



# Dorris Peters

(1930 - )

"It's a privilege to have a gift and to help people." Dorris Peters, an Elder from the Sto:lo Nation, respectfully acknowledges. Born on November 26, 1930, she grew up along with her 15 siblings on a reservation 12 miles west of Hope where she was raised in the "traditional Indian way" by her parents and grandparents. At the age of 12, she left school due to the unbelievable discrimination and worked at various jobs. Determined to further her education, she took correspondence courses and later on, enrolled in the Adult Education Upgrading Program at Okanagan College. At the age of 16, she embarked on the first of two marriages through which she raised seven children along with many foster children, of whom she is extremely proud.

A woman with strong convictions, in the early 1970's she began an "extensive political career in the Indian movement," serving as a leading voice for Indian Women. A decade later when her second marriage ended, she returned to the workforce and got a job as a corrections officer. She did this until she decided to pursue her natural calling in life.

The great grand-daughter of "a famous healer and seer," Dorris was blessed, not only with a generous spirit but a preternatural gift. Since her early childhood, she has had the extraordinary ability of second sight, and the even more wondrous talent of healing with her hands. In her youth, bigotry forced her to conceal these abilities. Now at an age where she had greater understanding of her gift, Dorris decided to begin using it in earnest to help others, accepting no fees for her services, and turning no one away for any reason.

In the 1980's, she began apprenticing to be a healer and has since established herself as a highly-esteemed Salish Medicine Woman, working as a mentor, a healing companion, a teacher and friend to countless people. A former student of her reveals the profound effect Dorris has on those she teaches: "Words can never express the indebtedness I feel towards her as a human being....I am very proud to have had the experience of working and learning from such a fine upstanding medicine woman." Using nothing more than a feather and a crystal when healing, she listens to her patients with compassionate understanding, then puts her hands over them – though never on their skin without their permission. Her sympathy is so deep that when her patient cries, she cries with them.

Between 1999 and 2003, she served as the first Elder on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Board of Directors to aid residential school survivors, guided by her basic beliefs including: "honesty, respect, being a role model" and "giving back to the community."

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