

# CANADA – 150 YEARS STRONG



## WOMEN SHAPING OUR NATION

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## Introduction

This quilt celebrates and commemorates the amazing women who were instrumental in shaping our nation, both before and after finally being declared as “persons” under the law on October 18, 1929.

The women we have chosen to honour in our quilt include the “firsts” in their respective fields. They come from all walks of life, various ethnicities, ranging age groups and at differing stages in the lives of women – from as young as 14 years up until and even after their passing.

We have tried to select women who represent the very best, if not the “first”, in their field – from authors to suffragettes, astronauts to politicians and various fields in between. Many of these women have broken through the barriers that previously surrounded male dominated positions and professions.

What surprised us along our journey to research these great women for our quilt was the fact that we had heard of only a handful of them! Why is that?? We also discovered there are many lists identifying these “apparently fearless” women. There was, however, a core group of women that were identified in each and every list. The Famous Five were most prevalent - our beloved suffragettes! Frequently included were Roberta Bondar, one of 2 female astronauts; Elsie MacGill – the world’s first woman Aeronautical Engineer; Alice Munroe – author and Nobel Peace Prize winner for Literature and Haley Wickenheiser – first woman to break the all male barrier to become a professional hockey player.

It was a mere 87 years ago, that women gained the right to vote and started down the path towards determining not only our right to establish our own path in life, but also towards achieving equality with our male “partners”. For that is who men are supposed to be to us – our partners in life, our “mates” as the Australians say; as we have always been to them.

We ask that you keep faith with these “wonder women” of Canada – who have contributed to making our nation Strong, Proud and Free and spread these stories to your daughters, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, girlfriends, and female friends. We also ask that you keep faith and their spirit alive by exercising your right to vote at every opportunity!

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Photo credit: Public Domain

**The "Famous Five" were 5 Alberta women who are credited with asking the Supreme Court of Canada to answer the question, "Does the word Persons" in the BNA Act of 1867 include female persons? In 1929 women were declared "PERSONS" under Canadian law.**

**Henrietta Muir Edwards (1849 - 1931)** Edwards and her sister Amélia founded what would become one of Canada's first YWCAs.

**Nellie McClung (1873 – 1951)** Suffragette leader; first female director of the board of governors of the CBC and chosen delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva (1938)

**Louise McKinney (1868 – 1931)** Alberta MLA (1917 – 21); first woman elected to the legislature in Canada and in the British Empire.

**Emily Gowan Murphy (1868 - 1933)** first female magistrate in Canada, and in the British Empire.

**Mary Irene Parlby (1868 – 1965)** Alberta MLA (1921 – 1935); first woman in Alberta to be appointed to a cabinet position; first woman awarded an honorary degree from the University of Alberta.



Photo credit: Courtesy of University of Toronto

### **Augusta Stowe-Gullen (1857 - 1943)**

Augusta Stowe-Gullen, a medical doctor, lecturer and suffragist, **is the first woman to graduate from a Canadian medical school (Faculty of Medicine at Victoria University, Toronto) in 1883.** She was a member of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, a founder of the National Council of Women and a member of the Senate of the University of Toronto. In 1935, she was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

A leading figure in the suffrage movement, she succeeded her mother as president of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in 1903. She is known for her quotation **"When women have a voice in national and international affairs, wars will cease forever."**



Photo credit: Courtesy of Alcatron.com

### **Beverley McLachlin (September 7, 1943)**

In 2000, only seven months after being sworn in as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Beverley McLachlin was appointed Chief Justice of Canada. **She is the first woman to hold this position in the Commonwealth and is the longest-serving chief justice in Canadian history.** In her role as Chief Justice, she also serves as a Deputy of the Governor General of Canada.

McLachlin believes her position requires “conscious objectivity” and has stated her belief: “...the court belongs to the Canadian people and it should reflect the Canadian people.”



