

Timeline – CFUW in Canadian Women’s History

1800’s

Present

2018.10.17

This quick timeline will provide background and context to the rest of the evening. In this we will show the activities of Women and activities of CFUW particularly leading up to the Persons Case decision and what has occurred since.

Canada’s history has been shaped by countless determined women who worked to promote and uphold gender equality in Canada. Women championed a number of important human rights that have become core Canadian values — the right to vote in provincial and federal elections, the right to own property, the right to earn a fair wage, and finally, the right to be recognized as “persons” under the law.

1867 British North America Act (BNA Act)

1867



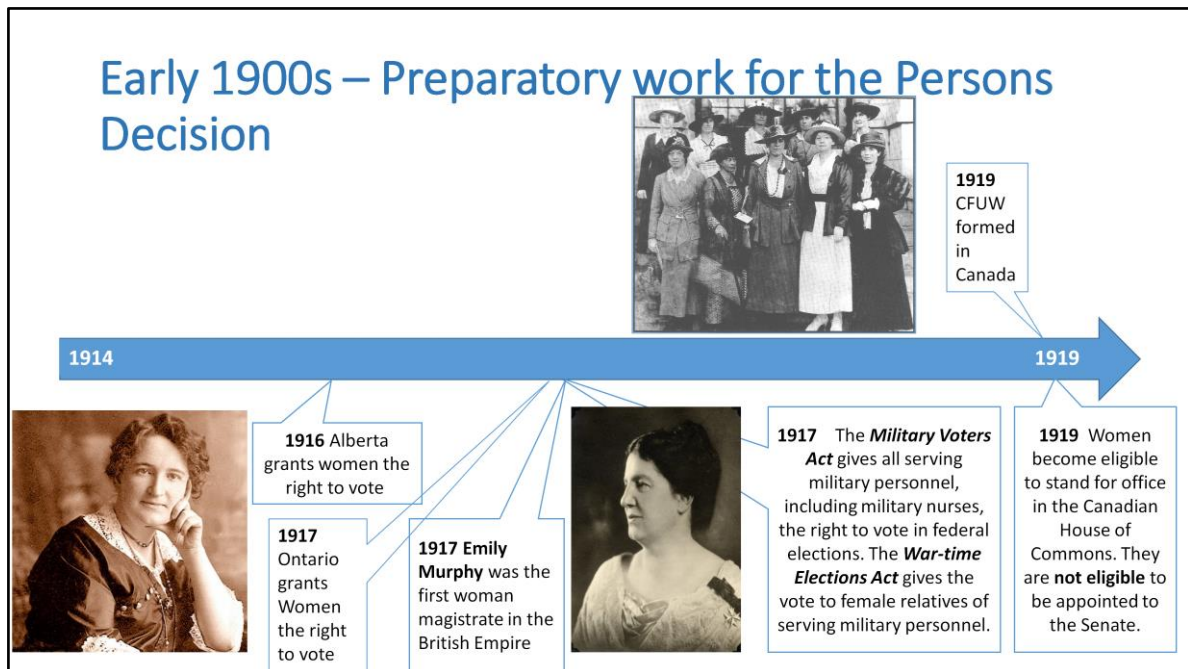
- Set out the powers and responsibilities of the provinces and of the federal government.
- This federal Act used the word "persons" when it referred to more than one person and the word "he" when it referred to one person.
- Section 24 said that only "qualified persons" could be appointed to the Canadian Senate. The Canadian government had consistently interpreted this phrase as meaning men only.

We'll start with the British North America Act of 1867 which set out the powers and responsibilities of the provinces and federal government. Most of us learned about this in school, but not perhaps the ramifications of the word "persons".

This federal act used the word persons when it referred to more than one person and "he" when it referred to a single person.

Unfortunately the Canadian government consistently interpreted that qualified persons were only men when it came to being appointed to the Senate.

Early 1900s – Preparatory work for the Persons Decision



During WWI (1914-1918), large numbers of women were recruited into jobs vacated by men who had gone to fight in the war. This led to women working in areas of work that were formerly reserved for men, for example as railway guards and ticket collectors, buses and tram conductors, postal workers, police, firefighters and as bank 'tellers' and clerks. Some women also worked heavy or precision machinery in engineering, led cart horses on farms, and worked in the civil service and factories. However, they received lower wages for doing the same work, and thus began some of the earliest demands for equal pay.

