

CREATING A WORLD OF EQUALITY

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 1994



CONDITION - FEMININE - CANADA
Partners in Action

The struggle for women's equality in Canada began more than a century ago, at a time when women were not allowed to vote, attend university or buy property. Today, women in Canada and around the world are still working to achieve full equality. The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women is scheduled for September 1995 in Beijing, China to focus the world's attention on the unequal status of women throughout the world and accelerate progress towards equality.

As Canadian women prepare for the World Conference, they are building on the historical contributions of women who have played a significant role in "Creating a World of Equality", the theme for the third annual Women's History Month in October. Canada is the birthplace of some of the world's pioneers, yet their names are unfamiliar. Pioneers such as Elsie Gregory MacGill, the first woman aircraft engineer in Canada and the first woman to graduate with a Masters degree in aeronautical engineering. During World War II, MacGill supervised the production of the Hawker Hurricane fighter aircraft and the Curtiss Wright Helldiver. Artist Pitseolak Ashoona earned an international following with her sculptures, stone engravings and drawings of traditional Inuit life, which have been featured in hundreds of exhibitions worldwide. Rosemary Brown, Chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission is respected throughout the world for her dedication to human rights. She is the past Executive Director and Special Ambassador of MATCH International, a non-governmental organization working with women from developing countries.

Canadian women have also been recognized for their contributions as inventors. Jennie Rimmer filed a patent in 1927 for her method of utilizing the secondary recovery of oil, a procedure still used today. Another of Canada's trailblazers was Emily Murphy, who became the first woman judge in the British Empire in 1916. Although she presided over the bench for 15 years, many lawyers often questioned her decisions, arguing under British common law, Canadian women were not "persons". Therefore, any decision handed down in her court could not be legally binding. After many years, Emily Murphy finally decided the question of "personhood" must be clarified. She and Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Muir Edwards took their case to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1928 and were rejected. Undaunted, they took their case to the final court of appeal in the British Empire, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. On October 18, 1929, the Privy Council overruled the Supreme Court decision and Canadian women gained legal status as "persons", thus making this day one of the most important in Canadian history in advancing women's equality.

History reveals female role models who have shown through strength, wisdom and vision, that women can progress into ALL areas of society. Women continue to make history in this country in 1994. Maureen Kempston Darke is the first woman President of General Motors of Canada Ltd., and Jocelyne Bourgon was appointed Clerk of the Privy Council. Bourgon is the first woman to hold the most senior position in the public service of Canada.

Canadian women are political and religious leaders, business executives, engineers, firefighters, homemakers and teachers. Perhaps the biggest gain for women today is greater freedom to be anything they choose to be. We salute our foremothers for giving us the opportunity to do so.

Status of Women
Canada



Canada



62 Immigrants for Domestic Service, [Quebec, Quebec], ca. 1911. Photographed by W.J. Topley.
National Photography Collection. W.J. Topley Collection. Neg. No. PA-126101.

1. Do you support any women only events?

YES ___ NO ___ DOES NOT MATTER ___

If yes check which ones

COADY PICNIC

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT ___

DECEMBER 6

CHRISTMAS PARTY

WOMEN'S CENTRE DAY ___

~~other events~~

COMMENTS: _____

2. Do you support International Women's Day Cabaret being a women only event?

YES ___ NO ___ DOES NOT MATTER ___

COMMENTS: _____

PLEASE FILL OUT ALL OR PART OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IT
TO THE WOMEN'S CENTRE OR TO THE AGM. THANK-YOU

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