

Dr. Nada Haidar – Celebrating Women’s International Day with Dr. Nada Haidar

Chiraz: Hello and welcome to CDA Oasis. My name is Chiraz Guessaier. I am very pleased to be joined today by Dr. Nada Haidar, the current President of the Nova Scotia Dental Association. Dr Haidar. Was installed in June 2018 and has resumed a busy agenda for the Nova Scotia Dental Association. Dr. Haidar is a graduate of Dalhousie University. She's a general dentist practicing in Halifax and a very active volunteer in her community and in the Association. She also teaches part time at the Faculty of Dentistry. She is here to tell us about her journey in the dental profession as well as the one that led to her becoming the President of NSDA. Dr. Haidar, it is a pleasure to host you today and to have you with us. Welcome to this Oasis conversation.

Dr. Haidar: Thank you Chiraz, it's my pleasure to be here.

Chiraz: How did dentistry start for you? What made you choose the field of dentistry?

Dr. Haidar: So, I was born to immigrant parents here in Canada and my parents were both hairstylists, very, very hardworking people. They stressed education as something that was extremely important in our household. They wanted their children to have every opportunity in Canada. They made sure that really all we had to do was to study and do well. And when I was in university, I recognized that I had a lot of artistic abilities that I inherited from my parents. And I felt that dentistry would be an excellent place for me to put those inherited qualities to good use. And so, I applied, and it was a very lucky day when I got accepted.

Chiraz: Great Story. In this new environment today where women are becoming more prominent in leadership positions, have you encountered any barriers or challenges throughout your journey?

Dr. Haidar: You know, I've always had a journey where people encouraged me rather than try to tell me I couldn't do something. I believe that when you work in a respectful environment, and I believe dentistry to be one of those environments, that when you give forth respect, you get respect. And so, to be very honest to that question, I never faced a barrier in what I chose to do. I put my mind to what I wanted to do. I think I surrounded myself with the best people and I respected them, and they respected me in return. As far as challenges, I think any mom professional would tell you the same things, in terms of challenges, you know, I do teach, I work, I run my office, I work with the NSDA. I have two busy teenagers. My life is, you know, a juggling act and it's always been for me a challenge, you know, wondering if I'm doing everything to the best of my ability. But I wake up every day, I take on every task the best way I know how. And I just, you know, I hope for the strength to get through it all. And I've been, I hope doing okay so far.

Chiraz: And as the President of NSDA, what are some of the oral health issues that you're currently dealing with in Nova Scotia, but that you're also advocating for?

Dr. Haidar: You know, I think our issues here in Nova Scotia can go right across Canada and what our concerns are and what we work here at the NSDA towards improving every day. So, there's always the issues of water fluoridation, you know, there are communities that don't want it. There are communities that rally for it and we at the NSDA as you know, always will rally for it. It is one of those things that has reduced the carries incidents in the population so radically that we can't deny the research. So, that's always something that when it gets tabled, we are here to deal with it. We are also just like anywhere else in Canada, very concerned about access to care for our most vulnerable of populations. So, it is something that we focus on in all of our meetings. It is something that we brainstorm on how we can improve the access to care for Nova Scotians and, you know, I believe that across Canada and even here in Nova Scotia, we really do need to focus on oral health as being a huge component of overall health. And putting that at the forefront of the minds of all of our population, not just here in Nova Scotia but across Canada. I think if we are doing that, you know, emphasizing oral health is overall health, we are taking a huge step forward in everything dentistry,

Chiraz: Teaching at Dalhousie in the Faculty of Dentistry, you being a woman, what would some tips or pieces of advice that you'd give to your female students for example?

Dr. Haidar: The number one question I get asked is when is the best time to have a baby?

Chiraz: That is a great question.

Dr. Haidar: There is no best time. They come when they come and you know they're a blessing when they do. But you know, the women always ask me typical questions like how many days do you work? How many days are you home? For me, I work three days a week. I'm home four days a week. But I choose to devote one of those to Dalhousie University because it gave me so much. I do encourage them very much to be involved in the profession, not just to get up and go to work every day. It can be lonely without other people to talk to about what you face every day, whether it be with patients or just the business of dentistry. So, I encourage them all to develop a peer network that is supportive and to have a lovely family and to devote themselves to their family and to devote themselves to their career. And that you can have it all. It is a juggle, but you know, it is a very rewarding juggle in the end. And it is a fine example. I believe that I set for my children and I hope that they follow some day in my foot steps.

Chiraz: I think it's a challenging journey, but it is also a very rewarding journey, especially the way you're doing it by volunteering and being very much involved

Dr. Haidar: Absolutely.

Chiraz: I don't want to hold you longer, but I have a very important question to ask you. What would you like your legacy to be? What would you like to be remembered by as the President of NSDA?

Dr. Haidar: Well, I have a love for my students at Dalhousie and entering into the presidency, it was my hugest hope to engage more of the youth who are out practicing here in Nova Scotia. So, I am contacting each one of them personally from the graduates from zero to five years over the next couple of months and having a personal conversation with each and every one of them and inviting them all to take part in what the NSDA has to offer. These dentists are the future of our profession. And if I could leave any legacy behind, it would be that one person that joined because I called and asked them to.

Chiraz: I'm sure you're going to do more than that and you're going to accomplish way, way more than that, but I'll take your word for it.

Dr. Haidar: Thank you,

Chiraz: Dr. Haidar, it was a privilege to speak with you. Thank you very much for taking the time today to be on Oasis and I wish you all the best in all your endeavors.

Dr. Haidar: Thanks, Chiraz. I had a great time speaking with you today.