

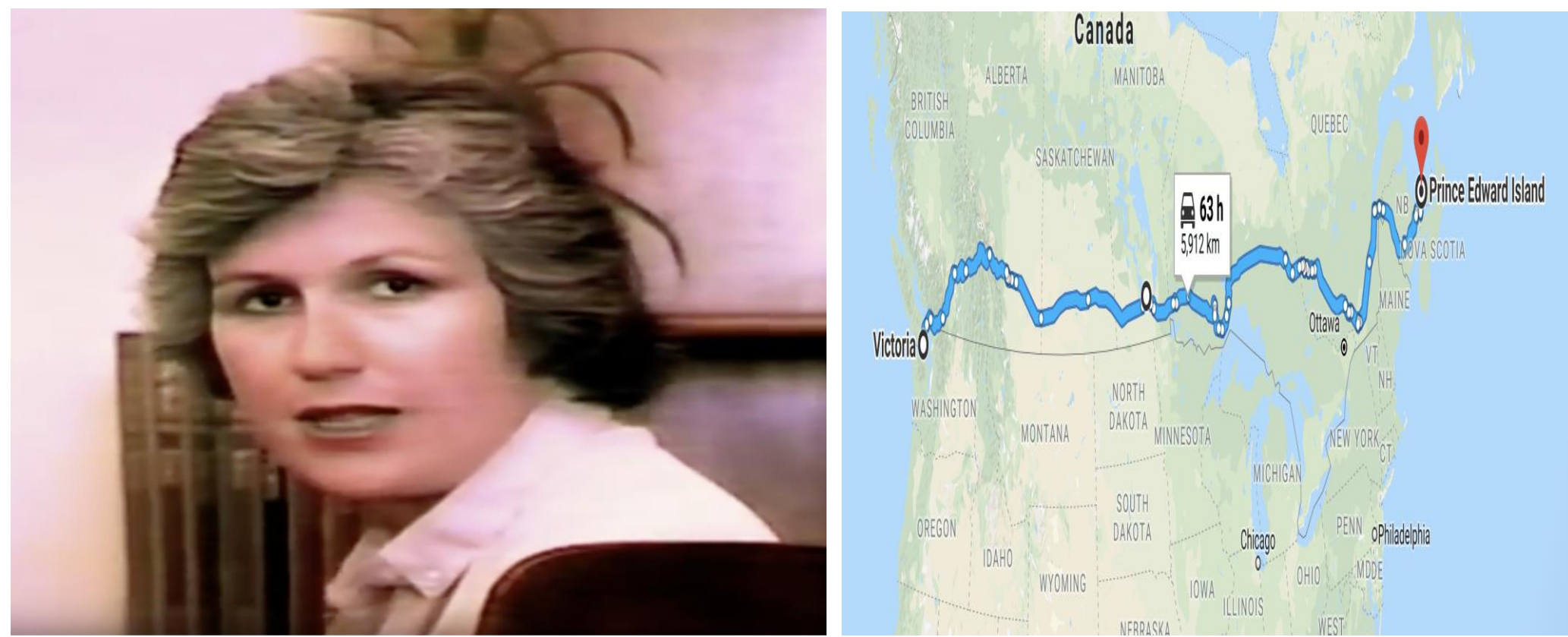
# Rediscovering Social Work Leadership: Digitalizing the CASW Oral History Project 1983/84

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## Overview

The CASW Oral History Project undertaken by PI Karen Hill created 53 oral histories with social work leaders across Canada who practiced between 1920 and 1980. These recordings are maintained for public use and preservation purposes by the National Library and Archive Canada. Digitalization of 5 of these oral histories was undertaken and these digital materials are now available via an open access Internet archive making these texts more accessible to social work researchers/students/practitioners.

## Background



Karen Hill worked in the area of social policy analysis across Ontario. As a staff member with Social Development Canada (Ottawa), Karen met many retired social worker volunteers. Lunchtime small talk revealed these elderly volunteers were in fact social work leaders who had developed the profession in Canada and laid the foundation for contemporary social policy systems and services. Concerned this history and the tacit leadership knowledge maintained by these retired social workers would be lost, Karen applied for grants, developed alliances between national and regional social work organizations and eventually undertook the CASW Oral History project (1984/84). Her work preserves the professional history of these 53 Canadian social work leaders.

