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“Votes for Women” pennant (courtesy The Manitoba Museum, H9-38-198). There were signs of some women being able to vote in the early 19th century in British North America, notably in Lower Canada but also in the Maritimes and Canada West. At least 27 Kanyen’kehà:ka women from Kahnawake, Lower Canada, cast ballots in an 1825 election. Some Catholic, Protestant and Jewish women with property also voted in early Quebec elections. After enslavement was abolished in 1834, Black women and men were not officially excluded as a group from the Canadian franchise. Women’s right to vote was not to last, however. By the mid-19th century, full citizenship was legally limited to white men and most colonies removed women’s franchise. The British North America Act of 1867 specified that only “Male British Subject, aged Twenty-one Years or upwards, being a Householder, shall have a Vote.” By the end of the century, laws across Canada mandated near-universal, white male citizenship at the federal and provincial level and explicitly excluded female voters. The necessity of being male to vote reflected the emerging Victorian idea of placing women and men in separate spheres. Women were idealized as guarantors of cultural survival, who had no place in political life. They were expected to remain at home, producing children and preserving culture. As French Canadians increasingly became a minority culture among English-speaking Protestants in British North America, women’s suffrage was seen as a particular threat to their national survival. There was opposition to having independent women who were believed to be a danger to religious, ethnic or national communities. Exclusion from the franchise also remained acceptable to many Canadians because many women as well as men believed that men had greater capacity for reason and that men’s potential for military service justified more rights. Opposition would only dissipate as suffragists successfully redefined women as legitimate public subjects and the public sphere as a respectable space for women to exercise authority. In 1885, House of Commons debates over a new federal franchise act (previously the right to vote was set by provinces) demonstrated the significance of suffrage in shaping the country. The decision to exclude all women, most Indigenous peoples (see also Indian Act) and all Asian persons was meant to preserve white men’s citizenship and the right to rule. Rise of the Suffrage Movement By the last decades of the 19th century, Canadian women increasingly protested against discrimination in education and paid employment as well as violence against women and children. One remedy was the suffrage campaign, which was led by many first-generation university graduates and female professionals in medicine, teaching and journalism. Suffragists advocated for the extension of suffrage to include women. They also insisted on the value of women’s maternal qualities in private and public life. Clipping from The Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 11 September 1915 (courtesy University of Manitoba Libraries, Digital Collections). University of Manitoba Libraries, Digital Collections Early suffragists were typically white, middle-class women, many of whom believed that suffrage would increase the influence of their class and result in a better country. Many of these suffragists were not inclusive, however, and even advocated against non-white women getting the vote. Nonetheless, there were non-white advocates who fought for women’s suffrage such as Black abolitionists like Mary Ann Shadd. Shadd edited the Provincial Freeman and advocated for women’s rights. Suffrage was also supported by unionists, socialists and temperance activists. The majority of Canadian suffragists relied on peaceful campaigning. Only a handful identified with the militant suffragettes led by Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) and the Women’s Social and Political Union in the United Kingdom. While they campaigned at every level of government for the vote, suffragists made their first inroads at the local level. Many Canadians believed that women’s mothering and domestic qualities were especially useful in managing local affairs. By 1900, suffragists had won municipal voting privileges for property-owning women in many cities, and some women could vote in elections for park, library and school boards. Mary Ann Shadd, editor of the Provincial Freeman, was a pioneer suffragist and abolitionist, who used her newspaper as a platform to discuss women’s rights, including the right to vote. The paper also informed readers of suffrage meetings held in Canada and the United States. However, Shadd was marginalized as a Black woman and as an opponent of American slavery. Her influence was all the more minimal as she returned to the United States in the 1860s. Emily Howard Stowe, from The Women's Suffrage Movement in Canada (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-9480). In Ontario, widening public debate about suffrage and women’s rights produced the Toronto Women's Literary Club (TWLC). The TWLC was devoted to higher education and intellectual development as well as to the physical welfare and employment conditions of women workers. To the TWLC, extending the vote to women would help to improve women’s safety as well as their chances of employment and education. The TWLC was created in 1876–1877 by Emily Howard Stowe, one of Canada's first female doctors. She and her daughter, Augusta Stowe-Gullen, spearheaded Ontario's suffrage campaign for 40 years (see Women’s Suffrage in Ontario). In 1883, the TWLC became the Toronto Women's Suffrage Association, which in 1889 became the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association. From the 1880s on, many Ontario unionists and socialists, including Knights of Labor journalist Thomas Phillips Thompson, also endorsed women’s suffrage. Suffragists were not a homogeneous group; nor did they focus only on suffrage. Campaigns also called for improved public health, equality in employment and education, social assistance and condemnation of violence. Despite numerous petitions and private members’ bills, lawmakers across the country (with a few exceptions) repeatedly voted against the enfranchisement of women. Suffragists had to undertake long years of public education and agitation while facing repeated abuse. In the 1890s, critical support came from Canada’s largest women’s group, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The Union’s leaders believed the franchise would help introduce prohibition and thus reduce violence. At Rideau Hall, Ottawa, Ontario, October 1898. Including Lady Aberdeen (centre), Ottawa, Ontario, May 1898. By 1914, women’s suffrage was seen as both a progressive and conservative cause. Growing urbanization, industrialization and immigration in the years before the First World War raised fears about how to integrate newcomers and control working-class Canadians. Some suffragists, especially those who were unionists and socialists, took up the cause of women workers, who were for the most part ill-paid and unprotected. Progressive members also championed suffrage early on as an expression of women’s right to equality while the respectable and cautious National Council of Women of Canada only endorsed the vote in 1910. Meanwhile, more conservative suffragists viewed the vote as a means of strengthening white middle-class power while oppressing non-white minorities and working-class Canadians. “The Canadian Mother” poster encouraging people to vote for the union government, Ottawa, Ontario, Heliotype Co. Ltd., 1914-1918. Union Government campaign poster, 1914-1918. Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, 1983-28-726. Nursing Sisters at a Canadian hospital voting in the Canadian federal election, France, December 1917. Anti-conscription rally in Victoria Square, Montréal, Quebec on May 24th, 1917. Image: Library and Archives Canada/C-006859. The First World War interrupted the suffrage campaigns and divided activists. Many concentrated on supporting the war effort, including conscription, in groups such as Women’s Patriotic Fund. Socialist and pacifist suffragists preferred to place their hopes on an armistice and international collaboration. Some endorsed the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, formed in 1915. A Canadian, Julia Grace Wales, wrote the League’s founding document, “Continuous Mediation without Armistice.” During the war, Winnipeg suffragist and journalist Francis Marion Beynon left her job and moved to Brooklyn due in part to her opposition to the war. Beynon and Ontario pacifist and suffragist Alice Chown left moving testaments to their views in Aleta Dey (1919) and The Stairway (1921) respectively. Suffrage in the West Opposition to feminism seemed strongest in central and eastern Canada, while the western provinces appeared more receptive. The West’s greater openness to women’s suffrage can be interpreted as strategic: newly colonized regions relied on white settler women to guarantee the displacement of Indigenous peoples. The vote was to attract and reward white newcomers. Though the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was a powerful advocate for the franchise in the West, the farm movement was at least equally influential. As early as the 1870s, the Manitoba Icelandic community was endorsing women’s suffrage. Margret Benedictsson, circa 1905 (courtesy Icelandic Collection, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba). Dr. Amelia Yeomans (courtesy Medicine Photograph Collection, College of Medicine Archives, University of Manitoba). Francis Beynon (courtesy Archives of Manitoba, N13687). Lillian Beynon Thomas (courtesy Archives of Manitoba, Personalities, L.B.1., N19359). An early suffragette, at 75 Hind travelled around the world to observe agricultural methods. Gladstone, Manitoba, 1905-1922. Early Manitoba leaders included Margret Benedictsson, Amelia Yeomans, Francis Marion Beynon, E. Cora Hind and Nellie McClung. A popular author and member of the Canadian Women's Press Club, McClung became the Prairie movement's dominant figure. Her best-seller In Times Like These (1915) combined serious argument with satiric put-down of anti-suffragists. Manitoba’s Political Equality League, established in 1912, was a star-studded assembly of articulate and hard-working activists. In 1914, the League held a successful fundraiser with a well-publicized mock parliament, a tactic employed elsewhere as well. An interior view of the Walker Theatre, 1907 (courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba/N13272). (courtesy PAM/N-10863). On the stage of Winnipeg’s Walker Theatre, women played politicians, with Nellie McClung mocking