

### 1.1.f. The Famous Five

Probably the best-known group of women activists in the history of Canada, the Famous Five were living in Alberta during their now famous battle to obtain recognition for women as “persons” under the law. Although they came from different generations and backgrounds, and were of different ideological persuasions, they found enough common ground to unite for the cause of women’s equality.

[Irene Parlby](#) - elected to the Alberta legislature in 1921; the province’s first woman Cabinet Minister; and the second woman to hold such a position in the British Empire. She helped to organize the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA) and served as its first president. She represented Canada at the League of Nations in Geneva, in 1930.

[Henrietta Muir Edwards](#) - co-founder of the Victoria Order of Nurses (VON) (1897); co-founder of the National Council of Women in Canada (NCWC) (1893); and founder of all of the chapters of the Local Council of Women in Alberta before 1905; as well as advisor to the Federal government on women’s legal rights for many years.

[Louise McKinney](#) - first woman elected (1917) to a legislature in the British empire. Among her many accomplishments were her service as President of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in Alberta and Saskatchewan for 20 years, and World Vice-President of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE).

[Nellie McClung](#) - a writer and social activist as well as a WI leader, who inspired many of the organization’s members to fight for social causes. She was elected to the Alberta legislature in 1921, was the first woman to serve on the CBC’s Board of Governors (1936) and a Canadian delegate to the League of Nations (1938).

[Emily Murphy](#) - in 1916, the first woman elected magistrate in the British Empire and champion of the “persons” case, in which five Canadian women petitioned the British Privy Council to declare Canadian women as persons under the law. In 1929, they won their suit, which meant that women could then sit in the Canadian Senate. Murphy was a member of the AWI and became in 1919, the first President of the Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada.

An exceptional website is maintained by the [Alberta Heritage Foundation](#) on the Famous Five. In addition, you might want to visit the Famous Five website maintained by the [Famous Five Foundation](#).