



**Roots of Empathy**  
**Racines de l'empathie**

## **Backgrounder**

### **Mission**

To build caring and peaceful societies by breaking intergenerational cycles of bullying and violence

### **Vision**

To instil lifelong empathy in children, through classroom interaction with infants

### **Introduction**

Roots of Empathy was founded on a mission of care and peace that begins with developing empathy in children to help them become better adults. Citizenship and responsive parenting techniques help to build capacity for empathy. Breaking with the intergenerational cycle of poor parenting and violence the program raises the level of empathy through children around the world. Recognized as one of the top evidence-based social and emotional learning programs by the George Lucas Foundation's Edutopia, the program has helped to reach over 1 million children.

### **About Organization**

Roots of Empathy was founded in 1996 with a simple goal: to instil lasting empathy in children through interaction with infants in a classroom setting. Recognized as one of the top evidence-based social and emotional learning programs by the George Lucas Foundation's Edutopia, Roots of Empathy has helped to reach over 1 million children worldwide. Roots of Empathy currently operates in Canada, New Zealand, the USA, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland and Costa Rica.

## What We Believe (Core Values)

- Empathy is important to improving the human condition
- Early educational learning is pivotal to a child's full emotional development
- Building a strong healthy attachment relationship

## What We Do (Key Messages)

- Raise social and emotional competence in children
- Reduce levels of aggression, bullying and violence
- Develop the next generation that respects and understands the plight others
- A proven way to measure and spread empathy throughout society using research and clinical studies
- Impact and reach a network committed to building better global citizens

## Mary Gordon Quotes

- "Roots of Empathy is about changing the world, classroom by classroom."
- "Change is often accomplished by altering the lens through which we view the world."
- "The deepest learning only takes place when we engage the hand, the heart and the mind."
- "Love grows brains."
- "Education is the most effective peace-building institution in the land. Our schools serve as our Ministry of Peace."
- "Globalization has given birth to a growing transnational interdependence which is healthier than the isolation of independence."
- "The children of today are the parents of tomorrow."
- "The social and emotional literacies learned in the ROE classroom contribute to creating safe and caring schools; the kindness of children shines as their empathy for one another grows. The classrooms of today are building the human capital of tomorrow."
- "Roots of Empathy is a pedagogy of hope - in our children we have an opportunity to create a new order where our differences can be acknowledged but our similarities will be our uniting force."
- "Children finding the humanity in the baby is a lever to finding the humanity in themselves and others."

## Strategic Timeline

- 1981** Mary creates public policy in Ontario through the EarlyON Centres (Previously Parent and Family Literacy Centres)
- 1996** Mary creates the Roots of Empathy program
- 2000** Roots of Empathy registers as a not-for profit children's charity  
Mary speaks for the first time at the World Health Organization in Luxembourg  
Nelson Mandela invites Mary Gordon to South Africa as a consultant
- 2003** The Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee medal is awarded to Mary for her contributions to field of education
- 2005** Seeds of Empathy is Created  
"Roots of Empathy; Changing the World Child by Child" is published  
The Order of Canada inducts Mary Gordon
- 2007** Roots of Empathy expands to New Zealand and the USA
- 2008** Roots of Empathy expands to the Isle of Man
- 2010** Roots of Empathy expands to the Republic of Ireland and Scotland
- 2012** Roots of Empathy expands to Northern Ireland, Germany and England  
Mary receives the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for Significant Achievement and Remarkable Service  
Mary is inducted to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador
- 2014** Mary speaks at the United Nations
- 2018** Mary is awarded the Governor General's Award for Innovation
- 2019** (May) Roots of Empathy to Host Inaugural "The Empathy Symposium"

## Present/Future

- 2019** Develop and Outline Comprehensive Fundraising Plan
- 2020** Raise \$ amount within Canada to help expand delivery of ROE to classrooms across the country
- 2021** Roots of Empathy wants to raise \$ to help expand ROE to 3 new countries
- 2021** Mary Gordon wants to collaborate and host a global TED talk on the critical nature of cultivating empathy in children at an early age
- 2021** Train an additional 1800 community volunteers in delivering Roots of Empathy to their community
- 2021** Partner with a University to conduct independent research on Seeds of Empathy

## Contact

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