

98-year-old woman defends her 1936 spelling bee title

- 1 Adell Williams-Keays was 11 years old when she was asked to participate in a spelling bee competition at her school in Barney's River Station, N.S., back in 1936. It was then that she received her first trophy, a giant honeycomb made of wicker with a painted wooden bee sticking out of it. "I wasn't nervous or anything, it was just one of those things I did," said Williams-Keays nonchalantly.



- 2 Since then, it has become one of the many stories Williams-Keays has repeatedly told her family. "I've been hearing about her 1936 spelling bee since forever, and a little bit of a brag to it," said her niece, Joan Williams-Mann. This summer, the family once again heard about Williams-Keays triumphant win 87 years ago, which led to Williams-Mann challenging her aunt to defend her title as a spelling bee champion at the same school she attended when she was a young girl.
- 3 "In order to compete, you had to either go to this school or be a descendant of someone that went to this school," explained Williams-Mann. Each person had two tries to spell the word correctly – and Williams-Keays only needed one, she had no misspellings. "It was not much different I guess. I learned a little bit from the first time. A little more confidence," she said.
- 4 The event was not just organized for the spelling bee; it also acted as a fundraiser for the old school, which is now a museum.

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