

## **DIVERSITY AT WORK**

### **October 2007**

(For interest/information purposes only)

**October is Women's History Month** (Canadian). Established in 1992 by the Government of Canada, this special month provides an opportunity to learn more about women's historic accomplishments and their contributions to Canadian society.

**Aboriginal Spirituality: Xlaaw** The season to pit up food. Wild crab apples are ripe and ready for preserving in Oolichan grease.

**October 1: International Day for the Elderly** (UN).

**October 2 : Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday** (India). Hindu nationalist who adopted "Non-Violence" in fighting for freedom of the country. His ideology and practices have affected many generations of individuals involved in social justice, peace and conflict resolution.

**October 7: Confucius' Birthday** (China, Taiwan). The birthday of Confucius is celebrated with a dawn ceremony at temples around the world. His birthday in 551 BCE, is celebrated as Teachers' Day in Taiwan.

**October 8: Thanksgiving Day** (Canada). Early Canadian settlers gave thanks for good harvests by decorating their churches with fruit and vegetables and celebrated dinner with venison and waterfowl.

**October 11: Navratri** (Hinduism). It means "Nine Nights" starting on the new moon and ending on Dussehra. It is dedicated to the 10-armed goddess Durga who had nine incarnations and has the power of good to destroy demons. On September 30, Durga Pooja will be completed to celebrate the divine creative force of the universe and to honour the 10-armed goddess Durga, wife of Shiva and the destroyer of demons. In Ontario celebrations and processions are held at temples across the province over the period of these days.

**October 11: National Coming Out Day (GLBT)** The first National Coming Out Day was held on October 11, 1988. It is an international event that gives gays, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people the opportunity to “come out” to others about their sexuality. It also provides a means of increasing the visibility of gay people.

**October 13: Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam).** This marks the end of the fasting of the month of Ramadan and is celebrated for 3 days. The date of observance may vary according to the sighting of the new moon. It is a time for great festivity and families and friends to come together and share gifts, speciality foods and entertainment. Where they can, people string lights and illuminate houses and neighbourhoods. Children get special treats called “Eidee” or “Eideeyah” in the South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. People give special alms before the morning prayers that are mandatory for all who are physically and mentally competent to attend. Girls and women dye their hands and feet with patterned henna and everyone wears new clothes for the morning prayers.

**October 17: International Day for Eradication of Poverty (UN).** The October 17th message is: **"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty."** (F. Joseph Wresinski).

Since its creation, October 17th has been a day for those living in extreme poverty to speak out and for all citizens to consider how they can contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty. The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty has been observed every year since 1993, when the General Assembly, by resolution 47/196, designated this day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries - a need that has become a development priority. At the Millennium Summit, world leaders committed themselves to cutting by half by the year 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty - people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

**October 18: Persons Day** (Canada). Persons Day is a cross-Canada celebration of the 1929 decision by the Privy Council to recognize women as "persons" and thus, allow them to be appointed to the Canadian Senate. In 1918, the Women's Franchise Act gave the federal vote to every woman in Canada over the age of 21 who was a British subject and had the qualifications required for the provincial franchise for men; in 1920 a standard federal franchise was set (which excluded Asians until 1948, Inuit until 1950, and status Indians until 1960; Quebec was the last province to give women the provincial vote, in 1940). In 1919 it became possible for women to be elected to the House of Commons, also on the same terms as men. Under English common law, on which Canadian law was based, women were only considered persons in matters of pains and penalties, but not as persons in matters of rights and privileges. This meant that, among other things, that women were denied the privilege of being appointed to the Canadian senate.

In 1929, the Privy Council in England, at that time Canada's highest court, responded to a petition by a group of five women (later known as the "Famous Five") to reinterpret the British North America Act to include women in its definition of persons. The Famous Five included Emily Murphy, the first woman judge in the British Empire; Nellie McClung, the first woman member of the Alberta legislative assembly; Louise McKinney, a politician and temperance campaigner; Irene Parlby, a politician and women's issues activist; and Henrietta Muir Edwards, a journalist and organizer. All were long-time activists on many issues relating to women's rights.

**October 19 : Chung Yeung Festival** (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan). The Chung Yeung, like [Ching Ming](#), is a day to remember ancestors. Families attend to the graves of their ancestors and pay their respects. They often eat cakes known as Ko, which sounds like the Chinese word for *top*. Therefore, eating the cakes will help one be promoted. The Chung Yeung Festival also commemorates a legend from the Han Dynasty (BC 202-AD 220) legend. In it, a soothsayer advised Woon King that he should take his family to a high place for the entire ninth day of the ninth moon. When they returned they found every living thing in their village had been killed. Families often go hiking along the many trails to be found in Hong Kongs United gardens.

**October 20: Bab's Birthday** (Bahai). Born Siyyid Ali Muhammad in South-western Iran in 1819; his title in Arabic means the Gate. His shrine is at the Baha'i World Center, Haifa, Israel. Work is suspended and Baha'is come together for prayers and festivities.

**October 21: Dussehra** (Hindu). It means "the tenth" and celebrates the triumph of Lord Ram over the demon Ravan who stole his wife Sita. The great Hindu epic poem, the Ramayana is read and enacted called Ram Lila. A big effigy of Ravan is burnt accompanied by fireworks.

**October 24: United Nations Day** (UN). The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, when the Charter was ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other signatories.

**October 31: Halloween** (Canada-USA). This tradition goes back to the Celtic people 2000 years ago., who celebrated their New Year in late autumn and honoured Samhain, or Lord of the Dead. They put candles on windows and lit bonfires to scare the disembodied spirits off ; wore disguises and always carried a lantern, the Irish used pumpkins for lantern, thus the fruit and the colour is associated with Halloween.

