



# BIOGRAPHIES of Selected Canadian Women Politicians and First Nations Leaders in Governance

Leona Aglukkaq (1967 - )



Leona Aglukkaq is a political leader and negotiator from the Northwest Territories. She was the first Inuk to be appointed to Cabinet. Her focus in government was to improve the quality of life for indigenous peoples, especially in the North.

- She was one of only two women in the nineteen-member Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. She was Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.
- Aglukkaq was instrumental in passing legislation that requires Inuit traditional practices and modern health methods to be used when training midwives.
- She told her Arctic College professor that her goal was to be a deputy minister in the territorial government by the time she was thirty.
- Aglukkaq served as Conservative MP from 2008 to 2015. She was Minister of the Environment, Minister of Health, and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.
- She was the first ever aboriginal Minister of Health. She was praised for her diplomatic leadership during the 2009 swine flu outbreak when hundreds of Canadians were infected with the H1N1 virus.
- Aglukkaq was born in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Her first language is Inuktitut.
- She wanted to be a role model for Inuit girls and women, just as Nellie Cournoyea was for her.

## Rona Ambrose (1969 - )



Rona Ambrose is a politician from Alberta who has held many different positions in government. She is a strong proponent of the rights of girls and women.

- In 2005 she made headlines when she criticized the national child care plan by saying in Parliament, "Working women want to make their own choices; we don't need old white guys telling us what to do."
- Ambrose has a Bachelor of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies and a Master of Arts in Political Science.
- In 2015 she became the interim leader of the Conservative Party.
- In 2006 when she was appointed Minister of the Environment, she was the youngest woman to be appointed to cabinet in Canadian history.
- As Environment Minister, Ambrose was very concerned about pollution, and introduced the Clean Air Act.
- She led Canada's call for an International Day of the Girl at the United Nations, which was successful. The day is now celebrated on October 11.
- Ambrose was born in Alberta and grew up in Brazil. She speaks Portuguese and Spanish.

## Joan Beatty (1940 ? - )



Joan Beatty is an influential Cree/Métis woman from Denschambault Lake, Saskatchewan. Beatty speaks Cree fluently and grew up learning the traditional ways of hunting, harvesting, trapping and fishing. She is passionate about the development of healthy communities.

- In 2003, Beatty was the first aboriginal woman and First Nations person to be elected to the Saskatchewan provincial legislature.
- She was appointed to cabinet as Minister of Culture Youth and Recreation and as a Provincial Secretary. In 2006, Beatty became Minister of Northern Affairs and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.
- She developed the SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards program which celebrates the outstanding achievement of aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan.
- Before embarking on her political career, Beatty was a journalist for CBC News.
- In 2008, she was approached by both the federal NDP and Liberal parties and was asked to run as a candidate from the Desenthe-Missinippi-Churchill River Riding. She chose to run for the Liberal Party.
- Beatty was a member of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation's Chief and Council where she was a councilor from 2013 to 2015.

## Carolyn Bennett (1950 - )



Carolyn Bennett is an Ontario politician known for being the first ever Minister of State (Public Health). She set up the Public Health Agency of Canada. Bennett also established the Public Health Network to enable provinces and territories to work with the federal government to protect the health of Canadians.

- Prior to politics, Bennett was a family doctor and university professor.
- She is the author of "Kill or Cure? How Canadians Can Remake their Health Care System."
- She has received many awards for her work, including the Royal Life Saving Society Service Cross, the EVE award for advancing women in politics and the CAMIMH Mental Health Champion Award.
- Bennett says, "My job has made me an even prouder Canadian and has well allowed me to feel that I have been able to truly make a difference."

## Ethel Blondin-Andrew (1951 - )



Ethel Blondin-Andrew is a strong aboriginal leader from the Northwest Territories. She focuses her attention on northern issues, especially those that affect the health and well-being of aboriginal children and women of the area.

- In 1998 Blondin-Andrew was the first aboriginal woman to be elected in the House of Commons into the Liberal caucus.
- Blondin-Andrew was Minister of State for Northern Development from 2003 to 2006 and was Secretary of State from 1993 to 2003.
- She received an honorary doctorate from Brock University to recognize her hard work and dedication in promoting the well-being of aboriginal communities.
- At a young age, Blondin-Andrew was forced to attend Grollier Residential school in Inuvik.
- She has a Bachelor's of Education from the University of Alberta and speaks her Dene language fluently.
- Blondin-Andrew works on treaty relations between the Dene, Métis people and the Canadian government.

## Rosemary Brown (1930 - 2003)



Rosemary Brown was the first black woman to become a member of any Canadian Parliament (federal or provincial). Born and raised in Jamaica, she moved to Canada at age 20 to study at McGill University in Montreal. Despite confronting serious racism and sexism, Brown accomplished great things during her career.