Conservative Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin, as she debated whether or not to give men the vote. In 1915, suffragist support was critical to the victory of the pro-suffrage Liberal Party in the provincial election. (See also Women’s Suffrage in Manitoba.) Presentation of petition by the Political Equality League for the enfranchisement of women, 23 December 1915. Clockwise from top left: A.V. Thomas, F.J. Dixon, Amelia Burritt, Dr. Mary Crawford (courtesy Archives of Manitoba, Events 173/3, N9905). Tied petition rolls contained 39,584 signatures, Archives of Manitoba, Events 173/4, Presentation of petition by Political Equality League for enfranchisement of women, 23 December 1915 (N9906) Franchise Petitions at Legislature, Archives of Manitoba, Events 173/6, Presentation of petition by Political Equality League for enfranchisement of women, Winnipeg, 23 December 1915 (N9908) Victories in the West and in Ontario Western suffragists found powerful supporters in the farm, labour and social gospel movements. Like men of their own class and community, Prairie suffragists never paid much attention to Indigenous women and were generally convinced of the superiority of Anglo-Celtic peoples. (See also Indigenous Women’s Issues.) On 28 January 1916, Manitoba women became the first in Canada to win both the right to vote and to hold provincial office. Manitoba was followed by Saskatchewan on 14 March and Alberta on 19 April 1916. In these instances, the farm movement supported women’s suffrage as the proper course for a democracy. The WCTU’s determination to protect the home and to end violence against women and children strengthened the suffrage cause. British suffragette Barbara Wylie visited Saskatchewan in 1912. Her communications, like those by activists from the United States and the rest of Canada, affirmed powerful global ties among suffragists. In 1914, a number of political equality leagues were created in Saskatchewan as well as the Women’s Grain Growers’ Association (WGGA). Farm journalist and president of the WGGA Violet McNaughton was Saskatchewan’s most powerful feminist for many years. In 1915, the WGGA and the WCTU collaborated to form the Provincial Equal Franchise Board. Their petition campaign ensured the Liberal government’s passage of a suffrage bill in 1916. Alberta showed a similar groundswell of support. The United Farmers of Alberta endorsed suffrage in 1912, and three years later the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA) emerged to campaign for suffrage, temperance and improvements in health and education. By then, Nellie McClung had moved to the province and joined suffragists such as journalist Emily Murphy, WCTU leader Louise McKinney and UFWA activist Irene Parlby. Nellie McClung (left), Emily Murphy (right) and Alice Jamieson (March 1916) were the leaders of the feminist cause in western Canada (courtesy City of Edmonton Archives). Nellie McClung, “The Heroine of the Campaign,” 1914. (courtesy Archives of Manitoba, N8342). In 1916, Emily Murphy was appointed police magistrate for Edmonton, the first woman magistrate in the British Empire. Louise McKinney was one of the appellants in the Persons Case and one of the first women elected to a legislature in Canada (courtesy Glenbow Archives/NA-825-1). Parlby was the first woman to become a Cabinet minister in Alberta. She supported Acts concerning women's rights (courtesy Glenbow Archives). In British Columbia, campaigns drew most heavily on urban activists, notably in Victoria, where suffrage demands were pioneered, and Vancouver, which had assumed centre-stage by the First World War. Once again, the WCTU was influential, but so too were the local councils of women as well as university women’s clubs. British Columbia also produced various political equality leagues and welcomed suffrage speakers from the rest of Canada, the UK and the US. British Columbia’s socialist and labour movements were critical, with the BC Federation of Labour endorsing suffrage in 1912. As elsewhere in Canada, BC suffragists showed little interest in Indigenous or Asian women, who served more often as an inspiration for charity rather than for sisterly alliance. On 19 March 1913, the Vancouver Sun sold out a special women’s edition that, together with massive petitions, demonstrated the breadth of support mobilized against anti-suffrage Conservative governments in Victoria and Ottawa. Suffrage leaders such as Helena Gutteridge, Mary Ellen Smith and Laura Marshall Jamieson displayed the talents that would later make them successful elected politicians. British Columbia was the only jurisdiction in Canada to put women’s suffrage to a referendum of male voters, during the provincial election of 1916. Bolstered by the favorable results (43,619 to 18,604 ballots), the new Liberal government approved women’s suffrage on 5 April 1917. (See also Women's Suffrage in the West timeline.) A week later, on 12 April 1917, Ontario suffragists caught up with the West. It was the first conservative government to pass women’s suffrage. Ontario produced the only suffrage organizations claiming a nation-wide mandate — the Dominion Women’s Enfranchisement Association and Canadian Women’s Suffrage Association — but their campaigns were largely restricted to the province. Although the WCTU was the strongest provincial group in support of women’s suffrage, Ontario also produced charismatic non-conformists such as social reformer, writer and spiritualist Flora MacDonald Denison. Denison admired British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst and was a Canadian representative in giant protests in the UK and the US. (See also Women’s Suffrage in Ontario.) Achieving the Vote in Federal Elections During the First World War, pressure mounted on federal politicians in the Conservative — later the Union Government (1917) — of Sir Robert Borden. The government wished both to acknowledge women’s contribution to the war effort and to appeal to future female voters by extending the franchise; it also wanted to firm up support for conscription. The government also feared that voters, especially men, who were born in countries with which Canada was at war would oppose conscription. In the controversial Military Voters Act and Wartime Elections Act of 1917, the federal vote was extended to nursing sisters (women serving in the Canadian Army Medical Corps) and to close female relatives of military men. At the same time, the Wartime Elections Act disenfranchised thousands of immigrants from enemy countries who had become citizens after 1902 as well as all conscientious objectors (those who refused to go to war because it was against their religious, moral or ethical beliefs). The Act divided Canadian suffragists, many of whom opposed partial enfranchisement and disenfranchisement. Nova Scotia-born, Borden entered the provincial parliament in 1896, took command of the federal Conservative party in 1901, and was Canadian Prime Minister, 1911-1920.en. (courtesy William James Topley / Library and Archives Canada / PA-028129) Once conscription was secured, the government began to argue that women had earned the right to vote through their war work. On 24 May 1918, female citizens, not included under racial or Indigenous exclusions, aged 21 and over became eligible to vote in federal elections regardless of whether they had yet attained the provincial franchise. In July 1919, enfranchised women gained the right to stand for the House of Commons, although appointment to the Senate remained out of reach until after the Persons Case of 1929. The Dominion Elections Act of 1920 continued to exclude voting rights on the basis of race in the provinces (this meant Japanese, Chinese and South Asians in BC and the Chinese in Saskatchewan). Similarly, Inuit and most First Nations were excluded from voting. Atlantic Provinces In Nova Scotia, women had been formally excluded from the provincial vote in 1851. In the 1890s, Nova Scotian women launched a campaign for the franchise. The suffrage movement was strongest in Halifax, where women championed progressive causes. Many activists were associated with the Local Council of Women and the WCTU. These included scholar and philanthropist Eliza Ritchie and Anna Leonowens, author of The English Governess at the Siamese Court (the inspiration for the play and film, The King and I). On 26 April 1918, women in Nova Scotia won the right to vote. Eliza Ritchie, Massachusetts, United States of America, Partridge Studio, 1856-1933. Partridge Studio . Library and Archives Canada, e008295886 The WCTU was also critical from the 1880s onward in New Brunswick, where a bill to enfranchise single, property-owning women failed in 1870. Sixteen years later, that same small group won the municipal franchise. New Brunswick’s only group devoted to the vote was the Women’s Enfranchisement Association of New Brunswick, which was formed in 1894 in Saint John. Not until 17 April 1919 was New Brunswick’s 1843 prohibition of female voters finally revoked. Prince Edward Island, which produced no popular agitation for women’s suffrage, revoked its 1836 formal exclusion of women on 3 May 1922. The suffrage movement in Newfoundland, a Crown colony separate from Canada, was active from about the 1890s. In 1892, a suffrage bill supported by the local branch of the WCTU was defeated. Many Newfoundland suffragists were directly inspired by British campaigns, and in 1920, the WCTU and The Women’s Patriotic Association inspired the Women’s Franchise League, which fought hard to win women the vote. That right was eventually obtained on 3 April 1925. In Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland, the right to stand for provincial office accompanied voting rights, but New Brunswick resisted that extension until 9 March 1934. (See also Women's Suffrage in Atlantic Canada timeline.) Quebec In Quebec, suffrage supporters came from both the French and the English-speaking communities, but the former was hobbled by the opposition of the Catholic Church and by nationalist fears. Montreal’s Local Council of Women included many strong suffragists, including McGill University’s Carrie Derick and Octavia Grace Ritchie England. Québécoise suffragists were led by McGill professor Idola Saint-Jean in the Canadian Alliance for Women’s Vote in Quebec and Thérèse Casgrain in the League for Women’s Rights. Their campaigns, in concert with some support from federal Liberal politicians, progressive provincial counterparts, as well as from the CCF (whose Agnes Macphail was a stalwart ally of Quebec suffragists), helped bring success on 25 April 1940. Idola Saint-Jean (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-68508). Thérèse Casgrain, third from the left; her daughters, Renée and Hélène; her mother, Lady Forget; and Mrs. Laviolette, September 1941 Agnes Campbell Macphail, MP for Grey South East, United Farmers of Ontario Party, Ottawa, Ontario, Yousuf Karsh, May 15, 1934. Black Women Enslaved Black men and women were unable to vote. After the abolition of enslavement in 1834, land-owning Black people were granted the right to vote. However, like other women, Black women were disenfranchised in subsequent decades across British North America on the basis of their gender. Unlike Asian and Indigenous women, Black women’s right to vote was not officially restricted on the basis of race and ethnicity. Black women like Mary Ann Shadd advocated for women’s suffrage. Over time, Black women regained the right to vote as gender-based voting restrictions were repealed at the federal and provincial levels. (See Black Voting Rights.) Asian Women Asian residents were explicitly excluded from the vote under the 1885 federal franchise legislation. The 1920 Dominion Elections Act did not exclude Canadians of Asian heritage explicitly, but the Act stated that persons disenfranchised “for reasons of race” by provinces would not get the federal franchise. Since Chinese, Japanese and South Asians were excluded from the vote in British Columbia, as were the Chinese in Saskatchewan, members of those communities could not vote at the federal level in those provinces. Despite continuing protests, Asian women and men waited until 1948 to receive the vote, the year of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Canada helped to draft and then adopted. Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lake Success, 1949. Canadian John Humphrey was the principal author. Indigenous Women Indigenous women were largely invisible in the suffrage campaigns. The vast majority of Canadian suffragists were of European origin. While some were sympathetic to Indigenous women, none campaigned to include First Nations or Inuit in legislation and most accepted the commonplace assumption that Status Indians were a “dying race.” Kanyen'kehà:ka-English writer and performer, Pauline Johnson, challenged that designation. Pauline Johnson is best known for her poetry celebrating her Indigenous heritage. (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/National Film Board fonds/e011177518) Indigenous women worked locally to improve conditions for their communities. As non-voters, they lobbied band councils, much as suffragists elsewhere pressured other levels of government. The 1934 Dominion Franchise Act explicitly denied the franchise to Status Indians on reserves and to Inuit in the north. Until 1951, the Indian Act also barred many Indigenous women from voting for or holding office in their bands. Inuit received the vote in 1950; however, their names were rarely added to official lists of people entitled to vote, and ballot boxes were not brought to Inuit communities in the Arctic until 1962. Ottawa finally extended the right to vote to all Indigenous people, women and men, in 1960. Both sexes continued, however, to question the value of a right to vote in a nation dominated by settler communities that resisted equality. (See also Indigenous Women and the Franchise; Indigenous Women’s Issues; Indigenous Suffrage.) Women in Politics Once women won the vote, they encountered considerable resistance in entering politics. In 1921, Agnes Macphail became the first woman to win a seat in the House of Commons, representing the United Farmers of Ontario. The second, Martha Black, replaced her ailing husband in 1935 as Conservative MP for Yukon. The third, Saskatchewan’s Dorise Nielsen (associated with the CCF and then the Communist Party of Canada), arrived in Ottawa in 1940 but found little support. The first Indigenous female Member of Parliament was the Liberal Ethel Blondin Andrews for Western Arctic, Northwest Territories, in 1988. In 1917, Alberta’s Louise McKinney of the Nonpartisan League was the first woman elected to a provincial legislature in Canada and the British Empire (followed closely by Roberta MacAdams, elected by soldiers and military nurses). Numbers grew slowly. In 1941, British Columbia had five female MLAs, the largest number in any legislature until the 1970s. In 1957, Conservative MP Ellen Fairclough became the first woman appointed to a federal Cabinet. In 1996, British Columbia elected the first Chinese Canadian women to its legislature: Liberal Ida Chong and NDPer Jenny Kwan. Campbell served as Justice Minister in the government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, before becoming Canada's first female prime minister. (courtesy of Prime Minister's Office) Real advances in numbers, which depended on the resurgence of feminism, awaited the end of the 20th century. Feminist Kim Campbell became prime minister of a short-lived Conservative government in 1993. The 2019 general the House of Commons — 29 per cent of MPs elected. To much approval, the Liberal government announced an unprecedented Cabinet with 50 per cent female ministers. The first female senator, Liberal Cairine Wilson, was appointed in 1930 and by 2016 there were 33 women senators. The first female premier of a province or territory was Rita Johnson (Social Credit) of British Columbia in 1991. Significance and Legacy The other test of suffrage rests with legislative outcomes. While modern polling often suggests that female voters disproportionately favour more liberal causes, little attention has been paid to post-suffrage results. It is clear, however, that the suffrage movement everywhere endorsed improvements in education, healthcare and social services that would better lives for women and children. The introduction of provincial mothers’ allowances or pensions beginning in the First World War would not have occurred without feminist pressure and politicians’ fears of new voters. It is also no coincidence that Canada’s general, if imperfect, experiments with social security in the 20th century coincided with some 50 per cent increase in the electorate. As democracy became nearly universal, governments were forced as never before to begin to address issues of equity and justice. Women’s suffrage was essential to that advance.

 From Criminal Code Amendments to maternity leave to Bill C-127, these are the key moments in Canadian history that made a big difference to women. While much of our current attention is on the state of women's rights in Canada today, it's always a good idea to reflect on how far we've come. Though, you might be surprised at how recently some of these rights and freedoms were extended to women. Case in point? Women have only had the right to vote in Canada for the past 100 years—and Aboriginal women didn't get the right to vote until 1960. Still, we'll celebrate these victories as we look to the future and continue the conversation about women's rights in Canada and the world. Here are 17 key moments that have defined women's rights in Canada. 1884-1964 Starting in Ontario in 1884, the creation of the Married Women’s Property Act means that married Ontario women have the same legal rights as men and can purchase property. Manitoba is the next province to follow suit in 1900 and gradually other provinces and territories do the same. 1909 An amendment to the Criminal Code criminalizes kidnapping of women. Previously, the abduction of a woman over the age of 16 was legal unless the woman was an heiress. 1916-1960 Caucasian women are slowly given the right to vote in Canada, starting with provincial elections in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1916. By 1918, all Caucasian women are able to vote in federal elections, but it takes until 1951 for provincial voting privileges to extend to white women in every province and territory. In 1960, Aboriginal women finally get the vote. 1921 British Columbia passes legislation that gives women six weeks maternity leave before and after giving birth. No other province or territory has maternity leave until 1964. 1928 For the first time, Canada’s Olympic Team includes female athletes. 1929 Thanks to the petitions of Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy and Irene Parlby, women become persons under the law and can hold political office. One year later, Cairine Reay Wilson becomes the first woman appointed to the Senate. Inspired? But there are also many more Canadian women who made an impact on us. 1951 Ontario passes the Fair Employment Practices Act (creating fines and a complaints system to minimize discrimination) and the Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act (to tackle the gender wage gap). 1985 Sections 15 and 28 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms come into effect, establishing the constitutional right to equality. The government cannot discriminate against individuals based on their sex or sexual orientation. 1983 The passing of Bill C-127 makes sexual assault (and rape) within the context of marriage a crime. 1993 Kim Campbell serves as Canada’s first woman Prime Minister for less than five months. 2001 Canadian Human Rights Commission recommends a pay equity system to Parliament, which subsequently lead to the appointment of Bilson Task Force to improve the federal pay equity approach. 2004 The Standing Committee On the Status of Women 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. 2005 Same-sex marriage is legalized in Canada. 2012 Canada leads a successful international Campaign at the United Nations to establish the 'International Day of the Girl' to bring attention to women's rights on a global level. (Yay Canada!) 2015 Canada launches the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The final report and subsequent recommendations would be released in 2019. 2017 Gender expression and gender identity are added to the Canadian Human Rights Act. 2019 Karen Jensen becomes Canada's first-ever Pay Equity Commissioner. Read up on these 10 Canadian ladies paving the way for women everywhere, if you're looking to the future of women's rights in Canada. Recommended By: Anne T. Donahue Read More Why was this decade a turning point for women? One of the most important changes that happened in Canada during the 1920s, was women gaining suffrage. In 1918, Prime minister Robert Borden's government extended suffrage to most Canadian women and, in 1919; women were allowed to run for parliament.(Creating Canada.1) On October 18, 1929, the supreme court decided that women are persons allowing them the right to be appointed to the senate. Suffrage was one of the first steps to achieving male and female equality in Canada.(Creating Canada.2) (Canada Face of a Nation.84-86) The Persons Case established women the right to become appointed to the senate. On October 18,1929, the Supreme court decided that women are persons. This was made possible by :Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby. From that moment, Canadian women were allowed to become part of the Canadian senate.