



Roots of Empathy  

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Racines de l'empathie



Roots of Empathy 2020 - 2021 Annual Report



“It makes us think of ways this world could be better and ways we could help it. ROE teaches us how we could identify other peoples feelings and how to take care of our own mental health.”  
Grade 6 Student, Venerable Michael J McGivney Elementary School, Brampton, Ontario



“This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for my baby to have a positive impact on the world. You will walk away from this program as a better parent, no matter your background.”  
Parent, Westhill Elementary School, Bothell, USA



“I think the children were able to talk about their feelings, acknowledging how they felt and what was fair and just. They accepted a new person into their classroom and showed me manaaki and whakawhanauantanga - kindness and hospitality. The children learnt about diversity and understanding that we are all may look different but we often feel in similar ways.”  
Instructor, Owkata Primary School, Rotorua, New Zealand



*Mary Gordon*  
Mary Gordon  
Founder/President

We decided when schools shuttered their doors to COVID-19 that we would prepare a virtual program. And that's exactly what we did. We changed from a program with a “baby-on-a-blanket” in a classroom to a “baby-on-a-screen”. Through a miracle of collaboration and good will, this innovation has spread across Canada and internationally.

We realized that children are more stressed and anxious then we've ever seen before. We are seeing poor mental health and well-being. So, Roots of Empathy gave children the opportunity to make sense of what is happening to their lives. In fact, our first lesson was titled: What Happened? Together with the children, we spoke about loss of friendships, of not seeing relatives, loneliness and stress. The teachers reported improvements in children's emotional well-being as they were given opportunities to express how they were feeling in discussion, through their art and through letters that they wrote to the Roots of Empathy baby.



*The Honourable Christy Clark*  
Christy Clark  
Chair, Board of Directors

In 2021, we extended our Fall Recovery Program with additional lessons for the winter and spring term with a human-rights focus. With the human-rights focus, the first lesson was focused on Courage. At every age, courage is required to deal with the challenges children face in their lives and the moral courage to stand up for what isn't fair. Courage to say, “That's a mean way to talk or an unfair thing to do.”

Roots of Empathy has learned a lot though the innovation of bringing our program online. We've learned of the resilience and courage of children, the dedication of their parents and teachers and their remarkable ability of ROE Instructors to navigate this new virtual world with resilience and generosity.

Who we are



**About Us**

Roots of Empathy is an international children's charity established in 1996 by social entrepreneur, educator and author Mary Gordon. It operates in 12 countries in seven languages and has reached over one million children.

**Our Mission**

Roots of Empathy's mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.

**Our Goals**

- To foster the development of empathy
- To develop emotional literacy
- To reduce levels of bullying, aggression and violence, and promote children's pro-social behaviours
- To increase knowledge of human development, learning and infant safety
- To prepare students for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting

**Develop empathy**

1

- Roots of Empathy program for elementary school age children
- Seeds of Empathy program for 3 - 5 year old children in childcare
- Nurturing Empathy in Children - a parenting program for parents of children K to third grade
- Launched first virtual Recovery Program to address COVID-19
- Created and distributed 12 'Parenting through COVID' videos in 18 languages and 10 Temperament videos.

**Learn and share**

2

- Independent research
- Annual program evaluations
- Centre of Excellence
- Professional development

**Inspire the Empathy Movement**

3

- Biennial Research Symposium
- Speaking engagements
- Media outreach
- Community building through social media



### COVID disrupted learning

When the COVID pandemic started, it was estimated that 1.2 billion children in 186 countries were out of the classroom [1]. Disrupted and online learning continued for many throughout the 2020-2021 year.

In one survey, 74% of teachers reported that they are concerned or have questions about the mental health and well-being of their students in relation to the current pandemic.[2]

Roots of Empathy (ROE) took action.



### ROE moved from a baby "on a Green Blanket" to a "baby on a screen"

We created and launched our virtual ROE Recovery Program for 4 age groups. This program supports students' mental health and wellbeing while exploring topics related to human rights and social justice. Research in Scotland, by our partner Action for Children, showed that the ROE Recovery program was "a key to tool to help children promote inclusion. It allows children the space to hear and recognise the lockdown experiences and feelings of others, and for them to understand they are not alone and to feel empowered."



