

## **Kate Walker Biography**

Kate Walker has worked for more than 36 years in the book industry, starting in 1976 as an assistant to William Collins & Sons' western rep, Keith Sacre. In 1978 she was offered a position as a sales representative with sales rep agency *Stanton & MacDougall*. As the new rep she was given the most remote territory of northern B.C. It was her introduction to travelling great distances to visit bookstores, libraries and museums to promote Canadian books. Believing that customers need to be seen where they work and that books sell one at a time, these customer visits would eventually take her to many places in the northern territories and western provinces. When she bought the company in 1991, changing the name to *Kate Walker & Company*, she maintained this tradition and strategy, training many of the best sales reps in the industry.

Kate Walker & Company's client list included publishers both large and small, reflecting a sincere commitment to both independent presses as well as larger commercial companies. The variety of books and authors provided retail and library customers with many options, making their reps' visits important to their success. One of Kate's greatest pleasures was continuing to travel to Alberta, the Northwest Territory, the Kootenays and the Sunshine Coast to visit customers.

In addition to working on behalf of client publishers and customers, Kate has given back to the book industry in other ways: participating in publishing courses and workshops, as juror for the BC Book Prizes and serving as president of the Western Reps Association. Her company also found ways to encourage safer environmental practices and donated to many literacy, charity and food bank programs. Personally she encouraged serving and eating only wild fish, particularly wild BC salmon.

From the beginning, there were many people who mentored, guided and inspired Kate in her work as a book rep. Keith Sacre, her first boss, was the epitome of kindness and generosity. From him Kate first learned the vital role librarians play in the industry and forever after made sure that library issues were front and centre. From Allan MacDougall she learned how important it is to take care of your employees. "*Allan always had our backs, even when we made mistakes, and he was always there with praise for our successes.*" From Bill Duthie, Kate learned how to sell backlist (he pointed out the best ones in her catalogues – a bonus for a new rep!) and was forever grateful for his advice. From bookseller Thora Howell, Kate saw firsthand how a clever bookseller brings authors and readers together. Hosting many events at The Bookstore on Bastion, Thora created space for many wonderful experiences.

In 2010 Kate changed the name of the company to *Ampersand Canada's Book & Gift Agency*, part of making way for her new partners Saffron Beckwith and Cheryl Fraser to take over running the company.

Since retiring at the end of 2012, Kate has served as a juror for the Alberta Book Publishers non-fiction prize, and has read dozens of the books that accumulated on her shelves during her career as a book rep. Going back to bed with a coffee and a book is now a daily practice. Kate is also learning how to grow food, goes to yoga more often, spends more time with her three grown children and one grandchild, and prefers riding her bicycle everywhere instead of driving. She remains grateful for the many years of wonderful people and books, and believes that reading and literacy are keys to happiness that should be shared with everyone.