

National Nursing Week

Over the past 2 years, the world has been contending with the Covid-19 pandemic. With an increase in hospitalizations, nurses have been the backbone of Canada's healthcare system. In recognition of the ongoing hard work, the EDI committee would like to recognize National Nursing Week. The National Nursing Week this year falls on the week May 9th to 15th, which is an annual celebration of nurses. It also coincides with the birthday of Florence Nightingale (the founder of modern nursing) which is on May 12.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) will be celebrating with the theme COVID-19 pandemic: Nursing through crisis. For more information, please visit this website:

<https://rnao.ca/events/nursing-week>

To celebrate National Nursing week, the EDI committee would like to spot light a ground breaking Canadian nurse. Each province has its own college of nurses. For this spotlight, the EDI committee would like to recognize the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia and pioneer nurse Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk, the grandmother of one of Mind Forward's employees, Sadika.

Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk and her family came over to Nova Scotia in 1914. Clotilda was the first



generation of Barbadians that went to work at an integrated steel plant in Whitney Pier.

Clotilda's brother was in pre-medicine at Dalhousie University when he suggested she attend Nova Scotia Hospital. In 1954 Clotilda became the first Black graduate of the Nova Scotia Hospital School of Nursing (NSHSN). She went on to work at the Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth. Clotilda maintained her professionalism and succeeded in her job, while contending with white patient's unhealthy prejudice

and biases. Clotilda recalls one time; “There was however this one female who didn’t want to me to have anything to do with her. Six weeks later, she came around and started to speak to me and it became virtually impossible for me to avoid her. We became friends and she gave me a Royal Doulton tea cup and saucer after she was discharged from my unit.” Clotilda then was the Admission Unit head nurse for three years up until 1957 before heading to Grenada where she was the Director of Nursing for nine years at the island’s psychiatric hospital.

(<https://www.ronfanfair.com/home/2021/4/16/660bgw4t0x1dwuggiumeu1iji5yy5s>)

Building on the experience and knowledge she gained as the Director of Nursing, Clotilda moved back to Nova Scotia. Clotilda spent 24 years at Cape Breton’s psychiatry hospital, serving as nursing supervisor for five years and then was appointed as the first Director of Staff Development for 19 years. Clotilda was then appointed as the Director of Educational Services at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, a position she held for two years. In 1988, she became the first black person to be elected president of the Registered Nurses Association of Nova Scotia (now called the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia) in the organization's 100-year history.

(<https://www.ronfanfair.com/home/2021/4/16/660bgw4t0x1dwuggiumeu1iji5yy5s>)

In 1994, Douglas-Yakimchuk retired from nursing but that did not stop her from servicing the community. With her knowledge and expertise in the field of mental health, she contributed to the development of the community residential workers program at the Nova Scotia Community College Marconi campus. The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services recognized the program by adopting it as the minimum standard of care for residential services in the community.

On April 15, 2021 Canada lost this trailblazing nurse. At the age of 89, Clotilda succumbed to Covid-19. Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk had three daughters, two sons, 13 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; two stepchildren, three half brothers, and three half sisters.

“Ms. Douglas-Yakimchuk received many honors, including being appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 2003 and a member of the Order of Nova Scotia in 2018.”

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/obituaries/clotilda-douglas-yakimchuk-dead-coronavirus.html>)

Those who knew Clotilda best described her as:

“She was gentle, thoughtful, caring and classy.”

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard said Douglas-Yakimchuk was more than a nursing trailblazer. *“Clotilda was an activist, community leader and union organizer.”* she added.

Mayann Francis, Nova Scotia’s first Black Lieutenant Governor, held Douglas-Yakimchuk in high esteem.

“Growing up, I thought Clotilda was the most beautiful woman in the world,” she said. “In addition to her beauty, she was such a kind, smart, intelligent, compassionate and caring person who was full of ideas. She was just a great person and wonderful role model and I just enjoyed being around her. This is a woman who influenced and helped a lot of people and she will be missed.”

It was a great pleasure to do the research on this amazing woman. She was a great pioneer for black woman in Canada and within this field.”

To end on what a quote from her granddaughter Sadika;

“My granny was my role model. She was definitely my first example of what resiliency looked like. She taught me that education is key and it is something that cannot be taken away. She taught me the importance of humility and empathy.

She was definitely one of my biggest motivators. Definitely gave me constant encouragement while pursuing my own masters.

Although she was so education focus, she definitely had a balance definitely loved to dance and laugh.”

If you would like to know more here are some great articles on Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk:

<https://www.ronfanfair.com/home/2021/4/16/660bgw4t0x1dwuggiumeu1iji5yy5s>

<https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.4512933>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/obituaries/clotilda-douglas-yakimchuk-dead-coronavirus.html>

Please join the EDI committee in recognizing Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk.