

74

WOMEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

MEET SOME EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE WHO SHAPED OUR COUNTRY

Illustrations by Michelle Simpson



Everywhere the legendary explorer David Thompson went, his half-Cree wife **Charlotte Small** went, too, travelling tens of thousands of kilometres in the early 1800s through bush, swamp and mountain with their three children.

Phyllis James Munday helped map and photograph many mountains near her B.C. home and in 1924, became the first woman to climb Mount Robson, the highest peak in Canada's Rockies.



I'm **Mina Hubbard**. When my husband died exploring northern Labrador, I decided to complete his journey in 1905. The expedition turned into a race, but my First Nations team and I beat the competition by six full weeks, making top-quality maps along the way.

IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE



The Royal Canadian Air Force wouldn't let the experienced Vancouver flyer **Helen Harrison** be a Second World War pilot, so she served with the Air Transport Auxiliary, a group of mostly women who moved planes while men flew in battle.



In 1939, New Brunswick's **Molly Kool** became the first woman sea captain in North America, and the second in the entire world.

I'm **Idola Saint-Jean**. From the 1910s into the 1940s, I tirelessly demanded rights for Quebec women, especially the right to vote and to hold any job. I also worked to help children and the elderly.

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS



Passionate about rights for all workers, especially women, **Helen Armstrong** was the only female leader of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919.



In the 1950s, **Jean Lumb** pushed the Canadian government to make its immigration laws fairer so that Chinese people could bring family members to be together. She was also a busy store-owner and volunteer who helped save Chinatown areas in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary.



Marie Lacoste Gérin-Lajoie didn't think it was fair that wives had to give their property and any money they earned to their husbands. She devoted her life to educating Quebec women about their rights and working to change the law.

I'm **Nahnebahwequay**. (My English name was Catherine Sutton.) The government tried to sell my family's land while my husband and I were away doing church work. Because I was Ojibwa, I wasn't allowed to buy it back. I went to England in 1860 to ask Queen Victoria for First Nations land rights.



In 1946, **Viola Desmond** was arrested when she wouldn't move from her seat in the section of a New Glasgow, N.S., movie theatre that was for white people only. Now recognized for her courageous fight against racism, Desmond is featured on the most recent \$10 bill.



Alberta's **Famous Five** were **Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney** and **Henrietta Edwards**. They didn't stop until Britain forced the government of Canada to declare in 1929 that women actually were persons.



Edith Archibald was a firm believer in the power of women gathering in small groups over tea. This Newfoundlander who moved to Nova Scotia pushed for a ban on alcohol and for women's right to vote.

ARTFUL LIVES



Starting in the late 1880s, **Hannah Maynard** — the first female photographer in B.C. — gained worldwide admiration for her creative approach to taking pictures. Notice how she put five images of herself in this photo.



Prudence Heward was one of several women in Montreal's Beaver Hall Group of artists in the 1920s and 1930s. Her powerful, bold paintings are in the National Gallery and have been featured on stamps.



Her quiet, majestic paintings of B.C.'s forests and First Nations totem poles were not popular in her lifetime, but **Emily Carr** is now seen as one of Canada's greatest painters.



Shaped from clay or marble, sculptures by Toronto's Frances Loring stand in war memorials and public places all over Canada, including Parliament Hill.



I'm Kenojuak Ashevak.

My creation The Enchanted Owl is one of the most famous Canadian artworks ever. I was among the first Inuit involved in the Cape Dorset art printmaking project.



I'm **Bonnie Baker**. When the men who played pro baseball went off to the Second World War, team owners started the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, using lots of Canadian players. I left Saskatchewan to be a catcher in the league and became one of its biggest stars.

Hilda Ranscombe may be the best female hockey player ever. In the 1920s and 1930s, she led her southern Ontario team, the Preston Rivulettes, to 10 Ontario championships and six national titles.

FIT, FAST FEMALES



Before she was 24 years old, B.C. skier **Nancy Greene** won gold and silver at the 1968 Olympics as well as World Cup titles in 1967 and 1968. She still holds the Canadian record for the most World Cup skiing wins.



