

Women & Labour

At the start of WWI women were expected to get married to a man, have children and then be home to take care of the family and the home. If women worked, the jobs were limited to 'traditional' employment such as a teacher or nurse. Today, although there continues to be gender inequities in the workplace, women can be found in almost all job classes and positions. No longer restricted to 'women's jobs', women continue to battle for equal access to all positions and equal pay for equal work. These women are representative of so many women that have made the workplace safer and more equitable for women.

Please note that the information contained in this section comes from a variety of sources, all of which are listed in the References section.

Name	Biographical Information
<p>Laure Gaudreault 1889 (La Malbaie) - 1975 (Clermont)</p>  <p>© Société d'histoire de Charlevoix</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 1927 to 1947 collaborated with the newspaper 'Le Progrès de Saguenay' and used the paper to raise awareness of the plight of rural teachers - isolation, salary differences (urban vs rural; men vs women) • In 1936, Gaudreault encouraged local teachers to unit to found l'Association catholique des institutrices rurales de Charlevoix • She participated in the creation of 13 other regional teacher associations • From 1937 to 1946, she was president of the la Fédération catholique des institutrices rurales • 1st paid trade unionist in Québec • Considered as 'Pioneer of teacher union' as she contributed to the unification of the unions by founding the la Corporation des instituteurs et institutrices catholiques de la province de Québec, for which she served as vice-president from 1946-1965
<p>Madeleine Parent June 1918 (Montréal) - 2012 (Montréal)</p>  <p>Keith Beatty, Toronto Star</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1942 (24yrs old) led the union movement - The United Textile Workers of America - against the Dominion Textile company • She led a successful strike that lasted 100days against the Dominion Textile company who would not recognize the union • Because of the anti-union sentiment of the Quebec government, Parent was arrested twice for organizing what the government called 'illegal' strikes • In the early 1950s, Parent organized the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union • Parent organized the Confederation of Canadian Unions in 1969 • She was also a founding member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) • Parent received the Idola Saint-Jean prize (by the Fédération des

	<p>femmes du Québec) in 1993</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all that she had done in her labour activism, she received an honorary Doctorate of Law at Concordia University - and several others • In 2013 she was honoured by using her name for a bridge in Québec = the Madeleine Parent Bridge • <i>“Labelled a communist and arrested several times for her efforts, Parent emerged as one of the most influential and selfless leaders of the union movement in Quebec, and the rest of Canada.”</i> (Zevbertini, 2014)
<p>Eileen Tallman Sufrin 1913 (Montréal) - 1999 (British Columbia)</p>  <p>Canadian Labour Institute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufrin began her union work in 1937 as secretary of CCF trade union committee • In 1941, she joined, as a full time organizer, the Office and Professional Workers Organizing Committee (as bank workers were interested in establishing an union in Toronto and Montreal) established by the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) • That same year she helped lead Canada's first strike of bank employees in Montreal (Employees of the Banque Canadienne Nationale) • In 1943, Sufrin worked for the United Steelworkers and helped organize the Inghish plant workers into a union • Sufrin headed a drive to organize the Eaton workers from 1958 to 1952 (about 40 000 employees across Canada but focus was on the 3 Toronto locations) • To honour her work she received the Governor-General Medal in 1979 • In 2016, Sufrin was named as one of 30 women in Canada's Great Women in the magazine 'Canada's History' • She has also been inducted in the Member of the Canadian Labour Hall of Fame
<p>Huguette Plamondon 1926 (Montréal) - 2010 (Montréal)</p>  <p>UFCW Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began her union work at a 19 years old becoming the secretary for the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) in 1945 • In 1953, Plamondon became an active member of the Conseil du travail de Montréal - which was affiliated with Congress of Industrial Organizations • She became the first woman to lead a major Canadian labour organization in 1955 when she became President of the Conseil du travail de Montréal • Plamondon then became the first woman to be union executive for a national labour organization in 1956 when she was elected vice-president of Canadian Labour Congress. A position she kept until

<p>Iona Samis</p>  <p>UFCW</p>	<p>1988!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Samis began her union work in 1947 when she began as a meat plant worker and a UPWA activist ● In 1966, she became the first woman to be elected as vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour
<p>Grace Hartman 1918 (Toronto) - 1993 (Toronto)</p>  <p>Worker History Museum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grace Hartman first became involved in unionized work in 1954 when she joined the National Union of Public Employees ● She then was elected president of the NUPE Local 373 in North York ● In 1965, Hartman chaired the Ontario Federation of Labour's Women's Committee ● She then joined the Committee for the Equality of Women in Canada in 1966 ● In, 1968 Hartman was appointed to the Advisory Council of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women ● She became the first woman to lead a national union in North America, when she was elected CUPE's National President in 1975 and remained in that position until 1983 ● In 1974 she became the 2nd President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women ● For her passionate work, as a feminist in the labour movement, Hartman receive the Governor General's Persons Award in 1985 ● She also was honoured in 1986 when she received the YMCA Women of Distinction Award ● Grace Hartman has been inducted into the Canadian Labour Hall of Fame
<p>June Veacock</p>  <p>Arnold Auguste African Canadian Workers: From 1960 to Present Continuing the Fight June Veacock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 1986, June Veacock becomes the first woman in senior position for a central labour organization when she became the Director of Human Rights for the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) ● Veacock is a founding member of the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists ● In 1994, she played an important role in the first successful case of systemic discrimination on the grounds of race brought by a group of Black and Visible minority nurses (investigated and settled by the Ontario Human Rights Commission) ● She currently is the Chair of the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists ● Veacock is a member of the Congress of Black Women of Canada
<p>Louise Lefebvre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Louise Levebvre began her union career in 1978, when she began

 <p>UFCW</p>	<p>work as a cashier when soon after became active in the labour movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● She became member of the Local 503 executive in 1992 ● Lefebvre also served on the FTW LGBT rights committee, UFCW Canada National Council Human Rights and Equity & Diversity Committee ● In 2013, Lefebvre became the first openly gay leader of a UFCW Local Union when she was elected President of UFCW Canada Local 503
<p>Jan Simpson</p>  <p>Ron Fanfair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jan Simpson started working for Canada Post as a postal clerk in Toronto sortation plant in 1985 where she quickly became shop steward ● She also helped organizing for the CUPW ● Simpson became the first black woman elected to the CUPW National Office when she was elected as the national union representative responsible for external organizing in 2011 ● She went on to become the first black woman to lead national union in Canada when she was elected as National President for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in 2019 ● Simpson received the Urban Alliance on Race Relations Labour Award in 2019 ● She was also selected as one of the 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women in 2020 ● Simpson is also a member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists