

GEORGE COUCHIE

George Couchie was a police officer for over 32 years. He lives on Nipissing First Nation with his wife Carolyn. They have three children – Sandra, Heather and Rob; and three granddaughters. He is a former national police power lifting champion and a member of the Red Tail Hawk Clan.

George Couchie is a retired Ontario Provincial Police officer with over 33 years of service, with 12 of those years delivering award-winning Native Awareness Training Programs and Initiatives. Couchie belongs to the Red-tailed Hawk Clan and his spirit name is Zoongiday, which means 'strong heart' in Anishinaabemowin.

Couchie created *Walking the Path*, a program with strategies linked to the Ontario curriculum for Grades 1 through 12, designed to provide youth of all backgrounds an understanding of Indigenous culture and history, and intended to build skills in youth to drive social change. The program is now in its 24th year of operation.

The Niigan Mosewak (Walking Forward) program, also created by Couchie, is a mentorship program geared towards Indigenous youth aged 12 to 17, which encourages positive and healthy lifestyle choices and celebrates cultural pride and wellness. The camp program is still running.

Couchie received many accolades in his continued efforts in cultural training, and a published author. He wrote the book, *Raised on an Eagle Feather*, to educate people on Anishinaabe ways. Another book is currently underway that focusses on the spark we have within us. Couchie is writing his message as a children's book that will appeal to everyone.

Couchie was recently awarded a star on the Kiwanis North Bay Walk of Fame. His name was put forward for his work on cultural awareness for Truth and Reconciliation. He organized three sessions starting in 2016 to 2018 for the City of North Bay with Mayor Al Macdonald. The four part sessions were free to the public and spoke about culture, history, effects of residential schools and a mini pow wow. The number of people attending the events was over 3000 in total.

In 2005 he received an Eagle Feather from his community of Nipissing First Nation in recognition of his work with youth. In 2012 he received his second eagle feather from the community for his dedication to the youth.

George continues to volunteer in local elementary schools delivering the Walking the Path program. He has been invited to speak to The Senate (Ottawa), the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario College of Opticians. He is a volunteer member of the OPP Chaplaincy.

During the Ipperwash Trial, George was a key liaison between the OPP and the family of Dudley George. He was recently invited to support OPP officers in the days following the on-duty death of an officer on Manitoulin Island.

Awards

Some of the awards George has received are as follows:

- Celebration Award in 1988 for his work with the Special Olympics in North Bay
- In 1999 citation from the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police
- In 1999 awarded a national citation for anti-racism initiatives
- In 2007 awarded an Anishinabek Lifetime Achievement Award from the Union of Ontario Indians
- In 2012 he received the Queens Jubilee Award for his work with youth
- In May of 2013 received the Order of the Police Forces from the Governor General of Canada. MOM designation – member of the order of merit
- In 2015 he was inducted into the North Bay Human Rights Hall of Fame
- In 2017 Honorary Inspector with the Ontario Provincial Police
- In 2017 he received the Senate 150th Anniversary Award
- In 2018 he was granted an Honorary Doctorate from Nipissing University