

## DÉSIRÉE M. MCGRAW - BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Since August 2015, Désirée has served as **President and Head of [Pearson College UWC](#)** (**Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific and United World College [Canada]**) – “Canada’s school for the world” and one of 17 [United World Colleges](#) around the globe.

More than 4,000 young leaders and changemakers aged 16 to 19 from every Canadian province and territory and 160 countries have attended the pre-university school on the unceded territory of the Scia’new (Beecher Bay) First Nation near Victoria, British Columbia. Pearson was the first educational institution in Canada to offer the International Baccalaureate.

From 2008-2015, Désirée served as **Executive Director and President of the Montreal-based [Jeanne Sauvé Foundation](#)**. Through its flagship Sauvé Scholars Program, affiliated with McGill and Concordia Universities, the Foundation sponsored outstanding young leaders from over 50 countries to participate in a year-long intensive, intercultural, residential and academic experience designed to encourage a global fellowship of social entrepreneurs and leaders.

Prior to that, Désirée was a **Senior Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada and Director of Policy for the Minister of International Cooperation**. In this capacity, Désirée coordinated all key files in the areas of sustainable development, stakeholder relations and multilateral organizations with direct involvement in Canada’s response to humanitarian crises such as HIV/AIDS in Africa, the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) and the Pakistan Earthquake (2005). She was also the principal political advisor and key contributor to the Government of Canada’s 2005 *International Policy Statement on Development Cooperation*.

In 2010, Désirée was named by the **World Economic Forum as a [Young Global Leader](#)** and was chosen to participate in the **[Governor General’s 2015 Leadership Conference](#)**.

She is an original member and serves on the Advisory Council of the **[Banff Forum](#)** for young professionals involved in public service, as an advisor to [AudaciousYOU](#), an AI-powered startup on the future of work and education). Désirée also serves on the

National Board of The Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada and is a Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Democracy and Diversity at Queen's University.

In 2017, Désirée was appointed by Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change to serve on the China-Canada Council for Cooperation on Environment and Development.

Désirée has previously served on the Board of Directors and/or Selection Committees of several organizations, including [OXFAM-Québec](#), [Canadian Lawyers Abroad](#), [McGill Journal of Sustainable Development Law](#), the Gordon Foundation Global Youth Fellowships, the [Lester B. Pearson Peace Medal](#), and the [London Goodenough Association of Canada](#). She is an alumna of the [Terry Fox Humanitarian Program](#).

With more than 25 years of experience as a lecturer, researcher, reporter and spokesperson in the field of sustainable development and as co-founder of Al Gore's [Climate Reality Project](#) leadership corps in Canada, Désirée has been described by the national media as "one of Canada's 10 most influential people on environmental issues."

Following her appointment by UN Under-Secretary-General Maurice Strong to serve as **one of two Youth Ambassadors to the 1992 Earth Summit**, she spent four years working as an international reporter for the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. She has also served on a number of Canadian delegations to UN conferences, including on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), the Biodiversity Convention (Nairobi, 2000) and the Climate Change Convention and Kyoto Protocol (Montreal, 2005).

At age 16, Désirée embarked on a national speaking tour promoting global peace and security issues during the Cold War era. The eight-month cross-country tour reached a quarter of all Canadian secondary schools and was the subject of an award-winning documentary by the National Film Board of Canada entitled "[Mile Zero: The SAGE Tour](#)" (1987). Désirée also participated in a video series featuring **David Suzuki** and **Gwynn Dyer** called "[Alive in the Nuclear Age](#)" (1989).

Désirée studied International Relations as a Commonwealth Scholar at the London School of Economics and Political Science and has completed executive training at

Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Yale University's Jackson School of International Affairs, and McGill University's Desautels School of Management.

A seasoned public speaker, Désirée frequently delivers speeches at convocations and conferences in Canada and abroad. In 2014 the *Financial Post* recognized her as a “Trailblazer and Trendsetter” among [Canada's Top100 Women](#), and she was profiled in *Première en Affaires* as [one of eight top women executives in Québec](#).

Fluently bilingual in English and French, Désirée hails from Montréal as do her husband Christopher and their children, John Patrick and Michael Connor. They now make their home in Greater Victoria, B.C. where Désirée is an active member of the [International Women's Forum](#) and the [Canadian International Council](#), and where she will host the 2019 congress of [Community Foundations Canada](#).