

Barb McInnes

TELUS Ottawa Community Board Chair

2012 - 2021



Community Champion

For a tiny person, Barb walked fast. Almost airborne as she danced through life. But she always landing on two feet, steadfast as anyone can be. Her smile and sparkling eyes radiated warmth wherever she went. A childlike wonder and sense of playfulness was always close at hand. Barb delighted many with her wit and sense of humour. She was fierce too, especially when it came to defending her community, her beliefs, her family and friends.

I fondly remember Ottawa Community Foundation Board retreats where songs were sung, and ukuleles were played after a long day of strategizing. Barb and I disagreed often enough and yet, respected one another's beliefs and courage to stand in our truth while staying open to having a more expanded view of the world. When I first met Barb and she asked me to join the Advisory Board for Leadership Ottawa, I was 29 and had no idea who she was, nor did I think I had anything to offer to the philanthropic sector. Barb in her gentle persuasive manner showed me how indeed I was practicing philanthropy with the social and environmental governance of my business. And that it was time to contribute at a more strategic level. She was a fierce supporter, caring friend, wise mentor, and intelligent colleague. There was no stopping Barb when she got into her head and heart that the community needed an innovative initiative, a creative collaborative solution, or a spark of genius. That's a part of Barb's beauty, she saw beyond the surface and helped nurture many individuals and initiatives in our community and beyond. And it was astute of Barb to not only support the most vulnerable in our city, but to ensure that beauty and art flourished. Barb recognized and celebrated all that nourished the human spirit.

I miss you dear friend. Xo

Manjit



Inspiring Leader

My final words to Barb, spoken over the phone, were "We love you". Really, I meant "I love you". It was my way of trying to tell her how much she's meant to me, as a community leader and role model. As I get older, I appreciate her even more, and the countless ways that she's selflessly given back and shown her support for worthy causes.

In the 15 or so years that I've reported on Ottawa's charity events, I would say she was one of the women whom I photographed the most (and I have files of digital images to prove it!). She was just that involved in our community. I have really nice memories of attending garden parties and private functions that she held in support of various charities at her home. I remember when she received her Order of Canada. How exciting. And, when she so bravely recited a Shakespearean soliloquy in front of a large audience.

I loved being on the judging committee for the Philanthropy Awards when she chaired it. She was so good in her role. More recently, she chaired the Telus Ottawa Community Board. I just loved hearing what she had to say, every time she spoke. In late 2019, we visited the Youville Centre to give gift cards out to young moms, on behalf of Telus. It was such a special day, made even more special to be doing it with Barb.

Caroline Phillips

Ottawa Business Journal



Philanthropic Visionary

While I met Barb only recently on the Ottawa Community Board, her zest for life and commitment to making our community stronger and supporting individuals to be their best was so evident. She will be dearly missed.

~ Kathryn Hughes, Director, Government Relations, TELUS Health

Like all of you, it has been a reflective time as I think about my relationship with Barb. I was just looking at some pictures of my visit to Inle Lake in Burma in 2015. I only went there because, when Barb heard we were going to Burma and did not have it on our itinerary, she insisted (in her Barb-esque way) that this was a terrible mistake and that we should cancel our stay in boring Mandalay and go to Inle Lake instead, an entire community built on stilts. She was right, of course, and it was one of the most memorable travel experiences I have ever had. The world needs more people like Barb. She will be incredibly missed.

~ Alex Munter, CEO and President, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario



Community Influencer



Just thinking about the loss of Barb McInnes. She has left a lasting impression on our community board, our city and many individuals.

~Tom Donahue, President,
TELUS Community
Ambassadors, Ottawa Chapter

Inquisitive Explorer

With her big heart, wealth of experience, and knowledge of the community, Barb was the ideal board member and chair of the Telus Community Foundation. No matter how long the agenda and difficult the decisions, she consistently demonstrated her leadership skills that included kindness, humor and patience.

I have also had the pleasure of knowing Barb for many years and in many contexts. As President of her alma mater, I had the privilege of bestowing upon her a well-deserved honorary degree that was applauded not only by the university community but by the region and beyond.

Barb was an inquisitive explorer and passionate about her discoveries. She was also very generous about sharing her discoveries. For example, she loved art and when she discovered new artists, with Glenn, she organized showings, garden parties, and purchased works which, when they ran out of wall space, they generously donated to the university gallery at Carleton, for example.

