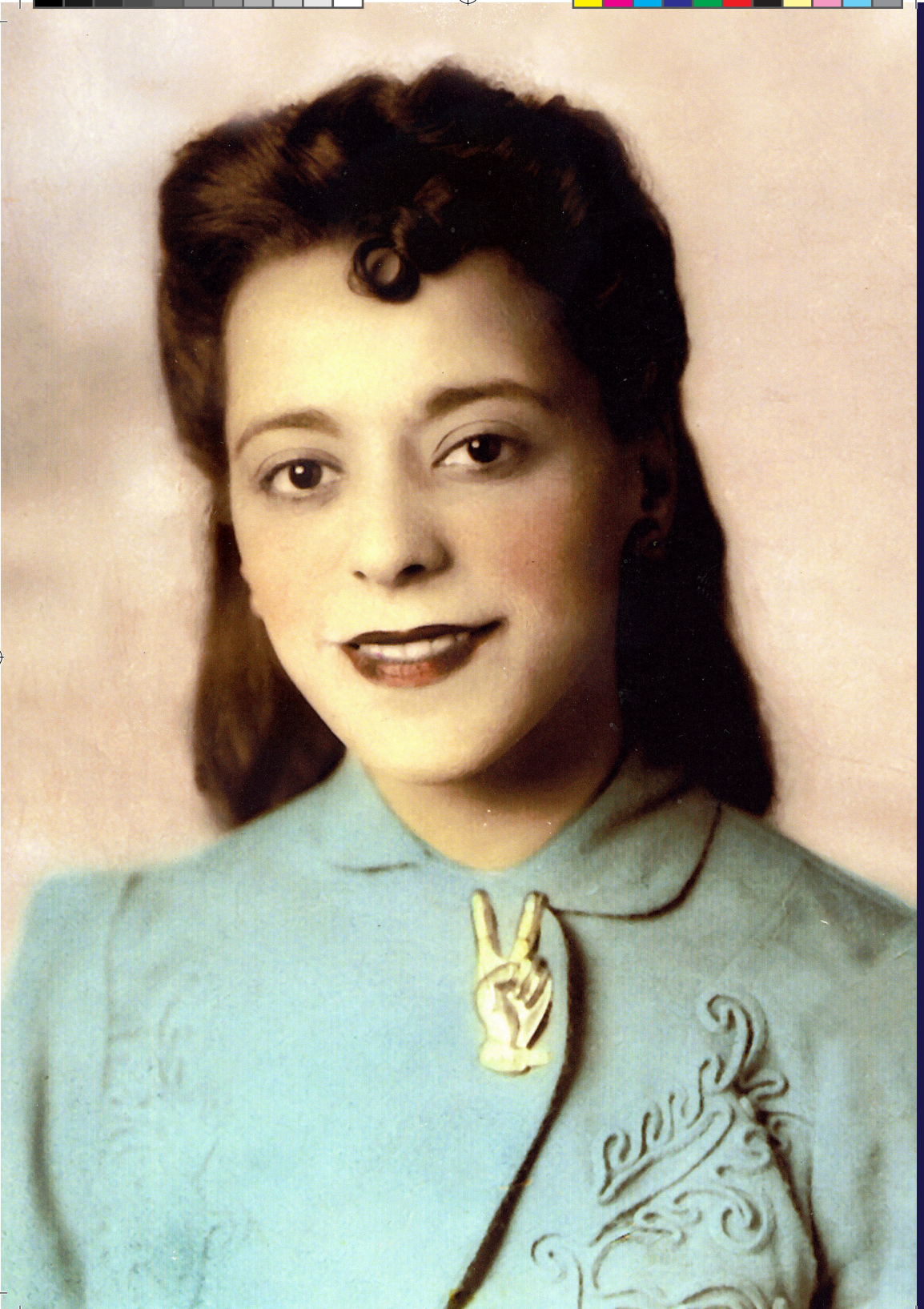




THE VIOLA DESMOND CHAIR IN SOCIAL JUSTICE







A WOMAN OF COURAGE

Viola Irene Desmond (nee Davis) was born on Gottingen Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, on July 6, 1914. She was the fifth of 15 children of James Davis, a barber and auto business assistant, and Gwendolyn Irene Johnson, a homemaker.

By 1942 she had established a flourishing line of hair cosmetics. The business employed more than 30 people with operations in Canada and the United states. A monumentus achievement for a women of colour in this era.



NOVEMBER 7, 1946

During an overnight business trip in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Ms. Desmond decided to visit the Roseland Theatre, a local movie house, and requested a floor ticket for the show. Unknown to Desmond, she had been sold a balcony seat as the better floor seats were reserved for Whites only.

After being seated, she was informed by the usher that she had purchased a balcony seat and not a floor seat. Desmond returned to the ticket seller and requested an exchange for a floor seat but was refused. Desmond returned to her floor seat and when ordered to relocate to the balcony by the manager, she refused to move. The local police chief was called and Desmond was arrested, forcibly removed from the theatre and jailed overnight.






The Roseland Theatre, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia



The next day, Desmond was tried in the New Glasgow Courthouse for tax evasion for failure to pay a penny tax. This was the difference in the cost of the cheaper balcony seat and the floor seat that she had occupied. She was found guilty and fined \$20 plus \$6 in court costs.

And so began the legacy of a woman who took a stand and fought for social justice.





