

Announcing YWCA Toronto's 2024 Women of Distinction Award Recipients

Driven to advance equity and inclusion

TORONTO, March 7, 2024 – Ahead of International Women's Day, YWCA Toronto is proud to announce the names of five remarkable women who will be celebrated at our 43rd Women of Distinction Awards Gala in May. Women of Distinction are change-makers committed to creating a place at the table for women, girls and gender diverse people.

This year's extraordinary slate of recipients includes **Natasha Ferguson** (Labour), **Jaspreet Gill** (Advocacy and Social Justice), **Kelly Hannah-Moffat** (Education), **Gillian Riley** (Corporate Leadership) and **Nadia Ladak** (Young Woman of Distinction).

"The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is 'Inspire Inclusion', for YWCA Toronto, this means celebrating diversity and empowerment. While we are dedicated to improving the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people through our life stabilizing and supportive programs and services," says YWCA Toronto Chief Executive Officer, Heather McGregor, "we are also deeply committed to celebrating the successes of gender equity champions in our community. In May, at our annual Women of Distinction Award Gala, we will be hosting an inspiring awards ceremony honouring five extraordinary women, and we hope you will join."

The Women of Distinction Awards is YWCA Toronto's largest annual fundraising event. Proceeds from this event make it possible for YWCA Toronto to help women, girls and gender diverse people secure housing, heal and build sustainable futures. This year, the event will be held on Thursday, May 23 at an all-new venue, the historic Liberty Grand.

Award recipients are available for exclusive interviews through YWCA Toronto's office.

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YWCA Toronto's 2024 Women of Distinction

Natasha Ferguson (Labour)

As a general contractor and principal owner of Ethelfox Construct Group, Natasha Ferguson is leading the charge to bring women into the construction industry. After experiencing sexism and racism in job interviews and on construction sites, she created Ethelfox Construct Group, the only full-service construction firm in Canada owned and operated by a woman. Through Ethelfox Construct Group, Natasha is making skilled trades more equitable along gender and racial lines.

Jaspreet Gill (Advocacy & Social Justice)

Jaspreet Gill, Executive Director of York Region Center for Community Safety (YRCCS), is not afraid to take a chance, especially when it means creating meaningful change. After hearing countless first-hand stories of abuse from the young women she taught, she made the life-altering decision to leave a post-secondary teaching career to support women fleeing violence. Jaspreet quickly ascended to the role of Program Manager and then Executive Director at YRCCS, where she responded to the shrinking of

programming by registering YRCCS as an independent non-profit organization, making it the only service delivery hub of its kind in York Region—a single access point of programs for those impacted by intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Because of Jaspreet’s boldness and perseverance, women in York Region facing intimate partner violence have a place to go when they need help.

Kelly Hannah-Moffat (Education)

As an internationally respected scholar, administrator, and advocate for penal reform, Kelly Hannah-Moffat is a leading advocate for change in the criminal justice system. Her work challenging oppressive practices within the justice system—especially those that harm Black and Indigenous women—has forged a path through uncharted territory since the late 1990s.

Despite Artificial Intelligence (AI) having the potential to influence the criminal justice system negatively, Kelly is poised to rally against the narratives of bias and racial discrimination that underscore this technology to ensure that the future is more just for Black and Indigenous women and gender diverse people.

Gillian Riley (Corporate Leadership)

For more than 30 years, Gillian Riley, the current President and CEO of Tangerine Bank, has made it her mission to spark institutional change in the corporate world. Her efforts have been at the forefront of many projects, such as the Scotiabank Women Initiative, a program that empowers women-led businesses in Canada by providing them with crucial resources, and the Commercial Banking National Women's Group, a collective committed to promoting gender equity, diversity and inclusion within Scotiabank. Through Gillian’s commitment to championing gender equity, diversity and inclusion, she is ensuring that all voices are heard, especially in the corporate sector.

Nadia Ladak (Young Woman of Distinction)

Nadia Ladak is a bold and creative entrepreneur. When a university project prompted her to create a product she was passionate about, she co-founded Marlow, a gender-inclusive, eco-friendly menstrual care brand offering the first lubricated tampon. Now Marlow’s Chief Executive Officer, Nadia’s extraordinary commitment to making bold change as an entrepreneur continues to be evidenced through mentoring high school-aged young women on entrepreneurship and advocating for the needs of women entrepreneurs on Startup Canada’s Women Advocacy Network, and through her weekly newsletter, A Founder Diary, where she continues to shape a community of young women leaders.