### Our Global Annual Report shows the Recovery Program helped children to express themselves and develop empathy.

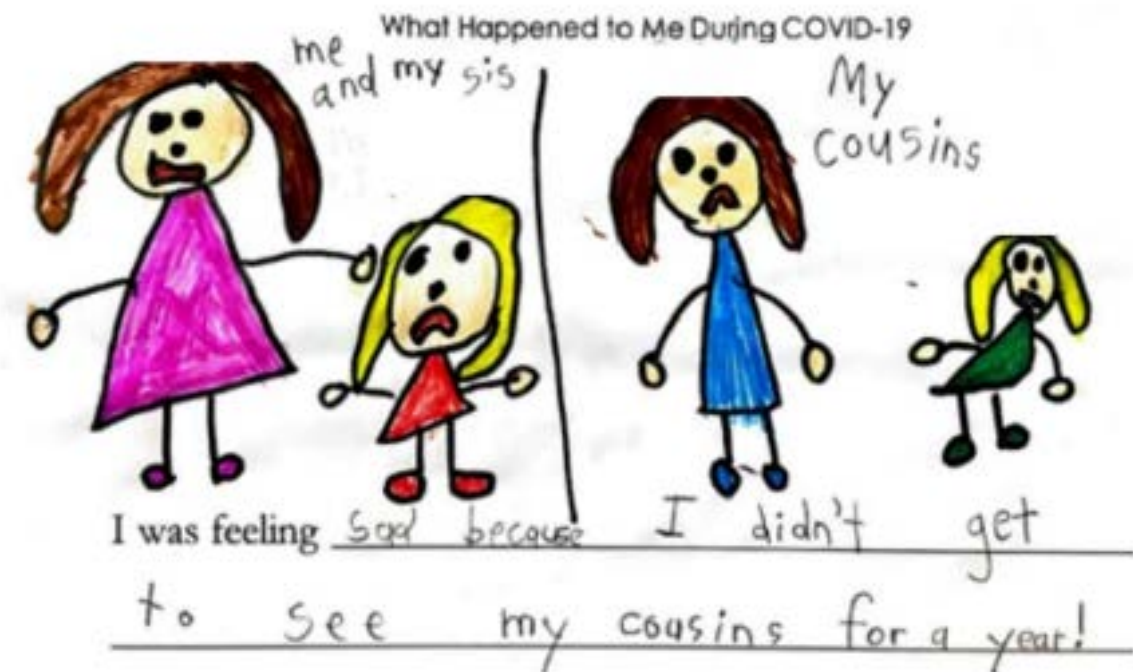
- Here are a few highlights:
- 74% of Roots of Empathy students also reported that they liked knowing that they are not the only one who thinks and worries about things.\*
- 78% of Roots of Empathy students reported that they understood more about the impact the pandemic has had on them and others
- Read the full report [HERE](#)

2020-2021 Recovery Program Impact



it can teach us about emotions and differences

Primary 3, Castlehill Primary School, Campbeltown, Scotland



Harbourside Elementary, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada

### Examples of artwork by children who took the Roots of Empathy Program

References: [1] World Economic Forum April 2020, Retrieved at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>  
[2] Canadian Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Pandemic Research Study

2020-2021 Recovery Program Impact

✓ **CBC Here & Now** ✓



On May 12th, Mary Gordon appeared on the CBC radio program **Here & Now**, hosted by **Gill Deacon**. Mary's storytelling captured the hearts and minds of the listeners. In terms of promoting our brand and increasing recognition of our organization, the interview was invaluable, providing millions of CBC listeners across Canada and beyond with relevant and interesting information about our organization.



2020 – 2021 Created, launched and evaluated our **new Roots of Empathy Recovery Program** for four age groups.

✓  **January 2021 Roots of Empathy 25th Anniversary**

✓ **HundrED awards Roots of Empathy as a global innovator for the fourth year in a row.** 

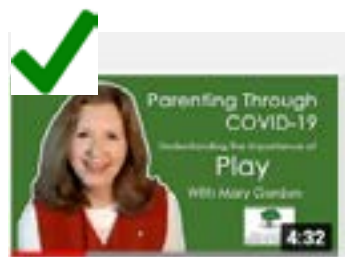


Piloted and evaluated **Seeds of Empathy virtual program** for childcare centres



**ROE Children's Gallery - 21 Wishes for 2021**  
We opened an online Children's Gallery to give voice to the students who participate in our programs. The first show's theme chronicles 21 wishes made for the world by 8 and 9 year old children from Roots of Empathy programs. We are humbled by their insights, their empathy, and their hopeful generous spirits. [CLICK HERE](#)

✓ **Parenting Through the Lens of Temperament**  
Roots of Empathy created a series of videos that address various aspects of parenting through the lens of temperament. Temperament is the way we react to people and situations. Understanding temperament allows for a deeper understanding of how children are wired, their reactions, and their approach to the world. [CLICK HERE](#)



**Parenting Through COVID-19 Video Series**  
Founder and President Mary Gordon

helps parents and educators during these challenging times, and beyond with a series of videos on how to parent through COVID. Available in 18 languages, including seven Indigenous languages [CLICK HERE](#)



✓   
June 2021 – Introduction of **Seeds of Empathy** to Wales

# 2021 Virtual Symposium



Our Research Symposium 2021 theme was Empathy and Well-being.

We reached over 4200 like-minded individuals from 52 countries coming from backgrounds in health, education, research, and aligned fields in a thought-provoking two-day symposium.