**October 31: Samhain** (Wicca). Also known as the Feast of Hecate; it marks the final harvest.

## *Timeline*

**1875** - Grace Annie Lockhart graduated from Mount Allison University and was awarded the first university degree to a woman.

**1876** - A British common law ruling states that "women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges."

**1876** - Dr. Emily Howard Stowe and her daughter Augusta Stowe Gullen form the Toronto Women's Literary Club, a screen for suffrage activities.

**1881** - Dr. Charlotte Ross becomes the first woman to practice medicine in western Canada.

**1883** - Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen becomes the first woman to graduate in medicine from a Canadian university, Victoria College, Cobourg.

**1885** - In Alberta, unmarried women property owners gain the right to vote and hold office in school matters.

**1895** - The Local Council of Women (Edmonton Chapter) is organized by Lady Isabel Aberdeen, wife of the Governor General.

**1896** - Canada's Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton implements a new immigration policy to encourage western settlement.

**1897** - Clara Brett Martin becomes the first woman admitted to the profession of law in the British Empire.

**1906** - Katherine Hughes joins the staff of the Edmonton Bulletin as a journalist. She also becomes the first provincial archivist for Alberta.

**1908** - Gertrude Watt, women's editor and columnist for the Edmonton Saturday News, forms the Edmonton Chapter of the Canadian Women's Press Club.

**1909** - At a joint convention, the Alberta and Saskatchewan provincial Woman's Christian Temperance Union pledges to work more actively for women's right to vote.

**1910** - The Canadian government passes a new Immigration Act that gives Cabinet the power to restrict the landing of immigrants based on their "race . . . , class, occupation or character".

**1912** - The United Farmers of Alberta endorse women's suffrage.

**1913** - Immigration to Canada peaks at over 400,000 people.

**1916** - Manitoba becomes the first province to give women the right to vote and hold provincial office.

**1916** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in Saskatchewan provincial elections.

**1916** - The Alberta Equal Suffrage Act gives women 'absolute equality' with men in provincial, municipal, and school affairs, and thus permits women to vote and run for office in all Alberta-based elections.

**1916** - Emily Murphy, Edmonton, becomes the first woman appointed as a magistrate in the British Empire.

**1916** - The United Farm Women of Alberta is formed with Irene Parlby as president.

**1917** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in British Columbia provincial elections.

**1917** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in Ontario provincial elections.

**1917** - Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams from Alberta become the first women elected to a provincial legislature.

**1917** - Under the Wartime Elections Act, women in the armed forces or with military relatives were given the right to vote while citizens of 'enemy alien' birth were disenfranchised.

**1917** - The Dower Act is passed in Alberta providing a wife with a life interest in a homestead that cannot be disposed of without her consent.

**1918** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in Nova Scotia provincial elections.

**1918** - The Canada Elections Act gives all women over 21 the federal vote.

**1919** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in New Brunswick provincial elections.

**1919** - An amendment to the 1910 Immigration Act gives Cabinet the power to restrict the landing of immigrants based on their nationality.

**1919** - Under the federal Naturalization Act, a British subject who marries an 'alien' is permitted to retain her citizenship.

**1921** - Nellie McClung is elected as a Liberal member in the Alberta Legislature.

**1921** - Irene Parlby is appointed Minister without Portfolio in the United Farmer's government, and thus becomes the first woman in Alberta and the second woman in the British Empire to serve as a cabinet minister.

**1921** - Agnes McPhail of Ontario becomes the first woman elected to the House of Commons.

**1925** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in Newfoundland elections.

**1927** - Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby

and Nellie McClung meet at Emily Murphy's house in Edmonton to sign her petition regarding appointing women to the Senate.

**1928** - The Alberta government passes the Sexual Sterilization Act, permitting a Eugenics Board to order the sterilization of any person deemed to be "mentally defective".

**1928** - The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously decides that women were not persons who could hold office as Senators in Canada.

**1929** - The British Privy Council reverses the Supreme Court's 'Persons' Case decision.

**1930** - The Honourable Cairine Wilson of Ontario becomes the first female Senator in Canada.

**1940** - Women gain the right to vote and run for office in Quebec provincial elections.

**1951** - Charlotte Whitton is elected Mayor of Ottawa and the first female Mayor in Canada.

**1957** - Ellen Louks Fairclough is the first woman appointed to the federal cabinet.

**1967** - A new point system immigration policy eliminates discrimination based on race, religion or national origin.

**1967** - Prime Minister Lester Pearson establishes a Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

**1971** - The federal government creates the cabinet portfolio of Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**1972** - The Alberta government overturns the Sexual Sterilization Act. Since 1928, over 3,000 people have been sterilized under the Act.

**1974** - Pauline McGibbon, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, become the first woman appointed Lieutenant Governor in Canada.

**1982** - The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is adopted, including Section 15, the Equality Clause.

**1984** - Jeanne Sauvé becomes the first woman appointed Governor General of Canada.

**1989** - Audrey McLaughlin, Member of Parliament from the Yukon, is elected as the leader of the federal New Democratic Party and becomes the first woman ever to lead a national political party in Canada.

**1991** - British Columbia's Rita Johnston becomes Canada's first female premier, although not elected.

**1993** - Catherine Callbeck is elected Premier of Prince Edward Island. She becomes the first female Premier elected in Canada.

**1993** - Following a party leadership convention, Kim Campbell becomes the first female Canadian Prime Minister.

**1995** - Christine Silverberg, Calgary Chief of Police, is the first female police chief in a major Canadian city.

**1999** - The Famous 5 monument is unveiled at Olympic Plaza in

Calgary.

**2000** - The Famous 5 monument is unveiled at Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

**2001** - Lieutenant Governors in seven Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) and the Governor General of Canada are women.

**2002** - Approximately one third of the Canadian Senate are women.