

**Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion**  
**Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion**

[ccdi.ca](http://ccdi.ca)

## Celebrating International Women's Day on March 8 and beyond

Each year on March 8 we celebrate [International Women's Day](#) as a way to recognize all of the collective and individual achievements of the women and girls in our lives. In celebrating, we take time out of our day on March 8 to festively and publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of women and girls at home, at work, in our faith centres, and every other area of our lives.

As we celebrate, we would also like to encourage everyone to consider and embrace an intersectional perspective, a perspective we have done our best to highlight throughout this guide.

There are several organizations that provide resources and yearly themes to channel our collective efforts. Unfortunately, not all themes were available at the time of writing, so we do encourage you to check back prior to your event or initiative if connecting with the themes presented is helpful or important to you and your efforts.

- [UN Women](#): Last year's theme was "Invest in women: Accelerate progress".
- [IWD organization](#): #AccelerateAction: recognizing that at the current rate we will reach gender parity in 134 years. This year's theme encourages increased momentum and urgency to addressing and removing barriers for women in personal and professional areas of their lives.
- [Le collectif 8 mars](#) (Quebec): Last year's theme was ça gronde.

Keeping gender equity as a starting point, how are we addressing barriers and biases for women and girls from various additionally marginalized identities including racial, sexual orientation, physical size, disability, religion, or language?

Celebration and recognition are great starting points. However, we cannot forget or overlook the true purpose of this day which seeks to create gender equality. In working towards that effort, we hope to encourage your conversations to continue beyond March 8. The sections and activities provided below, invite readers to explore both individual and organizational possibilities for reflection and action.

Building beyond a one-day celebration, allows for organizations to work in solidarity with women and girls in your organizations and locally to build momentum towards bigger and more sustained change. We hope this guide and the subsequent activities support your ongoing efforts with this in mind.

## Exploring gender equity: A potential outline for using this guide

To support your planning for your International Women's Day celebrations as well as any future oriented actions to develop programs with gender equity in mind, we have developed a series of activities to guide you through [individual reflection](#), [organizational exploration](#), and [actionable support](#).

The activities are presented in an order that we think is supportive of reflection leading to action. However, for organizations early on their journey, it may be valuable to explore the [Trailblazers and changemakers](#) activities within your team or connect with the one of the organizations suggested in the [Taking a targeted approach](#) section as a place to begin. At the same time, working through some of the reflective exercises as a way to start preparing for next year.

## Critical reflections for individuals on International Women's Day

**Objective:** To use critical reflection skills, transformative learning theory elements, and intersectional feminist resources.

**Intention:** To provide space and questions for reflection around IWD and gender equality for leadership and individuals to help inform potential areas of action.

1. How do you feel about International Women's Day? What does this day mean to you?
2. What do you know about feminism? Hint to foster your learning and reflection: See if you can find two current (within the last 10 years) articles, speeches, books, poems, etc., by searching for example: intersectional feminist theory.
3. Who is a woman in your sector or field that you want to learn more about?
4. What are gender roles? How do gender roles impact your life?
5. What barriers impacts women and girls here in Canada?
6. What human rights are women and girls still denied around the world? And why?
7. What does gender-based oppression or violence look like in society?
8. What does gender inequity look like in workplaces?
9. What are some concrete actions you can take towards gender equity and empowerment?
10. How are you feeling now that you have spent this time reflecting, learning and critically thinking about feminism, International Women's Day and gender inequity?

## Missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people – Articles for awareness and advocacy

As we reflect on these critical questions surrounding gender equity and International Women's Day, it's vital to situate these efforts within the broader contexts of reconciliation and justice. This year marks the 10-year anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report—a milestone that calls us to deepen our commitment to addressing historical and ongoing injustices against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) people. This section of the guide highlights some key resources, advocacy efforts, and creative initiatives aimed at raising awareness, inspiring action, and supporting meaningful change.

### [Indigenizing International Women's Day](#)

- The Canadian Women's Foundation illustrates that gender justice activism is more than a single movement, as many movements are intertwined across communities and people. In doing so, they interviewed Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, PhD, who is a proud member of the Wikwemikong First Nation and has worked to advance the rights of Indigenous women as the president of the Ontario Native Women's Association since 2003. The interview talks about what it means to **Indigenize International Women's Day** – and Indigenizing as a process of naturalizing Indigenous knowledge to transform spaces, places, and hearts. This is a podcast you can listen to or read along with the transcript.