- She earned a Masters degree in Social Work at UBC, was President of the BC Council of Black Women and a founding member of the Vancouver Status of Women Council, the Vancouver Crisis Centre and the BC Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.
- Her slogan was "Brown is beautiful." She wrote a book called *Being Brown: A Very Public Life*.
- In 1972, Brown won a seat in the provincial legislature and in 1975 became the first black woman to run for the leadership of a federal government party (the NDP). She finished second.
- Brown put in place a committee to remove sexism from school materials and programs. She served as an MLA until 1986, when she retired from government. After teaching for a few years at Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria and UBC, she became CEO of MATCH International, an agency that promotes women's issues around the world. Later, Brown served as Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.
- She was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 1995, the Order of Canada in 1996 and in 2009, Canada Post created a postage stamp in her honour.

## Catherine Callbeck (1939 - )



Catherine Callbeck was the 28th Premier of Prince Edward Island, the second female Premier in Canadian history, and the first to win a general election. She has been a strong advocate for increasing the number of women in politics.

- She served as Minister of Health and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Disabled Persons in Prince Edward Island.
- Callbeck has a Bachelor of Commerce and a Bachelor of Education. While she was at university, she was the only woman in her commerce class.
- Callbeck was appointed leader of the PEI Liberal Party in 1993 and her party won the provincial election.
- She is an entrepreneur and taught business courses before becoming a politician.
- Callbeck was appointed to the Senate in 1997. She said, "My greatest work within the Senate ... was bringing the concerns of [Prince Edward] Islanders to the floor of the Senate."
- She has been involved with the Women's Campaign School and has mentored many young women interested in pursuing a career in politics.
- Callbeck retired in 2014. The following year she was named to the Order of Canada.



## Kim Campbell (1947 - )

### First Canadian Female Prime Minister



Kim Campbell was Canada's first and only woman Prime Minister, the first woman Minister of Justice, the first woman Attorney General, the first woman Minister of National Defence and the first woman elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

- When asked how she felt about being the first female Canadian Prime Minister, she said, "I'd be prouder still to say I was Canada's 10th woman prime minister."
- In 1986, she was elected as a Social Credit political party representative of the BC Legislative Assembly. In 1988 she replaced retiring Conservative member Pat Carney in the House of Commons.
- Campbell made notable amendments to Canada's Criminal Code in the areas of sexual assault and firearms during her tenure as Minister of Justice and Attorney General.
- Since leaving politics, Campbell has made her career on the international stage in a number of positions such as Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders from 1999-2003 and chair of the World Movement for Democracy.
- In 2014, Campbell suggested that the solution to the current problem of the under-representation of women in government is to elect two candidates, one male and one female, from each riding. This would instantly bump up the percentage of women to 50%.
- Campbell was born in Port Alberni and studied political science at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. She earned her law degree at the London School of Economics.



## Thérèse Casgrain (1896 - 1981)



Thérèse Casgrain was a leading woman in Quebec politics. She was instrumental in bringing the right to vote to women in Quebec, and was the first woman to lead a provincial political party.

- Casgrain hosted a popular feminist radio show, *Femina*, and was the leader of the League for Women's Rights.
- She was featured on the back of the 2006 Canadian \$50 bill along with the Famous Five. Their photos were replaced eventually by an icebreaker, leaving Queen Elizabeth II as the only woman on our currency.
- In 1948, she became one of the federal vice presidents of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which would later become the New Democratic Party. Casgrain led the Quebec wing of the party, the Parti social démocratique du Québec, from 1951 to 1957. She was president of the Quebec wing of the New Democratic Party.
- Casgrain was a campaigner against nuclear weapons. In the 1960s she created the Quebec wing of Voice of Women, an organization dedicated to promoting world peace. She was a founder of the League for Human Rights and the Fédération des femmes du Québec.
- In 1967, she was appointed as an Officer to the Order of Canada and in 1974 she was promoted to Companion.
- Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau appointed Casgrain to the Canadian Senate in 1970, where she sat as an independent for nine months before reaching the mandatory retirement age of 75.

## Christy Clark (1965 - )

### Premiere of BC



Christy Clark is a politician from Burnaby, BC. She is the second woman Premier in BC history (after Rita Johnson).

- Clark brought the anti-bullying "Pink Shirt Campaign" to British Columbia to raise awareness of issues related to bullying in schools, workplaces and communities.
- She began her political career in 1996, but left politics for a few years in 2005 and hosted a radio talk show called "The Christy Clark Show."
- Clark attended universities in Canada, France and Scotland.
- She was the second woman in Canadian history (after Pauline Marois) to give birth to a child while serving as a cabinet minister.
- When she ran for leadership of the BC Liberal Party, her slogan was "family first."

## Sheila Copps (1952 - )



Sheila Copps is one of Canada's foremost female politicians, known for being feisty and tough. Copps was the first woman to hold the position of Deputy Prime Minister and served for ten years in the federal cabinet as Minister of the Environment and Minister of Canadian Heritage.

