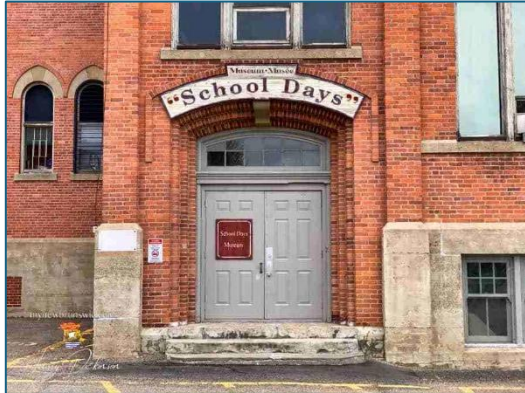


NBSRT President Seeks Your Help To Save The School Days Museum



The **School Days Museum** was established over 40 years ago with the support of Professors in the Faculty of Education at UNB. It was initially an exceedingly small collection of artifacts dating back to 1872 when New Brunswick established the first non-denominational school system in Canada and retired teachers took items during the year to schools who wanted to learn the history of education. It continued to enhance its collection for several years and in 1994,

it moved several hundred artifacts to the Justice Building on Queen St. the former Normal School, which had been the education centre to prepare teachers for New Brunswick Public Schools.

The Museum is housed in the Annex of the Justice Building and now houses 12,000 artifacts, including a complete set of classroom furniture [circa 1920], which are open for public display from the beginning of June to the end of August. The Board of the SDM are all retired teachers who donate their time to maintaining the museum, providing educational articles, and seeking Federal and Provincial Grants to employ two



summer students. We have employed two summer students for many years. Their principal job is to show the collection to tourists and other visitors who come to the museum and to teach a class, using the 100-year-old materials and teaching techniques to bring the history of education alive. They also work to digitize all the paper artifacts. SDM receives a Federal Student Employment Grant and a Provincial Student Employment Grant totaling \$11,400, all of which goes to employ the students from June 1 to Aug 31.

The 'School Days Museum Inc.' is a registered non-profit corporation and can issue receipts for any donations it receives. It does receive a GNB Community Museum Grant of \$3000, annually and a GNB collection Inventory Grant of \$1500 in 2024-25 to support the digitization of the collection. It does receive a grant from the Provincial NBSRT of \$5000. annually and NBSRT Branches also give grants totaling \$1500.



SDM has enjoyed rent- free housing for 32 years and has not paid for heat or lights. It does carry insurance, including liability insurance for the museum and its collection. Its shoe-string budget has been built based on having space, heat and lights provided.

Brunswick News reported today that the new justice building will not be ready until the fall of 2027. We could stay put for this

summer and perhaps the summer of 2027. Regardless, we are still required to move but there may not be enough time to make the move before June this year. We could plan to move by September 2026 and make use of our students to help with the packing. We are seeking the help of the Provincial Archives to ensure the protection of the artifacts in any move.

We have looked closely at our finances and will need to change our business plan. We are open to the public by appointment for 9 months of the year using retired teacher volunteers and open 5 days a week for 3 months, using students funded with grants. [June to Aug] We will need to develop an annual fund-raising campaign to address our new reality.

We need help from the City, the Province and the Federal Government to protect our heritage. Forty years of diligent and responsible volunteer work should not be tossed aside. SDM houses the most comprehensive record of education in New Brunswick and we need help.

As members, you can contribute to saving the school Days Museum by contacting your MLA and letting them know that you expect them to support the Museum, primarily by finding another location in the province or through funding. You also can help support local museums in your communities which are in jeopardy. Thanks for joining our colleagues in this endeavor.

For my part, I have written the Premier Susan Holt, the Minister for Seniors Lyne Chantal Boudreau, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Heritage Isabelle Theriault and the Minister of Transportation Chuck Chaisson. I am reaching out to the Minister of Education by telephone.

See Carolyn Barnhart's letter (*next page*) to the Premier and other Ministers. Add your voice to her rallying cry. The work of you and your colleagues needs to be respected by Government.

Rod Campbell, President
New Brunswick Society of Retired Teachers

Good afternoon,

I am writing to respectfully urge the Government of New Brunswick to continue funding and to actively support the preservation of the NBSRT's School Days Museum and its extraordinary collection of more than 12,000 educational artifacts.

For years, this invaluable collection was housed in the former Justice Building in Fredericton — a location that allowed the museum to operate in a fully functional public facility where utilities such as heat and lights were covered as part of the building's operational status. The unexpected sale of that building has now placed the entire collection at risk and has left the museum facing displacement without an alternative plan or adequate transitional support.

This is not merely a matter of space. It is a matter of stewardship.

The School Days Museum safeguards the cultural and educational heritage of New Brunswick. Its artifacts document the evolution of teaching and learning across generations — from rural one-room schoolhouses to modern classrooms. These materials tell the story of educators, students, communities, and the development of public education in our province. They reflect how literacy was built, how communities gathered around their schools, and how education shaped the social and economic fabric of New Brunswick.

Discounting or dispersing this collection would represent an irreplaceable loss. Once fragmented, such a collection cannot be reconstructed. The cost of preservation today is modest compared to the cultural cost of losing a century (and more) of our educational history.

Museums are not luxuries; they are guardians of identity. In a time when we speak of strengthening communities, supporting educators, and celebrating our heritage, the School Days Museum embodies those very values. It provides opportunities for students, researchers, retirees, and families to connect with our shared past. It offers tangible learning experiences that textbooks alone cannot provide.

Continued provincial support — whether through operational funding, assistance in securing an appropriate facility, or transitional funding — would demonstrate a commitment to preserving New Brunswick's educational legacy. It would signal that our province values not only current educational outcomes, but also the history that brought us here.

This is not simply about artifacts; it is about memory, identity, and respect for those who built our educational system. We owe it to past and future generations to ensure this collection remains intact, accessible, and properly preserved.

I urge the government to act swiftly to secure a sustainable future for the NBSRT's School Days Museum.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Barnhart

A proud graduate of the New Brunswick school system and proud retired teacher!