Photo credit: Courtesy of Pinterest.com

### **Céline Marie Claudette Dion (March 30, 1968)**

Céline Dion is a French-Canadian singer and businesswoman, who has won five Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year and Record of the Year. In 2003, Dion was honoured by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) for selling over 50 million albums in Europe. **Dion remains the best-selling Canadian artist and one of the best-selling artists of all time with record sales of over 200 million copies worldwide.**



Photo credit: Courtesy of Anne Murray

## **Morna Anne Murray (June 20, 1945)**

**With album sales over 55 million copies worldwide, Anne Murray was the first Canadian female solo singer to reach No. 1 on the US charts and the first to earn a Gold record for the "Snowbird" song (1970).** Well known in the world of pop, country, and adult contemporary music, Anne Murray is also the first woman and the first Canadian to win Album of the Year at the 1984 Country Music Association Awards for her Gold-plus 1983 album "*A Little Good News*".

Murray has received four Grammys, a record 24 Junos, three American Music Awards, three Country Music Association Awards, and three Canadian Country Music Association Awards. She has been inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, the Juno Hall of Fame, the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame, and Canadian Broadcast Hall of Fame. She is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame Walkway of Stars in Nashville, has her own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles and on Canada's Walk of Fame in Toronto. **In 2011, *Billboard* ranked her 10th on their list of the 50 Biggest Adult Contemporary Artists Ever.**



Photo credit: Courtesy of Wikipedia

## **Beverly Elizabeth Muriel Gregory "Elsie" MacGill, (1905 – 1980)**

Known as the "Queen of the Hurricanes", **Elsie MacGill was the world's first woman to earn an aeronautical engineering degree.** In 1938, Elsie received an offer of employment as Chief Aeronautical Engineer at Canadian Car & Foundry, and her application for membership in the Engineering Institute of Canada was accepted, making her the first female member of the professional association.

MacGill worked as an aeronautical engineer during the Second World War and did much to make Canada a powerhouse of aircraft construction during her years at Canadian Car and Foundry. After her work at CC&F she ran a successful consulting business. Between 1967–1970, she was a commissioner on the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, published in 1970.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Right Honorable Kim Campbell

## **Right Honorable Kim Campbell (March 10, 1947)**

**Kim Campbell is Canada's first and only, female Prime Minister.** At 16 she became the first female student body president of her high school. Thirty years later, she became the 19th Prime Minister of Canada at the age of 46. Ms. Campbell has spent much of her life breaking barriers for women. She is currently the Chairperson for Canada's Supreme Court Advisory Board

As Justice Minister, Campbell brought about a new rape law that clarified sexual assault and whose passage firmly entrenched that in cases involving sexual assault, "no means *no*". She also introduced the rape shield law, legislation that protects a person's sexual past from being explored during trial. Her legacy of supporting sexual victims has been confirmed through her work as the Founding Principal of the Peter Lougheed Leadership College at the University of Alberta.



Photo credit: Courtesy of wordpress.com

### **Karen Kain (March 28, 1951)**

**Karen Kain, recognized internationally as one of the most gifted classical dancers of her time, is a past Principal Ballerina with the National Ballet of Canada.** Upon graduating from the National Ballet school of Canada in 1969, she was invited to join the National Ballet. Kain became a principal dancer in 1971, performing central roles in a wide array of ballets, eventually becoming well known in Canada, with the help of legendary dancer Rudolf Nureyev. She worked as a guest artist with Roland Petit's Ballet National de Marseilles, the Bolshoi Ballet, the London Festival Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, the Hamburg Ballet, the Vienna State Opera Ballet, and the Eliot Feld Ballet. She retired as a professional dancer in 1997.



