

The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award



Daphne Clarke

Windsor, Ontario

Born in Jamaica, Daphne Veronica Clarke migrated from England to Canada in 1970. Trained as a registered nurse, certified midwife and pediatric nurse, she practiced at the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Ontario, for over 25 years, where she was known for her compassion and care.



But it is her volunteer work that shows the true measure of her commitment. Now retired, Ms. Clarke has devoted much of her life to the causes closest to her heart: social justice and diversity.

As a community volunteer, Ms. Clarke touched the lives of many newcomers and immigrant women. She was the founder and first president of an organization called Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWWIW), which she started from her basement in the 1980s. Padmini Raju, current WWWIW executive director, remembers when Ms. Clarke took in her first client. "Almost 30 years ago, when I started living in Windsor, there wasn't even a settlement agency to speak of. Now there are many—enough to help all the newcomers coming into Windsor. It's a delight to see."

Ms. Raju says there were few programs and services at the time, just a few passionate individuals who recognized gaps in the system. "Our centre started because of the injustices done to female foreign domestic workers that were cheated out of their wages by their employers," she said. "These women had nowhere to go, and Daphne Clarke was their godsend." WWWIW is now one of the largest settlement agencies in Windsor providing services to women, and is a cornerstone of the community.

Ms. Clarke has helped her community in many ways, serving as a board member for the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County and the Women's Enterprise Skills Training (WEST),

which helps ease the integration of immigrants into Canadian society. She has also served as a member of the

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International Underground Railroad Monument Committee of Windsor and Detroit, which erected two Underground Railroad monuments in memory of slaves escaping from the South. She is a proud member of the Essex County Black Historical Research Society and a lifetime member of the Windsor West Indian Association. She also sat on the City of Windsor Race and Ethno-cultural Relations Committee and the St. Alphonsus Refugee Settlement and Adaptation Committee.

Ms. Clarke has been recognized for her contributions over the years, receiving the Leadership Award from the Windsor and District Black Coalition, and the inaugural City of Toronto Person's Day Award. Deeply committed to the advancement of women and human rights, Ms. Clarke is a wonderful example of a Caring Canadian, whose tireless efforts have helped make her community a better place to live.



The Caring Canadian Award was presented to Daphne Clarke on April 17, 2012, at Rideau Hall. Sgt Ronald Duchesne 2012 © Rideau Hall