

Dr. Olive Patricia Dickason

Lifetime Achievement



Without the Indigenous, there would have been no Canada. This is the shot Dr. Olive Patricia Dickason fired across the bow of Canadian historiography. Today everything once thought about the early foundations of Canada is under question because of her, and her academic work. Not only did Dickason write the history, she has forever changed it. And by doing so, she has made history. An accomplished journalist who won numerous writing awards at The Globe and Mail, the retired University of Alberta history professor came to academia late in life. Of Métis background, Dr. Dickason was dismayed by what she found when delving into Canada's past. While there was plenty written about Canadian politicians, hardly an Aboriginal face or voice could be lifted from the pages of history. Unlike most other historians, Dickason asked why. What about Aboriginal contributions to Canada's first economic activities: the fur trade; whaling; forestry? What of the thousands of years of preparation before Confederation? Where were the accounts? Now we have them. Thanks to Dr. Dickason, accurate portrayals of Canada's development now line the shelves. First there was Indian Arts in Canada, then, The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas, and, most significantly, her groundbreaking Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples. For the first time, Aboriginals were fully appreciated in sound academic studies as fully dimensional human individuals and communities who have their own histories and role in the development of what we know as Canada. Along the way, this historian has inspired a whole generation of students to take up where she left off. In the past, she has been awarded one of the most prestigious awards in Canadian historiography, the Macdonald Prize, and, is a member of the Order of Canada. She received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her lifetime achievements that have brought a truer historical perspective to the history of Canada and Aboriginal people.