



News Release

For Immediate Release

July 4, 2019

HELEN AND TED HUGHES, IRWIN ELMAN NAMED KORCZAK HONOUREES

VICTORIA — Three Canadians who have dedicated their lives to public service with a focus on children and youth were honoured recently by the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada during a ceremony at Government House.

Helen and Ted Hughes of Victoria jointly received the Janusz Korczak Medal for Children's Rights Advocacy while former Ontario Child and Youth Advocate Irwin Elman received the Korczak Statuette in Recognition of Caring for Children. The awards were presented by B.C. Representative for Children and Youth Jennifer Charlesworth and Korczak Association President Jerry Nussbaum during the ceremony hosted by Lieutenant Governor Janet Austin.

Janusz Korczak was a Polish-Jewish author and pediatrician, best known for his selfless heroism in 1942 when, as an orphanage director in Warsaw, he refused offers of freedom and accompanied the children in his care to a Nazi extermination camp.

In the spirit of Korczak, who is widely recognized as the father of the international child rights movement, the awards honour outstanding contributions to the promotion of the rights of children in ways that encourage love for children, listening to children, fostering healthy children's lives, and building capacities in children.

Helen Hughes was an elected councilor on city councils in both Saskatoon and Victoria. She spent decades supporting community and philanthropic organizations that benefit children, youth, families and Indigenous people. After moving with Ted to Victoria in 1980, she worked with both the Ombudsman's Office and then the B.C. Council of Human Rights.

Helen was elected to Victoria's city council in 1990, serving for 18 years. She also immersed herself in projects that benefited children and youth, helping to organize the Capital Region Action Team on Sexually Exploited Youth, helping to create the "Souper Bowls of Hope" fundraiser for the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society and, as a member of the Victoria Public Library Board, helping found the Lifelong Learning Festival held on International Literacy Day.

Ted, like Helen, has devoted himself to public service and has contributed both as a volunteer and in a professional capacity as a lawyer, a judge and an adjudicator. He is a former judge of the Court of Queen's Bench of Saskatchewan, a former Deputy Attorney-General of B.C. and the former Conflict of Interest Commissioner for the province.

Among his many notable achievements, Ted served as federal chief adjudicator regarding harms and abuse arising out of Indian Residential Schools. He also conducted an independent review of B.C.'s child protection system in 2006 – a review that resulted in the creation of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. In 2012-13, he presided over a public inquiry in Manitoba also addressing child protection issues relevant to that province.

“Helen and Ted are outstanding people – two kind and attentive individuals committed to improving the lives of vulnerable children and youth,” Charlesworth said. “We thank them for the inspiration they provide as tremendous role models and for putting their energies into action time and again to transform our communities.”

Irwin Elman has extensive experience as an advocate for children and youth including as an educator, counsellor, youth support worker, program manager, policy developer and, most notably, as Ontario's first independent provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. He served in the latter position until this March, when his office was closed by the Ontario provincial government.

“In this role, Irwin shone brightly. He was passionate, committed, fair and reasonable,” Charlesworth said. “Under Irwin's leadership, the Ontario office gave vulnerable youth a voice and was the national leader among advocates in youth engagement, an achievement of which he can truly be proud.”

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada was established in February 2002, with its home in Vancouver. The association is devoted to the ideals and legacy of Korczak (1878-1942), the educator, physician and writer. His teachings and work remain powerful and relevant for educators, social workers and children's advocates committed to social justice and education for democratic citizenship.

The association's mandate is to support the human rights of all children and to foster recognition of Korczak's humanism and sacrifice. It strives to teach others about this man, whose ideas were adopted by the United Nations in its *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989.

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