

Celebrate Women



Be part of a better world

MARCH 2010

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About the publication

International Women's Day is a global celebration of the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. In honour of this special day, the Women's Issues Branch of the Executive Council Office is launching the inaugural edition of this publication, which showcases six very accomplished New Brunswick women.

They come from many different walks of life and have all shown dedication, desire to succeed and strength in the face of opposition. They are leaders in their communities whose efforts have built a path that will improve lives for generations to come.

Promoting a society based on equality for all is one of the mandates of the Women's Issues Branch. The work being done around the province on this issue is impressive and very encouraging. We are very pleased to profile women whose lives reflect this common goal.

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Minister Mary Schryer

Honouring women in New Brunswick

“I strongly believe it is important to honour women from New Brunswick who have made a significant difference in the lives of others and in their communities.”



Monday, March 8, is International Women’s Day. In honour of this special day, I am very pleased to present the first issue of *Celebrate Women* a publication showcasing the accomplishments of New Brunswick women.

As minister responsible for the status of women, I strongly believe it is important to honour women from New Brunswick who have made a significant difference in the lives of others and in their communities.

These intriguing women have influenced the lives of those around them time and again by sharing their passionate beliefs and by taking on leadership roles. How ever diverse their backgrounds are, the common thread that ties these exceptional women together is the significance of their contribution to a better society for New Brunswick women and for all residents of this great province. They’ve challenged opposition, barriers and stereotypes in hopes of making New Brunswick a better place for all of its residents. Their accomplishments speak for themselves, and we are very proud to provide a platform from which their achievements can be displayed.

I would like to thank all who have contributed to this inaugural publication.

It’s a true privilege to serve as the minister responsible for the status of women and I invite you to join me in honouring these female role models of achievement and dedication. I hope their passion and energy will encourage and inspire women of all ages.


Sincerely,

Mary Schryer

Minister responsible for the Status of Women

Senator Sandra Lovelace Nicholas

Changing the lives of thousands of Aboriginal women and children across Canada

A portrait of Senator Sandra Lovelace Nicholas, a middle-aged woman with short, light brown hair, wearing a black blazer over a white collared shirt and large hoop earrings. She is smiling slightly. In the background, a portion of the Canadian flag is visible on the left side.

*“It’s great that my voice can now be used for all kinds of **women issues** and isn’t strictly for the Aboriginal people.”*

Senator Sandra Lovelace Nicholas’ courage and tenacity changed the lives of thousands of Aboriginal women and children across Canada.

She’s the first Atlantic Canadian Aboriginal woman to sit in the Senate; a member of the Order of Canada and a winner of a Governor General’s Award; she’s won numerous human rights awards and earned an honorary degree from St. Thomas University.

"I'm just an ordinary person who likes to help people if I can."

Yet, despite all her accomplishments, Ms. Lovelace Nicholas still finds it hard to believe she is a recognized figure and a role model to so many.

"I'm just an ordinary person who likes to help people if I can," she says.

Born in 1948, she received a degree in residential construction from Maine Northern Technical College and studied for three years at St. Thomas University in Fredericton.

Lovelace Nicholas gained national and international recognition 20 years ago for her nearly ten-year-long battle to protect the rights of Aboriginal women and children in Canada.

"It started out as a personal battle for me," says Lovelace Nicholas, who married a non-native American airman and moved to California. Upon her return to New Brunswick, and divorce, she was shocked to learn that she and her children had lost their status as natives and were denied housing, education and health care provided to natives under the Indian Act. Native men who married non-native women didn't lose their status under the act.

"I have two daughters and didn't want them to lose their cultural rights if they were true to their heart and fell in love with someone who didn't have Aboriginal status," she says. "I just couldn't stand by and watch this happen."

Lovelace Nicholas became internationally known when, in 1977, she petitioned the United Nations over the treatment by the Canadian government of aboriginal women and children in Canada, in the case known as *Sandra Lovelace v. Canada*. Joined by others from the reservation, Lovelace Nicholas led a 132-km march of women and children from Oka (Québec) to Ottawa (Ontario) on July 17, 1979.

"We received a lot of support, especially from the non-native segment of the population."

In 1985, she successfully had the section of the Indian Act removed which revoked an aboriginal woman's Indian status if she married a non-aboriginal man.

A lot of Lovelace Nicholas' internal resolve came from her mother and her daughters. "They inspired a passion in me to make things right for future generations."

