

# Founder



*Marilou McPhedran*

*“We should never, never be afraid  
or ashamed about dreams. The  
dreams won't always come true and  
we won't always make it, but where  
there is no vision, a people perish.”*

*T.C Douglas*

*M*arilou was born and raised in rural Manitoba, graduated in Law from Osgoode Hall in Toronto and has been a dedicated human rights advocate working nationally and internationally for decades. With tenacity once described as a cross between a terminator and an earth mother, Marilou was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1985 in recognition of her co-leadership of the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution, the grass roots driver for strengthening equality rights in the Canadian Constitution, particularly in sections 15 and 28 of the Charter. Marilou became a 'LEAFmother' through four years of passionate voluntarism preparatory to co-founding LEAF to ensure that Canada's judges would benefit from feminist legal analyses in key constitutional equality cases, with the hope that "lived rights" for women and girls in Canada would advance.

Marilou is the principal (dean) of The University of Winnipeg Global College, having resigned as the Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission to return to Manitoba. Prior to her appointment at Global College she held positions at the City of Toronto, Women's College Hospital, University of Waterloo, York University, the University of Victoria and the University of Saskatchewan.

In addition to LEAF, she co-founded several internationally recognized non-profit systemic change organizations including METRAC – the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children; and the "always open" Gerstein Crisis Centre for homeless discharged psychiatric patients in Toronto. She is a pioneer in research and advocacy to counter human rights violations through systemic reform – in law, medicine, education and government. She founded the International Women's Rights Project. As chief executive officer of a federal center of excellence, she directed staff and programs including a cyber research network; she has chaired two public inquiries into the sexual abuse of patients; and she has co-investigated and co-authored social justice research, including: the ten country pilot study to assess impact of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

As principal of Global College, she currently directs the new BA degree program in Human Rights and Global Studies and the Institute for International Women's Rights, coordinates the Joint Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies for University of Winnipeg, manages the Global Citizenship Program. As a volunteer, she is on the Board of the Winnipeg Women's Health Clinic and is the Vice-President of the Canadian International Council - Winnipeg Branch.

**A woman who has made a difference for women and girls in Canada**  
*Women's Legal Education and Action Fund*  
Founded – April 17, 1985