- Copps entered politics in 1981 by becoming the first Liberal in over 50 years to represent the provincial riding of Hamilton Centre. In 1984, she was elected MP for the riding of Hamilton East and was re-elected five times in a row.
- Copps has a B.A. in French and English from the University of Western Ontario and studied at McMaster University and the University of Rouen in France. She received an Honourary Doctorate in Law from Université Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia in recognition of her efforts to promote bilingualism and her commitment to advancing the French language and culture in Canada.
- She brought forward the strongest federal environmental assessment legislation in the world, established Young Canada Works to provide summer jobs for youth, brought in copyright protection for Canadian recording artists and led Ministers of Culture from over 50 nations in the development of the first ever International Network on Cultural Diversity.
- Copps faced a great deal of sexism while in politics. For example, Conservative MP John Crosbie told her "Quiet down, baby" during a lively debate. Copps responded by saying, "I'm nobody's baby."
- Since she left politics in 2004, Copps has been working both in French and English as a journalist, broadcaster and political commentator. She is the author of two books: "Nobody's Baby" and "Worth Fighting For." Copps lives in Ottawa.

## Nellie Cournoyea (1940 - )



Nellie Cournoyea was the first female premier of a Canadian territory and the second female premier in Canadian history. She is the first native woman to lead a provincial or territorial government.

- Prior to politics, Cournoyea worked as an announcer and station manager for CBC North Inuvik. She co-founded The Committee for Original People's Entitlement (COPE), a political organization to speak for the Inuvialuit. In 1994, Cournoyea played a key role in negotiating the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.
- Cournoyea was first elected to the territorial Legislative Assembly in 1979, representing the electoral district of Western Arctic. This district was dissolved in 1983, and Cournoyea represented the new district of Nunakput for the remainder of her political career.
- In 1991, Cournoyea was selected as Premier of the Northwest Territories and served as premier until 1995 when she retired from politics.
- Cournoyea was awarded honorary Doctorates in Law from Lakehead University, Carleton University and the University of Toronto. She received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 1994, and in 2008 she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and inducted into the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame.
- Born in Aklavik, Northwest Territories, Cournoyea was raised in the traditional lifestyle of the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta. Cournoyea grew up traveling and hunting along the western Arctic coastline.

## Pat Duncan (1960 - )



Pat Duncan was the first female and the first Liberal premier of the Yukon. She was the second woman in Canadian history to win the premiership of a province or territory through a general election.

- Before entering politics, Duncan was a small business owner and active in her local community.
- When she became the first female premier of the Yukon in 2000, newspaper reporters in the rest of Canada mistakenly referred to her as "Mr. Duncan."
- She appointed a cabinet with three female and three male members apart from herself, which was a rarity in politics.
- Duncan helped arrange the transfer of power from Canada's federal government to the territory of Yukon in 2001, allowing the Yukon to manage their own natural resources and use them for economic development and provide much-needed employment.
- She helped First Nations settle land claims and take control of areas that were rightly theirs.
- Born in Edmonton Alberta, she has lived most of her life in the Yukon. She has a degree in Political Science from Carleton University in Ottawa.

## Hedy Fry (1941 - )



Hedy Fry is the longest serving female Member of Parliament and the first immigrant woman to run for leadership of the Liberal party. She is known as a powerful negotiator.

- She studied to become a medical doctor in Dublin, Ireland. She was an influential physician at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver for two decades. Fry was also a national leader in medical politics.
- Fry was a panelist on the CBC TV show Doctor, Doctor.
- She was elected to the House of Commons in 1993 by defeating Prime Minister Kim Campbell in her riding of Vancouver Centre, becoming the first rookie to defeat a sitting Prime Minister.
- When she ran for leadership of the Liberal party in 2006, Fry said that Canada's diversity is its greatest competitive advantage. "It's our weapon of mass inclusion," she said.
- Fry was born in Trinidad and immigrated to Canada in 1970.

## Nina Grewal (1958 - )



Nina Grewal is a businesswoman from Surrey, British Columbia. She was a Member of Parliament from 2004 to 2015.

- Her husband is former MP Gurmant Grewal. The Grewals were the first married couple in Canadian history to serve concurrently as federal MPs.
- She was a member of the Reform Party and Canadian Alliance.
- Before politics, Grewal worked as a sales manager for a company selling Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP).
- Grewal was born in Japan. She lived in India and Liberia before moving to Canada. She lives in Surrey, BC.
- In the 2015 national election, Grewal, her husband, and her 29 year-old son wanted to run for Conservative party seats. Nina was the only member of the family that the party supported to be a candidate, but she was not successful in winning a seat.



## Rita Margaret Johnston (1935 - )



Rita Johnston was Canada's first female Premier. She was involved in BC politics at the municipal and provincial levels, and was known for being a hard worker and a team player.

- She began her political career in 1969 when she was elected councilor in Surrey, BC. Her interest in politics was sparked by dealings with the municipality during the establishment of her family business, a mobile home park.
- In 1975, Johnston ran for Mayor of Surrey, losing by less than 100 votes. She served on the Council for the District of Surrey.
- In 1983, She became an MLA in the BC Legislative Assembly as a member of the BC Social Credit Party. She held the positions of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.
- Premier Bill Vander Zalm appointed her to Cabinet in 1986.
- Upon Vander Zalm's resignation in 1991, Johnston was chosen interim leader of the Social Credit Party by the party caucus, thus becoming Acting Premier and the first woman premier in Canada. Johnston intended to make her mark in this role, but her party lost the next election.
- Johnston stepped down as leader of the party in January 1992 and retired from politics.