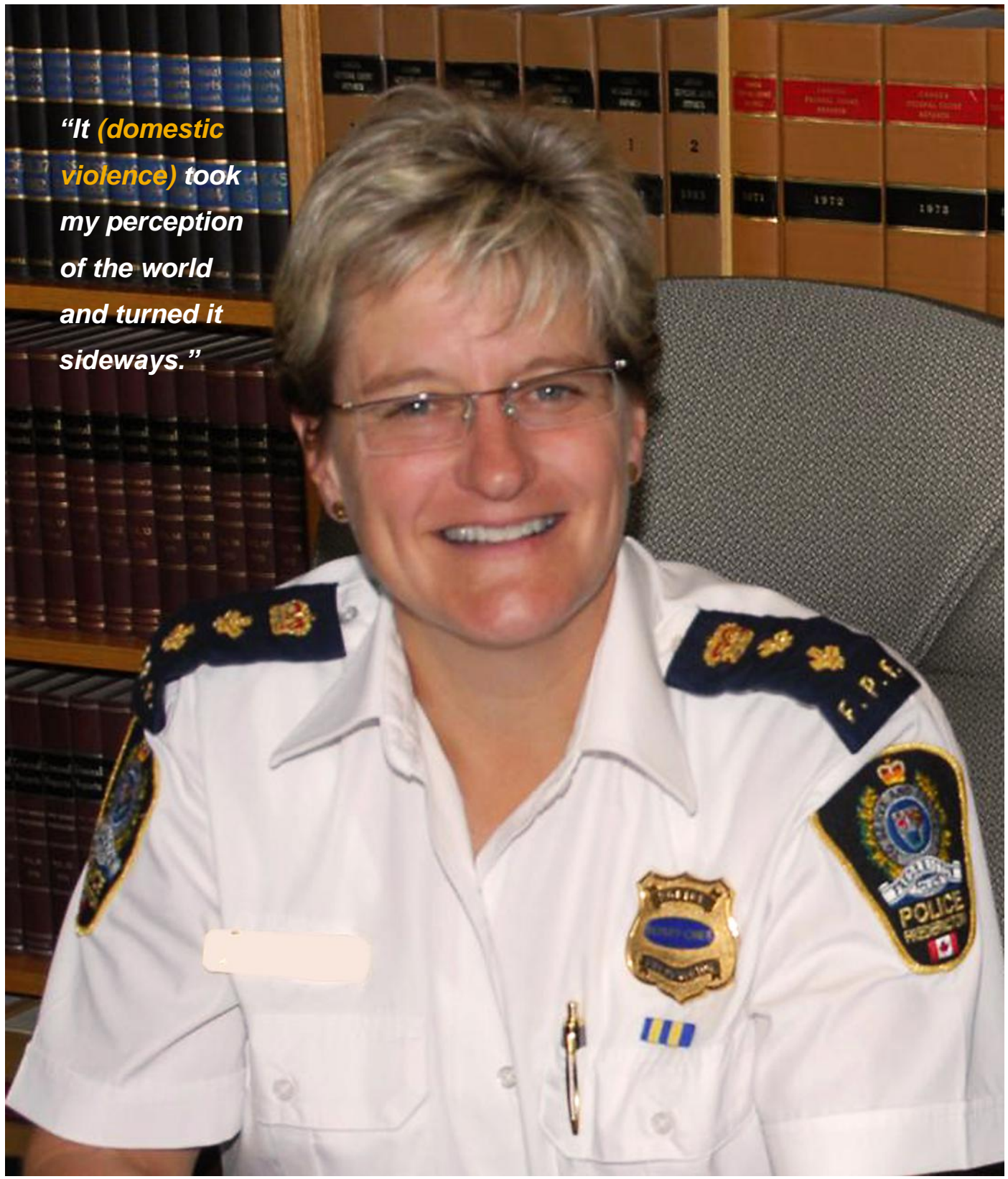
In 2005, Prime Minister Paul Martin appointed Lovelace Nicholas to represent New Brunswick in the Senate of Canada.

"It's great that my voice can now be used for all kinds of women issues and isn't strictly for the Aboriginal people."

She is leery of what the future holds if planning for the next generation doesn't begin soon. "The rights of the third generation will be emerging as an issue relatively soon," she says. "We need to start thinking about it now."

