

Community activist receives official recognition

The good work of Dr. Maggie Hodgson, former director of Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, and founder and national co-chair of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation, has been

recognized by Canada's Governor General Michaëlle Jean. Hodgson has been named an officer of the Order of Canada.

Hodgson is a member of the Carrier Nation who has worked nationally and internationally on

justice and healing initiatives. She was the chief lobbyist for the first Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering held in Edmonton in 1992 with 3,200 people participating from around the world. This gathering has been hosted in three other countries and will return to Edmonton this year. She spearheaded a national addictions awareness initiative celebrating successful sobriety. The campaign, called Keep the Circle Strong, began with 25 communities and has enjoyed the participation of 1,500 communities across Canada.

Hodgson is the co-author of four books. Thirty-eight colleges and universities use one of the books, *Nation to Nation*. The proceeds from her writing provide bursaries to Third World students to study addictions.

Hodgson was also a big player in the Aboriginal working caucus, which provided counsel to the federal government during compensation

negotiations for former students of residential schools.

During an interview with Sweetgrass editor Debora Steel last year, Hodgson talked about her 18 years at Nechi, and her work on the national stage.

She said when she thought about her life's accomplishments she remembered the little things. She called them silent achievements.

"We trained an array of people that were community people who were not alcohol and drug counsellors. Like at the Blood reserve they had some security officers who were elderly people and older people and they kept getting into fracas with community people who were chronic alcoholics. So they sent them to us for training, not to make alcohol and drug counsellors out of them, but to teach them how to be more effective security guards, to be able to be a referral source for these people to get into

treatment, and they were able to build a relationship with them so that when these people were ready that they could actually be part of the referral movement."

She talked about a doctor who came to Nechi to develop a more human touch.

"There was a doctor that was working in the inner city in Winnipeg who was working in the drug area, and he knew how to treat livers but he didn't know how to treat alcoholics. They don't teach them how to treat alcoholics. They don't teach them how to intervene with alcoholism. So he actually left his practice and came in and it was so amazing to see him, this doctor with 15 years experience, sitting beside a person who only had a Grade 10. He could read off everything that happened to the liver, but what he didn't know how to do was how to deal with people, to be that referral source and be able to be that guide for people to get into a recovery program."



Maggie Hodgson has been named an officer of the Order of Canada by the Governor General, Michaëlle Jean.



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