### [The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – Supplementary Report](#)

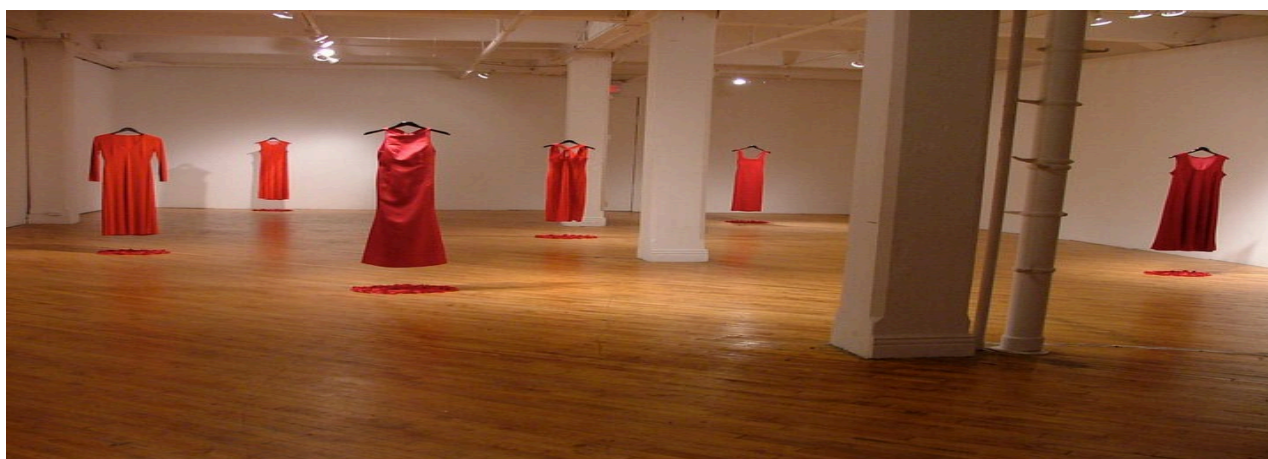
- This report, created by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, is a result of the collective effort that provides a roadmap that will enable us, as a society, to better ensure the safety of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The reality of violence against Indigenous women in Quebec is often overlooked, and because of the language and cultural barriers, these works rarely consider the realities of women in Quebec, or publications in French about them. The analysis showcases the impacts of colonial legacy on identities and cultures, the various manifestations of violence experienced by women and the importance of society, the challenges of the Quebec provincial and federal systems that are supposed to help them, and lastly, the resilience and hope that drives the women and their families.

### National Center for Truth and Reconciliation (10-year anniversary)

- The 10-year anniversary for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission marks a decade since its final report, which had concluded 94 Calls to Action aimed at addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of residential schools and fostering reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. This is an important milestone that highlights the Commission's progress, challenges, and ongoing commitments in reconciliation efforts, and serves as a call for renewed energy in assessing how Canadians and Canadian institutions are addressing systemic inequalities.

### The REDdress Project

- Jamie Black, a Métis artist, created the REDdress Project, which engages with themes of memory, identity, place, and resistance. Black's project uses red dresses as a symbol for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This art installation has raised visibility and awareness on this crisis in Canada and has become a symbol for advocacy.



The REDdress Project at an art installation in Canada. Jamie Black hopes to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Indigenous women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence.

### Moose Hide Campaign

- The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement aimed at ending violence against women and children, with a strong focus on Indigenous communities. Their initiatives are grounded in Indigenous ceremony and traditional ways of learning and healing, and a cornerstone of the campaign is the moose hide pin. It signifies commitment to honor, respect, and protection of women and children, and speaking out against gender-based and domestic violence. Like the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two Spirit Calls for Justice, the Moose Hide Campaign emphasizes community involvement, allyship, and policy advocacy to address structural inequalities that perpetuate and uphold violence.



The Moose Hide Pin, worn as a commitment to honor, respect, and protecting the women and children in your life. The pin shines a light into the shadows of a devastating social illness impacting all Canadians, sparking much-needed conversations and dialogues.

Through reports, art installations, grassroots campaigns, and reflective commemorations, these resources offer a small glimpse of the lived realities of violence, the resilience of survivors and families, and the systemic changes required for justice and safety. By engaging with these materials, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of the intersectional challenges Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people face and encourage advocacy that amplifies their voices and honors their experiences. As we engage with this material, it is important to consider how we can contribute to creating to creating safer, more equitable spaces for Indigenous peoples:

- What does reconciliation mean to me, and how am I actively working towards it?
- How have my own beliefs, biases, or assumptions been shaped by colonial narratives about Indigenous peoples?

Advocacy begins with awareness, but it must also extend into action - challenging systems of oppression, supporting Indigenous-led solutions, and fostering meaningful relationships based on respect and solidarity.



## Trailblazers and changemakers: exploring Canadian women's milestones to inspire action

This activity is designed to encourage workplace conversations about key milestones in Canadian women's history, with a focus on understanding progress through an intersectional lens. By researching and reflecting on these milestones, participants will connect historical achievements to contemporary workplace actions for advancing gender equity.

