

#BreakTheBias theme for this year's International Women's Day



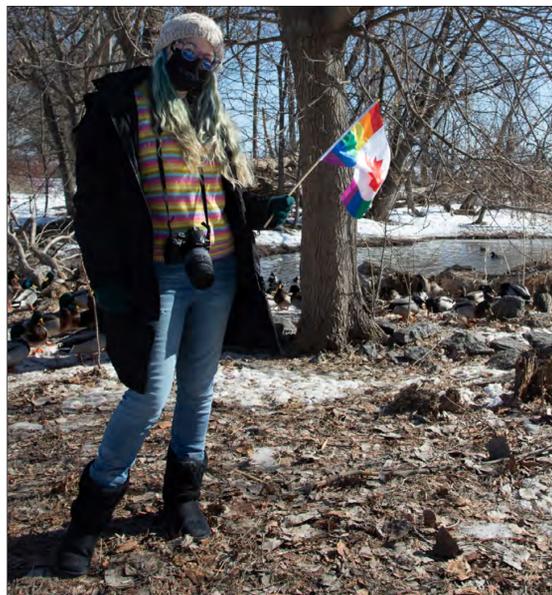
(Left) TORONTO, ON. – Lula Abdo, 32, poses for a photo at her downtown Toronto apartment. Abdo is originally from Yemen and arrived in Canada in 2019. Abdo's document name is Ala, but she prefers to be called Lula, a name that was given to her by a close friend in Indonesia. Being a trans woman of colour, Abdo described her past life when she had to hide who she was. "You create a character that is not you." According to Abdo, her biggest challenge in her life has been being accepted for who she is. As a trans person, she talks about her personal journey of self-actualization from her childhood to present, as she began transitioning. Sharing a glimpse into day in her daily life, Abdo shares key events that led to her decision to get hormone therapy in Canada. To learn more about Abdo's story, click on the link: <https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/lula>

Photo by Sabah Rahman



PICTON, ON. – Talitha Tolles, 29, stands in front of Wisdom of the Universe, a mural representing Métis beadwork based on an original painting by Christi Belcourt, behind St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. As a queer, Métis artist, Tolles said she experiences the complexities of identity daily but as a Métis woman, she said she has a commitment to her family and community to uphold traditions and to pass them on to future generations. This International Women's Day, Tolles said breaking the bias means defying stereotypes. "Our world holds many forms of stereotypes and discrimination against women, but specifically Indigenous women. Every day I wake up and make the choice to defy those stereotypes," she said. "My people are up against systems set out to eliminate us, and yet we continue to survive and in many cases thrive."

Photo by Kayla Isomura



BELLEVILLE, ON. – Ruby Curtis-Cowen proudly displays a Canadian flag fringed with Pride colours in Belleville. Curtis-Cowen immigrated to Canada four years ago from London, U.K., with her husband and two sons. She does not fit the stereotype of immigrants to Canada. She is a native speaker of English and is not a visible minority. Sometimes, she hears people making anti-immigrant statements and challenges them. Often their response is something on the lines of, "I don't mean you." These interactions remind Curtis-Cowen that we still have biases regarding newcomers and that the country has a way to go on the diversity and inclusion front.

Photo by Ron Lavie



OTTAWA, ON. – Owner of the paint-it-yourself ceramic studio The Mud Oven, Katie Hatley-Davidson, stands in front of the ceramic glazing station. "I take pride in the safe and free atmosphere we create here for the clients coming from all walks of life," said Hatley-Davidson. "Don't be afraid to take up space, especially in the business environment. Do what inspires you and don't be afraid to push boundaries," Hatley-Davidson shares as a piece of advice to other women for International Women's Day.

Photo by Felix Chagnon



(Left) PETERBOROUGH, ON. – Sandra Young is the owner of Statement House, a vintage and consignment store in Peterborough. "I've never felt like I was living in a man's world, and since opening my business, I have not felt any stigma or challenges because I am a woman. When I worked a corporate job, it was a different story. It was definitely a boys' club," Young says.

Photo by Luke Best

(Right) Tweed, ON. – Judy Shorey sits in her recliner that looks out onto Main Street. Shorey was born and raised in Sulphide, ON. She hopes to continue to see the world change in a positive way for her only granddaughter. "She is the first in the family to graduate high school. I hope she is empowered to be the strong independent woman she is and doesn't have to live through the same struggles I had as a woman."

Photo by Christie Leja



BELLEVILLE, ON. – Kaya Pereira is a local artist and business owner, located in downtown Belleville and features the work of 30 different artists, the majority which are women from around southeast Ontario. "It wasn't very long ago that women didn't have a place in society where they were able to speak freely, or really at all," she said. "The fact that I, as a woman who is mixed is able to have a business anywhere, let alone Belleville, the town where I'm born and raised, I can't say enough about how momentous Women Day is to me."

Photo by Ethan Cairns



BELLEVILLE, ON. –Tanya Hill, 47, works out at CrossFit. She does crossfit to stay healthy and benefits from mental health. Her hobbies include travel, hiking and outdoor sports.

Photo by Saddam Zaman



BELLEVILLE, ON. – Julie Stoliker, owner of Miss Priss, a clothing and accessory store located in downtown Belleville, poses for a portrait. "Equality for everyone is incredibly important. I support strong women, and they support me as well."

Photo by Alex Lupul



BRAMPTON, Ont. – Nujhat Nabeela, 27 from Bangladesh, is pictured in front of her home in Brampton, her first ever real estate investment. Nabeela completed her Masters degree at University of Waterloo, and by her late 20's, is already an experienced UX Designer leading IT projects for the Ontario government. Being a homeowner was a huge step for Nabeela but she wanted to do it for her family. For Nabeela, celebrating International Women's Day is a reminder that she has the ultimate freedom to design her life in her own terms.

Photo by Sabah Rahman