

Dr Patricia Roberts-Pichette

Patricia is a pioneering New Zealand born scientist, educator, and historian whose career has spanned continents and disciplines. After graduating from UC she left New Zealand in 1954 on a Fulbright scholarship to complete her PhD in Ecology and Forestry at Duke University in the USA. She then moved to Canada, where she taught biology for a decade at the University of New Brunswick, often as the only woman in her faculty, and advocated for gender equity in academia. Patricia's scientific research, particularly on the Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*), remains influential and widely cited. Her career extended into public service, where she managed the Canadian Man and Biosphere Secretariat for UNESCO and later worked at the Canadian International Development Agency. She broke further ground as the first woman appointed to the Technical Advisory Committee secretariat at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, overcoming significant institutional resistance.

Beyond science, Patricia became a leading authority on the history of British child migration to Canada. She coordinated the Middlemore Project, documenting the lives of children sent from Britain to Canada, and authored the book *Great Canadian Expectations: The Middlemore Experience*. Her dedication to research, advocacy, and education has been recognised with national awards, and she continues to inspire with her resilience, passion, and commitment to social justice and historical truth.

Patricia's acclaimed book *Great Canadian Expectations: The Middlemore Experience* offers a groundbreaking exploration of British child migration to Canada. Published after 15 years of meticulous research, the book chronicles the lives of over 5,000 children sent from Birmingham's Children's Emigration Homes to rural Canadian communities between 1873 and 1933. Patricia challenges the prevailing narrative of exploitation, presenting a nuanced account of the Middlemore agency's efforts to provide destitute children with better futures. Her work highlights the differences between Middlemore and other emigration schemes, emphasising the agency's commitment to child welfare. The book has become a vital resource for genealogists and historians, underpinning the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa's Middlemore Project and its searchable online index. It has also been used as a primary reference in academic workshops and public exhibitions, cementing its status as the most comprehensive guide to the Middlemore experience. Patricia's work continues to reshape understanding of Canada's immigration history.

Biography provided by the University of Canterbury Inspirational Alumni webpage:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/science/science-schools-and-departments/school-of-biological-sciences/biological-sciences-alumni>