income.” Shannon returned to St. John’s with a new focus and enrolled in the Marine Institute’s Marine Environmental Technology program. It has been a perfect fit, providing a great combination of training, community, and opportunity.



Shannon is planning to travel to Indonesia again this year for another internship. She notes that the work being done in Indonesia to give fishermen more safe, reliable, and sustainable jobs in tourism away from the shark fishery has important implications. “If keystone species [like sharks] are eliminated, it affects all of us. It regulates our climate and food chains, it’s so important. This project in Indonesia is doing a lot to fix that.”

The trip might not have been feasible without donor support. It’s made a big difference for Shannon. “When I first came to the Marine Institute, I didn’t even realize how much opportunity there was here for scholarships,” said Shannon. “When I got my first one, I felt as though my hard work was recognised, and it was such an incentive to try harder and be more involved.” ■

## Nature's Classroom

### Dr. David Philpott and Robert Power's gift to the Botanical Gardens

Nature is one of the greatest classrooms. That’s certainly how Dr. David Philpott and his husband Robert Power see it. As lifelong educators who champion outdoor learning, they wanted a way to support opportunities for young learners to get hands-on out in the open air. To do this, they created the David and Robert Children’s Education Endowment Fund at the Botanical Garden.

David and Robert both worked as teachers when they met in 1997 and shared a passion

for youth education. Robert, who grew up in St. John’s, began teaching at Immaculate Conception in St. Thomas Line, before moving over to Holy Family school in the mid-1980s. David, who grew up in rural Newfoundland, worked as a teacher for 15 years before completing his PhD and becoming a professor in Memorial's Faculty of Education in 2000.

David and Robert have been together nearly thirty years, marrying in 2003. Without children of their own, they wanted a plan for their estate that would honour their lifelong dedication to teaching and learning, and that could benefit young students in perpetuity. “Robert spent his career in the regular classroom. I dealt with vulnerable learners who struggled in that environment,” said David. “I had a clinical practice for years dealing with children with developmental or learning challenges. We both know the value of experiences like the Botanical Garden - field trips, taking the class out into the community, out into the environment. Robert had many field trips with his students, so we know what the kids get from those experiences.”

“We wanted to do something for children. We love the Garden. Robert’s a gardener. I’m an outdoors guy. So, it was an easy decision for us to support the quality of programs and the experience that these children will get when they visit the Botanical Garden. When we met with the team at the Garden to discuss an estate gift, they helped us realize the potential of an endowment that would create an immersive experience for children to play, learn, and explore with their friends.”

By establishing the David and Robert Children’s Education Endowment Fund, the couple have created a lasting gift that

Robert Power and Dr. David Philpott



will deliver on their dedication to outdoor education for generations to come. The gift includes an initial investment so that the fund can be established now, allowing David and Robert to see the fruit of their investment during their retirement years, while their estate will make the gift into an endowment to keep funding children’s programming long into the future.

As for how the gift is used, the couple wanted to ensure the Garden staff can direct it as needed, so long as it supports youth education. “We wanted to give the educators at the Botanical Garden the flexibility to use that money according to how they felt it was needed that year. For example, this year they might choose to do something with art materials. Next year they might choose to do something with outdoor science, investigative materials – however they feel they need to use the money to meet the needs and enrich the experience for children. We wanted to make sure the money went into the hands of the educators and for materials for the children. That’s the only restrictions we put on it. The educators decide how they will use the money each year to enrich the experience for children.” ■

In 2026 Memorial University continues to build on the pride and momentum of our recent Centennial year. The generosity of our donors remains essential to supporting students and shaping the future of our province. This edition of the Memorial Legacies newsletter highlights two incredible gifts, the donors who created them and the impact they are having. We hope that you enjoyed them.

This year brings change to our office as long-time Planned Giving Development Officer Catherine Barrett has retired. We extend our heartfelt thanks for her exceptional leadership and dedicated service to our legacy donors over many years. We wish her the very best in this next chapter.



We are pleased to welcome the leadership of President Dr. Janet Morrison to our community. Her commitment to student success, community partnerships, and academic excellence is guiding Memorial into its next century with clarity, energy, and purpose.

Finally, I am delighted to introduce myself as Julia Ludlow Corcoran, the new Senior Development Officer, Planned Giving. I look forward to connecting with you and supporting the meaningful relationships that make such a lasting impact across Memorial.

Thank you sincerely for your continued generosity and support.

Julia Ludlow Corcoran  
Senior Development Officer,  
Planned Giving

## The Gift of a Lifetime

Legacy gifts take different forms, such as gifts made through a bequest, proceeds of a life insurance policy, retirement plan assets or a charitable trust. An endowed fund can be set up in your lifetime or through your estate by donating a minimum amount which is added to the university's endowment. Your donation (the principal) is not spent, but a portion of the annual income earned from the principal is given to the designation of your choice. You can support the area of greatest need, or create student scholarships, bursaries or awards. You can also designate support for a specific campus, faculty, department or program. Wise estate planning can reduce taxes payable and maximize the impact of your estate, helping your heirs and fulfilling your charitable wishes.

Learn more about leaving a legacy at Memorial by completing the enclosed reply card, visiting [www.mun.ca/legacy](http://www.mun.ca/legacy) or contacting:

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The gift, estate and financial planning information included in this publication is not a comprehensive review of the topics. Please seek professional legal and financial advice when planning a charitable legacy gift. Memorial University Charitable Registration No. 10769 0273 RR001