1. **1914 Nellie McClung** rented the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg and staged a mock parliament, casting herself as premier and putting men in the role of having to beg her for the vote. The event was a great success, both financially and politically.
2. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta granted women the right to vote in 1916 and British Columbia and Ontario in 1917, before women could vote federally. Alberta is significant in the Persons Case, so that's why it's mentioned here.
3. **1917 Emily Murphy** was the first woman magistrate in the British Empire. On her first day, a defendant's lawyer challenged a ruling on the grounds that she was not a

"person" and therefore not qualified to perform the duties of a magistrate.

4. **August/September 1917** The *Military Voters Act* gave all serving military personnel, including military nurses, the right to vote in federal elections. The *War-time Elections Act* gave the vote to female relatives of serving military personnel.
5. **May 1918** The *Federal Women's Franchise Act* gave all women British subjects aged 21 and over the right to vote in federal elections.

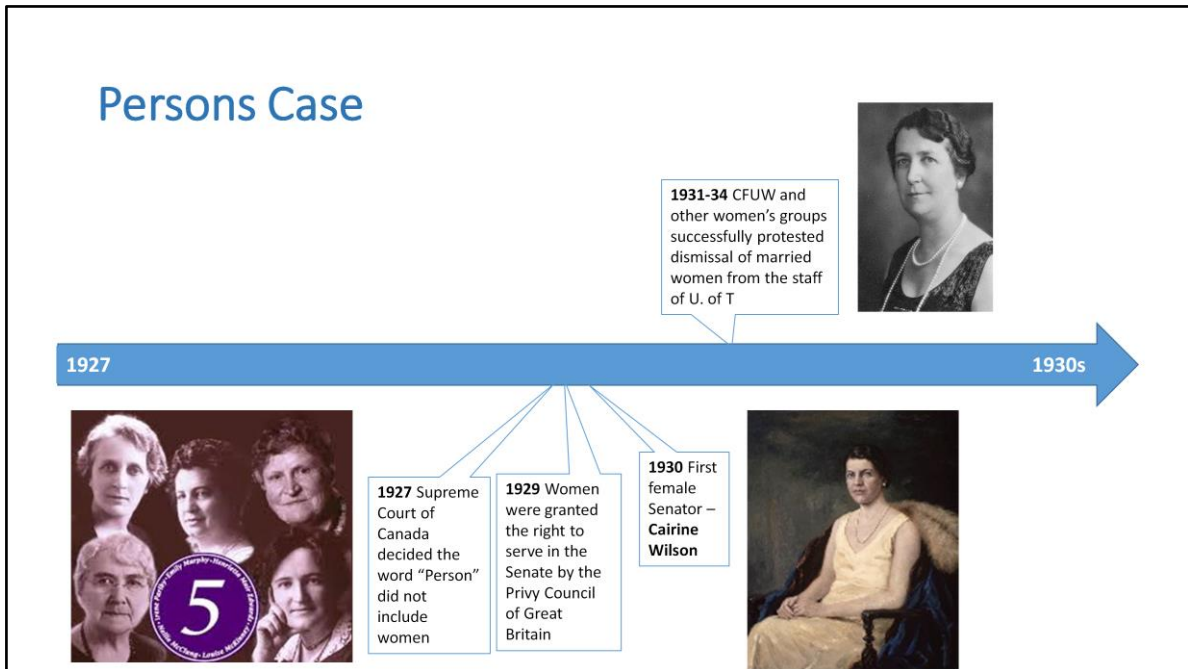
In July 1919, Women become eligible to stand for office in the Canadian House of Commons. They are **not** eligible to be appointed to the Senate.

6. **1919** - Early in 1919, **Dr. Winifred Cullis** of Britain, who had spent time in Canada during the war years lecturing at Toronto University suggested that women in Canada might wish to organize a national federation so that Canada might become one of the first countries to join in the emerging International Federation of University Women. A similar suggestion came from **Virginia Gildersleeve** of the American Association of University Women

In March 1919 at a conference, four of the leaders in university organizations - **Mrs. J.A. Cooper**, President of the Toronto Club, **Mrs. R.F. McWilliams**, President of the Winnipeg Club; **Miss May Skinner**, then representing Canada on the American Association's committee on International Affairs; and **Miss Laila Scott** in Toronto decided to create the Canadian Federation of University Women.

1920 – International Federation of University Women formed *with* Canada as an inaugural member. The goals of the IFUW were to foster peace and encourage international understanding

Persons Case



In 1927 Emily Murphy and four other prominent Canadian women – Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Henrietta Muir Edwards – asked the Supreme Court of Canada to answer the question: does the word "person" in Section 24 of the *B.N.A. Act* include female persons? After five weeks of debate and argument, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that the word "person" did not include women.