Toronto's **Alexandrine Gibb** loved sports, especially basketball, and devoted her life to making sure girls and women had a chance both to be athletes and to have women coaches.



Fanny Rosenfeld, nicknamed **Bobbie** because of her short hairstyle, excelled at basketball, tennis, hockey and softball. She won silver and gold at the 1928 Olympics, the first where women were allowed to compete in track and field.



Nurse Myra Bennett was so dedicated to helping people that she worked for free for more than 10 years in the 1920s and 1930s after the Newfoundland government ran out of money to pay her.

Leonora King was born in eastern Ontario but became the first Canadian doctor in China when she started working there in 1877. She started hospitals and clinics, and never asked her patients for money.



I'm **Georgina Pope**. I was born in Prince Edward Island but travelled far and wide, leading the first group of Canadian nurses to help soldiers in the South African War in 1899, and oversaw all Canadian nurses serving in the First World War.

HEALING HANDS

Marie-Henriette LeJeune-Ross travelled all around Cape Breton Island starting around 1800, using special plants and other knowledge to nurse people and help to birth babies.

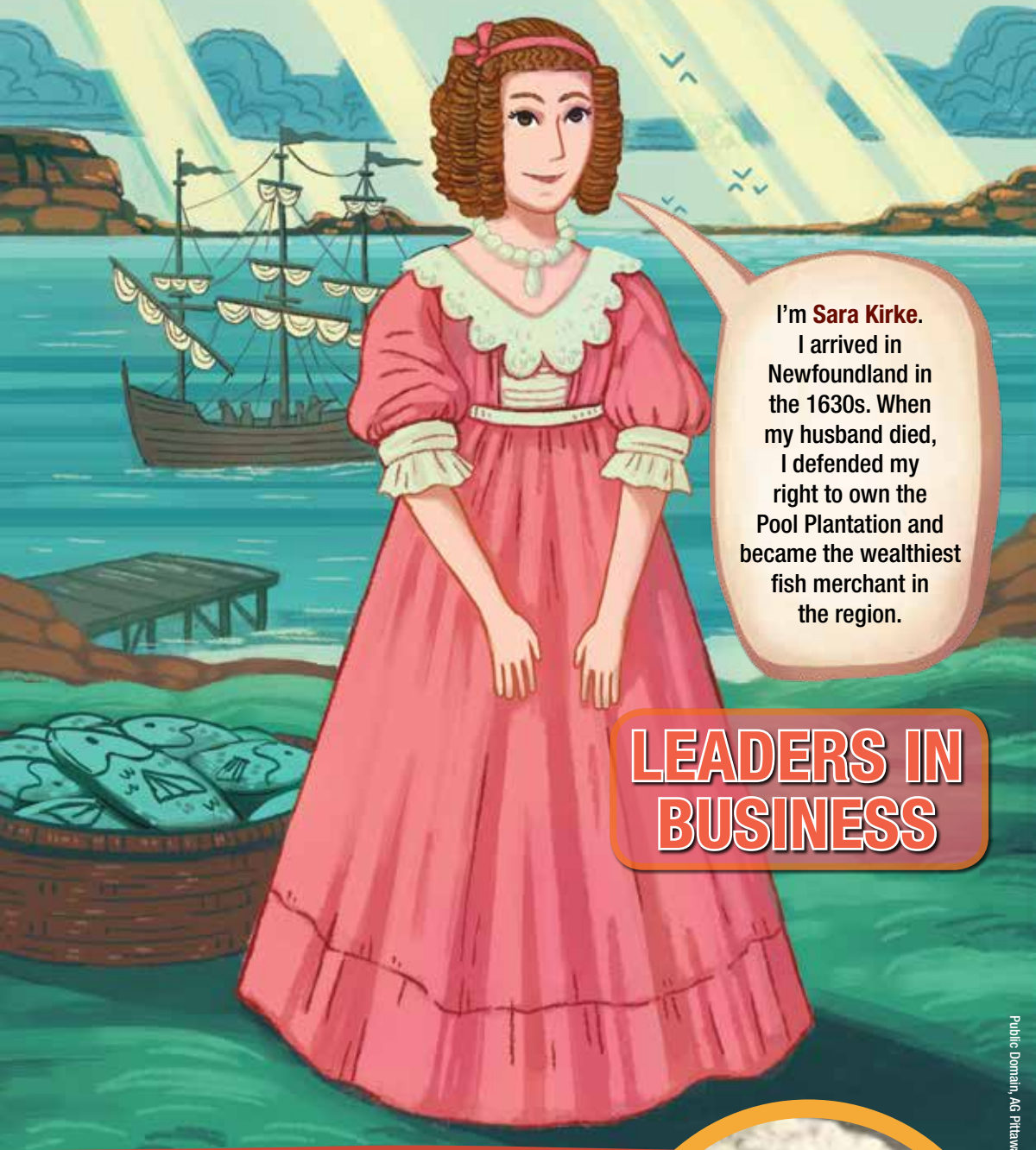


In the late 1890s, when women doctors were mocked, Quebec's Maude Abbott became one of the world's most important and respected researchers into heart disease.



Ontario's Jenny Trout became the first Canadian woman to earn a licence to practice medicine, in 1875.





I'm **Sara Kirke**.
I arrived in
Newfoundland in
the 1630s. When
my husband died,
I defended my
right to own the
Pool Plantation and
became the wealthiest
fish merchant in
the region.

LEADERS IN BUSINESS



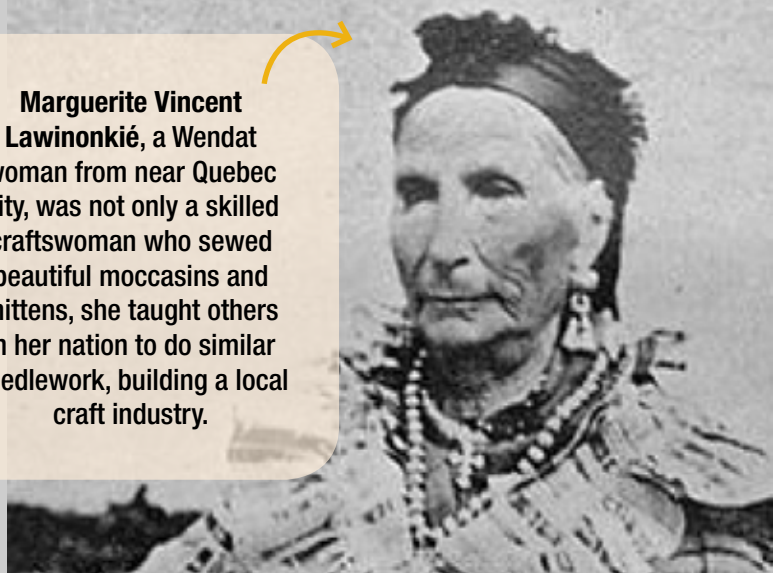
The first *caisse populaire* — a bank owned by its members — was started in 1900 by Alphonse Desjardins and his wife Dorimène Desjardins. She ran the Caisse Desjardins while her husband was away at another job, and helped build it into a whole movement after he died.





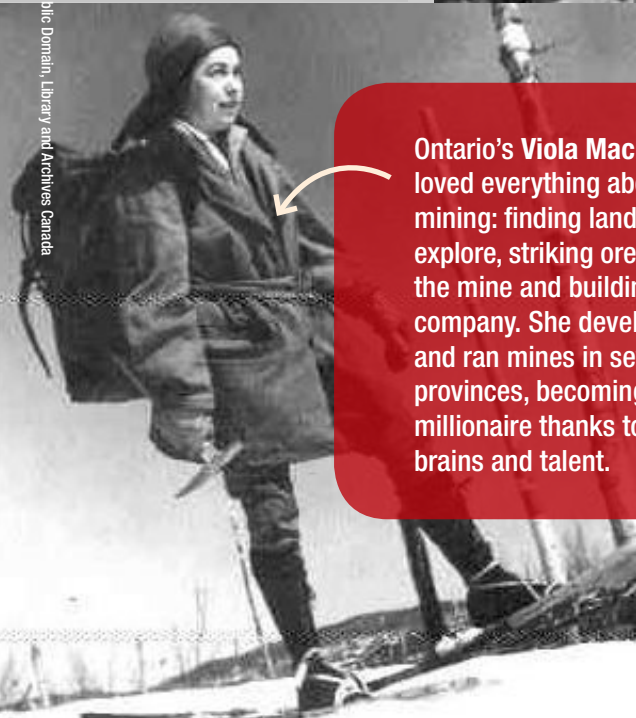
Nellie Cashman didn't stop after making a small fortune mining gold in B.C. in the late 1870s. When the Klondike gold rush started 20 years later, she headed to the Yukon where she was a miner and owned restaurants.

