

# Founder/President Mary Gordon



Mary Gordon is recognized internationally as an educator, best-selling author, child advocate and parenting expert who has created award-winning programs informed by the power of empathy. In 1996, she founded Roots of Empathy, which now offers programs in Canada, New Zealand, the United States (in Seattle) and the Isle of Man. In 2005, Ms Gordon founded the Seeds of Empathy program. She is a Member of the Order of Canada and an Ashoka Fellow.

Ms Gordon is also the founder of Canada's first and largest school-based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, which she initiated in 1981. These Centres have become public policy in Ontario with hundreds of schools involved. The Nelson Mandela Children's Foundation brought Ms Gordon to South Africa to share her early childhood parenting expertise.

Ms Gordon speaks and consults to governments, educational organizations, and public institutions. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards recognizing her contribution to innovation in early childhood education and international social entrepreneurship, including the 2009 Public Education Advocacy Award from the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Her 2005 Canadian bestseller, *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*, was ranked as one of the Top 100 Books of the Year by the Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper. She was a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal for her outstanding commitment to education.

Ms Gordon has presented on early childhood development to conferences organized by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Health Organization, and the United States government, among others. She worked with the World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health's Knowledge Network for Early Childhood Development for their report, *Total Environment Assessment Model for Early Childhood Development*.

Ms Gordon has twice had dialogues with His Holiness the Dalai Lama: first in 2006, at the Vancouver Dialogues, and then in 2008, in Seattle, Washington as part of the Seeds of Compassion event. The Dalai Lama expressed that programs like Roots of Empathy will build world peace.

In 2008, Roots of Empathy was one of three winners – and the only Canadian organization – to win an international competition from Changemakers, an Initiative of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, for programs that help youth at risk.

Also in 2008, National Chief, Phil Fontaine and the Canadian Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution to support Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy in First Nations schools across Canada. Ms Gordon is committed to making her program available to Aboriginal communities.

Ms Gordon was the first female Canadian Ashoka Fellow, recognizing her as a member of an international circle of social entrepreneurs who have the creativity that enables them to envision new and better ways to address persistent social problems and the entrepreneurial skill and determination required to bring their ideas to fruition. She is a member of the Executive Board of Directors of the Ashoka Foundation.