The five women, who came to be known as The Famous Five, were shocked by the Supreme Court decision but did not give up the fight. They took their case to London, to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain, which in those days was Canada's highest court of appeal.

On October 18, 1929, Lord Sankey, Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, announced the decision of the five lords, and I quote

"The exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbarous than ours. And to those who would ask why the word "person" should include females, the obvious answer is, why should it not?"

The Famous Five not only won the right for women to serve in the Senate but helped pave the way for women to participate equally in – and contribute equally to – all other aspects of life in Canada.

Cairine Wilson had the honour of being appointed Canada's first woman Senator. She was named to the position by her friend Prime Minister Mackenzie King four months after a ruling in the Persons' Case. She served in the Senate until her death in 1962, gaining recognition for her dedication to causes such as supporting refugees and the League of Nations. Cairine Wilson became the first female president of the League of Nations Society in Canada and in 1949 Senator Wilson became the first Canadian woman to be a delegate to the UN General Assembly.

Mabel Thom - CFUW President 1931-1934

This is the lead up to World War II. CFUW signed a petition for disarmament.

CFUW successfully protested, along with other women's groups in Toronto, against the dismissal of married women from the staff of the University of Toronto. Prior to this, if you married, you needed to leave the staff.

1960s – Women become active again

1966 Dr. Laura Sabia, CFUW President, brought together 32 women's groups demanding women's rights



1960s



1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women was created in Canada (NAC)

[Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(DEDAW\)](#) was passed by the General Assembly on 7 November 1967

As President of CFUW, Dr. Laura Sabia realized that deputations from women's organizations to the federal government had been politely heard, complimented, and quickly forgotten.

Early in 1966, on her own initiative as President of CFUW, Laura wrote to 32 influential women's organizations nationwide. She organized a meeting of their representatives where they formed a committee for the Equality of Women, later named the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women.

Laura then worked in concert with Liberal cabinet minister, **Judy LaMarsh**, to spearhead the formation of the Committee for the Equality of Women in Canada.

A Royal Commission was set up in 1967. Dr. Sabia was a founding member and the first President of the **National Action Committee on the Status of Women** as well as its Ontario counterpart.

Laura was active politically herself as an alderwoman for seven terms, organizing a Home and School Association, and writing columns for The Toronto Sun. On her open-line radio programme she became famous for her challenges to government on subjects such as incest and family violence.)

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) worked diligently for many years to secure women's human rights. The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (DEDAW) was passed by the General Assembly on 7 November 1967.^[3]

Finally in December 1972, the General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year

1970s – Local and National women



1975 CFUW – Orangeville and District formed



Ruth Bell, CFUW President, was a member of

- Match International,
- Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF),
- Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) and
- UNESCO's Sub-Commission on the Status of Women.

1970s

1975-
International
Women's
Year



1975
Rosemary
Brown came
2nd in race
for
leadership of
NDP

1979 Flora
MacDonald
became
the 1st
female
Secretary
of State



1975 – International Women's Year.

Rosemary Brown served as a MLA in the British Columbia legislature from 1972-86, making her the first Black Canadian woman to be elected to a Canadian provincial legislature.

In 1975, she became the first black woman to run for the leadership of a Canadian federal party, finishing a strong second (with 40.1% of the votes on the fourth and final ballot) to Ed Broadbent in that years New Democratic Party leadership election.

In CFUW Orangeville and District was formed with 20 Charter members – Mrs. Dorothy Cavers was chosen as President.

1976 a brief on media violence related to young children was presented to the Royal Commission by CFUW Orangeville and District It was titled "The effects on Society of Violence in the Communications Industry"

Ruth Bell, was CFUW President from 1973-76 and came to Orangeville when we were organizing. She was a founding member of:

- Match International (organization to match the needs and resources of Canadian women with the needs and resources of women around the world)

- Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)
- Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and
- UNESCO's Sub-Commission on the Status of Women.

Flora MacDonald was the first woman to seek leadership of the Progressive Conservative party and in 1979 MacDonald became the first female Secretary of State for External Affairs, and one of the first female foreign ministers anywhere in the world. She presided over the end of the Vietnam war and the Iranian crisis where 6 American diplomats were held hostage.

