

## Mary Gordon Founder/President, Roots of Empathy



Mary Gordon is recognized internationally as an award-winning social entrepreneur, educator, author, child advocate and parenting expert who has created programs informed by the power of empathy. In 1996, she founded Roots of Empathy, which now offers programs in Canada, New Zealand, the USA, Isle of Man, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. In 2005, Ms Gordon created 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. They have become public policy in Ontario, with hundreds of schools involved. They have been used as a best practice model internationally. The Nelson Mandela Children's Foundation brought Ms Gordon to South Africa to share her 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 education and international social entrepreneurship, including the 2011 David E. Mitchell Award of Distinction from the Ernest C. Manning Innovation Awards, and 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. In 2011, Ms Gordon was named an Ashoka Globalizer, joining a select group of Ashoka Fellows supported in extending their message and impact to the global level.

Ms Gordon has presented on early childhood development to gatherings organized by the World Health Organization and the United Nations, among others.

Ms Gordon has had three 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 and in 2011 at the Delhi Dialogues. The Dalai Lama has expressed that programs like Roots of Empathy will build world peace.

In 2008, Roots of Empathy was one of three winners in an international competition from Changemakers for programs that help youth at risk. Also in 2008, National Chief Phil Fontaine and the 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.

In 2002, Ms Gordon was named 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 Global Executive Board of Directors.