Photo credit: Courtesy of the Economic Club of Canada

### **Kathleen “Katie” Taylor (August 25, 1957)**

**Kathleen is the first woman to chair the board of a major Canadian bank (Royal Bank of Canada – RBC).**

Taylor became chair of the board in January 2014. She is also the former President and CEO of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Taylor is the chair of the board of the Hospital for Sick Children Foundation and a member of the board of trustees for The Hospital for Sick Children. She is also a director of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, where she serves on the Audit and Human Resources Committees. In addition, she is a member of the Principal’s International Advisory Board of McGill University and the Dean’s Advisory Council of the Schulich School of Business at York University, and a member of the National Council of the C.D. Howe Institute.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Ansgar Walk

### **Kenojuak Ashevak (1927–2013)**

Born in an igloo on the south coast of Baffin Island, Kenojuak Ashevak's career as an artist began in 1958 when a government administrator recognized her talent. She quickly became a role model for many other Inuit women. Among her more well-known works is *Enchanted Owl*, created for Cape Dorset's 1960 print collection; it was used on a postage stamp in 1970 to mark the centennial of the Northwest Territories and soon became an artistic icon. Ashevak lived most of her life in Cape Dorset, where she had a large extended family of children and grandchildren. **Gracious, composed, and thoughtful, she has been an inspiration and mentor for second- and third-generation Inuit artists.**



Photo credit: Public Domain

### **Emily Carr (1871–1945)**

**Emily Carr was a west coast artist who has been described as “Canada’s Van Gogh.”** Born in Victoria, Emily Carr began with few advantages. She studied art in San Francisco, London, and Paris while struggling to fund her education. Embracing the new modernist style, she came home in 1911 and applied her new skills to her favourite subjects — West Coast rainforests and the villages and artifacts of indigenous peoples.

However, Canadian critics and buyers were not ready for her work and she abandoned painting for fifteen years. It wasn’t until the National Gallery mounted an exhibition of West Coast art in 1927 that she received the attention she deserved. By the time of her death she enjoyed international renown that has outlasted that of her contemporaries.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Don Hogan Charles/The New York Times

### **Ga'axstal'as, Jane Constance Cook (1870–1951)**

**Jane Cook gained renown as a leader, cultural mediator, and activist.** Raised by a missionary couple, she had strong literacy skills and developed a good understanding of both cultures and legal systems. As the grip of colonialism tightened around West Coast nations, Jane Cook **lobbied for First Nations to retain rights of access to land and resources.** She testified at the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission of 1914 and **was the only woman on the executive of the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia in 1922.** A fierce advocate for women and children, she was also a midwife and healer and raised sixteen children.



Photo credit: GlobalNews.ca

### **Viola Desmond (1914–1965)**

**Viola Desmond is known for challenging segregation practices in Nova Scotia.** Long before the modern civil rights movement in the United States, a Black woman from Halifax took a stand for racial equality in a rural Nova Scotia movie theatre. It was 1946, and Viola Desmond, a hairdresser, caused a stir by refusing to move to a section of the theatre unofficially set aside for Black patrons. Desmond was dragged out of the theatre and jailed. While officials denied that Desmond's race was the root of the issue, her case galvanized Nova Scotia's Black population to fight for change. In 1954, segregation was legally ended in Nova Scotia.



Photo credit: Courtesy of CP/Toronto Star

### **Mary Two-Axe Earley (1911–1996)**

**Mary Two-Axe Earley was a Mohawk woman who challenged the law discriminating against First Nations women.** Mary improved the lives of thousands of Aboriginal women and their children. Born on the Kahnawake Mohawk territory, close to Montreal, Two-Axe Earley moved to Brooklyn, married an Irish-American, and had two children. She was later widowed. Because she had lost her Indian status by marrying a non-Aboriginal, she was barred from going back to live on her reserve. For more than two decades, Two-Axe Earley lobbied to have the discriminatory law reversed. In 1985, she was successful. Her efforts benefited about sixteen thousand women and forty-six thousand first generation descendants.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Wikipedia

### **Adelaide Hoodless (1857–1910)**

**Educational reformer and founder of the Women's Institute.** Adelaide Hoodless began her public life with the death of her infant son, who had consumed tainted milk. The tragedy inspired her to set about making sure that more women were educated in matters of domestic science, and she began pushing for home economics courses to be taught in Ontario public schools. She was also a powerful force behind the formation of three faculties of household science. Working with Lady Aberdeen, wife of the Governor General, **she helped to found the National Council of Women, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and the national YWCA.**



