



The Honourable Edna Ekhivalak Elias

Commissioner of Nunavut

International Women's Day
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Ullukkut

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Nunavummiut today about an important annual event, International Women's Day.

International Women's Day is celebrated each year on March 8th. On this day people across Canada and around the world celebrate the economic, political, and social achievements of women past, present and future.

This year, 2011, marks the 100th anniversary of this special day. The first National Women's Day was observed in the United States on February 28th 1909. In 1910 the leader of the Women's Office for the Social Democratic Party in Germany, Clara Zetkin, proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day – a Women's Day – that would help women campaign for their rights.

Women from 17 countries representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs and the first three women elected to the parliament in Finland approved the proposal and International Women's Day was created. The first International Women's Day was honored in 1911 in Austria, Germany, Denmark and Switzerland.

Today we can honor a century of achievement among women, celebrate all the work that has been done and focus on promoting and sustaining equality between men and women.

Local activities on this day connect women from all around the world as they participate in conferences, political and government activities, networking events and local women's craft markets.

There have been significant improvements in the quality of life for women over the last 100 years but we need to continue to work on behalf of women to gain equality in the workplace, in business and in politics.

We must continue to work on a global scale to improve education opportunities for women, provide quality health care to women and work to stop violence against women.

Women have always played an important role in Inuit society and today in Nunavut our government is working with other organizations to help find solutions to the barriers women face when they move forward to develop their skills, abilities and leadership potential.

Women who are confident in their skills, talents and knowledge can be an inspiration our younger generation. They can be mentors to the young women of today, encouraging them to play active roles in society. The contributions women make to society will help us all build strong and healthy communities rooted in equality and balance.

I encourage everyone to take the time to acknowledge the roles women play in society today and inspire the women we know and celebrate their achievements.

Honorable Edna Ekhivalak Elias
Commissioner of Nunavut