Our virtual symposium not only brought together top North American neuroscientists and experts on wellbeing and empathy like Dr. Richard Davidson, Dr. Dan Siegel, Prof. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, and Dr. Bruce Perry, but we also dove into topics such as empathy in leadership, social justice, and had an across-border perspective on black fatherhood.

In honour of our 25th anniversary, we presented the inaugural Roots of Empathy Social Justice Award to His Honour Justice Murray Sinclair, LLB, MSC, IPC. He is Anishinaabe and a member of the Peguis First Nation. He is a Fourth Degree Chief of the Midewiwin Society, a traditional healing and spiritual society of the Anishinaabe Nation responsible for protecting the teachings, ceremonies, laws, and history of the Anishinaabe. Among his many achievements: he was the first Indigenous Judge appointed in Manitoba and the second in Canada; he served as Co-Chair of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba and was Chief Commissioner of Canada's Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Roots of Empathy is honoured to have been able to present this award to His Honour Justice Murray Sinclair.

*"I enjoyed all aspects of the symposium. All speakers and topics were well chosen. Empathy is the most important topic to be taught to human kind and schools are well-placed to honour the Roots of Empathy Program. The good work that so many people are doing in this field is essential and heartwarming. This all came together in the symposium."*  
Participant

To listen to the speakers in our 2021 Research Symposium, please click [HERE](#).

Our Movement

# Where is Roots of Empathy cited?

Since 1998, Mary Gordon and the Roots of Empathy program have been cited



in a wide range of disciplines

- psychology
- education
- child & family studies
- public policy & politics
- sociology
- medicine
- criminology
- neuroscience



in a wide range of sources

- scholarly articles
- research studies
- government reports
- conferences
- training documents
- annotated bibliographies
- dissertations
- white papers
- books



\*Additional citations counts the number of times articles that we have been cited in have been cited. This shows Roots of Empathy's knock-on effect.



Roots of Empathy can teach the world, “To think outside your own lives and understand not everyone is living the same life as you and to always chose kindness over being right. It is important to listen to others viewpoints and not always be focused on what is just going on in your life.”

Grade 6 Student, Foothills Academy, Calgary, Alberta

“To have empathy to others. To have respect for each other and being kind to each other. To teach us how we can change the world and how we can learn to be kind.”

Grade 4 Student, Tecumseh Elementary School, Vancouver, BC

“I think Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to understand each other. Also to be kind, fair, including and understanding.”

Grade 7 Student, Frank Roberts Junior High, Conception Bay South, Newfoundland and Labrador

“It makes us think of ways this world could be better and ways we could help it. ROE teaches us how we could identify other people’s feelings and how to take care of our own mental health.”

Grade 6 Student, Venerable Michael J McGivney Elementary School, Brampton, Ontario

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## Roots of Empathy wishes to thank our key global supporters and partners

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Roots of Empathy also wishes to recognize the contributions of Lead Agencies

Action for Children Scotland

Barnardos Republic of Ireland

Pre School Learning Alliance UK

Public Health Agency Northern Ireland

University of Oregon - Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect



### Donate

You can donate easily online through our website. We are a registered charity. Whether a one-time donation, a monthly contribution, a gift in the name of a loved one or friend, or a legacy gift, your support will make a difference - [rootsofempathy.org/donate](http://rootsofempathy.org/donate)



### Volunteer your time

You can become an Instructor or a Roots of Empathy family with your newborn. If you are a school, we would be happy to talk to you too! We have more information for each group on our website - [rootsofempathy.org](http://rootsofempathy.org) under Participate



### Get & stay in touch

We have many ways to contact us. For a list of people to contact regarding particular programs or regions, please visit [rootsofempathy.org](http://rootsofempathy.org). Follow us on social media @rootsofempathy. Sign up for our newsletter on our website and learn with us. Call us (1)(416) 944-3001. Email us at [mail@rootsofempathy.org](mailto:mail@rootsofempathy.org)

### Roots of Empathy Canada

Year ended August 31

2021

2020

#### Revenue

Government grants	\$ 1,752,860	\$ 1,359,377
Foundations	336,000	219,040
Lead agencies	188,352	496,083
Community / school contributions	160,740	310,885
Corporations	547,227	398,290
Empathy enterprise	6,300	62,175
Individuals	89,191	89,096
Interest and other income	1,432	19,972
Government subsidy (Note 10)	512,357	592,453
	<b>3,594,459</b>	<b>3,547,371</b>

#### Expenditures

Program delivery	\$ 1,156,765	\$ 891,290
Program integrity and quality assurance	813,438	885,052
Empathy movement and awareness	196,246	310,694
Research	228,524	78,757
Administration	722,780	891,048
Fundraising	236,169	119,700
	<b>3,353,922</b>	<b>3,176,541</b>

Excess of revenue over expenditures before other item	240,537	370,830
Impairment of investment		37,216
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 240,537	\$ 333,614



**Changing the world, child by child**



**Roots of Empathy**  

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