



Women of Colour

Women of Colour in Canada:

It is often the case that when asked to think about women of significance in Canada, many women of colour are overlooked. These women have contributed to Canada by breaking barriers and paving the way for women of colour to have a seat at the table. These women have taught Canadians about their culture, background and the differences that help shape our country by identifying multiculturalism.

These women have not only helped women, but supported everyone in becoming “firsts” in a lot of ways and we are grateful for them in helping shape Canada and it’s history.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/noteworthy-figures.html>

Women	Biographical Information
<p>Mary Shadd (October 9, 1823 – June 5, 1893)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary was an American-Canadian anti-slavery activist, journalist, publisher, teacher, and lawyer. • She was the first black woman publisher in North America and the first woman publisher in Canada. • Mary's family was involved in the Underground Railroad assisting those fleeing slavery. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, her family relocated to Canada. • Self taught, Mary went to Howard University Law School, and continued advocacy for civil rights for African Americans and women for the rest of her life. • Mary went to school in Windsor, Ontario
<p>Viola Desmond 1914-1965</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viola Irene Desmond (née Davis), businesswoman, civil rights activist (born 6 July 1914 in Halifax, NS; died 7 February 1965 in New York, NY). • Viola Desmond built a career and business as a beautician and was a mentor to young Black women in Nova Scotia through her Desmond School of Beauty Culture. • In 1946, ten years after being a business women in Nova Scotia Viola Desmond challenged racial discrimination when she refused to leave the segregated Whites-only section of the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. Viola Desmond was arrested, jailed overnight and convicted without legal representation for an obscure tax offence as a result. • Viola Desmond was unable to remove the charges against her and went unpardoned in her lifetime. • Viola is the first Canadian woman to be featured on a dollar bill/ bank note. • Viola taught in two racially-segregated schools for Black students, she began a program of study at the Field Beauty Culture School in Montreal, one of the few such institutions in Canada at the time that accepted Black applicants. She also owned her own small business, Vi’s School of Beauty Culture in Halifax, NS in 1937



Margaret Jean Gee
1927-1995

- Three years after the Law Society lifted the restrictions against females of Chinese heritage joining the profession, Gee enrolled in law school at the University of British Columbia and became the first woman of Chinese descent to graduate from law in 1953.
- Margaret Jean Gee was born in 1927 in Vancouver, British Columbia. She is a woman of many firsts.
- At the age of 26, she was called to the bar in British Columbia and became the first woman of Chinese descent to be admitted to the bar in Canada in the process.
- Having opened her private practice in 1955 in Vancouver, she also became the first Chinese-Canadian woman to become a lawyer in British Columbia.
- Moreover, Gee was also the first Canadian female of Chinese heritage to have served as a Pilot Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force Reserves.

Violet King
(1929 Calgary - 1982 New York)








- Her life consisted of several important milestones
- She was the first Black Canadian to obtain a law degree in Alberta, the first Black person admitted to the Alberta Bar and the first Black woman to become a lawyer in Canada.
- She was also the first woman appointed to an executive position with the YMCA in the United States.
- Violet King attended Crescent Heights High School and became president of the Girls' Association in Grade 12. At a young age, King knew she wanted to pursue a legal career. Her Grade 12 yearbook caption read: "Violet wants to be a criminal lawyer."
- Violet King attended the University of Alberta in 1948. To finance her studies, she taught piano lessons in Edmonton. Out of 142 students, King was one of only three women in the Faculty of Law. She was a member of the Blue Stocking Club — a discussion group for women with an emphasis on history and public affairs.

Jean Augustine
1937-



- In 1993, Canadian politician Jean Augustine became the first Black woman elected to the Parliament of Canada.
- Born in St. George's, Grenada, Jean Augustine was a qualified teacher when she arrived in Canada in 1959, but had to work as a domestic and shoe clerk before earning an Ontario Teacher's Certificate.
- After completing a Master of Education degree, Ms. Augustine became a school principal and supported many social causes through her involvement in boards such as that of The Hospital for Sick Children.
- During her years as a federal member of parliament, The Honourable Jean Augustine served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada, Chair of the National Liberal Women's Caucus, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Deputy Speaker. During her years as a federal member of parliament, The Honourable Jean Augustine served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada, Chair of the National Liberal Women's Caucus, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, Chair of the