(thecanadianencyclopedia) Nellie McClung was a suffragist who wanted to make a difference for women in Canada. (Canadiana scrapbook.42) She was the first woman in Canada to be elected as a federal member. She fought tirelessly for women's rights in Canada and achieved many feats including achieving suffrage for all Canadian women.(thecanadianencyclopedia) For several centuries, women were not legally recognized as the equals of men. Whether in terms of access to education, the professions or civil and legal rights, women were dependent on their husbands. Even the first declarations of human rights did not include women. It was only after many years of struggle on several fronts that women were able to achieve the level of legal equality they have today. The battle for women's rights has included access to education, entry to the professions, the right to vote, the right to stand for election, the right to sit in government, the right to manage property, the right to divorce and access to fairer justice. But all this was not achieved at once and had to evolve over time. It should also be pointed out that the laws passed had the power to change the way society functioned legally. Women also had to take access to their rights and mentalities had to adapt to this new reality. The first women's demands were made during the French Revolution. Some women took the opportunity of the social changes and equalitarian values of the time to demand certain changes. First of all, they wanted the right to primary education, access to health care and the right to work. They also wanted legal protection to support abandoned women and unmarried mothers, marriage reform and the right to divorce. In 1791, following the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Marie-Olympe de Gouges in turn drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen. In her writings, she defended women's rights and the abolition of slavery. Marie-Olympe de Gouges was guillotined by Robespierre. In 1804, the entry into force of the Napoleonic Code put an end to these first attempts at women's rights. The Napoleonic Code described the legal incapacity of married women: they were totally excluded from political rights. Women were therefore formally prohibited from attending high schools and universities. Married women also had no right to manage their property or sign contracts. In fact, they were not allowed to work or travel abroad without their husband's permission. The husband controlled his wife's entire life, including relationships and correspondence. Working women were not even allowed to collect their own wages. Women found guilty of adultery were severely punished by law. Unmarried mothers and their children had absolutely no rights. The first women's rights convention was held on 19th July 1848 in the State of New York. During this meeting, women's demands were linked to the right to vote, political participation, access to work and the right to education. In 1880, public secondary education was made available to women in France. In fact, access to education and instruction was women's first struggle. When schools opened their doors to them, it was said that their training would serve to make women better managers of the home as well as good educators for their sons. In reality, the women who studied saw it more as an opportunity to do something else and to take over the public space. Access to education gave women opportunities to fight for emancipation and advance their rights in all areas. It was at the end of the 19th century, during the Industrial Revolution, that the first feminist movements appeared. Initially concerned with work, the debate also turned to the right to vote. Women first wanted to obtain conditions and salaries equivalent to those of men. Fighting for equal pay for equal work, women did not hesitate to set up trade unions and go on strike to get their way. After gaining the right to education, women set about gaining civil and political rights. Focusing first on the right to vote, which they obtained at different times, depending on the country, women of the time also succeeded in obtaining certain work-related rights. For example, it was in 1907 that working wives could freely dispose of their wages. A little later, in 1909, maternity leave was introduced in France. After giving birth, women were entitled to eight weeks' rest, during which they could not be dismissed. In 1920, women also gained the right to join a trade union without needing their husband's permission. Improvements to the education system continued at the same time. By 1920, women's and men's bachelor's degrees were deemed equivalent. The same applied to secondary school curricula, which by 1924, were identical for both men and women. Legally, married women obtained a new status that allowed them to have an identity card, a passport and a bank account. However, husbands retained their rights of residence and paternal authority. In addition, husbands could still oppose the exercise of a profession. Women's rights became more concrete after the war and the period of decolonization. In 1946, the United Nations set up a Commission on the Status of Women. This commission produced various texts, including the Convention on Political Rights, written in 1952, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 1957 and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, drafted in 1981. Launched by the revolutionary wave of 1968, the new feminism sought to promote women's equality while respecting their femininity. This equality had to be social, but it also had to be present in couples. Feminists wanted women to gain autonomy and independence in their relationships. In society, women demanded a place in political and decision-making circles. The feminists of the 1960s and 1970s were primarily concerned with achieving equality between men and women. They also wanted official recognition of women's contribution to the well-being of society and the family. In concrete terms, feminists wanted to eliminate prejudices and practices that were harmful to women. Moreover, it was in 1946 that men and women were deemed equal in the Constitution. In 1965, women gained the freedom to exercise the profession of their choice. In 1966, Betty Friedan founded the National Organisation of Women. The aim was to achieve total equality between men and women. This organisation also took a stand against the roles traditionally assigned to women. A similar movement emerged in the United States in 1967. The Women's Liberation Movement fought for access to the professions and the right to abortion. In 1970, what was described as paternal authority became parental authority. The mother's contribution was then officially recognized. Since 1995, the UN has acknowledged that women's rights are an integral and indivisible part of human rights. Many feminists wanted to give women the right to control their own bodies: to have children if and when they wanted to. It was at this time that the battle for access to contraception and abortion predominated. In 1967, contraception was permitted in France. In 1971, a petition signed by 343 women, the Manifesto of the 343, who had had abortions, sparked a social debate. The petition called for the right to easy access to contraception and the right to legal abortion. Among the signatories were Simone de Beauvoir, Jeanne Moreau and Catherine Deneuve. Abortion was legalized in France in 1975, while distribution of the contraceptive pill had been authorized since 1974. 1975 was also named International Women's Year, while the decade 1975-1985 was designated the United Nations Decade for Women. During this period, a number of feminist groups also fought against violence against women, rape and sexual assault. It was not until 1980 that rape was legally considered a crime in France. In recent years, women have fought for parity and pay equity. Whether in politics or in the workplace, women want to be recognized. The aim of pay equity is to ensure that men and women are paid the same for equivalent work. Parity aims to increase the proportion of women in positions of power and decision-making (members of the Assembly, members of the Senate, company directors, etc.). Some countries even require boards of directors to be made up of at least 40% women. In France, half the candidates running for election must be women. Despite the great advances made in the 20th century, there are still a number of challenges to be met: combating poverty and illiteracy, which affect more women than men throughout the world, and increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. Strongly linked to civil rights, the right to vote was the battleground for women in the early 20th century. At the time, women fighting for the right to vote were nicknamed suffragettes, after the word suffrage, which means a vote cast in an election. The first suffragette groups appeared in Great Britain in 1903. The suffragettes formed political and social unions whose main aim was to campaign for women's right to vote. New Zealand was the first country where women had the right to vote, in 1893. The right was acquired after a petition was circulated. Although women had the right to vote, they did not have the right to stand as candidates until 1919. In all other countries, the right to vote for women was more difficult to achieve. In some countries, women had to resort to more violent means to make their cause heard. Between 1908 and 1920, a number of suffragettes took part in protests in China, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, Paris and elsewhere. At the same time in London, 250,000 suffragettes were protesting in the streets. In Denmark, women who paid income tax were given the right to vote in 1908. The suffragettes in London took more violent means in 1913 when they caused explosions and destroyed telephone links. The suffragettes fought not only for the right to vote, but also for political equality and the right to stand for election to the communes. At the time, Great Britain was exerting strong pressure on activists by convicting them or sending them to prison. Some suffragettes were injured as a result of police violence. Some countries soon gave women the right to vote. As early as 1914, women in Montana in the United States were granted civil rights, and in 1916 one of them was elected to her state's House of Representatives. Several countries followed this example: Denmark (1915), Great Britain (1918), the United States and Germany (1920) and France (1944). In the United States, the new laws were to authorize women's rights and the rights of Black people. Civil equality was achieved through several treaties: the Civil Rights Acts. The first, signed in 1875, granted civil equality to blacks. Another treaty was signed in 1957. The most important was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This officially put an end to racial segregation. All citizens had access to the same services and the same rights, regardless of colour, nationality, sex or race. The entire US population gained the right to vote in 1965 with the Voting Right Act, which gave everyone the right to vote. Once the right to vote had been won, certain groups of suffragettes began to take up other causes such as ownership of the body, birth control, abortion and civic equality. Because of its particular political structure (federal and provincial governments), Canada has moved at different speeds in the development of women's rights, with some provinces granting rights more quickly than others. In 1900, the federal right to vote was limited to those eligible to vote at the provincial level, which excluded all women and minorities. Over the course of the century, several new laws were created to promote equality between men and women. The first provinces to give women the same legal capacity as men were Manitoba (1900), Prince Edward Island (1903) and Saskatchewan (1907). Despite these advances, some businesses, especially those owned by Asians, were unable to employ white women. In the years that followed, some provinces allowed women to vote in provincial elections: Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (1916), British Columbia and Ontario (1917), Nova Scotia (1918). In 1918, women who had the right to vote in their province could also vote in federal elections. By 1920, all Canadians aged 21 or over could vote. By 1929, women could even be appointed to the Senate. Women in Prince Edward Island gained the right to vote in provincial elections in 1922, while women in Quebec could not vote until 1940. After the Second World War, governments began to introduce legislation to promote women's access to work and pay equity. Ontario (1951) and Saskatchewan (1952) were the first provinces to create legislation on these issues. In 1953, Canada, British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia followed with legislation on pay equity and fair employment practices. In the years that followed, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta created similar measures. After tackling labour laws, governments adopted various human rights texts and codes: Ontario's Human Rights Code (1962), Nova Scotia's Human Rights Act (1963), Quebec's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1975) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977). During these years, and thanks to these new laws, women acquired certain legal guarantees as well as the right to property. Born into a bourgeois family, Marie Lacoste-Gérin-Lajoie quickly developed a passion for the law, in particular the various forms of legal discrimination against women. Self-taught, she became a legal expert and lectured at the Université de Montréal. She wrote several legal treatises in which she attempted to Reformation the Civil Code. She fought hard to change the laws so that women would have the right to control their property and income and men would lose the freedom to spend all the family income. In 1907, Marie Lacoste-Gérin-Lajoie founded the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste. This foundation brought together a number of women from different professional backgrounds. Its aim was to promote women's civil and political rights. In 1922, she led a group of 400 women to demand the right to vote from the Premier of Quebec. The refusal meant that Quebec became the last Canadian province to grant women the right to vote, in 1940. Born into a wealthy family and brought up by a Catholic mother, Simone de Beauvoir was attracted to study and writing from an early age. As an adolescent, she became an atheist and decided to devote her life to her studies. It was while studying philosophy in Paris that she met Jean-Paul Sartre, with whom she shared her life. After her studies, she taught and wrote extensively. Defending an existentialist philosophy (conceptualized by Sartre), she reflected on the meaning of life based on real life, concrete experiences. Her work includes essays and fiction. Simone de Beauvoir's best-known and most-quoted work is The Second Sex, published in 1949. It quickly became the standard work of reference for the global feminist movement. In this essay, Simone de Beauvoir rejects the natural inferiority of women. According to her, “one is not born a woman, one becomes one”. She also defines the female gender, as described in various scientific and social theories. She then goes on to list the obstacles that stand in the way of women's lives. The solution, for this feminist philosopher, lies in work: “It is through work that women have largely overcome the distance that separated them from the male; it is work that can guarantee them concrete freedom”. Marie Gérin-Lajoie is the daughter of Marie Lacoste-Gérin Lajoie. In 1911, Marie Gérin-Lajoie was the first woman in Quebec to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree. She later studied social sciences. Part of her studies were self-taught, because women were not allowed to continue their studies after the baccalauréat. That's why she went to New York in 1918 to study social services. She later returned to Montreal where she worked in social action

Council of Women of Canada Women's religious organizing was also a means through which women could advocate social change. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, for example, was formed in 1874 by Letitia Youmans of Picton, Ontario, in order to raise awareness of the negative consequences of alcohol consumption on society, and ultimately to ban alcohol and promote evangelical family values.[2] Inspired by its American counterpart, the WCTU grew to become one of the first organizations to fight for suffrage while also being a training ground for future suffrage leaders.[5] The Hebrew Ladies Sewing Circle (founded 1860) also worked to promote social change through religion-inspired organizing.[6] It was organized in Toronto in 1906 by Ida Siegel to provide girls in their community training in sewing skills and as a response to the conversion attempts of Jewish youth by Protestant Evangelicals. It grew to establish a Jewish Endeavour Sewing School where they taught girls sewing, Jewish religion and history.[7] in Toronto grew to establish a Jewish Endeavour Sewing School where they taught girls sewing, Jewish religion and history.[1] Other examples include the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which provided (and continues to provide) services such as reception centres, shelters, and educational programs for single working class women along with The Girls' Friendly Society (Anglican-based), the Catholic Women's League, and the Grey Nuns of Montreal who provided daycare centres for working women.[1] Edith Archibald In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women in Canada were also making inroads into various professions including teaching, journalism, social work, and public health. Grace Annie Lockhart became the first woman in the British Empire to receive a bachelor's degree, providing clear evidence of the justice of women's claim to full rights in the field of higher education.[8] Advances included the establishment of a Women's Medical College in Toronto (and in Kingston, Ontario) in 1883, attributed in part to the persistence of Emily Stowe, the first female doctor to practice in Canada. Stowe's daughter, Augusta Stowe-Gullen, became the first woman to graduate from a Canadian medical school.[1] Women also established and became involved with organizations to advance women's rights, including suffrage. In 1893, the National Council of Women of Canada was formed which was designed to bring together representatives of different women's groups across Canada, providing a network for women to communicate their concerns and ideas.[9] When they endorsed suffrage, in 1910, the NCWC did so on the basis that women had an indispensable role in society which should give them the right to participate in public life by electing their government, in keeping with the maternal feminism prevalent in the period.[1] During World War I, women took on not only traditionally feminine jobs, but also heavy work such as in munitions factories. This changed role of women increased women's political prominence, and issues such as women's suffrage were raised.[10] During the 1920s, women adventurers pushed the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women. From 1922 until 1929, Aloha Wanderwell (born in Canada) became the first woman to travel around the world in a car, beginning her journey at the age of 16.[11][12] Helena Gutteridge fought for women's suffrage in BC Organizing around women's suffrage in Canada peaked in the mid-1910s. Various franchise clubs were formed, and in Ontario, the Toronto Women's Literary Club was established in 1876 as a guise for suffrage activities, though by 1883 it was renamed the Toronto Women's Suffrage Association.[13] Compared to other English speaking industrialized countries, Canada's suffrage movement gained success rather easily, and without violence. The tactics adopted by the movement in order to bring about reform included collecting petitions, staging mock parliaments and selling postcards.[13] Widows and unmarried women were granted the right to vote in municipal elections in Ontario in 1884. Such limited franchises were extended in other provinces at the end of the 19th century, but bills to enfranchise women in provincial elections failed to pass in any province until Manitoba, and Saskatchewan finally succeeded in early 1916. Alberta followed the same year and Emily Murphy became the first woman magistrate not just in Canada, but the entire British Empire. At the federal level it was a two step process. On September 20, 1917, women gained a limited right to vote: According to the Parliament of Canada website, the Military Voters Act established that "women who are British subjects and have close relatives in the armed forces can vote on behalf of their male relatives, in federal elections." About a year and a quarter later, at the beginning of 1919, the right to vote was extended to all women in the Act to confer the Electoral Franchise upon Women. The remaining provinces quickly followed suit, except for Quebec, which did not do so until 1940. Agnes Macphail became the first woman elected to Parliament in 1921.[14] Large numbers of women continued for many years to be excluded from the right to vote, based on race or indigeneity. British Columbia, for example, denied persons of Asian, Indian (Southeast Asian), and Indigenous origin the rights to universal adult suffrage that came about with the Dominion Elections Act of 1920.