



IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA ARE DIVERSE IN BACKGROUND BUT SHARE A KEY LIFE EXPERIENCE.

THEY HAVE ADOPTED CANADA AS THEIR HOME. LIKE ALL NEWCOMERS, IMMIGRANT WOMEN BRING THEIR SKILLS, TALENTS AND COURAGE, WOVEN TOGETHER BY THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS. EACH NEWCOMER ALSO BRINGS THE GOAL OF BEING CANADIAN.

October is Women's History Month (WHM) in Canada – a time to recognize the achievements of women as a vital part of our Canadian heritage. The theme for WHM 2007 is Celebrating Immigrant Women in Canada, which commemorates the role of immigrant women and reflects the fact that 2007 is the 60th anniversary of Canadian citizenship.

Many Canadians are only a generation or two removed from ancestors who immigrated to Canada. Aboriginal peoples comprise just 4% of Canada's population, yet their roots go back some 10,000 years in this land.

Immigrant women make up a significant part of the population of women and girls in Canada. Approximately one in five women and girls now living in Canada was born outside the country – a total of 2.8 million in 2001.

Canada's multicultural environment helps newcomers feel comfortable and accepted. However, foreign-born women can face racial or religious intolerance and harassment. There are also gender-based obstacles that all women face, but which are compounded by other factors, such as race, religion, language and heritage. In spite of the challenges, generations of immigrant women have seized the opportunity to create new lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

Among Canada's first immigrant women were those who came to New France in the early 1630s. From 1663 to 1673, women of marriageable age were brought over to correct the imbalance of the sexes. Known as *les filles du roi*, about 800 women arrived during the first 11 years of royal governance.

In the 1800s, Icelandic and Finnish immigrant women helped women gain the vote in Canada. In their home countries, they had enjoyed equal rights with men, including voting rights. Dismayed to find that women in Canada did not yet have these rights, these immigrant women rallied together in the suffrage movement of the 1880s.

Many women also immigrated to Canada as "war brides" after the two World Wars. Approximately 48,000 war brides, along with their children (nearly 22,000), followed their husbands to Canada in the mid-1940s. Mostly from Great Britain and Western Europe, they adapted well to life in Canada, nurturing their families and enriching their communities.

Immigration over the past 100 years has shaped Canada, with each new wave adding to the nation's ethnic and cultural composition. Half a century ago, most immigrants came from Europe. Today, most are from Asia. From 1991 to 2000, 2.2 million immigrants were admitted to Canada. On average, about half of those immigrating to Canada since 1980 are women.

The Right Honourable Michaël Jean, Governor General of Canada, was born in Haiti in 1957 and came to Canada in 1968. Her Excellency understands first-hand the immigrant experience and the impact immigrant women have on Canada:

"...EVERY DAY, WOMEN FROM NEAR AND FAR ... BRING TO THIS COUNTRY THEIR INSIGHTS, THEIR OPINIONS, THEIR IDEAS ABOUT FREEDOM, AND THEIR OWN STRUGGLES TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES THAT KEEP THEM FROM ACHIEVING AUTONOMY AND REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL."

We can be proud of Michaëlle Jean and of the accomplishments of countless immigrant women, throughout our history and today. Let's look at a few of the **inspiring stories of these women of achievement:**

ANITA RAU BADAMI WAS BORN IN 1961 IN INDIA AND CAME TO CANADA IN 1991. AN AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF NOVELS ADDRESSING ISSUES OF INDIAN FAMILY LIFE AND THE CULTURAL CHALLENGES FACING INDIANS MOVING TO THE WEST, SHE IS A FULL-TIME WRITER.

ROSEMARY BROWN (1930-2003) WAS BORN IN JAMAICA AND CAME TO VANCOUVER IN 1950. A POLITICIAN, FEMINIST, TEACHER AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST, SHE WAS THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN IN CANADA TO BE ELECTED TO OFFICE AND THE FIRST WOMAN TO RUN FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF A FEDERAL POLITICAL PARTY.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ADRIENNE CLARKson WAS BORN IN HONG KONG IN 1939 AND CAME TO CANADA WITH HER FAMILY IN 1942. RENOWNED IN CANADIAN BROADCASTING, JOURNALISM, ARTS AND CULTURE, AND PUBLIC SERVICE, SHE SERVED AS CANADA'S 26TH GOVERNOR GENERAL FROM 1999 TO 2005. HER MEMOIR, *HEART MATTERS*, WAS PUBLISHED IN 2006.