## Rosemarie Kuptana (1954 - )



Rosemarie Kuptana is an Inuit woman from Sachs Harbour, North West Territories. She focuses most of her energy on promoting Inuit life and culture, environmental protection in the Arctic, and the right for Inuit people to have self-determination.

- In 1975, at the age of twenty-one, Kuptana became involved in talks about Inuit land rights within her territory.
- She hosted a radio show on the CBC Western Arctic Radio Station. Her program focused on cultural, social and political issues of the day that affected Inuit people of the Beaufort Sea area. Later she joined the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation that produced both radio and television in Inuktitut, one of the northern Inuit languages.
- From 1986 to 1989, Kuptana was Vice President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, involving the interests of the Inuit people living in Russia, Alaska, Canada, USA, and Greenland.
- In the early 1990s, Kuptana was President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. This is an organization that voices concerns for the Inuit people in Canada.
- In 1992, she was awarded the Order of Canada and the Governor General's Confederation Medal and was named as one of Maclean's Honour Role. She was also selected as the Up Here Magazine's Northerner of the Year.
- Kuptana grew up speaking Inuvialukton and learned the traditional Inuit ways of hunting and survival.
- She lives in Ottawa and is the President of the Circumpolar Conference.

## Jenny Kwan (1967 - )



Jenny Kwan is a ground-breaking politician from Vancouver. She was the first Chinese-Canadian cabinet minister in British Columbia, and a senior member of the provincial caucus of the NDP.

- In 1993 at age 26, she was the youngest city councilor in Vancouver's history.
- When she was elected MLA in 1996, she was one of the first Chinese-Canadians to sit in the BC Legislative Assembly.
- From 2001 to 2005, Kwan and NDP colleague Joy MacPhail were the only MLAs in Opposition in the BC Legislature. The Liberals outnumbered them 77 to 2.
- Kwan speaks Cantonese fluently.
- She has a bachelor of arts in criminology
- Her full name is Jenny Wai Ching Kwan.
- Kwan was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to Canada when she was nine years old.

## Louise Marguerite Renaude Lapointe (1912 - 2002)



Louise Marguerite Renaude Lapointe was among the first Canadian women to work as a professional journalist and the first French Canadian woman to hold the Speaker of the Senate title.

- Lapointe began her career as a writer about music and women's issues, and eventually wrote editorials. She worked as a journalist in the 1940s and 1950s at *Le Soleil* in Quebec City. In 1959 she joined the staff of Montreal's *La Presse*. She wrote for *Time* and *Life* magazines, and for the international service of Radio-Canada.
- In 1965 Lapointe was named Journalist of the Year. Her book, *L'Histoire bouleversante de Mgr Charbonneau*, sold 50,000 copies.
- She worked for the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs and Northern Development, and served on the Commission for Social Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs. She was also a delegate to the UN General Assembly.
- In 1971, Pierre Trudeau appointed Lapointe to the Senate, and she became the first French Canadian woman to hold the position of Speaker of the Senate in 1974.
- In 1989 she was made a Companion of the Order of Canada.

## Daurene Lewis (1943 - 2013)



Born in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia in 1943, Lewis was a descendant of freed Loyalist African Americans who settled in Annapolis Royal in 1783. She was a descendant of Rose Fortune, a Virginian who became the first female police officer in North America.

- Trained as a registered nurse, Lewis held a diploma in teaching in schools of nursing from Dalhousie University, a Master of Business Administration from Saint Mary's University, and in 1993 was awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Mount Saint Vincent University.
- Lewis first formal political involvement was in 1979, running for town council in Annapolis Royal.
- Her issues included increasing awareness of the area's history, and attempts at community revitalization. She was appointed as deputy mayor in 1982. In 1984, Lewis was elected mayor of Annapolis Royal, making her the first female black mayor in Canada.
- Lewis attempted to enter provincial politics in the 1988 election, making an unsuccessful bid to represent Annapolis West in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly for the Liberal Party.
- She was the first black woman in Nova Scotia to run in a provincial election.

## Sandra Lovelace (1948 - )



Sandra Lovelace is a Maliseet woman from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick. She is best known for her fight against gender discrimination that was written into the Indian Act. Her efforts led to a shift in policy that allows for less gender discrimination towards aboriginal women.

- She studied at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick and has a degree in residential construction. Before entering politics, Lovelace worked in the construction industry as a carpenter.
- In the 1970s, Lovelace began her battle against the Indian Act because she had been personally affected by it: she lost her Indian status when she married a white man.
- From 1977 to 1981 Lovelace brought her case to the Supreme Court, where she argued that the denial of her Indian status violated her human rights. She lost her case.
- She petitioned the United Nations Human Rights Committee, who agreed that Canada should change the law.
- In 1985, Bill C-31 was created and added to the Indian Act. This change allowed aboriginal women to marry whom they pleased without losing Indian status.
- In 1990 Lovelace was awarded the Order of Canada, and in 1992 she received the Governor General's Award.
- Prime Minister Paul Martin appointed her to the Senate in 2005.