[15] Province Date of Women's Suffrage[16] Date of Women's Ability to Hold Office[17][18][19][20] Manitoba January 28, 1916 January 28, 1916 Saskatchewan March 14, 1916 March 14, 1916 Alberta April 19, 1916 April 19, 1916[note 1] British Columbia April 5, 1917 April 5, 1917 Ontario April 12, 1917 April 24, 1919 Nova Scotia April 26, 1918 April 26, 1918 New Brunswick April 17, 1919 March 9, 1934 Prince Edward Island May 3, 1922 May 3, 1922 Newfoundland April 13, 1925 April 13, 1925 Quebec April 25, 1940 April 25, 1940 Dominion of Canada (federal government) Relatives of individuals in the armed forces - September 20, 1917. All female British subjects in Canada, not included under racial or Indigenous exclusions[21] - May 24, 1918 July 7, 1919[note 2] ^ First women elected in the British Empire were two Alberta women (Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams) elected in 1917. ^ First woman elected to the House of Commons was Progressive candidate Agnes MacPhail, elected in 1921. Unveiling of a plaque commemorating the five Alberta women whose efforts resulted in the Persons Case, which established the rights of women to hold public office in Canada. The Famous Five were a group of five women from Alberta who wanted courts to determine women were considered to be "persons" for the purposes of being called to the Senate under section 24 of the British North America Act, 1867, the main provision of Canada's constitution.[22] The Senate was the body which at that time approved divorces in some provinces of Canada, among other decisions important to women. The Famous Five petitioned the Federal Cabinet to refer this issue to the Supreme Court. After some debate, the Cabinet did so. The Supreme Court, interpreting the Act in light of the times in which it was written, ruled in 1928 that women were not "persons" for the purposes of section 24 and could not be appointed to the Senate. The five women, led by Emily Murphy, appealed the case to the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council, at that time the highest court of appeal for the British Empire. In 1929, the five Lords of the Committee ruled unanimously that "the word 'persons' in Section 24 includes both the male and female sex". They called the earlier interpretation "a relic of days more barbarous than ours".[23] The Eastview Birth Control Trial of 1936–1937 was the first successful legal challenge to the dissemination of information and the possession of materials relating to birth control being illegal in Canada, and it marked the beginning of a shift in Canadian society's acceptance of such practices.[24] In September 1936, Dorothea Palmer was arrested in Eastview (now Vanier, Ontario), and charged with possessing materials and pamphlets related to birth control, then highly illegal under Canadian law. As she was working for the Kitchener-based Parents' Information Bureau (PIB), her arrest could have led to the collapse of the organization and as many as two years' imprisonment for Palmer. However, the PIB was the brainchild of industrialist A. R. Kaufman, a eugenically-minded industrialist whose support eventually saw Palmer's charges dropped. The trial lasted from September 1936 to March 1937.[25] Ultimately, the case was dismissed by the presiding magistrate Lester Clayon, who ruled that, as Palmer's actions were "in the public good", no charges could be held against her.[26] In his final ruling, he explained that: The mothers are in poor health, pregnant nine months of the year... What chance do these children have to be properly fed, clothed and educated? They are a burden on the taxpayer. They crowd the juvenile court. They glut the competitive labour market.[27] Though feminism in Canada continued after the work of the Famous Five, during the Depression and the Second World War, feminist activism in Canada was not as clear to see as it was during the fight for suffrage and thereafter. However, women's engagement in the workforce during the Second World War brought about a new consciousness in women with regards to their place in public life, which led to a public inquiry on the status of women, as well as new campaigns and organizing for equal rights. Whereas the first wave was organized around access to education and training, the second wave of Canadian feminism focused on women's role in the workforce, the need for equal pay for equal work, a desire to address violence against women, and concerns about women's reproductive rights. Veronica Foster, popularly known as "Ronnie, the Bren Gun Girl" on the production line. Many women worked "on the home front" during the war.During the Second World War, Canadian women were actively pursued by the Canadian government to contribute to the war effort.[1] One of the ways in which women contributed to the war effort was by joining the workforce. Prior to the war, some young and unmarried women had already joined the workforce; however, during the war an increased need for female workers arose in many industries due to the depleted pool of male workers who had largely been mobilized to fight in the war.[28] Although women continued to work in their pre-war traditional fields of employment such as textile manufacturing, retail, nursing, and homecare services,[29] as the demand for labour intensified in all industries, women became employed in many non-traditional fields including: manufacturing, trade, finance, transportation, communication, and construction.[29] In response to the labour needs of many industries, the Canadian government created a special Women's Division of the National Selective Service to recruit women into the workforce.[28] The first groups of women to be recruited were single women and childless married women.[30] The National Selective Service then recruited women with home responsibilities and later women with children.[31] By 1944, more than one million women worked full-time in Canada's paid labour force.[32] The inclusion of women with children into the workforce led the federal government to develop a program known as the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement in order to assist working mothers with childcare during the duration of the war.[33] Under the Agreement, the federal government offered to help the provinces subsidize childcare programs. Quebec and Ontario took advantage of the agreement and developed childcare facilities such as nurseries and after school programs.[34] Flora Eaton presenting a cheque to the Canadian Red Cross. She was an active fundraiser and allowed Eaton Hall to be used as a military hospital for Canadian soldiers during the war. Women also contributed to the war effort by volunteering. As soon as the war broke out, many local women's volunteer societies quickly mobilized to contribute to the war effort. Women in these organizations engaged in a range of activities including: sewing clothes for the Red Cross, cultivating "victory" gardens, and collecting materials like rubber and metal scraps for wartime production.[35] By the middle of the war the Canadian government established the Women's Voluntary Services to coordinate the wartime activities of the local women's societies across Canada.[36] Women also participated in the war by joining the military. Prior to the war, with the exception of the Nursing Service of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, the Canadian army was composed only of men.[37] Yet, by 1942 women were recruited into the military, air force, and navy.[37] In fact, by the end of the war 20,497 women were members of the army, 16,221 were members of the air force, and 6,665 were members of the navy.[38] When women were first recruited they mostly worked in administrative and support positions such as stewardesses and clerical aides, but as the war carried on, women were promoted to more skilled positions such as motor vehicle mechanics, electricians, and sail-makers.[38] The Canadian government expected women to return to their roles in the home once the war ended.[39] In 1941, the government created an Advisory Committee on Reconstruction to deal with the post-war reconstruction issues.[39] Shortly after its creation, some Canadian women advocated for female representation within the Committee due to the vital contribution of women to the war effort.[39] Consequently, in 1943, the government created a subcommittee to deal with issues women would encounter once the war ended.[39] The subcommittee was headed by Margaret McWilliams, a journalist and notable women's organization activist and consisted of nine other women from across the country.[39] The subcommittee produced a report with a number of recommendations including that women should be trained or retrained for jobs on the same basis as men and that household workers should receive labour benefits like unemployment insurance.[39] The report received little public attention and ultimately failed to achieve any of its recommendations.[39] However, many of its recommendations were discussed once again, decades later in the 1970 report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.[39] When the war finally ended many Canadian women did as the government expected of them and returned to their roles in the home.[39] Additionally, when the war ended some of the services the government offered working women during the war, like childcare, were discontinued.[40] Yet, in the years following the war, the number of women joining the workforce steadily increased as women's contribution became more and more necessary to sustaining both the home and the economy - a fact addressed by a number of government initiatives.[39] In 1951, the Ontario government passed the Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, and by the end of the 1950s, all provinces except for Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador had passed similar legislation. In 1954, the Government of Canada created a specialized women's department within the Department of Labour, and in 1956, it also passed legislation providing pay equity for women working in the federal civil service.[41] Main article: Royal Commission on the Status of Women The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was a Canadian Royal Commission that examined the status of women and recommended steps that might be taken by the federal government to ensure equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society. The Commission commenced on 16 February 1967 as an initiative of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. Public sessions were conducted the following year to accept public comment for the Commission to consider as it formulated its recommendations. Florence Bird was the Commission's chair. The Commissioners appointed were: Florence Bird (chairperson), Elsie MacGill, Lola M. Lange, Jeanne Lapointe, Doris Ogilvie, Donald R. Gordon, Jr (resigned from Commission), Jacques Henripin, John Peters Humphrey (appointed following Gordon's resignation). The National Union of Students (Canada) (NUS) formed in 1972 and became the Canadian Federation of Students in 1981. While student aid, education cut-backs and, by the late 1970s, tuition fees may have been the primary policy concerns of the national student organization, there was a definite undercurrent of women student organizing in NUS and on local campuses.