Photo credit: Courtesy of Postal History Corner

### **Pauline Johnson (1861–1913)**

Emily Pauline Johnson (also known in Mohawk as *Tekahionwake* - pronounced: *dageh-eeon-wageh*, literally: 'double-life') was a Canadian writer and performer popular in the late 19th century. **Johnson was notable for her poems and performances that celebrated her Aboriginal heritage; her father was a hereditary Mohawk chief.** She also drew from English influences, as her mother was an English immigrant. A poem that illustrates her creative blending of these two cultures is the frequently anthologized, "the Song My Paddle Sings".



Photo credit: Public Domain

### **Agnes Macphail (1890–1954)**

**Agnes Macphail, was the first woman elected to the House of Commons.** While working as a young rural schoolteacher she became involved with progressive political movements, including the United Farm Women of Ontario. She also began writing a newspaper column. In 1921 Macphail was elected to the Commons as a member of the Progressive Party of Canada. Her causes included rural issues, pensions for seniors, worker's rights, and pacifism. She also lobbied for penal reform and established the Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada. She later was elected to Ontario's Legislative Assembly, where she initiated Ontario's first equal-pay legislation in 1951.



(1)



(2)

(1) Photo credit: Courtesy of Orbitsservices.com

(2) Photo: Lina Giornofelice pictured as the lead character, Angelina Napolitano in the 2005 movie, *Looking for Angelina*

## **Angelina Napolitano (1882–1932)**

**Angelina Napolitano brought domestic abuse to national awareness.** Little is known of her tragic life, outside of the fact that she was an Italian immigrant who in 1911, killed her husband with an axe as he slept. Her action was in response to being “told,” while 6 months pregnant, to earn money through prostitution. The abuse allegation was ruled inadmissible and she was convicted of murder and sentenced to hang. The case ignited enormous debate and a flood of petitions asking that her life be spared. **It brought the “battered woman” defence into the spotlight and highlighted inequities in the law.** On July 14, 1911, the federal Cabinet commuted her sentence to life imprisonment. She was granted parole in 1922 and is believed to have died ten years later.



Photo credit: Courtesy of The Grey Roots Archival Collection

### **Nahnebahwequay, Catherine Sutton (1824–1870)**

**Christian missionary and spokesperson for Ojibwa people, Nahnebahwequay, also known as Catherine Sutton, took issue with the Indian Department in 1857.** At that time, the Department prevented First Nations people from purchasing their own ceded land. Sutton travelled to England to present the case to the colonial secretary and the British Crown. A group of Quakers in New York funded her voyage and provided her with a letter of introduction. She was introduced to Queen Victoria on June 19, 1860. The intervention of the British government allowed her and her husband, William, to buy back their land, but nothing was done for other First Nations families. Upon returning to Canada, she continued to argue for the rights of indigenous people.

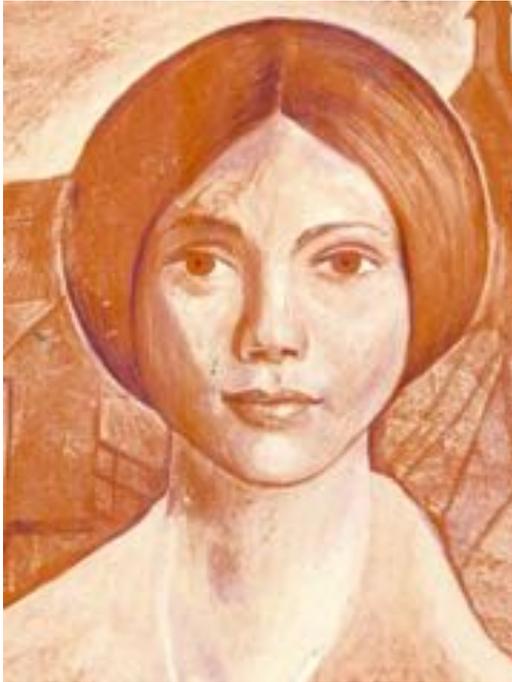


Photo credit: As depicted on the cover of *Woman of the Paddle Song* written by Elizabeth Clutton-Brock

