

Strength in Brave Women Stories

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Every year on **March 8th**, we celebrate International Women's Day. This special day traces its origins back to the early 20th century, though it was officially recognized by the United Nations in 1975. For 2025, the Government of Canada's theme for International Women's Day is "**Strength in Every Story**." Through the inspiring stories of several remarkable women, we can witness their courage and resilience.

Roberta Bondar – Canada's First Woman in Space



There are countless examples proving that women can be outstanding scientists, and Roberta Bondar is one of the most exceptional. In 1992, she became the **first Canadian woman to travel to space** and the world's first neuroscientist astronaut. As part of a NASA space mission, she conducted research on how the human body adapts to microgravity, **contributing significantly to the field of space medicine**.

Her success was not a coincidence. From a young age, Bondar was determined to become a scientist, starting with **experiments in her basement laboratory**. Through extensive education, she earned a Doctor of Philosophy in neuroscience from the University of Toronto (1974), and a Doctor of Medicine from McMaster University (1977). Her relentless pursuit of knowledge and dedication ultimately led her to **fulfill her lifelong dream of traveling to space**.

Bondar demonstrated that **determination and passion can defy barriers**. Not only is she a respected neurologist, medical researcher, and educator, but she is also an accomplished author. She has published four photography essay books, expressing her deep appreciation for Earth's natural environment.





Viola Desmond – A Symbol of Civil Rights



Take a close look at your **\$10 bill—the purple one—and you'll see the face of a woman who changed history.**

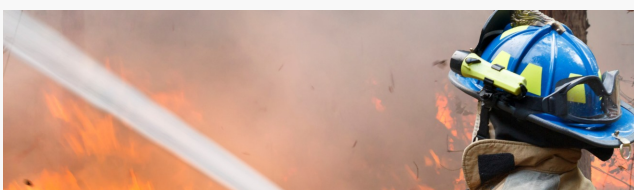
In 1946, **Viola Desmond**, a Black entrepreneur, was **arrested and fined for refusing to leave a “whites-only” section in a movie theater.** When ordered to move, she stood her ground and was forcefully arrested, fined, and locked in a jail cell for the night.

At the time, racial segregation was commonplace, but **Desmond refused to accept injustice.** After her arrest, she **fought for years through legal appeals**, all while continuing to raise awareness about racial equality within her community. Her act of defiance became **a turning point in Canada’s civil rights history**, ultimately helping to lay the foundation for a more equal society.

Printed on the back of the **\$10 bill**, you'll find an excerpt from the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:**

"Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination."

As we carry this bill in our hands, let's remember that the freedom and equality we enjoy today are, in part, thanks to the courage of Viola Desmond, a woman who refused to back down.





Louise Hine-Schmidt – A Pioneer in Fire and Rescue

Louise Hine-Schmidt currently serves as the **Deputy Chief of Ottawa Fire Services**, a position she earned in 2020 after more than 21 years of experience as a frontline firefighter. In 1999, she made history as **one of the first three women ever hired as firefighters by the City of Ottawa**.

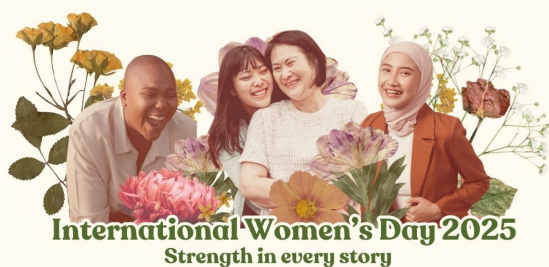
Breaking stereotypes have always been an important mission for her. As the **founder and former president of Fire Service Women Ontario (FSWO)** and a key figure in **establishing Camp FFIT (Female Firefighters in Training)**, Louise has dedicated her career to **empowering women in the firefighting profession**.

Her advocacy and leadership have **opened doors for more women to pursue careers in emergency services**, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive future in firefighting. In addition to her extensive experience, she also holds an **Executive Diploma in Municipal Management** (Western Ontario / **Seneca College**). Whether it's the people around us—or even ourselves—we all have the potential to become trailblazers like her in the future.

Final Thoughts

Gender equality has come a long way, but there is always more work to be done. We must believe in **our ability to pursue our dreams** and become who we aspire to be—regardless of gender. At the same time, **we should be ready to support and encourage the women around us, recognizing their limitless potential**.

Join [Bravery in Action, an International Women's Day event](#), and let's learn together to create a more inclusive future.



Canada

Reference:

- ☒ [Canada - International Women's Day](#)
- ☒ [Women of Impact in Canada - Roberta Bondar](#)
- ☒ [Women of Impact in Canada - Viola Desmond \(1914 – 1965\)](#)
- ☒ [the canadian encyclopedia – viola desmond](#)
- ☒ [Women of Impact in Canada - Louise Hine-Schmidt](#)

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