

Forced-out professor gets honorary degree

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Three years after forcing her into retirement, the University of Alberta granted an honorary degree Monday to Olive Dickason.

Dickason, 75, was a history professor who was first forced to retire 10 years ago, because she'd reached the university's mandatory retirement age.

So she took the university to court.

She was reinstated after the Court of Queen's Bench ruled in her favor. But she lost on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1992, she left the university.

The battles stirred up emotions, but she said she was happy to receive an honorary degree.

"There's certainly no point in holding any grudges," she said.

Dickason grew up during the Depression in Manitoba. She spent 20 years in the newspaper business. When her children grew up, she became a student at the University of Ottawa.

She came to the University of Alberta in 1975, as a professor of

history, but didn't like that it left out native history.

Her family tree is partially native. "It's far back, but it's there ... And the way history was being taught, some of my ancestors were being overlooked."

Dickason brought native studies

into focus at the U of A. She wrote several volumes on the subject, including *The Myth of the Savage*, and *Canada's First Nations*.



Dickason

The latter won the 1992 Macdonald Prize as the best historical work in Canada

— the same year Dickason was forced out.

In accepting the honorary degree Dickason said:

"Canada has a much richer and older history than what has generally been portrayed. That tired old cliché about Canada being a land of much geography and little history simply misses the point."