## Flora MacDonald (1926 - 2015)

### First Female Foreign Minister



Flora MacDonald was an inspirational woman from Nova Scotia. She was Canada's first female Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and one of the first female foreign ministers anywhere in the world. She was also the first woman to challenge for leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party.

- As foreign minister, she played a key role in the escape of six American diplomats during the Iran hostage crisis of 1980. She authorized the issue of false Canadian passports so that the Americans could leave Iran.
- After the Vietnam war, MacDonald created a plan to help more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees to enter Canada.
- She once climbed to the base camp of Mount Everest.
- She wrote an environmental book called Rain Forest.
- MacDonald received the Order of Canada as an Officer in 1992 and was promoted to Companion in 1998.
- She was a global ambassador for a variety of charities and founded her own NGO called Future Generations Canada. This organization set up environmental projects and created schools for girls in Afghanistan.



## Agnes Macphail (1890 - 1954)



Agnes Macphail was a progressive, thoughtful leader and feminist at a time when the world was run only by men. She was the first woman elected to Canada's House of Commons in Ottawa in 1921, during the very first federal election in which women were allowed to vote or run for government office. She was re-elected in the 1925, 1926, and 1930 federal elections.

- Macphail fought some tough battles to change laws that effected prison reform, the reduction of the military and weapons, Canada's cooperation with other countries, and old age pensions.
- She was the first president of the Ontario CCF (which came before the NDP party) in 1932. In 1939 she founded the Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada, a group working with and for women in the justice system.
- Macphail was the first woman appointed as a member of a Canadian delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland — a United Nations-like organization established after WWI — where she was an active member of the World Disarmament Committee.
- Macphail was one of the first two women to be elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly in 1944.
- Macphail was responsible for Ontario's first equal-pay legislation in 1951.
- She worked for two separate parties and promoted her ideas through column-writing, activist organizing, and legislation
- Macphail died at 63, just before she was offered an appointment in the Canadian Senate.

## Pauline Marois (1949 - )



Pauline Marois was the first female premier in Quebec, and the only politician in Quebec history to hold the Finance, Education and Health portfolios. She was also a controversial figure, a separatist, and worked hard to create Canada's first subsidized daycare program.

- Marois proposed a Charter of Values that seeks to ban religious symbols from public life. For example, women wouldn't be able to wear the veil if they worked in the public service.
- Regarding her belief in the sovereignty of Québec, she said, "I arrived in the Outaouais as a French Canadian. I left the region identifying forever as a Québécois."
- She was appointed Deputy Premier in 2001 and in 2012 became the 30th premier of Quebec.
- When she was 30, she worked as Chief of Staff for Lise Payette, the minister responsible for the condition of women. She was afraid to take the job because she felt she was not "feminist enough." Payette told her, "With me, you'll become one." Two years later, Marois replaced her former boss as that same minister.
- She gave birth to her second child shortly after being elected in 1981. She is the first woman in Canada to give birth while holding ministerial responsibilities.
- Marois is nicknamed "Dame de béton," which means "lady of concrete," after she faced many challenges to her leadership from prominent members of her caucus.

## Elizabeth May (1954 - )

### Green Party Leader



Elizabeth May is the leader of the Green Party and an advocate for social justice, the environment, human rights, and sensible economic solutions. She is an environmentalist, writer, activist and lawyer. She has suffered much abuse by the media in her career as a politician.

- In the 1970s she was involved in a grassroots movement against proposed spraying chemicals from airplanes on the forests to kill insects near her home on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. The effort stopped spraying from airplanes from occurring again in that province. In this campaign, she was personally attacked in the media for her looks rather than her ideas or accomplishments.
- In 1986, when she was an environmental policy advisor in Ottawa, May was instrumental in the creation of several national parks. She was involved in negotiating the Montreal Protocol to protect the ozone layer with new legislation and pollution control measures.
- May is the author of seven books. Her book *Frederick Street* focused on the Sydney Tar Ponds and the health threats to children in her community — the issue that led her to go on a seventeen-day hunger strike in May 2001 in front of Parliament Hill. She also writes about the decline in democracy in Canada.
- May became leader of the Green Party in 2006.
- In the 2011 election, May made history by being the first Green Party candidate to be elected to the House of Commons.
- In 2012, she was voted Parliamentarian of the Year and in 2013, Hardest Working MP by her colleagues in the House of Commons.
- May was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2005. In 2010, *Newsweek* magazine named her “one of the world’s most influential women.” She lives in Sidney, BC.

## Hazel McCallion (1921 - )



Hazel McCallion was the longest-serving mayor in Mississauga, Ontario (1978 to 2014), known as “Hurricane Hazel” because of her outspoken political style.