Barb's explorations included travel and her time in France with her family was the source of many lively conversations. Her more recent forays into the Caribbean resulted in bright newsletters that she cheerfully emailed to those of us chained to our desks in snowy Canada. Her infectious enthusiasm made us all look forward to these notes. Her descriptions were so vivid, you felt as if you knew the local people she had met and had tasted with her the fresh seafood specialties and seasonal fruits. She warmed our hearts, if not our toes!

We all miss Barb's sense of purpose and ready smile, her thoughtful gestures and dedication to her community.

With most sincere condolences,

Roseann (Runte)



Inspiring Role Model

Dear Glenn, Leah, Emily and family,

It's hard to put into words the impact someone's presence has had on your life and I have struggled to find the words to do justice to the remarkable woman Barb was and the legacy she has left behind. The impact she had on my confidence, my career, and more generally the way I approach day to day life is something I will never forget.

I first met Barb when I assumed a role with TELUS managing the Ottawa Community Board, to which she had been a member for a number of years. I was by far the littlest fish in a big pond of accomplished executives and amazing leaders in the community and to say I was intimidated would be a massive understatement. Despite my inexperience in relation to those around me, Barb welcomed me with open arms, a huge friendly smile and an authentic interest in who I was not only at work, but as a wife, a mother, a daughter and a person. This meant more to me than I can express.

After a few years managing the TELUS Ottawa Community Board, Barb and I grew closer – attending many events together, exchanging stories about our families, our shared interests and our hopes and plans for the many underserved young people we had the opportunity to support through our collaborative work with the community board.

When Barb became Chair of the Board, I was elated – not only because she was the perfect person for the job, but also, somewhat selfishly, because I would have so much more time to work closely with her, learn from her, and just be in the presence of someone whom I admired so much. We spoke regularly, and every time we interacted I left feeling inspired, excited and fully supported by her guidance. The times spent in her home, having tea in her garden and sitting at her dining room table reviewing endless grant applications are moments I never took for granted – each conversation offering her unique perspective and the chance for us to catch up on life.

Barb never missed an opportunity to share stories of her family and how proud she was of each of them. The always present sparkle in her eye seemed to shine brighter when she would share stories of her adventures with Glenn, time at the cottage with family and friends or the many ways her daughters and grandchildren added to her life. These genuine emotions were just a small part of what made her such a role model to me. She was someone who put family first but also seemed to have endless time to care for everyone who crossed her path.

Since Barb's passing, I have thought of her so many times; swimming in the lake with my daughters, scheming up our next family adventure, or cuddling up and playing a game of scrabble with whoever is willing to play me. Today, when I see all the amazing memories being shared online from her family, friends, and extensive network, I look at the pictures with love and appreciation. This is a woman who I aspire to be like in every aspect of my life and I feel so deeply grateful to have had the chance to know. I will continue to miss her so much but as that sadness shifts to thoughtful, warm memories, I will be grateful for the time she gave to me, her unparalleled commitment to helping others and her infectious love for life which are feelings which will be with me forever.

With love,

Sarah Arden



Passionate Advocate

I only recently met Barb having taken over the management of the Ottawa Community Board in May of 2020. In my very first meeting with Barb, I noticed her positive energy, zest for life, openness and warmth and felt an instant connection to her. Her passion for her community and philanthropy in general was evident and it was clear, she was deeply connected to a large number of organizations and individuals in the community.

I am a true believer that people come into your life for a reason. I remember hearing the news of her diagnosis and her scheduled surgery. I shared with her my personal journey having had the same surgeries that she was about to endure. It broke my heart to hear of another person that had to go through that, knowing exactly the uncertainty she felt.

In subsequent conversations, I was amazed at her positive attitude and it was clear that Barb could feel the love and support of everyone around her. She told me that my story gave her hope and at that very moment, it became clear the reason she had come into my life.

While our connection was brief, she has left a life-long impression on me. She is one of the most inspiring women I have ever met who clearly understood her purpose in the world...helping each and every person that she could while leaving a trail of people whose lives were changed simply by knowing her.

I am truly grateful and blessed that she came into my life. I think of her often and know that we all have big shoes to fill as we continue to spread her legacy of giving and passion for helping others.

~Jennifer Park
Senior Community Investment Manager
TELUS Ottawa Community Board

