

## Women's History Month in Canada

Women's History Month is celebrated every year in October in Canada. This month is designated to celebrate the accomplishments of Canadian women throughout history. In 2021, Women's History Month theme is **Women Making History Now**. This theme recognizes the women that are making lasting impacts on our country especially in the context of the pandemic and current efforts to advance reconciliation, through their work and commitment to a better and more inclusive future for Canada.

Please join the EDI committee in celebrating the ground breaking Canadian women, and learning from the resource [here](#).

### Women in Canadian History: A Timeline

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| <b>1645</b> | One of the first hospitals in Canada was Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal. This was opened by <b>Jeanne Mance</b> a French nurse and settler of new France.  |
| <b>1813</b> | <b>Laura Secord</b> walked 32 kilometres to warn British forces of a looming attack by the Americans. As a result, the British troops and their Mohawk allies were able to prevent an American invasion at the battle of Beaver dams in the War of 1812.         |
| <b>1853</b> | <b>Mary Ann Shadd Cary</b> is an abolitionist and the first black woman in North America to publish a newspaper. In 1853, she published the <i>Provincial Freeman</i> ; this publication gave a voice to Black Canadians and called for an end to slavery.       |
| <b>1867</b> | <b>Dr. Emily Howard Stowe</b> was the first Canadian woman to practice medicine. Medical schools in Canada were not accepting women students at this time, Stowe applied and was accepted to the New York Medical College for women where she graduated in 1867. |
| <b>1875</b> | <b>Grace Annie Lockhart</b> received a bachelor's degree in Science and English Literature from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. It was the first degree awarded to a woman in Canada.  |
| <b>1897</b> | <b>Clara Brett Martin</b> was admitted to the bar as Canada's first woman lawyer.  |
| <b>1903</b> | <b>Emma Baker</b> became the first woman to receive a Ph.D. from a Canadian university. She earned the degree in psychology at the University of Toronto.  |

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| <b>1914-1918</b> | During the First World War, more than 2,800 women served with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, with the majority serving overseas in hospitals, on board hospital ships, and in combat zones with field ambulance units.  |
| <b>1916</b>      | As a result of the efforts of <b>Nellie McClung</b> and the <b>Political Equality League</b> , Manitoba women were the first in Canada to gain the right to vote in provincial elections.   |
| <b>1917</b>      | <b>Louise McKinney</b> and <b>Roberta MacAdams Price</b> of Alberta became the first two women in the British Empire to be elected to a provincial legislature.   |
| <b>1918</b>      | White women over the age of 21 who were Canadian citizens were granted the right to vote. It took another 40 years before women of colour in Canada obtained the same right.  |
| <b>1921</b>      | <b>Agnes Macphail</b> , activist and founder of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada, became the first woman elected to the House of Commons.  |
| <b>1924</b>      | <b>Cecile Eustace Smith</b> , a 15-year-old figure skater, became the first Canadian woman to represent Canada in the Olympic Games. She competed in the first official winter Olympics in Chamonix, France.  |
| <b>1927</b>      | <b>Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Muir Edwards</b> became known as the <b>Famous Five</b> . Their efforts launched a legal challenge that would mark a turning point for equality rights in Canada. The Famous Five were journalists, politicians, reformers and activists from Alberta who asked the Supreme Court of Canada to answer the following question: does the word “person” in Section 24 of the British North America Act include female persons? After 5 weeks of debate, the Supreme Court decided that the word “person” did not include women. |
| <b>1929</b>      | The British Privy Council declared that women are “persons” and were able to be appointed to the Senate of Canada.  |
| <b>1941</b>      | The Canadian Women's Army Corps and the Royal Canadian Navy, Women's Division, were formed and over 45,000 women volunteers were recruited for full-time military service other than nursing.   |
| <b>1954</b>      | <b>Elsie Knott</b> , an Ojibwa woman and member of the Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario, became the first woman elected chief of a First Nation community in Canada.  |
| <b>1960</b>      | All women in Canada were given the right to vote in federal elections in 1960 as a result of the <i>Canada Elections Act</i> . Before this time, Indigenous people living on reserves could not vote unless they gave up their treaty rights and Indian status.   |
| <b>1967</b>      | <i>The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada</i> was established and was the first Commission to be chaired by a woman, <b>Florence Bird</b> . The Commission's mandate was to “inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society.”  |
| <b>1969</b>      | <b>Réjane Laberge-Colas</b> was a judge of the Quebec Superior Court and the first woman in Canada to be appointed as a judge to a superior court.  |
| <b>1970</b>      | The report of the <i>Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada</i> was tabled in Parliament. It included recommendations on updating the legislative system and addressing such critical issues for women as poverty, family law, the Indian Act and the need for a federal representative for women.   |
| <b>1971</b>      | <i>The Canadian Labour Code</i> was amended in 1971 to include the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex and marital status, the strong reinforcement of the principle of equal pay for equal work and the provision of 17 weeks of maternity leave.  |

