

Why storytelling is essential to effective communication of the earth sciences: a tribute to Gwen Martin

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Geological issues are increasingly relevant to the everyday lives of individuals and communities around the world, whether it is the risks to water quality, natural hazards (e.g. earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis), climate and sealevel change, management of our energy and resources, or the complexities of geological engineering. Yet most earth science professionals, and even educators, find it challenging to communicate geological concepts to the non-geologist. How can we educate the public in basic science, when it is now so skewed by information overload, and, in many cases, by general disinterest?

To help understand how to communicate the science of climate change, Somerville and Hassol suggested: "Try to craft messages that are not only simple but memorable, and repeat them often. Make more effective use of imagery, metaphor, and narrative. In short, be a better storyteller, lead with what you know, and let your passion show." In other words: don't fixate on just the facts.... *tell stories!* Akin to Gwen Martin: one of our most cherished local pioneers who has successfully inspired a generation by making Atlantic Canadian geology accessible through storytelling, activities, and publications.

In her younger years, Gwen was a geologist, prospector, musician, journalist, and geotourism guide. She also jumped freight trains and took flying lessons. In the 1980s she became a professional writer and editor ... and hasn't looked back since. Throughout her career, Gwen has contributed to different governmental departments including Energy and Mines, Natural Resources, Natural Resources and Energy (DNRE), and Education. Her passion for the Earth and Earth Science education has resulted in engaging and valuable resources for schools, as well as publications about our earliest geologists, our unique fossils, urban geology, local geo-hotspots....and much more! Her work includes "Gesner's Dream" (published by CIM NB Branch), and "For the Love of Stone" (published by DNRE). She has traveled throughout New Brunswick instructing teachers, inspiring students, and informing the general public.

Gwen's vision for the world now and in the future embraces our innate human need to connect (or re-connect) with our landscape history and our awesome planet. For everyone, just to pick up a rock, break it open, and for the first time, with our own eyes, see a piece of the Earth that has been hidden for a very long time – perhaps a billion years! Through her stories, Gwen Martin reminds us to be in awe of our world, and to unearth new treasures every day.