

SHUSWAP DISTRICT ARTS COUNCIL ENDOWMENT - BLAIR BORDEN MEMORIAL



Blair Borden was a founding member of the Shuswap District Arts Council in 1970. Before she passed away in 2006, Blair offered to establish the Arts Council endowment fund with a gift of \$10,000. At the time, the BC Arts Renaissance Fund was matching funds raised by arts organizations for endowment funds, and the Arts Council was able to double that gift right away. Blair's original gift remained separate from the Arts Council's general endowment fund so that it could specifically be directed toward scholarships. Blair stated, "I'd like to see the focus on music and not necessarily on youth. I think learning goes on all your life."

A music enthusiast all of her life, Blair recalls learning to sing "at mother's knee as a kid riding in the car." Her mother had a powerful alto voice. And while her father claimed to have a "tin ear," Blair's paternal grandfather played the fiddle. Blair sang in school and university choirs and played trombone in the Montreal Junior Symphony.

Born in Toronto, Blair grew up in Montreal and attended McGill University, after graduation, she spent two years travelling and working in recreation in both London and South Africa.

She arrived in Salmon Arm in 1968 to teach school and was encouraged by then principal Tom Brighthouse to move into music teaching. "I've always enjoyed music and learned to play a diversity of instruments and enjoyed their relationship to each other." When she first lived in Salmon Arm she played with the Okanagan Symphony for 10 years and later, after a move to Sorrento, played for another 10 years in the Kamloops Symphony. Blair also joined the Shuswap Singers. During these years with the symphonies she played the string bass and brass instruments. "I consider myself a specialist in low brass instruments," she said.

Blair played string bass in the Salmon Arm Community Band for many years. "I was one of the seven originals," she said, "and at that time played the E-flat tuba." She also instructed an Adult Beginner Band class through Okanagan College for a couple of years, and was a founding member of the Shuswap Recycling Society (long before it was a global trend).