[42] Women and some men supporters rallied around issues of sexism on student councils and in NUS, violence against women, abortion rights and the establishing women centres and daycare on campuses. By 1979, NUS established the Declaration of the Rights of the Woman Student. As Moses points out (p. 89), the "Declaration avoided discussion of other serious social inclusions — issues of race, physical ability, and aboriginal people were not included" which perhaps speaks to why issues of racism and ability caused much discordance in the women's movement of the 1980s. Moses (2010, pp. 76–77) cites several key sources on the long history of women student organizing in Canada going back to the late 1800s and suggests that "NUS women's student activism of the 1970s should not be viewed as an entirely new phenomenon arising amidst the clamour and legacy of 1960s liberation struggles". "Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, women's participation in [the Canadian Union of Students and its predecessor, the National Federation of Canadian University Students stayed consistent: around the 15–17 percent mark." Moses (2010, p. 92, note 34). The link between women students and late 1960s women's movements has been widely acknowledged. Yet, as Moses points out, this acknowledgement stops abruptly after 1971; the activism of youth and students was widely ignored in the historiography of women's movement in the 1970s. This is not something that Moses attempts to explain. It would seem likely that the gap in recognition has something to do with how young women and how women historiographers of the 1970s identified; that is, not as students or youth per se, but as women. While the women's movement of the 1970s was of course, multigenerational, it was also most certainly in many ways, a significant youth movement and this, as Moses (2010) suggests, has not been well understood and acknowledged. The Battered Women's Shelter Movement in Canada emerged predominantly during the late 1960s and early 1970s, within the framework of second wave feminism.[43] Building on the oft-used second wave slogan, "the personal is political", second wave understandings of the state's role in regulating private life paved the road for a re-conceptualization of domestic violence as a social problem as opposed to a completely private matter.[44] The movement was generated in large part because for women who had experienced domestic violence, "there was no place to go."[45] However, several feminists have criticized the Battered Women's movement for its reliance on the battered woman-as-victim archetype.[46] The National Action Committee (NAC) was formed as a result of the frustration of women at the inaction of the federal government in regards to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Beginning in 1972 as a coalition of 23 women's groups, by 1986 it had 350 organizational members, including the women's caucuses of the three biggest political parties. Partly funded by government grants, the NAC was widely regarded as the official expression of women's interests in Canada, and received a lot of attention from the media. In 1984 there was a televised debate on women's issues among the leaders of the contending political parties during the federal election campaign. The NAC and women's issues were receiving a lot of attention and the NAC was rapidly growing, although beginning in 1983 it had competition from REAL Women of Canada, a right-wing lobby group.[47] Passed by prime minister of the time, Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian Human Rights Act gave basic rights to all humans. There was no discrimination based on sex, race, religion etc.... It specified that there must be "equal pay for work of equal value". There had been significant disparity between the pay received by women and by men. However, by the mid-1980s there was still disparity: full-time female employees earned on average only 72% of what men earned.[10] In 1980 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced his plan repatriate the Canadian Constitution, and with it a new Charter of Rights and Freedoms to "identify clearly the various rights to be protected, and remove them henceforth from governmental interference."[48] With so much division in Canada on what should be included in a bill of rights, the federal government decided to hold a Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate, which allowed the public to submit amendments to the constitution.[49] Women's organizations saw this as an opportunity for Canadian women's rights to be legally and equally represented through entrenchment in the charter. On November 20 the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) had their opportunity to speak. The NAC saw the importance of equal recognition in the Charter for both men and women as a way to combat systematic discrimination. In response to the Nation Action Committee's presentation, Senator Harry Hays responded:[50][51] I was just wondering why we don't have a section here for babies and children. All you girls are going to be working and you're not going to have anybody looking after them. This statement was seen as exemplifying the ignorance and discrimination Canadian women faced. In February 1981 the National Action Committee scheduled a conference for women on the constitution that was cancelled by the federal government. In response to the cancellation Doris Anderson, president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and prominent feminist resigned in protest, this act of protest galvanized Canadian women. Feminist groups were angered at the cancellation of the conference and began to organize their own conference and a coalition was formed, which came to be known as the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution.[52] On February 14, 1981, about 1,300 women exercised their democratic right and marched into Parliament to debate the charter. They were demanding a specific clause on equal rights between men and women.[53] This conference resulted in amendments to Section 15, which guarantees an equality of rights under the law, along with the creation of Section 28 which states: Notwithstanding anything in this Charter, the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons. Even though the Canadian Constitution was established in 1982, the sections on equality were under moratorium and did not come into effect until April 17, 1985.[52] Further information: Abortion in Canada A significant concern of second wave feminists in Canada was access to abortion. Until 1969, abortion was a criminal offence under the Criminal Code, and women were dying from trying to procure abortions outside of the law.[citation needed] For these reasons, abortion was legalized by Parliament in 1969 under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1968–69. Abortion remained an offence, unless it was first approved by a Therapeutic Abortion Committee on the grounds that continuation of the pregnancy "would or would be likely to endanger her life or health". The abortion had to be performed in a hospital rather than in a clinic.[54][55] Only one in five hospitals had the committee required to approve the operation, resulting in many women crossing the border to receive an abortion in the United States.[54] By 1970, women nationwide mobilized to organize a cross-country abortion caravan from Vancouver to Ottawa that called for increased reproductive freedom, through increased access to abortion and birth control.[56] The restrictive nature of the abortion law led others to challenge it, including Henry Morgantaler, a prominent Montreal doctor who attempted to establish abortion clinics. In 1973, Morgentaler was charged under the Criminal Code for providing abortions. The case went to the Supreme Court of Canada. In Morgentaler v R, the Court unanimously held that the criminal law provisions were within the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal Parliament. The Court also unanimously held that the provisions did not infringe the Canadian Bill of Rights.[57] The Supreme Court upheld his conviction. A decade later, after the passage of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Morgentaler was again convicted under the abortion provision. This time, when the case reached the Supreme Court, he was successful, in R v Morgentaler in 1988. The Court ruled, by a 5–2 majority, that the abortion provision of the Criminal Code infringed the Charter's guarantee of security of the person under section 7. There was no single majority decision. Justice Bertha Wilson, the first woman on the Supreme Court (appointed in 1982), wrote one of the strongest opinions striking down the provision.[58][59][60][61] Canada signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1980, and ratified it in 1981.[62] The third wave of Canadian feminism, which is largely perceived to have started in the early 1990s, is closely tied to notions of anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-capitalism.[63] The notion of a sisterhood among women prevalent in the second wave, is critiqued by third-wave feminists, who have perceived this seeming universalism to be dismissive of women's diverse experiences, and the ways that women can discriminate against and dominate one another.[63] Third-wave feminism is associated with decentralized, grassroots organizing, as opposed to the national feminist organizations prevalent in the second wave.[2] Canada recognized female genital mutilation as a form of persecution in July 1994, when it granted refugee status to Khadra Hassan Farah, who had fled Somalia to avoid her daughter being cut.[64] In 1997 section 268 of its Criminal Code was amended to ban FGM, except where "the person is at least eighteen years of age and there is no resulting bodily harm".[65][66] Fourth-wave feminism refers to a resurgence of interest in feminism that began around 2012 and is associated with the use of social media.[67] According to feminist scholar Prudence Chamberlain, the focus of the fourth wave is justice for women and opposition to sexual harassment and violence against women. Its essence, she writes, is "incredulity that certain attitudes can still exist".