"I have two daughters and didn't want them to lose their cultural rights if they were true to their heart and fell in love with someone who didn't have Aboriginal status."

Lovelace Nicholas takes great satisfaction in some of her accomplishments, but she knows she didn't do it alone. Many women stood beside her, going to meetings, marching and strengthening the sound of a unified voice, and she encourages others not to get discouraged with the change they are trying to make.



“It (domestic violence) took my perception of the world and turned it sideways.”

Leanne Fitch

Raising awareness about domestic violence

As a young person just starting her career as a police officer, Leanne Fitch of Fredericton thought she knew what the world was about.

The reality turned her world upside down. But it also made her more compassionate and prompted her to do what she could to help raise awareness about domestic violence.

A 25-year policing veteran, Fitch became deputy chief of the Fredericton Police Force in 2005, making her the first woman in the history of the department to reach this level. Along the way, she has worked hard to educate her fellow officers and the public at large about domestic violence.

Having grown up in a loving, stable family environment, Fitch had no idea that others didn't have the same support system. "The concept of domestic violence was completely foreign to me," says Fitch.

At the age of 17, Fitch learned that a close family member had been experiencing this type of abuse. She was completely blown away. "I had no idea this was happening," says Fitch. "It took my perception of the world and turned it sideways." The realization that violence at home actually happens - and to people she knew and loved - opened her eyes to the harsh reality of the world.

Fitch was attracted to policing for the same reason many others are - a strong desire to help. Moving back

to Fredericton after having worked for the Toronto Police Force, Fitch found herself travelling the same streets she did as a child, but she saw it from a different perspective this time.

"I would be going to homes that looked ideal only to find children and women in crisis," she says. "We really have no appreciation of what goes on in the homes of others."

"As police officers we take domestic violence training, but it isn't until you experience it on the frontline that you realize how common it actually is." Fitch would know. She has been dealing with this type of crime from early on in her career - at a time when it wasn't at the forefront of society's consciousness.

"You realize that there are just some things that you need to get involved with and stand up for what is right."

Fitch has served on many boards and working groups within the province to help prevent family violence as well as working on training manuals to help police officers properly handle intimate partner violence.

"People are freer to talk about this more than in the past, but we need to get to a place where this just doesn't happen anymore."

She also worked in the family services section of the police force focused on domestic violence and sex crimes. "This was the most difficult posting of my 25 year career," she says.

While Fitch acknowledges there is a better understanding nowadays of the complexities surrounding domestic violence, she knows better than most people that there is still much more to do. "People are freer to talk about this more than in the past, but we need to get to a place where this just doesn't happen anymore."

She recognizes that it takes a number of people working towards the same goal to make changes and encourages anyone who wants to get involved to do exactly that.

Pam Coates

Dedicating her life to eliminating poverty

*"I see many women getting involved, but I also see others on the sideline because they are scared to speak out. I want them to know that they can **make a difference**. Just like I did."*



Dr. Pamela “Pam” Coates is an outstanding example of the power every person has to make a difference in this world.

Coates transformed herself from a struggling single mom lost in the “system” to one of New Brunswick’s strongest champions of the poor.

She has dedicated her life to the elimination of poverty and has been instrumental in changing provincial income assistance policies that will improve the lives of thousands of New Brunswickers in need.

Coates has served as president of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO), established a poverty self-help group called ‘One Voice for All’, organized the first Atlantic Canada Conference for Poor People, participated in the province’s Final Forum poverty reduction roundtable and received an honorary doctorate from the University of New Brunswick for her community work.

“As a single parent living in the Crescent Valley area of Saint John, I was barely scraping by with my meagre income,” says Coates. Turning to the government to deal with regular costs of life, she noticed that many people were in the same situation – but she wanted to change it.

Wanting to teach her son valuable life lessons, Coates began talking to people around the neighbourhood and decided to make a difference. She educated the government, and the community, about the realities of living on income assistance.

“There are income policies that keep people back,” she says. “Single parents would like to further their education, but by making minimum wage they simply don’t have the money to pay for a babysitter, which means they can’t get a better education, which means they can’t get a higher paying job, which

Switzerland to paint a true picture of people living in poverty.

Coates appreciates that she needed her own support system in order to make a difference. She found this in her son as well as the Reverend Cannon Patricia Craig.

“She (Reverend Cannon Patricia Craig) saw my potential and helped me see that I could make a difference. For that I will always be grateful.”

means they can’t afford a better quality of life. You get the picture.”