### **Charlotte Small (1785–1857)**

**Charlotte Small, the wife and interpreter of explorer David Thompson**, was born at Île-à-la-Crosse, a fur trade post in what is now northern Saskatchewan. She was the daughter of a Cree woman and a white trader with the North-West Company. Raised among her mother's people, her knowledge of both English and Cree made her a valuable companion to Thompson. Married at age thirteen to twenty-nine-year-old Thompson, **Small would go on to accompany the explorer as he mapped much of western Canada, covering as much as 20,000 kilometres.**

Thompson acknowledged that his "lovely wife," with her knowledge of Cree, gave him "a great advantage." Their strong and affectionate partnership lasted 58 years during which time they raised 13 children.



Photo: Dorothy M. Speiser

### **Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–1680)**

**Kateri Tekakwitha was Canada's first indigenous saint.** Her story is a story of resilience in the face of colonial incursions and a story of a woman who tried to revitalize her traditions and values despite her conversion to Catholicism. Mohawk born, Kateri was orphaned at age four, and at age nineteen went to the Catholic mission of Kahnawake near Montreal, where she befriended a group of devout women and devoted the rest of her short life to prayer, penitential practices, and caring for the sick and aged. Miracles were attributed to her shortly after her death, and her gravesite soon became a pilgrimage site. Tekakwitha was canonized as a saint on October 21, 2012.



*Photo credit: Copyright - Cochrane Photography*

### **Justice Bertha Wilson (1923–2007)**

**Justice Wilson was the first woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.** Born into a working-class family in Scotland, Bertha Wilson trained in law in Canada. When appointed to the high court in 1982, she already had a track record as a justice with the Ontario Court of Appeal, where she was known for her humane decisions in areas such as human rights and the division of matrimonial property. During her nine years on the Supreme Court, she helped her male colleagues to understand that seemingly neutral laws often operated to the disadvantage of women and minorities. She thus helped usher in groundbreaking changes to Canadian law during the early years of interpretation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Canada International

### **Alice Munro (July 10, 1931)**

**In 2013, Alice Munro received the Nobel Peace Prize in Literature.** Ms. Munro was born and raised outside of Wingham, Ontario. She attended the University of Western Ontario where she studied English Literature and published her first short story in the university's literary magazine. Her first book of short stories was published in 1968 and since then she has published fifteen more. Her awards include the 2009 Man Booker International Prize for her lifetime body of work, the Governor General's Award for fiction (3 times), Writer's Trust of Canada 1996, Marian Engel Award and the 2004 Roger's Writers' Fiction Prize, culminating in the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature. When presented with the Nobel honor, she was cited as a "master of the contemporary short story". **Munro is the first Canadian recipient and only the thirteenth woman to receive this award.**



Photo credit: Courtesy of Canadian Museum of History

### **Jeanne Mathilde Sauvé (1922 – 1993)**

**In 1984 Ms. Sauvé was appointed by Queen Elizabeth to be the first woman Governor General for Canada.** Sauvé held this position until 1990. She had been elected to the House of Commons in 1972; she served as a minister of the Crown until 1980, when she became the Speaker of the House of Commons. Her appointment as Canada's representative of the Queen in 1984, was generally welcomed. Ms. Sauvé subsequently founded and worked with the Sauvé Foundation until her death, January 26, 1993.



Photo credit: Courtesy of NASA

### **Julie Payette (October 20, 1963)**

**Julie Payette is the first Canadian astronaut to visit the Space Station and the second Canadian woman to have flown in space.** Her space flights include STS-96 (1999) and STS-127 (2009); she has logged over 611 hours in space. Ms. Payette earned her B.Eng. from McGill University and her Masters of Applied Science in Computer Engineering from the University of Toronto. In 1992 she was selected, out of 5,330 applicants, for the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). She served as Chief Astronaut for the CSA from 2000 – 2007. Ms. Payette is an accomplished musician and singer and is fluent in 6 languages including English and French. She currently works in Houston, Texas as a CAPCON (Spacecraft Communicator) for Mission control Centre, NASA.



Photo credit: courtesy of the Canadian Encyclopedia

### **Roberta Bondar (December 4, 1945)**

**Dr. Roberta Bondar is Canada's first female astronaut and the first neurologist in space.** Following more than a decade as NASA's head of space medicine, Bondar became a consultant and speaker in the business, scientific, and medical communities. Bondar has received many honours including the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario, the NASA Space Medal, over 22 honorary degrees and induction into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Zoology and Agriculture from the U of Guelph, a Master of Science in experimental pathology from the University of Western Ontario (1971), a Doctor of Philosophy in neuroscience from the University of Toronto (1974), and a Doctor of Medicine from McMaster University (1977).



Photo credits: courtesy of thompsononline.com

### **Clara Hughes (September 27, 1972)**

Olympic cyclist and speed skater, Clara Hughes won two bronze medals in the 1996 Summer Olympics and four medals (one gold, one silver, two bronze) over the course of three Winter Olympics. **She is tied with Cindy Klassen as the Canadian with the most Olympic medals. Hughes is one of only five people to have podium finishes in the Winter and Summer versions of the games, and is the only person ever to have won multiple medals in both.** Hughes was the first Canadian woman to win a medal in road cycling at the Olympics, winning two in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Hughes was named to both the Order of Manitoba and as an Officer of the Order of Canada. In the summer of the year 2010, it was announced that she would receive a star on the Canadian Walk of Fame and on November 15, 2010, she was inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. Clara Hughes is the National Spokesperson for the Bell Lets Talk Mental Health initiative.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

### **Cairine Wilson (1885-1962)**

**Cairine Wilson became Canada's first female senator at age 45.** Prior to this, women weren't allowed to serve in the Senate as the law deemed they were not full "persons." **In 1949, Wilson became Canada's first female delegate to the United Nations General Assembly.** She was the chairman of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and the first woman to chair the Senate Standing Committee (Immigration and Labour). She was given the Cross of the Knight of the Legion of Honour by France in 1950 for her work with child refugees. Wilson again made parliamentary history in 1955 when she became the first woman Deputy Speaker of the Canadian Senate. She and her husband, Norman Wilson (a Liberal MP), raised 8 children.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Dee Brasseur

## **Capt. Jane Foster and Capt. Deanna Brasseur**

**In June of 1989 Capt. Jane Foster and Capt. Deanna Brasseur became the first two women CF 18 Hornet Fighter pilots in the world.** While Jane Foster left the Air force 6 months later, Deanna (Dee) flew the CF-18 in Canada and Europe. She retired with 2,500 jet plane hours. She and Foster were two of the first three Canadian women to gain military “wings”. Brasseur is also known for speaking out about sexual abuse in the military. In 1998, Deanna Brasseur was made a member of the order of Canada and in 2007 she was inducted into the women in Aviation, international Hall of Fame.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Creative Commons

## **Hayley Wickenheiser (August 12, 1978)**

**Ms. Wickenheiser, a five-time Olympic medalist, was the first woman to play full-time professional hockey in a position other than goalie.** She represented Canada at the Winter Olympics five times, capturing four gold and one silver medal as well as twice being named tournament MVP. She is tied with teammates Caroline Ouellette and Jayna Hefford for the record for the most gold medals of any Canadian Olympian, and is widely considered the greatest female ice hockey player in the world. On February 20, 2014, Wickenheiser was elected to the International Olympic Committee's Athletes' Commission. On January 13, 2017, Hayley announced her retirement from hockey and is now committed to a medical career.