[68] Fourth-wave feminism is "defined by technology", according to Kira Cochrane, and is characterized particularly by the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, and blogs to challenge misogyny[69] and further gender equality.[67][70][71][72] Issues that fourth-wave feminists focus on include street and workplace harassment, campus sexual assault and rape culture. Scandals involving the harassment, abuse, and/or murder of women and girls have galvanized the movement; one example of such a scandal in Canada was the 2016 trial of Jian Ghomeshi. During the time of fourth-wave feminism, Canada removed its tampon tax in mid-2015 following an online petition signed by thousands.[73] Also during the time of fourth-wave feminism, in May 2016, in an attempt to make the Canadian national anthem gender-neutral by changing "thy sons" to "of us", Liberal MP Mauril Bélanger introduced a private member's Bill C-210.[74] In June 2016, the bill passed its third reading with a vote of 225 to 74 in the House of Commons.[75] In July 2017, the bill was in its third and final reading in the Senate;[76] the bill was passed on January 31, 2018, and received royal assent on February 7, 2018.[77][78] Feminism in Quebec has evolved differently from the rest of Canada, and its history does not necessarily match the idea of the four "waves" conventionally used to describe Canadian feminist history. After Confederation, the provincial government of Quebec continued to be closely associated with the Catholic Church, resulting in the preservation of traditional gender roles. The conservatism of the then-provincial government, and the privileging of Catholic values contributed to Quebec being the last province in which women received the provincial franchise. By the 1960s, during the Quiet Revolution, many women in Quebec linked the patriarchy that shaped their lives with the colonial domination of English Canada over Quebec's affairs. Equality between genders would amount to little if both men and women were subordinated and misrepresented through English values, culture and institutions. Though the Fédération des femmes du Québec was founded in 1966 to advance the rights of women in Quebec, and the organization worked closely with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in the 1970s and 1980s, tensions between English Canadian and Québécois feminists were strong during the debates over the Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Accord, and at the time of the 1995 Referendum. Belleau applies a feminist methodology and research framework to the inter-woven issues of national and cultural identity (what she terms "nat-cult"), both within Quebec and between the province and the rest of Canada (ROC). These conceptions of self, be they feminist, Québécois, or Canadian, in turn affect the identity politics of the region. She deploys "strategic intersectionality" in order to analyze how feminism is represented in Canada's two main legal systems. She cautions against eternalizing differences (essentialism) or erasing them (universalism). Quebec is a unique case study because of the problematic private–public divide, which is reinforced by the parallel civil–common law split in the province's legal system. Furthermore, the Québécois are historically situated as both colonizers and as colonized peoples, further lending complexity to their identities. Belleau employs "tactical thinking" to negotiate among Québécois and ROC feminisms, engaging with identity politics and processes of subordination and dissolution in how Quebec feminists are represented in the legal world. She argues that Quebec feminism should (and does) have a "distinct face" ([79]). This is manifest in the approach of intersectionality as embracing cultural distinctions, ensuring no fights for social justice are subordinate to each other, and the understanding of emancipatory confrontations as independent but still interrelated. "Distinct feminism" preserves this nat-cult individuality. The author also details the mythic "confrontational" portrayal of Anglo-Saxon feminism, and that much of Québécois feminist identity stands in contrast to this perceived antagonistic Anglo-Saxon feminism. Quebec men, similarly, struggle with their own conceptions of self, particularly amid historical confrontations with English-Canadian men. Conquest has led to hierarchy, exemplified through the past relationship of the Quebec matriarch and her male consort, l'homme rose, or the "pink man". For women, many embrace their "Latin" heritage through an allegiance to their French past in order to assert their distinctiveness in a continent with competing cultural identities. Younger Québécois feminists wish to disassociate themselves from both Anglo-feminism and Latin-femininity to construct their own intersectional identity, and to remove themselves from the sexism inherent in some Latin cultures. In addition, as the author articulates, for First Nations women, this "French past" does not provide positive memories or cultural touchstones. Ultimately, Belleau urges women to see projection, dissociation, and distinction as strategies used by both Quebec and ROC feminists to create constructive dialogues and coalitions among women. Indigenous feminisms (Indigenous feminism) have also taken a different trajectory from the mainstream, white, Anglo-Canadian women's movement. Indigenous women have largely not participated in that movement, in part because Indigenous women's organizations have focused on issues related to colonialism and cultural discrimination. Further, some Indigenous women have explicitly rejected the label of "feminist" because, it is perceived to suggest "a strongly anti-natal and anti-family stance that is offensive [to Indigenous women] as they rebuild their nations".[80] As well as this, it is important to understand that this resistance comes from a place of realizing that gender roles, the community and culture are deeply interconnected, therefore gender issues do not only effect Indigenous women, but effect the community as a whole.[81] Others have viewed the universal sisterhood associated with the second wave with hostility, perceiving the idea that all women are the same as an erasure of difference and as an attempt at colonization.[82] By and large, Indigenous women active in pursuing their rights, such as those belonging to the Native Women's Association of Canada, "do not see themselves as part of a separate feminist movement but rather one that will complement the aboriginal organizations, which tend to be male dominated".[83] Indigenous women have worked together to address gender and cultural discrimination as they experience it. One of the most notable instances of this activism was around the issue of who qualifies as a Status Indian under the Indian Act. The status of "Indian" was conferred to people whose father had the Indian status.[82] According to an amendment to the Act made in 1951, a native man always passed on his status to his wife and children (whether she was Indigenous or not), while a native woman who married a non-native lost her own status and could not pass on her status to her children.[82] These conditions for qualifying for status caused many women to be displaced from their communities.[82] These amendments inspired activism on the part of the Tobique Women's Group, as well as the founding of the Native Women's Association of Canada in 1974, in order to enable women to achieve equality not only as women, but as Indigenous women.[84] The struggle for women to receive equal status under the Indian Act was also clear in various challenges to the Act, first by Mary Two-Axe Earley, followed by the human rights challenges raised by Jeannette Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, and Sandra Lovelace in the 1970s. In 1985, the Indian Act was amended to address unequal treatment of native women with Bill C-31 which allowed the return of Native Status to those who had lost it.[82] Having said that, there are still an abundance of discrimination aimed at Indigenous women and activism continues to be done to this day. Other women have also contested the mainstream feminist history of "waves". In the case of Black Canadian women, the mainstream history of the first and second waves is problematic insofar as their struggles to enable women to leave their homes and partake in the labour force ignored that certain women had always worked to support their families. Most clear in American Black feminist Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, the experiences of Black women in Canada have not been adequately addressed by conventional feminist histories. Like Aboriginal women, some Black feminists have articulated their experiences in terms of a racially disadvantaged struggle for equal treatment and that their struggle is not only against patriarchy but systemic racism as well. Mary Ann Shadd Cary was a prominent member of Canada's Black community who advocated in Ontario for a woman's right to vote in the 1850s.[85] Black women saw a need to fund their own organizations, including missionary work in the late 19th century through the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Baptist Church.[86] Furthermore, black women founded organizations like the Coloured Women's Club in Montreal (founded in 1902) to expand opportunities for people in the Black community through mutual support.[87] Though the "double burden" of work and household labour that would be an important element of feminism in its second wave had long been present for black women, they were also less likely to be paid fairly. While it was middle class white women's experiences during and after World War II, coupled with the emergence of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique that led middle-class white women to consider engaging in the workforce, "by the time of World War Two at least 80 percent of Black women in Canada worked in the domestic-services sector and earned less than their white counterparts".[86] Black women in Canada established a national women's organization in the post-war years, with the founding of the Canadian Negro Women's Association in 1951. Though the organization started largely as a social organization, over several decades, it became more activist in orientation, and in 1980, after a national conference, it changed its name to the Congress of Black Women of Canada to reflect the changing structures and concerns of the organization.[88][89] Canada portalFeminism portal Women in Canadian politics History of Canadian women Women's liberation movement in North America#Canada Attorney General of Canada v Lavell Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism in Canada, a 2012 documentary film Government of Canada's Gender-based Analysis Plus program Indigenous feminist art responses: ReMatriate Collective

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