



Helen “Nellie” Keigan was born in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia on February 13, 1908. She taught school there for 41 years (1927 – 1968). Nellie had a unique ability to see into the hearts and minds of young children, and she was able to reach them on their level and inspire in them a love of learning. She had a good appreciation for the difficult transition children faced when starting school, and consequently her kindergarten classroom was often a scene of unstructured bliss, bordering on anarchy. Other children not fortunate enough to be selected for Nellie’s class could often be seen wistfully peering in through the window. Nellie had a singular approach to discipline; for instance, when a child was caught playing hockey cards, rather than confiscate the corrupting materials, Nellie would pull out a box of “traders” and proceed to negotiate a swap. In Nellie’s class, learning was fun; her gift was an ability to unlock the natural potential of the individual child, and to encourage children to explore the world and their own creative selves. When she retired, she was honoured by a huge celebration – a testimony to how much she was loved and respected by her colleagues and the community. After retiring she moved to Toronto to be with her brother, Douglas Keigan. She continued to support and encourage children, papering her walls with the art work of the children in her apartment building until the day she died, December 18, 1990.