Marguerite Vincent Lawinonkié, a Wendat woman from near Quebec City, was not only a skilled craftswoman who sewed beautiful moccasins and mittens, she taught others in her nation to do similar needlework, building a local craft industry.



Ontario's **Viola MacMillan** loved everything about mining: finding land to explore, striking ore, starting the mine and building the company. She developed and ran mines in several provinces, becoming a millionaire thanks to her brains and talent.

After **Lucie Blackburn** and her husband escaped slavery in the U.S., they ended up in Toronto where in 1837 they started the first cab company in what is now Ontario.



I'm **Molly Brant**. I was a Mohawk loyal to Britain during the American Revolutionary War. I was highly respected in my home near Kingston, Ont., for my lifetime of helping build connections between the British and First Nations.



Rosemary Brown of Vancouver was the first Black woman elected to a provincial government, in 1972, and the first woman to run to be leader of a national political party, in 1975.



POLITICAL WOMEN



Annie Gale became the first woman city councillor in Canada when she was elected in Calgary in 1917.



Ontario's **Agnes MacPhail** was the first woman to win a seat in the House of Commons, where she served from 1921 to 1940.

“Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily it's not difficult.” —Charlotte Whitton, Canada's first female mayor, who led the city of Ottawa for nine years.

ON STAGE AND SCREEN

Toronto's **Mary Pickford** was the highest-paid film star of the early 1900s. She started a movie company with her husband and was one of the first women to be a producer.



Calgary's **Kathleen Parlow** gave her first violin concert at six years old, and went on to perform all over the world to enraptured audiences starting in 1907.



I'm **Emma Albani**. I sang on the world's greatest stages as one of the biggest opera stars of the late 1800s. I was one of Queen Victoria's favourite performers and spent a year as a lead singer with New York's famous Metropolitan Opera.

Celia Franca founded the National Ballet of Canada in 1951, after being invited by Toronto ballet-lovers to move from England for the job.



Known as La Bolduc, **Mary Travers-Bolduc** was a folksinger in the 1930s beloved by French-speaking audiences for her performances and records of her own songs and traditional ones.



I'm **Mrs. Kwong Lee**. I was the first Chinese woman to live in Canada, but little is known about me, including my own name. I arrived in Victoria, B.C., in 1860 with my husband.

PIONEERING PEOPLE



A successful fur trader and businesswoman in the mid-1700s, **Sally Ainse**, a First Nations (likely Oneida) woman still couldn't win the right to keep the land she had bought near Chatham, Ontario.

Public Domain



Born in Ontario, **Kathleen Rice** became an expert on wilderness living and made a small fortune when she discovered copper, nickel and zinc in northern Manitoba.



Gudridur Thorbjarnardottir sailed to Vinland — probably the island of Newfoundland — more than a thousand years ago. She and her family settled there for three years, meaning she was likely the first European woman to visit Canada.

Jeanne Mance left France in 1641 to set up a hospital in what is now Quebec, L'Hôtel Dieu, and ended up working with Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve to found the city of Montreal.





In 1854, when a ship ran aground on Lake Erie, **Abigail Becker** plunged into the icy waters to rescue eight men, earning her the nickname **The Angel of Long Point**.

