



Michaëlle Jean was born in 1957 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She was eleven years old when Canada offered political asylum to her parents who were fleeing the repression of the dictatorial regime in their country of origin. Francophones, it is in Quebec that they settled. Her family experienced the ordeal of forced exile and, like all refugees, the immense challenge of rebuilding a life elsewhere, starting from scratch, gathering all their strength and their experiences, also motivated by the desire to contribute, as citizens and full citizens to the development of their host country.

Michaëlle Jean will never stop wanting to serve Canada, by participating in the establishment of the largest network of shelters and emergency assistance for women and children victims of violence across Quebec and other provinces. Her brilliant career as a journalist and host of programs on Canadian public television was driven by her passion for promoting awareness of social and development issues in our country and in the world. In 2005, she was appointed Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada, the first black woman to reach the highest constitutional office in our country and that she carried with extraordinary energy, for a five-year term.

When on January 12, 2010, her native country was devastated by a terrible earthquake, the United Nations called on the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean to be UNESCO Special Envoy to support the reconstruction efforts of Haiti with the financial support of Canada. Then, in 2014, she was the first woman elected to head the International Organization of La Francophonie, which brings together 88 states and governments on 5 continents.

Together with her husband, film-maker Jean-Daniel Lafond, she co-founded and co-chairs the [Fondation Michaëlle Jean Foundation](#), whose programs support, through art and culture, civic initiatives alongside some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised young people in Canada.

Michaëlle Jean is Chancellor of the University of Waterloo.