	<p>Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Deputy Speaker.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2007 she became the first Fairness Commissioner for the province of Ontario.
<p>Deepa Mehta 1950-</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepa Mehta was born on January 1, 1950, in Amritsar, India and is a prominent and respected filmmaker whose work is known worldwide for its honesty, beauty, and universality. • Her award-winning films have been shown at major film festivals and distributed worldwide. Her elemental trilogy comprises <i>Fire</i> (1996), <i>Earth</i> (1998), and <i>Water</i> (2005); the latter was nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign language film, and would become very successful with audiences in Canada, and around the world. <i>Water</i> and her comedy <i>Bollywood/Hollywood</i> (2002) remain two of the top 10 grossing English Canadian films. • Other movies in her oeuvre are <i>Sam and Me</i> (1991), <i>Camilla</i> (1993), and <i>A Heaven on Earth</i> (2008). • In 2003, she won a Genie Award for the Bollywood/Hollywood screenplay. In May 2012, Mehta received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, Canada's highest honour in the performing arts. • Mehta is also the recipient of the 2012 Governor General's Performing Arts Award for lifetime artistic achievement.
<p>Lily Singh</p>  <p>September 26, 1988</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily Singh is a Canadian comedian, former talk show host, and YouTuber who formerly appeared under the pseudonym Superwoman (stylized iiSuperwomanii), her long-time YouTube username. Born and raised in Scarborough, Ontario, Singh began making youtube videos in 2010. • In 2016, she was included in <i>Forbes</i> list of world's highest paid YouTubers ranking third and earning a reported \$7.5 million. • Singh was born and raised in the Scarborough district of Toronto, Ontario. Her parents, Malwinder Kaur and Sukhwinder Singh are Indian immigrants from Hoshiarpur, Punjab, India, and raised her as a Sikh. • In February 2019, Singh came out as bisexual to the public via social media.
<p>Carol Huynh 1980-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Huynh was born on November 16, 1980, in Vietnam. She fled Vietnam with her family in the late 1970s as a refugee. • Huynh began freestyle wrestling in high school, and continued in the sport through university. She won several medals at the World Championships over a number of years—bronze in 2000, 2005, 2010, and silver in 2001. • Despite failing to qualify for the 2004 Olympic Games, Huynh won the gold medal in her weight class at the Pan American Games in 2007, and went on to repeat her gold-medal winning performance at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Huynh was the first gold medalist for Canada in women's wrestling and was the first gold medalist for

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<p>Sandra Oh 1971-</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandra Oh is a Canadian actress born on July 20, 1971, in Nepean (now Ottawa), Ontario, Canada. • The daughter of Korean immigrants, Oh started her performance career as a child. She attended the National Theatre School of Canada, and at age 19 had her breakthrough role in the television biopic <i>The Diary of Evelyn Lau</i> (1993). • Her performance garnered a Gemini nomination and the 1994 Cannes FIPA d'Or for Best Actress. • In 1996, Oh moved to Los Angeles to join the cast of HBO's comedy <i>Arli\$\$</i>. Roles in films like <i>Under the Tuscan Sun</i> (2003) and <i>Sideways</i> (2004) followed. She then landed the role of Dr. Cristina Yang in the hit TV series <i>Grey's Anatomy</i> (2005), which garnered her numerous award nominations over the course of her 10 years on the show. In 2018, she found more success as the star of BBC America's spy drama <i>Killing Eve</i>.
<p>Jully Black 1977-</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a Canadian singer-songwriter, producer and actress. She has collaborated and written for many artists, including Nas, Saukrates, Choclair, Kardinal Offishall, Destiny's Child, and Sean Paul. • Jully is a major presence in the Canadian media and entertainment industry. As former host and correspondent for CTV's <i>etalk</i>.

Anne Clare Cools
 1943-



- Anne is a former member, the first Black member and the longest serving member of the Senate of Canada. As a social worker, Cools was a pioneer in the protection of women from domestic violence, running one of the first domestic violence shelters in Canada.
- In February 1969, Anne participated in a 13 day long civil disobedience sit-in at Sir George Williams University (later Concordia University), where over 400 students occupied the computer center to protest the school's inadequate handling of complaints of racism against a professor.
- In 1974, Cools moved to Toronto where she founded and served as the executive director for *Women in Transition Inc.*, one of the first shelters for domestic violence victims in Canada.
- In 1978, Cools contested the Liberal nomination in a by-election in the central Toronto riding of Rosedale. She lost to establishment candidate John Evans, the former president of the University of Toronto.

Hodan Nalaya
 1976-2019



Nalayeh, 43, was a powerhouse on social media, where she used her large following to continue her theme of sharing a side of Somalia rarely seen in coverage of the country.

She was [the founder of Integration TV](#), an online platform with millions of views on YouTube which describes itself as “building a community of inspiring and uplifting stories for Somalis worldwide.”

Nalayeh was a victim of a brutal terrorist attack - the port city in Jubaland, south of the capital Mogadishu.