- Early in her career, a psychic predicted inaccurately that she would only last for one term in office.
- McCallion was born on the Gaspé peninsula in Quebec, and she went to business secretarial school in Quebec City and Montreal. Her family could not afford to send her to university.
- She played for a professional women’s hockey team in Montreal.
- In 1979 a train carrying toxic chemicals derailed in Mississauga, followed by a large explosion and fire. McCallion led the peaceful evacuation of the city despite the fact that she herself was injured with a sprained ankle.
- During elections, she refused to accept political donations and asked her supporters to donate the money to charity.
- She is known for keeping Mississauga debt-free during her time as mayor.
- McCallion formed Hazel’s Hope, a campaign to fund health care for children affected with AIDS and HIV in southern Africa.

## Nellie McClung (1873 - 1951)



Nellie McClung was a writer, a politician, and an activist. She was a prominent member of the Famous Five, and she was instrumental in fighting for women's right to vote in Manitoba.

- As a child, she was disappointed that girls were not allowed to run races at a local picnic. "The whole question of girls competing in races was frowned upon," she said. "Skirts would fly upward and legs would show! And it was not nice for little girls, or big ones either, to show their legs! I wanted to know why, but I was hushed up."
- McClung was born in Ontario and grew up on a rural Manitoba homestead. She started school at 10 years old and earned her teaching credentials by the time she was 16.
- McClung joined the Winnipeg Political Equality League. She escorted then Manitoba Premier Rodmond Roblin through ghetto-like factories so he could see the deplorable working conditions women faced. In 1914 McClung staged a mock parliament in Winnipeg to bring even more attention to the issue. Manitoba was the first province to give women the right to vote in 1916.
- McClung was elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1921. She maintained her interest in social issues of the day such as Prohibition and medical care for school children.
- One of the Famous Five, McClung also played an important role in the famous "Persons Case", wherein women were declared "persons" under the law.
- In the 1930s McClung moved to Victoria. She was a member of the CBC Board of Governors, and was named a delegate to the League of Nations that later became the United Nations. She also believed that women should be ordained Ministers in the United Church.

## Alexa McDonough (1944 - )



Alexa McDonough is an influential politician from Halifax, Nova Scotia, who spent close to thirty years in provincial and federal politics. She was one of the first women to lead a major, recognized political party in Canada.

- McDonough studied sociology and psychology at Dalhousie University. Before she became a politician, she worked as a social worker and teacher.
- McDonough served as a member of the Nova Scotia provincial Legislature from 1981 to 1994. After the 1981 election, she was the only NDP representative in the entire provincial legislature and the only woman.
- In 1995, McDonough was elected leader of the national NDP party. She was one of the first women in Canada to lead a major recognized political party, taking the helm from Audrey McLaughlin, the first woman to lead a major national party in Canada.
- While she was the leader of the NDP, she called for a series of important meetings to help decide on the future of the NDP and Canadian social democracy.
- McDonough remained leader of the NDP until 2003. She was reelected in the 2006 and became the first woman to be elected to four consecutive terms.
- She retired from politics in 2008 and worked for a year as the temporary president of Mount Saint Vincent University. In 2009 she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. Mount Saint Vincent University created the Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender and Social Justice in her honour.

## Audrey McLaughlin (1936 - )



Audrey McLaughlin was the first woman to become leader of a national Canadian political party and the first member of the New Democratic Party to represent the Yukon in parliament.

- McLaughlin was the first member of her family to go to university. She has four degrees: a Master's Degree in Social Work and an honorary PhD from the University of Toronto and one from the University of British Columbia.
- She worked as a social worker in Toronto and as a teacher in Ghana, Africa.
- As a woman in politics, she faced a great deal of sexism. For example, the media tended to refer to her high cheekbones when they talked about her.
- She said, "When you listen, it's amazing what you can learn. When you act on what you've learned, it's amazing what you can change."
- McLaughlin was elected as the first New Democratic Party member of parliament for the Yukon in 1987. In 1989, she became the first woman to lead a national party in Canada. McLaughlin stayed on as leader until 1995 and retired from politics two years later.
- McLaughlin published her autobiography in 1992: *A Woman's Place: My Life and Politics*.
- She was awarded the Order of Canada in 2004 and she was on the National Roundtable on the Economy and Environment from 2005-2006. She worked on a variety of political projects in Africa and Kosovo, served as President of the Socialist International Women and represented the Yukon Government on Circumpolar Affairs.
- McLaughlin was born in Ontario and lives in the Yukon.



## Louise McKinney (1868 - 1931)



Louise McKinney believed that the purpose of a woman's life was exactly the same as a man's: to make the best contribution possible to her generation. She was the first woman ever elected to a Canadian legislature and, for that matter, in the entire British Empire. She was a determined, outspoken member of the Famous Five.

- McKinney started her working career as a school teacher.
- She played a key role in the fight for women to get the right to vote, which they obtained in Alberta in 1916.
- She was elected to the Alberta Legislative Assembly in 1917 at the same time as Roberta MacAdams. McKinney was sworn in first, so she gets the honour of being the first woman elected to government in Canada.
- She was a member of the Famous Five, a group of women who successfully petitioned the Supreme Court of Canada to determine whether women were "persons" under the British North American Act.
- McKinney championed the rights of immigrants, widows, separated women, and the disabled. Her efforts led to the passing of a bill that gave a woman the right to prevent the sale or mortgage of her home without her knowledge. In 1925, she was one of four women who signed the Basis of Union, which formed the United Church of Canada.
- In recognition of her work with the Famous Five, McKinney was made a World Vice-President of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE).

## Henrietta Muir Edwards (1849 - 1931)



Henrietta Muir Edwards was an activist, painter, author, and a member of the Famous Five. She advocated for divorce on equal grounds, mother's allowances, improved working conditions for women, and prison reform.

- Edwards was a member of the Famous Five, who worked on a high profile Supreme Court case challenging the status of women in Canadian government. It established that Canadian women were entitled to the same rights as Canadian men in political office.
- She created her own institutions in order to get things done. In 1875 she and her sister formed the Working Girls Association in Montreal, which was an early prototype of the YWCA.
- Edwards co-founded the Victorian Order of Nurses and the National Council of Women in Canada.
- She wrote two books on the legal problems and inequality of women in Canada.
- Edwards argued that, "If women had the vote there would be no need to come twice asking for better legislation for women and children, no need to come again and again for the appointment of women inspectors where women and children are employed; we would not ask in vain for the raising of the wage or consent."
- She was born in Montreal and later moved to Saskatchewan.

## Emily Murphy (1868 - 1933)



Emily Murphy was a feisty, intelligent woman from Alberta. She was the first female police magistrate in Canada, and is best known for being a member of the Famous Five. She was a First Wave feminist, a writer, journalist, and self-educated in the philosophies and rules of law.

- On the first day of her job as a police magistrate, a lawyer told Emily that “she was not a person in the eyes of British law” and therefore did not have the right to judge the case.
- Outraged, she and four other prominent women from Alberta fought the law and had it overturned in 1929, in what would be known as the “Persons Case.” These women were the Famous Five.
- Murphy was responsible for the passing of the Dower Act and the Married Women’s Protection Act. These laws ensured that women could own property (married women couldn’t do this before) and that a widow could receive one-third of her husband’s possessions when he passed away.
- Murphy wrote fiction under the name Janey Canuck.
- Her popular books include: *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (1901), *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910), *Open Trails* (1912) and *Seed of Pine* (1914).

## Rachel Notley (1964 - )

### Premier of Alberta



Rachel Notley is Premier of Alberta, leading the first NDP government in Alberta's history. She grew up in a passionate political family and was inspired to improve her home province through her work.

- Her father was Alberta NDP leader Grant Notley. When she was a college student, she challenged him at a public meeting on poverty and student debt. "Mr. Notley," she said, "my parents make too much money for me to get a loan, yet my parents are so cheap and I am so hungry. What would you recommend for me to do?" Her father gave her a \$20 bill when the meeting was over.
- Her mother was an activist, taking Notley to protest marches before her tenth birthday and contributing to her political and social awareness.
- Notley has university degrees in Political Science and Law.
- As a lawyer, she focused on labour, workers' compensation advocacy, and workplace health and safety issues.
- In 2015 she apologized to the Aboriginal community of Alberta on behalf of the government for its history of neglect and abuse.

## Pamela Palmater (1970 -)



Pamela Palmater is a Mi'kmaq woman from the Eel River Reservation in New Brunswick. She is a lawyer, professor, and an award-winning activist for aboriginal peoples and their rights. Palmater fights for many different social justice issues, including child and family services, treaty rights, education for aboriginal peoples, and off-reserve housing. She has been particularly critical of the Indian Act.

- Palmater has four university degrees, including a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies and History, a Bachelor of Law, a Master of Laws, and a Doctorate in the Science of Law.
- In 2011, she published her first book *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*. This book addresses the way that the Indian Act and the government decide who is legally a status Indian in Canada.
- Palmater was involved in the "Idle No More" from the beginning - raising awareness of the treatment of Indigenous women and the law.
- In 2012, Palmater ran to be the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and was a runner up.
- She has won many awards for her work, including the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in Social Justice.
- She is the Associate Professor and Chair for the Indigenous Governance Program at Ryerson University in Toronto.

## Irene Parlby (1868 - 1965)



Irene Parlby had a fascinating life as an English aristocrat and a member of the Famous Five. She was the first Albertan woman and the second woman in Canada to hold a provincial cabinet post. She was an important advocate for rural women and children.

- Parlby was born into an aristocratic family in England, and travelled the world before moving to Alberta in 1897.
- Her experience as a farmer's wife motivated her to improve the health and welfare of rural women and children in Alberta. She founded the United Farm Women of Alberta and was its president for 3 years.
- She was elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1921 and was known as "the Women's Minister" due to her focus on health, children, and women's issues.
- She is best known for being a member of the Famous Five, the group of women who successfully argued that women are "persons" with the same rights as men.
- Parlby argued that politics "most assuredly is a woman's job as much as it is a man's job."

## Jeanne Sauvé (1922 - 1993)



Jeanne Sauvé was a journalist, politician, and stateswoman who liked to challenge the establishment. She was Canada's first woman Governor General, one of the three first women members of Parliament to be elected from Quebec, the first woman federal cabinet minister from Quebec, and the first woman Speaker of The House of Commons.