Françoise-Marie Jacquelin, better known as **Marie de la Tour**, came to what is now New Brunswick in 1640. With her husband away, a rival attacked **Fort la Tour**. Marie took command of the 45 men inside and courageously defended the fort, which eventually fell to the attackers.

BOLD AND BRAVE

I'm **Joan Fletcher**. I'm from Regina originally, and served in the Second World War. I made 20 trips through dangerous jungles and over mountains to get 2,000 Dutch women and children out of a military prison in Indonesia. I even commanded Japanese soldiers to help out.

When rebels marched into Toronto in 1837, the young sisters **Charlotte** and **Cornelia De Grassi** spied on their movements and carried messages to the military, often as bullets flew.

She was known as **Cougar Annie**. **Ada Annie Rae-Arthur** and her family settled on a lonely part of Vancouver Island's west coast in 1915. She became an expert shot as she defended their farm against bears and, yes, cougars.



SCIENCE STANDOUTS

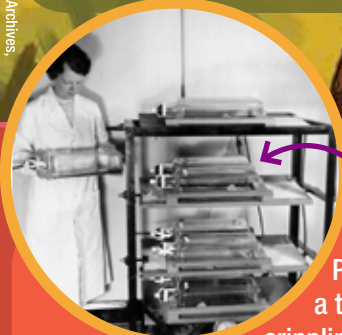
I'm **Maud Watt**. In the 1930s, my husband and I were shocked to see how few beavers were left in northern Quebec, and the suffering that meant for the Cree people. I set out by dogsled to meet with the provincial government, which agreed to turn over a huge piece of land as a reserve where we helped the beaver population recover.

“If you were a man, I'd say that was a fine lecture.” —said to Allie Vibert Douglas, who became Canada's first female astrophysicist in the late 1920s.

Sylvia Fedoruk was part of a team at the University of Saskatchewan that first used cobalt radiation to treat cancer patients in 1951. The treatment ultimately helped tens of millions of people.

Polio was a terrifying, crippling disease until a vaccine was found in 1952. Toronto's **Leone Farrell** perfected a way of making large amounts of the vaccine, helping millions all over the world.

Elsie MacGill from Vancouver was the first Canadian woman to earn degrees in electrical engineering and aeronautical engineering. She was also the first woman in the world to design and test an airplane.



THE POWER OF WORDS

I'm **Mary Ann Shadd Cary**. I left the U.S. and settled in southern Ontario in 1850 where I became the first Canadian woman to start a newspaper. I published and edited the *Provincial Freeman* to help and inspire other Black people.



Pauline Johnson drew on her Mohawk heritage for her hugely popular poetry and stage performances between 1892 and 1910. She published several collections of poems and a novel.

Kit Coleman wasn't satisfied at being made one of Canada's first female newspaper editors, in 1889. The Toronto woman went on to be North America's first female war correspondent and went undercover on all kinds of big stories in Canada and the U.S.



B.C.'s Muriel Kitagawa used her writing in magazines and newspapers to fight discrimination against Canadians like her who came from Japanese backgrounds, especially during the Second World War.

Using the name **Franoise, Robertine Barry** wrote fierce articles in the Quebec newspaper *La Patrie* in the early 1890s arguing for education and rights for women.



In the 1920s, Helen Creighton realized the old songs and stories of the Maritimes were about to disappear, so she travelled thousands of kilometres and spent countless hours recording them.

Onésime Dorval was the first licensed schoolteacher in what is now Saskatchewan. She taught in both French and English there and in Manitoba from 1877 to 1921.



Captured by English settlers in Newfoundland in 1819, Demasduit taught them that her people, the Beothuk, were not dangerous. Her efforts came too late, and the Beothuk were soon wiped out.



I'm **Marguerite Bourgeoys**. I set up some of the first schools in New France, and started a group of women who travelled by canoe and horseback to educate children wherever they were.

LOVE OF LEARNING



After Adelaide Hoodless's young son died from drinking unsafe milk, she set up training programs in Ontario to teach proper food handling and other skills. She also established the Women's Institute, which spread across Canada and around the world.