URSULA FRANKLIN WAS BORN IN 1921 IN GERMANY AND CAME TO CANADA IN 1948. A FAMOUS SCIENTIST, PEACE ACTIVIST AND ADVOCATE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, SHE IS PROFESSOR EMERITA AND SENIOR FELLOW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO. SHE HAS RECEIVED HONORARY DEGREES FROM CANADIAN AND OTHER UNIVERSITIES, AS WELL AS MANY OTHER AWARDS AND HONOURS.

MARILÚ MALLET WAS BORN IN 1944 AND CAME TO QUEBEC FROM CHILE AS A POLITICAL REFUGEE IN 1973. A FILMMAKER AND WRITER, SHE LAUNCHED HER CAREER AT THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD IN 1976. HER FILMS HAVE RECEIVED NUMEROUS AWARDS IN CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD.

IRSHAD MANJI WAS BORN IN UGANDA IN 1968 AND CAME TO VANCOUVER AS A REFUGEE IN 1972. AN AWARD-WINNING HUMAN-RIGHTS ADVOCATE, CREATOR OF THE ACCLAIMED FILM *FAITH WITHOUT FEAR*, AND INTERNATIONALLY BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE TROUBLE WITH ISLAM TODAY*, SHE NOW LEADS A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT OF REFORM-MINDED MUSLIMS.

MANUELA MARUJO WAS BORN IN 1949 IN PORTUGAL AND CAME TO TEACH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO IN 1985. FOCUSING HER PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH, WRITING AND TEACHING ON PORTUGUESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE, SHE DIRECTS HER EXTENSIVE VOLUNTEERING PURSUITS TO EDUCATION.

LENA (ELIZABETH MAGDALENA) PEDERSEN WAS BORN IN GREENLAND IN 1940 AND CAME TO THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES IN 1959. SHE HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN BUILDING NORTHERN COMMUNITIES. IN 1970, SHE BECAME THE FIRST INUIT WOMAN TO BE ELECTED TO THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COUNCIL.

LÉA POOL WAS BORN IN 1950 IN SWITZERLAND AND CAME TO MONTREAL IN 1975. SHE IS AN AWARD-WINNING FILM DIRECTOR, PRODUCER AND SCREENWRITER. HER FILMS DEAL WITH VARIOUS THEMES, INCLUDING EXILE, JEWISHNESS, INTIMACY AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY.

SAVELLA STECHISHIN (1903-2002) WAS BORN IN WESTERN UKRAINE AND CAME TO SASKATCHEWAN AT AGE NINE. WORKING TIRELESSLY TO PRESERVE UKRAINIAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IN CANADA, SHE FOUNDED THE UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA. SHE WAS ALSO A JOURNALIST.

THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN OF FORESIGHT, COURAGE AND COMPASSION WHOSE STORIES CONTINUE TO INSPIRE CANADIANS EVERYWHERE.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

The 2007 Women's History Month website WWW.WHM.GC.CA

Status of Women Canada website WWW.SWC-CFC.GC.CA

Citizenship and Immigration Canada – 60 Years of Canadian Citizenship WWW.CIC.GC.CA/ENGLISH/ABOUT/CITIZENSHIP/60/INDEX.ASP

Library and Archives Canada – Celebrating Women's Achievements WWW.COLLECTIONSCANADA.CA/WOMEN

Statistics Canada – Women in Canada: a Gender-based Statistical Report WWW.STATCAN.CA/BSOLC/ENGLISH/BSOLC?CATNO=89-503-X

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Fact sheet – Immigrant and Refugee Women WWW.CRIAW-ICREF.CA/FACTSHEETS/IMMIGRANT%20%20REFUGEE%20WOMEN/IMMIGRANT_FACT_SHEET_E.HTM