Coates fought hard to change income assistance policies, including one that required income assistance cheques to be mailed to recipients.

“Welfare cheques were mailed at the end of the month,” says Coates. “Often times cashiers would hold the cheque up and make some sort of defamatory comment for everyone to hear. This can significantly affect a person’s dignity.”

As the result of her work, direct deposit is now an option for people on income assistance.

As a participant in Premier Shawn Graham’s Final Forum roundtable this past year Coates is pleased with the recent change to the minimum income assistance rate.

“It was increased from \$246 a month to \$486,” says Coates. In her eyes the government had finally taken a hindering policy and made it beneficial to people in need.

As NAPO president, Coates had the opportunity to travel all over Canada as well as to the United Nations in

“She saw my potential and helped me see that I could make a difference. For that I will always be grateful.”

Coates hopes to encourage others in the same way. “I see many women getting involved, but I also see others on the sideline because they are scared to speak out. I want them to know that they can make a difference. Just like I did.”

Roxanne Fairweather

Succeeding in the world of business



*“As a single mother of three, I was fortunate to have great mentors and leaders who saw and **believed in my potential.**”*

Roxanne Fairweather knows it wasn't just hard work that made her one of this region's most influential and accomplished business leaders.

She credits her success to the many great mentors and leaders who believed in her along the way and to her longstanding business philosophy of putting others first; both clients and employees.

Few New Brunswick women have been as successful in the male-dominated world of business as Fairweather, who is President and Chief Executive Officer of Innovatia Inc., a Saint John based company that provides knowledge management and training services to more than 1,500 companies worldwide, including firms in the prestigious Fortune 500 bracket.

Named one of the Atlantic region's 50 most accomplished business executives by Atlantic Business Magazine in 2005, Fairweather leads a workforce that has grown to employ 300 people, 200 of whom work in New Brunswick. The company has operations elsewhere in Canada, plus employees working in India and the United States.

She is also playing a key role helping the New Brunswick government by serving as board chair of Facili-corp NB, the agency created to amalgamate all non-clinical shared services such as information technology and communication, material management and clinical engineering amongst the regional health care authorities. As well, Fairweather is a longtime member of

the University of New Brunswick's Board of Governors, currently serving as vice-chair.

Her interest in education has also forged a partnership between Innovatia and ELF, the Elementary Literacy Friends program, which focuses on increasing literacy in New Brunswick.

Ms. Fairweather believes serendipity found her working 25 years ago on the ground floor at NBTEL. "As a single mother of three I was fortunate to have great mentors and leaders who saw and believed in my potential," she says.

It was early in her career at NBTEL that she witnessed a business cul-

pushing beyond your comfort zone. Growth comes from the failures and successes and learning from both.

"It's a valuable tool to self-improvement," she says.

Fairweather finds her own encouragement and motivation close to home. Her mother raised seven children and worked hard to make every day a great day.

"She taught me that anyone can make a difference," says Fairweather, who believes that a person doesn't have to make grand gestures to contribute to their workplace or community.

"As a leader, it is inspiring to help people to be successful by creating an environment which stimulates creativity, collaboration and cooperation that allows the overall success of the business and the professional growth of the individuals within it."

ture of putting others – colleagues and clients – first. Throughout her own career as a business leader and manager, she has worked hard to cultivate similar work environments.

"As a leader, it is inspiring to help people to be successful by creating an environment which stimulates creativity, collaboration and cooperation that allows the overall success of the business and the professional growth of the individuals within it," says Fairweather.

She also believes in pursuing goals with passion and persistence and

Mother Theresa is another one of her role models.

"She says by doing little things with great love anyone can make a difference," says Fairweather. "I believe that."

Claudette Bradshaw

Believing in the importance of community work



“What we choose to do, or not to do, will have an impact on future generations,” says Claudette Bradshaw, former New Brunswick Liberal MP and federal cabinet minister.

As an elected Member of Parliament for Moncton - Riverview - Dieppe from 1997-2005, Bradshaw held a variety of roles in cabinet, including minister for homelessness and literacy. She continues her tireless work in social causes and recently received the Order of New Brunswick for her work.

“I’ve received much more than I have ever given.”

“What we **choose to do**, or not to do, will have an impact on future generations.”

