



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION

MUNPA Tribute Award

**Citation for Dr. Leonard Lye:
Mentor and Inventor**

Dr. Leonard Lye is a Professor Emeritus at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Prior to his retirement, he served as a Professor of Civil Engineering, Discipline Chair, and as an Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (Engineering). He is a Fellow of Engineers Canada, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering, the Engineering Institute of Canada, and the Canadian Academy of Engineering. These distinctions speak to his distinguished professional career—but his nomination focused on the remarkable contributions Leonard has made outside his formal role, and which he has continued, and even expanded, after retiring in 2018.

Tetra Society: The Tetra Society of North America is an award-winning charity dedicated to assisting people with disabilities to achieve an independent and fulfilling life in the community. The Tetra Society offers bespoke solutions to people with disabilities to overcome barriers they are facing. The solutions provided through this non-profit organization give individuals greater independence, quality of life and inclusion. Tetra recruits skilled volunteer engineers, technicians, health professionals, and others to design, make, or modify assistive devices or the environment for people with disabilities. The projects typically focus on supporting independent living, addressing vocational obstacles and providing access to recreational activities.

Dr. Lye founded the St. John's chapter of the Tetra Society in 1996 and he has been the coordinator and the unflagging energy behind the initiative ever since. Leonard has continued to contribute to TETRA in the seven years since retiring. At this point, not only is Leonard leading the St. John's Chapter, but he serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Tetra Society of North America. The impact of the program goes far beyond the lives of the individual and their immediate families. Many people at Memorial and in the St. John's community have been changed by their participation (Leonard is very persuasive!) in these projects. One nominator stated that there are students who have completely reframed their understanding of "disability" and even changed their career trajectory based on working directly with a Tetra Society client. It's clear to that nominator that Leonard himself recognizes the incredible impact of this work and that's why he continues to lead and to bring solutions to life. In order to grasp the impact of the work consider the following sample case study.

If the Glove Fits, Wear It – Fall 2021

Carter Burton lives in King's Point, Newfoundland. He loves hockey but his left-hand fingers curl in such a way that he can't get them into a normal hockey glove. Carter has hemiplegic cerebral palsy, which affects his left hand. When Carter was eleven years old, his occupational therapist reached out to Dr. Leonard Lye, coordinator of the Tetra Society's St. Johns Chapter, for help.

Describing the project, Dr. Lye says, “At home, I studied the materials and components. I took a glove apart and saw exactly how they were put together. Before long, I had a plan of what to cut out and what to sew together to make a ‘mitten’ hockey glove for Carter’s left hand. “Describing the process of assembling the hockey glove, Dr. Lye revealed: “using a suitable needle and “thread” (dental floss worked best), I unstitched the glove, cut out the connecting material for the fingers, then sewed it back up to create the mitten. In a CBC story, Carter says to Leonard ‘Now I have the opportunity to play hockey thanks to you.’”

*Leonard has gone on to make 3 more gloves and is referenced in a 2024 book by Jim Lang, *Everyday Hockey Heroes, Volume III*. It has a chapter titled “The Unlikely Hero: Leonard Lye”. “To me,” said Leonard in the book “what I do isn’t anything special. This is what we do at the Tetra Society.”*

In 2006, Dr. Lye and his volunteers created a guitar strummer for a client who had a stroke and is paralyzed on the right side. He can use his left hand to press chords and his left leg to push a pedal. Leonard and his team has created 3 of these strummers over the last 20 years, but each has unique features.

There are many more examples of the impact of the Tetra Society and Leonard’s work.

Shad: This is another major undertaking that Leonard was deeply involved in since 2003 becoming the Program Director in 2007. For those unfamiliar with the program, it is important to understand that each program hosts high-performing high school students from across the country and introduces them to university life, STEM-based career paths and entrepreneurship for a month in the summer. After retiring Leonard continued on as Director of the MUN Shad program until the end of 2020 in order to ensure that the program would continue on successfully and the transition to new leadership after his 14 years at the helm would be as smooth as possible. Leonard would literally camp with these students, teach them Tai Chi at dawn and then inspire them with his indomitable entrepreneurial enthusiasm. He also served for 10 years on the Shad International Board of Directors.

Dr. Lye’s most recent initiative was organizing and promoting the sport of pickleball in the province. He started as an ambassador of pickleball in 2017 and in 2020 he founded the Pickleball Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. He was the founding president and served for three consecutive terms. He now continues to play and coach pickleball to beginners privately and at community centres. The Association started with about 20 members but now has over 1000 active members in 5 years. Pickleball has become an economic engine for the province. He has been called the “Father of Pickleball” in Newfoundland.

In summary, Leonard Lye continues to enrich community with energy, humility, and deep care. Whether he is solving engineering challenges, teaching a new sport or musical skill (e.g., playing the ukulele), or mentoring young minds, Leonard embodies service, innovation, and joy. He has never stopped contributing—and is very deserving of the MUNPA Tribute Award. Congratulations, Dr. Leonard Lye.