### Key timeline entries

- 1875 – Grace Annie Lockhart
- 1927 – The Famous Five and the Persons Case
- 1993 – Jean Augustine
- 2015 – National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- 2019 – Karen Jensen

### Activity instructions

#### 1. Research and summarize

Divide your team into small groups or conduct individual reflections, depending on group size and structure. Assign each small group one of the timeline entries above. Participants will research the year, individual, and event by reflecting on the following prompts:

- What progress does this milestone represent?
- Who may have been left out of this progress?
- How does this milestone relate to our current workplace today?
  - What steps can we take in our workplace to advance gender equity?
- How does this milestone relate to broader societal challenges?
  - What can we do as individuals or as a community to address these issues?

#### 2. Sharing insights

Reconvene as a larger group, have each small group share one key insight or action idea inspired by their assigned milestone. Focus on addressing gaps in inclusion and equity.

As a full group, use the insights gained to brainstorm actionable workplace initiatives, such as advocating for equitable hiring and pay practices, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives and anti-racism programs, or engaging with the organizations highlighted on the next page. These efforts can help us collaborate with local and national organizations to enhance our workplace practices and deepen our commitment to gender equity.

## Taking a targeted approach: connecting with and supporting local organizations to inform your practices

This activity is intended to encourage learning and connecting with organizations that support women and gender non-conforming people as they seek to advance gender equity.

Connecting with organizations who are already doing this work can help to direct and inform your own approach to IWD, women's rights and gender equity as you move forward.

### Through a national lens

Below you will find some national organizations engaged in supporting the different needs of various intersectional communities of women across Canada. Just as womanhood is not a one-size-fits-all identity, neither is the support needed to advance women's rights and gender equity.

- [The Canadian Women's Foundation](#)
- [The Canadian Women on Colour Leadership Network \(CWCLN\)](#)
- [Disabled Women's Support Network of Canada \(DAWN\)](#)
- [Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour \(SNIWWOC\)](#)
- [BIPOC Women's Health Network](#)
- [Black Canadian Women \(BCW\) In Action \(Western Canada\)](#)
- [Assembly of First Nations – Murdered & Missing Indigenous Women & Girls](#)

### Connecting with your community

While these national organizations offer important work for several different communities of women across Canada, each community has different dynamics and needs for support. Local and regional organizations can help your gender equity work within your organization while supporting your communities at large.

Take the time to discover and connect with women's centres and organizations supporting women in your own communities. Explore the resources and information shared by your local organizations to help better understand the needs of your communities and how best to support them. Use the table below to document your findings on local organizations.

Organization name	Key services, resources, or programs	Contact information	How can we support or collaborate?



## Critical reflections for Workplaces on International Women's Day

Building on this collaborative approach, this activity invites workplaces to engage in critical reflection, helping to identify current strengths, gaps, and opportunities for action to advance gender equity.

**Objective:** To use critical reflection skills, transformative learning theory elements, and intersectional feminist resources.

**Intention:** To provide space and questions for reflection around IWD and gender equality for leadership and individuals to help inform potential areas of action.

1. Does your organization or workplace have education or training sessions on gender equity?
2. Does your workplace or organization highlight women's rights or gender equality outside of International Women's Day?
3. How has the organization or workplace prioritized gender equity?
4. Has the organization ever audited its policies and practices through an intersectional framework like [gender-based analysis +](#)? Or a similar framework?
5. Men play a critical role in reducing gender inequity and violence. Are there opportunities for Male allies to lead groups or initiatives where men discuss the importance of gender equity and safety in and out of the workplace?
6. What flexible work environments or options does the workplace have? And why would this be important to everyone, especially women, in the workplace?
7. Does your workplace have gender diversity? [\(Still, only 1 in 20 senior leaders is a woman of colour\)](#)
8. How does your organization or workplace challenge misinformation and harmful gender stereotypes in the workplace?
9. Why do you think organizations and workplaces are still struggling to achieve gender equity and safety?
10. How do you feel your organization could advance gender equity and safety?

## Wrapping up and moving forward

As organizations use this guide, our hope is to support active reflection, room for celebration, as well as ongoing actions beyond March 8. We do need time to collectively celebrate the accomplishments of the women and girls in our lives as well as a way forward to continually support the goal of gender equality locally and globally.

Ultimately, this commemoration guide challenges our perceptions of celebrating as a limited time offering and allows organizations to consider their positions as leaders in DEIA as they adapt their efforts towards celebrating women and girls during and beyond International Women's Day. This guide provides several opportunities for reflection and action by offering a series of thought-provoking activities that can be accomplished individually or organizationally in an effort to expand IWD possibilities.