

Linda Wilson

Cambrian College



My association with Cambrian College started as a student, encompassed a 30-year career, and continues as a retiree and alumna.

When I graduated from high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. The college system was just about to open that September, providing new educational choices and approaches, and I thought I would give it a try.

I enrolled in Cambrian College at the North Bay campus, now Canadore College, in secretarial science. My classes were held in two different former elementary schools in North Bay. It was like turning back the clock, walking some of the halls that I did as a six-year-old. But it was a very embracing environment too, because our classes were small. We had about 90 students total in all the programs that were offered that first year.

Employers soon became aware of college graduates and what they had to offer. College grads were in demand because of the focus on excellence, the focus on detail, and the fact that they already had a level of practical experience. The same holds true today.

Following graduation, I worked at Ontario Northland Transportation Commission in North Bay. I worked in a variety of different offices before starting in the public relations department. That is when my career focus changed. Ultimately, they created a job for me because of the kind of work I was doing. I was promoted to public relations assistant, the position I held for seven of the eleven years that I was with Ontario Northland.

I started my career at Cambrian College in Sudbury in July of 1979. I was hired by the founding president John T. Koski as information officer and I retired in 2010 as director of marketing and institutional relations, with executive responsibility for these functions.

John Koski interviewed me for the job of information officer himself. Interviews were handled differently then. Now, you go through a full committee. But because the position reported directly to John, he interviewed me. He was delighted that a graduate was interested in working for the college.

And from my perspective, being a college graduate was advantageous in terms of the job I was going into. I had an understanding of what the colleges were about because I had first-hand experience.

I felt a kind of ownership as well. Because I was a Cambrian graduate, Cambrian was mine; the (college) reputation was my reputation. At my retirement party, I remember telling everyone that Cambrian was my house and to make sure they took care of my house after I retired.

I also loved the energy that students brought to the college. At the beginning of each academic year, I would tell my staff to go to where the students were registering....to put themselves right in the middle of all that excitement. It was the most energizing activity just to listen to all the voices and to experience the enthusiasm of the students

Convocation was another highlight. It was an honour to share that day with students and families. And, I teared up at each convocation as the bag pipes led the procession of students, faculty, staff and dignitaries. It was always so moving.

I was with Cambrian for more than for 30 years, so I had the pleasure, the honour, of shepherding in a number of firsts, including introducing the college's first corporate identity program and its first official logo. One special memory for me was Prince Charles' visit in 1991. I was in charge of arranging that. I'm a monarchist, so it was quite highlight for me.

So, yes, it was a good 30 years.