

Biography

The Honourable Dr. Thelma Chalifoux

Retired senator Thelma Chalifoux never stepped away from a fight but she's a generous woman and at every turn she shares the strength she gained from those life battles with her people, the Métis.

Chalifoux, 85, began the St. Albert Michif Cultural Institute which honours her heritage and her people. Provincially she is known for the work she did to gain better housing and land rights for the Métis. Nationally she is known for her work in the Canadian Senate, from 1997 to 2004. Most recently she fought for and succeeded in achieving the Meadowview Centre for Women's Health and Wellness, to help women recovering from substance abuse.

She still works for her people's rights and wellbeing even though her own health is an ongoing battle. She talks about the anger she felt at times when she witnessed poverty among the Métis. That anger is meted out, however, with equal portions of pride in Métis accomplishments. She has an upbeat way about her and for that positive sense of being, Chalifoux credits her faith.

Prior to her appointment to the Canadian senate she worked as a teacher, and was active in the Métis community. She has since returned to her roots, and now operates the Michif Cultural Institute in St. Alberta, Alberta, an organization devoted to educational efforts on behalf of the local Métis community.

Senator Chalifoux acted as a key land claims negotiator, was the founder of the Slave Lake Native Friendship Centre, and was instrumental in developing the Métis Association of Alberta Land and Welfare Departments. She devoted several years to Alberta Native Communications Society and was an active participant in the community development movement of the Company of Young Canadians. Senator Chalifoux's own commitment to the Aboriginal community earned her the recognition of being named NAIT's Distinguished Friend of the Institute in 2002. She also received an Honorary Diploma in Business Administration in 2003. Chalifoux was the first female Métis to receive the National Aboriginal Achievement Award.