- She was one of Canada's first female political correspondents. She hosted a CBC radio show called *Femina*, and a TV show called *Opinions*, that talked about taboo subjects at the time.
- She was applauded for modernizing the administrative and financial management of the House of Commons. For example, she convinced politicians to clear their own plates in the Commons cafeteria and instituted the first daycare on Parliament Hill.
- In 1984 she became Canada's first female Governor General (representing the Queen of England in Canada), even though she openly declared that the monarchy should be abolished.
- Sauvé was born in a Fransaskois (francophones living in Saskatchewan) community and grew up in Ottawa.
- Sauvé favoured themes of peace, national unity and youth. In 1989, she founded the Sauvé Foundation, a ten million dollar fund dedicated to the cause of youth excellence in Canada and that is today headed by her son, Jean-François.



## Denise Savoie (1943 - )



Denise Savoie is an activist and politician from Victoria, British Columbia. She was the first female federal MP Victoria ever elected, bringing West Coast values to Ottawa. She was particularly passionate about the environment, education, and national child-care.

- She was the first female Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole in 2011. Speaking about this role, she said, "I asked my fellow MPs to imagine a Parliament that functions well — where debate is not focused on scoring points, but rather on creating better, more inclusive public policy."
- She was the only "franco-colombienne" in the House of Commons from 2008 to 2012.
- Victoria had been a Liberal riding for 13 years until Denise was elected, thereby switching it to NDP.
- Savoie suggested the "New Democratic Party" rebrand to the "Democratic Party," hoping to modernize the perception of her party.
- She received the Environment EcoCouncillor Award, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects Community Service Award, and an award from the Canadian Institute for Business.
- In 2012, Denise resigned her seat in the House of Commons for health reasons.

## Mary Ellen (Spear) Smith (1861 - 1933)



Mary Ellen Smith was the first woman elected to the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, the first woman in the British Empire to be appointed a Minister, and the first to serve as Acting Speaker of the Legislature. She was a social reformer dedicated to improving conditions for women and children. She fought for women's right to vote.

- Her husband was a politician. After he died, Smith ran in the election and won his seat. She was the first woman in the British Empire to take over her husband's seat.
- It is because of Mary Ellen Smith that a woman is addressed as Madame Speaker when she holds the position of Speaker in any government in the Commonwealth. In 1928 she was the first woman to be a Speaker.
- She worked on legislation to improve the rights and conditions of women and children, such as the 1918 Minimum Wage Act for Women and Girls.
- Smith grew up in England and moved to BC in the early 1890s, settling first in Nanaimo and then in Vancouver.
- Smith was a popular speaker, presenting often in Europe where she spoke on behalf of the federal government about immigration to Canada.
- She was president of the BC Liberal party until her death in 1933.

## Bertha Wilson (1923 - 2007)



Bertha Wernham Wilson was the first female Supreme Court judge. She made history for women's rights in several groundbreaking rulings favouring the rights of women to make decisions about their own bodies. She worked to protect women from abuse, to ensure gender equality in the legal profession and was Commissioner of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

- When she was a student at Dalhousie University, the head of the law school told her to "go home and take up crocheting." Women lawyers were rare in those days.
- In 1982 Wilson was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. She was also the first woman appointed to the Court of Appeal for Ontario in 1975.
- She was well-known for her role in supporting First Peoples' rights.
- In 1988, Bertha said, "Liberty in a free and democratic society does not require the state to approve the personal decisions made by its citizens; it does, however, require the state to respect them."
- Wilson retired in 1991 and was made a Companion of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.
- Wilson was originally from Scotland.

## Jody Wilson-Raybould (1971 - )



Jody Wilson-Raybould is a Kwakwaka'wakw woman who made history in 2015 by becoming the first Indigenous person to be Minister of Justice for the Federal Government of Canada. She is a distinguished prosecutor and First Nations leader.

- Wilson-Raybould is a lawyer by profession. She served as a BC Crown prosecutor for three years (2000-2003) before working on the BC Treaty Commission (2003-2009). She worked on more than a dozen treaty negotiations with First Nations and provincial and federal governments.
- She was raised in Vancouver and Comox, British Columbia.
- Wilson-Raybould is a member of the We Wai Kai Nation. She served as regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 2009 to 2015.
- Her twitter handle is Puglaas, the native name given to her by her grandmother. It means "a woman born to noble people."
- Of her post as Minister of Justice, she said, "This is where I'm supposed to be and I know that I have an opportunity to work with all of the ministers across government, and I recognize and embrace that opportunity."

## Kathleen Wynne (1953 - )

Premier of Ontario



Kathleen Wynne is a community activist, mediator, and politician. She is the first female Premier of Ontario, the first openly gay head of government in Canada, and the second openly gay head of government in the English-speaking world.

- Wynne was a public school trustee and participated in many grassroots community projects before becoming a politician.
- She said, "In every election, homophobia has been part of the landscape and in every campaign, I've been able to become connected enough to my constituents that they know who I am and that I can be elected on my merits."
- Wynne has Masters degrees in Linguistics and Adult Education.
- She is guided by the values of fairness, diversity, collaboration and creativity.