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| <b>1977</b> | <i>The Canadian Human Rights Act</i> was passed, forbidding discrimination on the basis of sex and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value for women.  |
| <b>1979</b> | <b>Nellie J. Cournoyea</b> , an Inuvialuit woman, was elected to the Legislature of the Northwest Territories. Nellie was the first Indigenous woman to lead a provincial or territorial government in Canada.  |
| <b>1981</b> | Women's rights were protected in the new <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . This ensured equality for women before and under the law  |
| <b>1983</b> | <b>Jeanne Sauvé</b> was appointed Governor General of Canada, the first woman to hold this post.  |
| <b>1987</b> | Combat roles in the Royal Canadian Air Force, such as flying fighter aircraft, were opened to women for the first time.   |
| <b>1992</b> | <b>Dr. Roberta Bondar</b> became the first neurologist in space and Canada's first woman in space.  |
| <b>1993</b> | <b>Jean Augustine</b> became the first Black Canadian woman elected to the House of Commons.  |
| <b>1993</b> | <b>Kim Campbell</b> became the first woman Prime Minister of Canada. Although her term as Prime Minister was short, she still inspired many young women to pursue politics. Kim Campbell has a background in law, political science and international relations and currently works in academia to advance social change, both internationally and in Canada.   |
| <b>1996</b> | <i>The Canadian Human Rights Act</i> was amended to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.   |
| <b>2001</b> | <i>The Canadian Human Rights Commission</i> recommends to Parliament that a proactive pay equity system be established.   |
| <b>2001</b> | The Government of Canada appointed the <i>Bilson Task Force</i> to improve the federal pay equity approach. In total, 113 recommendations were made for a new pay equity system.  |
| <b>2004</b> | <i>The Standing Committee on the Status of Women</i> was established in the House of Commons for keeping Parliament informed on issues pertaining to women's participation in society and promoting government action on equality for women.  |
| <b>2005</b> | Same-sex marriage was legalized across Canada.  |
| <b>2009</b> | <b>Commander Josée Kurtz</b> became the first woman in Canadian history to assume command of a major warship when she took control of the frigate HMCS Halifax.   |
| <b>2015</b> | Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the first gender-balanced Cabinet in history.   |
| <b>2015</b> | The Government of Canada launched the <i>National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</i> . The inquiry was the Government of Canada's response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #41, which states, "We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls." |
| <b>2017</b> | <i>The Canadian Human Rights Act</i> was amended to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender identity or expression   |
| <b>2017</b> | <i>It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence</i> (GBV), the first ever federal strategy on GBV, was launched. The Strategy will fill gaps in supports for diverse populations, including: women and girls; Indigenous women and girls; LGBTQ2 (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit) and gender diverse   |

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|             | individuals; women living in Northern, rural, and remote communities; women and girls with disabilities; immigrant and refugee women; children and youth; and senior women.  |
| <b>2019</b> | Karen Jensen was appointed as Canada's first Pay Equity Commissioner.  |
| <b>2019</b> | <i>Reclaiming Power and Place, the two-volume Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</i> , was released on June 3, 2019. It called for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across the country. |

Resources: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/womens-history-month/women-history-canada-timeline.html>