## Process

Using materials from the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is a difficult process requiring researchers to visit Ottawa. Open access online digital archives provide greater accessibility to materials as well as shifting the culture of archives to promote a more grassroots/popular understanding of the purpose and use of archival materials. YouTube is the home to many online digital archives.

To facilitate access to these archival materials, permission and partnership was sought from Karen Hill (who maintains the ownership of the project materials). Copies of the oral history materials were sought with support from Therese Jennissen at Carleton University. The oral histories included in this pilot project were selected by Karen Hill. Transfer of the analogue video materials to digital format was undertaken by an archival company recommended by the McMaster University Archive. Optical transfer of transcripts was undertaken by project research assistants.



**The McMaster Social Work Digital Leadership Archive** was created, 5 oral histories are now available via YouTube.

## Available Oral Histories



Rediscovering Social Work Leaders: Kay Shimizu  
McMaster School of Social Work Leadership Archive



Rediscovering Social Work Leaders: Florence Philpott  
McMaster School of Social Work Leadership Archive



Rediscovering Social Work Leaders: Ann DuMoulin  
McMaster School of Social Work Leadership Archive

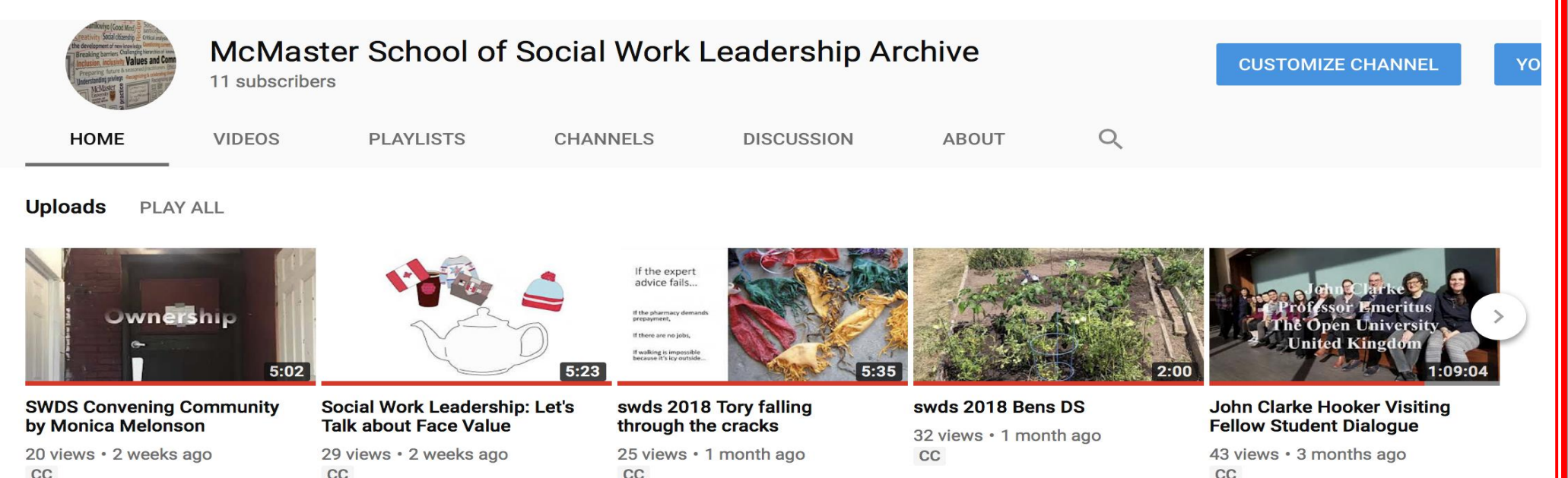


Rediscovering Social Work Leaders: David Weiss  
McMaster School of Social Work Leadership Archive



Rediscovering Social Work Leaders: Richard Splane  
McMaster School of Social Work Leadership Archive

## Future Possibilities



Karen Hill's sense of urgency around the need to preserve social workers' knowledge and understanding of practice as well as the history of the profession resonates today. The leaders presented in this project faced challenges and obstacles that mirror many of the ideological and value conflicts faced in our contemporary social context. The development of a Canadian Social Work Oral History 2.0 based on the model and method of the original research would hold value for the profession and for anyone who uses social welfare services.

The **Understanding Social Work Leadership in Hamilton through Digital Storytelling (SWDS)**

project is an complementary project that explores these possibilities...



## References and Acknowledgements

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