FOR NEARLY
TWO DECADES
WANDA ROBSON
HAS BEEN TELLING
THE STORY OF HER
SISTER'S COURAGE





IN 2003

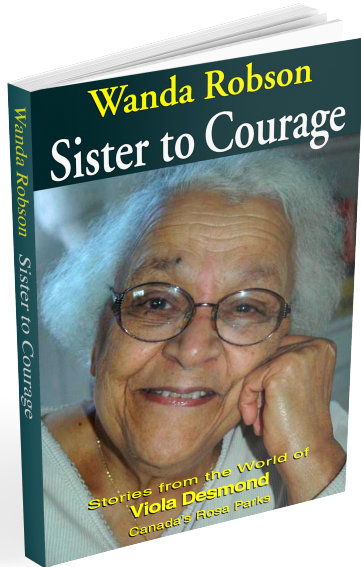
Wanda Robson, at the age of 73, enrolled at Cape Breton University (CBU) to pursue her life-long dream of obtaining a university degree. Encouraged by her professor, Dr. Graham Reynolds, she shared the story of her sister, Viola Desmond, and her trailblazing stand against social injustice.



Robson with Dr. Graham Reynolds of CBU

In 2007, she graduated from CBU, and since then, she has become an active spokesperson for social justice.





In 2010, she published her first book about her life and her memories of her sister, Viola.

In 2012, she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters from her alma mater.



Robson with Federal Finance Minister, the Hon. Bill Morneau, during a ceremony in Gatineau, Quebec on December 8, 2016.







In November 2018, Desmond made history again. Selected from a group of 12 iconic women, Desmond became the first Canadian female to appear on the Canadian \$10 bill, cementing herself as a symbol of courage to Canadians everywhere.

From a moment of social injustice, emerged momentous courage and an opportunity to create a more inclusive future.

Still today, there are Canadians who experience social justice issues. Poverty, limited access to education, employment, resources and unfair treatment represent some of the daily challenges to human dignity.







ROBSON CONTINUES TO INSPIRE WITH STORIES OF HER LIFE AND VIOLA DESMOND

THE VIOLA DESMOND CHAIR IN SOCIAL JUSTICE





Inspired by Desmond's life and career, the Chair is characterized by her courage and determination to succeed in the face of racial and social injustices.

Her remarkable stand against racial segregation in 1946 is a story which has become an inspiration to all Canadians.

Cape Breton University will create a permanently endowed chair that will honour the legacy of Desmond through research and educational initiatives promoting social justice and African Canadian studies in Canada.





THE CHAIR WILL:

- Establish CBU as a national resource centre for Social Justice in Canada.
- Foster a greater understanding of the history and culture of diverse communities in Canada.
- Lead and support knowledge endeavours exploring social justice issues and African Canadian studies.
- Develop and mobilize social justice research and scholarships in collaboration with national and international scholars and institutions.





- Create social justice awareness out-reach initiatives that target the public and private sectors in Canada.
- Honour and recognize the historical presence and achievements of African Canadians and other Canadian populations, whose histories and experiences have been under-represented in Canada.
- Promote and celebrate the life and legacy of Viola Desmond.
- Support The Viola Desmond and Wanda Robson Scholarship, which embodies the character, commitment and life experiences of Desmond and Robson. The scholarship will stress social justice education, with focus on inclusivity of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, class and physical disability.





CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO CHAMPION SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CANADA

Located in Sydney, Nova Scotia, The University was once home to thriving coal mining and steel making industries. Immigrant workers and their families, from around the world, flocked to Cape Breton to work. These immigrant groups recreated their home cultures by establishing religious, social and sporting institutions in their new neighbourhoods. CBU draws from the history and culture of these diverse immigrant communities.

A new social milieu was created in Cape Breton – one that widened the Island's worldview.





Through this diversity, CBU has drawn from the vitality that is alive throughout Cape Breton in the development of its curriculum and special educational initiatives including The Viola Desmond Chair.



CBU is also home to the Beaton Institute, the largest university archives east of Montreal. The Beaton Institute has a wide range of cultural holdings including the Viola Desmond Collection, which was recently donated by Wanda and Joe Robson.







THE PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CANADA





THE PAST

While Nova Scotia has one of the oldest, non-white populations to settle in Canada, much of its history followed racist patterns. Black Nova Scotians were subjected to a segregated, inferior quality of life including schooling, access to amenities like water, sewer, electricity and infrastructure. Blacks were denied access to training schools, and the population was largely forced into unskilled labour jobs.

THE PRESENT

In recent years, the push for social justice for all Canadians has opened new paths for many minorities in our country. While it is important to remember and recognize mistakes in our past, this gives us an opportunity to amend our actions today. The Viola Desmond Chair in Social Justice is the vehicle to help us move forward to a better, more inclusive Canada.



THE FUTURE

The Viola Desmond Chair will honour the courageous acts of Desmond and spark the pioneering spirit in all Canadians.

Your support will assist Cape Breton University in keeping the memory of Viola Desmond alive by contributing to Chair-related initiatives and advancing the benefits of education.

Cape Breton University is working to raise \$3 million to support the work of The Viola Desmond Chair and create a scholarship in Desmond's honour.

All donations are eligible for a tax receipt and will receive full recognition. For more information visit **ViolaDesmond.Org** or contact:

Paula MacNeil

Vice President, Development, Cape Breton University
paula_macneil@cbu.ca | (902) 563-1848







As Viola Desmond's nephew and Wanda Robson's son, I have a personal connection to the work of The Viola Desmond Chair.

As a working member of corporate Canada, I have witnessed advances in social consciousness through the make up of company senior management and Boards of Directors. But we can do more.

Supporting this initiative will encourage more youth to pursue post-secondary education, women and men to pursue their business dreams and work together to level the playing field for Canadians from all walks of life. It is a signal that Canadian businesses are striving for greater inclusion and equality in the workplace.

I am impassioned by the work of the Viola Desmond Chair and keeping my Aunt's story alive.

Gordon Neal
Campaign Chair





VIOLADESMOND.ORG



@ViolaDesmondChair



@ViolaDesmondChr



Viola Desmond Chair
in Social Justice

