



Braille Literacy Canada Honours Dr. Cay Holbrook with the 2020 President's Award

May 24, 2020 – President Natalie Martiniello, on behalf of the board of Braille Literacy Canada (BLC), presented the 2020 President's Award to Dr. Cay Holbrook at the Annual General Meeting held on May 9th, 2020. Established in 2018 and awarded annually, the award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to braille literacy in Canada.

“Dr. Holbrook is the true definition of a passionate and dedicated educator, who believes strongly in the power of literacy. Her leadership has enabled BLC to engage with important braille issues within Canada. Her dedication to literacy and the enthusiasm she always brings is contagious. We are so fortunate to have her among us,” states BLC President, Natalie Martiniello.

Dr. Holbrook's contributions to braille both in Canada and internationally are longstanding, and a testament to the enthusiasm and passion she has always shown for braille literacy and equitable education. Her career began as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) in South Carolina, before she shifted her focus to the education of future teachers at both John Hopkins University and the University of Arkansas. In 1998, Dr. Holbrook moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where she began her role as Associate Professor in Special Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC). It is thanks to her outstanding leadership that the Masters of Education (Blindness and Visual Impairment Concentration) transitioned to a hybrid (distance + on-campus) model, allowing many more students to pursue the field from their home regions. This flexible teacher preparation program continues to be well regarded in the field and has allowed UBC to support communities throughout Canada with skilled and highly qualified TVIs.

Dr. Holbrook served on the BLC board for many years, where she spearheaded braille initiatives to support the teaching and learning of braille literacy, including research on the characteristics of braille reading children, the landmark ABC braille study, research on tactile graphic standards, standards for teachers on braille reading and writing, and a manual to support classroom teachers. Along with others, she was instrumental during the development and implementation of Unified English Braille in Canada. Among her numerous publications, the Learning Media Assessment continues to provide vital guidance to TVIs when designing literacy-rich educational programs for students.

While her accomplishments are many, Dr. Holbrook's greatest contribution is her genuine passion for braille literacy. "Cay deeply cares about equitable access and the need to make reading both functional and meaningful, through the use of a variety of tools and media," adds BLC Vice-President Daphne Hitchcock.

BLC is honoured to recognize Dr. Holbrook for her years of dedication to the organization and to braille literacy.

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Braille Literacy Canada / Litt ratie braille Canada, founded in 1990 as the Canadian Braille Authority, is a national charitable organization led by a volunteer board of directors dedicated to the promotion of braille as the primary medium of literacy for those who are blind or visually impaired. BLC is recognized by the International Council on English Braille as the authority for the development, adoption, and establishment of standards relating to braille in Canada. BLC represents those working with or impacted by braille, with a membership comprising organizations, researchers, educators, braille transcribers, braille producers, parents of braille users and braille users themselves.

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