1980s –fighting for equality in legislation

1981 -CFUW supported the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CFUW advocated to all levels of government to ensure that equality for women is entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

1983-84 – Orangeville and District CFUW looked at the need for a facility for abused women and their children – doors opened in **1985**

1980s

1990

1982 – Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

1984- Jeanne Sauvé appointed the first female Governor General



NAC organized the 1st televised debate on women's issues by the three federal parties. **Audrey McLaughlin** became the 1st Canadian woman to lead a national political party



1981 -CFUW supported the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Also during this period CFUW was advocating to all levels of government during public debates to ensure that equality for women was entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, gives constitutional protection to individual human rights. It applies to relationships between an individual and government

There are two key sections of the Charter to note with regards to equality: sections 15 and 28.

Section 15 ensures the equal protection and benefit of the law “without discrimination [...] based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

Court decisions have expanded this list to prohibit discrimination on other grounds, such as citizenship, marital status and sexual orientation; decisions have also recognized that multiple grounds of discrimination may intersect in particular cases.

Section 28 guarantees that all rights covered in the Charter apply equally to men and women.

In the 1980s, locally CFUW members were busy lobbying against an Adult Entertainment establishment in town and in 1983-84, the group investigated the need for a facility for abused women and their children. The doors opened on what is now Family Transition Place in 1985.

1984 Jeanne Sauv  became the first female governor general in Canada's history, and only the second woman amongst all the Commonwealth nations

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) organized the first televised debate on women's issues by the three federal parties. Audrey McLaughlin became the first Canadian woman to lead a national political party in 1989.

1990s – CFUW active Nationally & at the UN

1994 -Phyllis Scott, CFUW
President participated along with other women's groups in a nationally televised Press Conference on gun control

1998 – CFUW
receives special consultative status at the UN

Mavis Moore
was part of the Canadian delegation to UN Status of Women meetings



1990s

1993 Canada elected its 1st female Prime Minister – **Kim Campbell**



Kim Campbell was elected in the 1988 federal election as the member of parliament (MP) from Vancouver Centre. She held 4 cabinet posts before being selected Party Leader.

She became Prime Minister from June 25, 1993 to November 4, 1993.

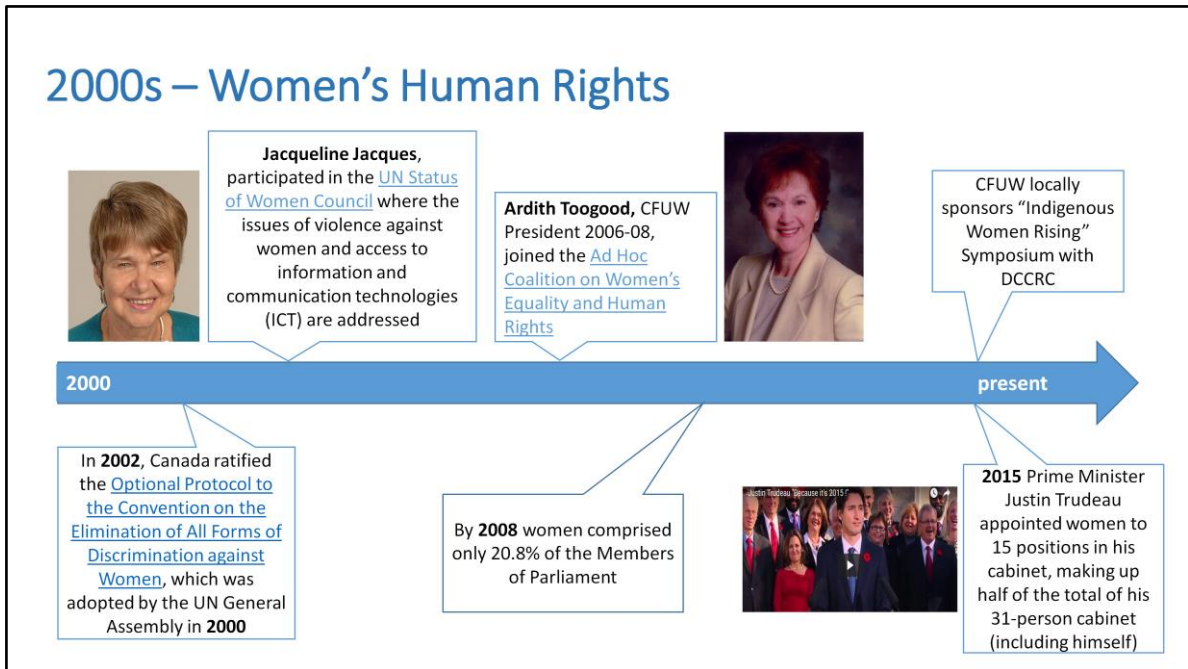
1994 -Phyllis Scott, CFUW President participated along with other women's groups in a nationally televised Press Conference on gun control,

In 1998, CFUW received special consultative status at the United Nations.