Bradshaw’s career started in 1968 with the Boys and Girls Club, where she learned about poverty, abuse and the dynamics of the family. It’s also where she met her husband, Douglas, and where she developed the idea for the hugely successful Moncton Headstart Program that has helped thousands of at-risk children and their families.

“I had met so many children while at the Boys and Girls Club, with difficulties integrating into the school system and parents ill-equipped to help them,” says Bradshaw. “I wanted to work with children younger than the age of six, and their parents, to help them before they started school.”

Headstart works with at-risk families by teaching parents how to provide for their children. It also helps children in their for-

mative years to develop the personal and interpersonal skills needed to be successful and happy in life.

"It helps the entire family," says Bradshaw.

When she entered into politics, Bradshaw hoped to give her community a voice at the federal level.

"It was a difficult decision to leave Headstart, because I loved what I was doing, and I intended to be in politics only for a short-time."

Bradshaw and her husband Doug have always believed in the importance of community and the need for all levels of government to work with local non-profit organizations to make a difference.

"We are starting to see some of this happening, and it's very encouraging," says Bradshaw.

She believes the business community is starting to realize that community social issues are also economic issues. As a result, business leaders are asking all levels of government to do more to address social issues and are also taking a more proactive approach themselves to finding solutions to issues such as poverty and illiteracy.

Bradshaw credits her mother with planting the seeds of social consciousness in her at an early age.

"She believed that you are put on this earth to work with your community, that through other people you grow as an individual."

The simple things in life – like helping others – appear to be making a resurgence in society in Bradshaw's opinion.

"The upcoming generation will be quite different in that they realize the importance of community," she says. "And they will work hard to get all levels of government and community organizations to cooperate to make a real difference."

"I consider myself so fortunate to have worked all my life in my community, and I have enjoyed each and every day," says Bradshaw. "I've received much more than I have ever given."

"She (my mother) believed that you are put on this earth to work with your community, that through other people you grow as an individual."





“I have two of the most beautiful boys, both under the age of four, good friends, a great partner and a job I truly love.”

Wanita McGraw Advocating for Francophone issues

Paying it forward is more than just a saying for **Wanita McGraw**. It's a way of life.

A partner at Benoit, McGraw & Paulin; a chartered accounting firm in Tracadie-Sheila, McGraw is a firm believer that you get what you give out of life.

As an active volunteer balancing a burgeoning business and a young family, McGraw considers herself very fortunate.

“I have two of the most beautiful boys, both under the age of four, good friends, a great partner and a job I truly love,” says McGraw.

Having moved home to Tracadie-Sheila after attending university and working in Moncton, McGraw is enjoying the lifestyle now available in her small hometown.

“I had forgotten how beautiful everything is here,” says McGraw.

She finds life easier with family close by, less commuting time and the ability to work and communicate primarily in French.

Her decision to become an advocate for Francophone issues was the natural next step.

Being a member of the committee on Acadian and Francophone issues, McGraw is eager to act as the voice of her community by providing input on various government strategies and programs affecting Francophones. Having the opportunity to work with lots of French-speaking clients, McGraw feels well positioned to share their opinions.

“I have often felt that where I live we are screaming and often times no one is listening,” says McGraw.

A popular public speaker, the 35-year old attributes her many professional and personal accomplishments to starting to volunteer at an early age and to having others believe in her.

“I started my volunteer career in 1987 with a local music festival as a gopher,” she says.

Since that time there hasn't been a year that she hasn't been involved in the community in some way. Whether it is as a board member for the United Way or helping elderly people with their income taxes during university, McGraw has always wanted to help others. She is also a member of the Energy and Utilities Board, the independent provincial agency which regulates electricity rates as well board member of the Office de stabilisation de la Fédération des caisses populaires acadiennes.

Getting to know a variety of people through her volunteer work has also provided McGraw with a solid level of support.

“People took an interest in me and believed in me.”

One person who is always offering her encouragement is Paulette Robert, former Director of the Community Business Development Corporation Péninsule acadienne.

“She was always telling others about me, offering my name for committees and speaking engagements,” says McGraw. Robert also initiated a dinner of business women that still meet to this day to talk about a variety of things.

“We are a diverse group of women from all different backgrounds, careers and lifestyles,” explains McGraw. “But we always find we have something in common to talk about.”

McGraw says her motivation and, ultimately her success, comes from her firm belief that if you are good in life, life will be good to you.