Mavis Moore, CFUW President 1998-2000 represented Canada on Canadian delegation to UN Status of Women meetings in New York.

During this time, CFUW took action on the environment (including pollution, mines and water), health, gun control, and nuclear non-proliferation.

2000s – Women’s Human Rights



Canada has worked to make women’s human rights a strong focus of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and Human Rights Council.

In 2000, the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which set international standards to eliminate gender discrimination.

In 2002, Canada ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Canada was one of the first countries to do this.

As part of our nation’s commitment to this convention, Canada must submit a report to the United Nations every four years about how it has worked to further the rights of women.

Between 2002 – 2004, **Jacqueline Jacques** CFUW President participated in the UN Status of Women Council in New York where the issues of violence against women and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) were addressed

Ardith Toogood, was CFUW President between 2006-08 when CFUW joined the Ad Hoc Coalition on Women’s Equality and Human Rights, Canadian

Department of Peace Initiative and GEAR (international coalition on Gender Equality Architecture Reform)

CFUW testified before House Standing Committee on Status of Women on funding and other cuts; advocated on the environment, gun control, Court Challenges Program, women's prison reform, child care, poverty, UN Agency for Women, Millennium Development Goals and a culture of peace for Afghanistan and Darfur.

Women's organizations from across the country joined in coalition to try to restore cut programs and funding.

By 2008 women comprised only 20.8% of the Members of Parliament.

Locally, we sponsored a symposium titled "Indigenous Women Rising" with DCCRC

2015 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed women to 15 positions in his cabinet, making up half of the total of his 31-person cabinet (including himself). Of the 184 Liberals appointed to office, 50 of them (or 27%) were female.

Justin Trudeau's comment when asked about why equality in Cabinet replied "because it's 2015". This is reminiscent of Lord Sankey's statement after deciding the Persons Case where he said "exclusion of women from public office is a relic of days more barbarous than ours".

Canada's history has been shaped by countless determined women who worked to promote and uphold gender equality in Canada.



And in this room there are many more whose effort and willingness to stand will move us further down the path to equal participation in serving our communities.

There have been many more determined women than outlined here. And in this room there are many more whose effort and willingness to stand will move us further down the path to equal participation in serving our communities.

Those in this room who have stood for public office in any capacity, please stand.

Thank you!

Please join me in thanking this group of women!

Dr. A. Vibert Douglas Fellowship	http://www.fcfd.org/en-ca/fellowshipsawards/dravibertdouglasfellowship.aspx
CFUW Fellowships and Awards	http://www.fcfd.org/en-ca/fellowshipsawards/listoffellowshipsandawards.aspx
Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case	https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/commemoration/gg/index-en.html
Federation of Canadian Municipalities	Federation of Canadian Municipalities awards for politicians, communities and high school students
RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards	https://www.womenofinfluence.ca/rbc-cwea/#.W7IIL5NKh8c
Women of Distinction	https://ywcacanada.ca/en/pages/programs/wod
Leading Girls Building Communities	http://www.women.gov.on.ca/owd/english/leadership/leading.shtml



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CFUW Orangeville and District

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month
Library at Westside Secondary School

www.cfuworangeville.com

References

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CFUW website:

<http://www.fcfd.org/Portals/0/cfuwpublicfiles/webfiles/whoweare/ourhistory/History%20and%20Heroines.pdf>

Women and the Vote in Canada – a timeline -

<http://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/trl/2016/01/women-and-the-vote-in-canada-a-timeline.html>

The “Persons” Case - <http://www.famou5.ca/the-persons-case/>

<http://www.canadahistoryproject.ca/1914/1914-08-women-vote.html>

<https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/commemoration/pd-jp/history-histoire-en.html>

<http://www.fcfd.org/en-ca/whoweare/ourhistory.aspx>

<http://www.heroines.ca/celebrate/historymonth.html>

Government of Canada: Women's Rights - <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/rights-women.html>

CFUW website:

<http://www.fcfd.org/Portals/0/cfuwpublicfiles/webfiles/whoweare/ourhistory/History%20and%20Heroines.pdf>

Women and the Vote in Canada – a timeline -

<http://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/trl/2016/01/women-and-the-vote-in-canada-a-timeline.html>

The “Persons” Case - <http://www.famou5.ca/the-persons-case/>

<http://www.canadahistoryproject.ca/1914/1914-08-women-vote.html>

<https://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/commemoration/pd-jp/history-histoire-en.html>

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