



*Our history is
filled with
Faith, Fun
and Fulfillment.*





The Catholic Women's League of Canada

My dear sisters in the League,

The Catholic Women's League of Canada is 100 years young as of June 17th of this year. Congratulations! To say that what has been accomplished in that time is astonishing and is beyond the imagination. When the League was organized nationally in 1920, it was the beginning of a lay association of Catholic women who would change the world as they advocate for social justice while working towards personal spiritual development. From coast to coast through urban and rural communities, women have met in homes, church halls and community rooms, in beautiful as well as humble surroundings. What all members had and have in common is the goal of making Canada and the world a better place through personal and collective spiritual growth, promoting the teachings of the Catholic church, enhancing the role of women, recognizing the dignity of all people, and contributing to the understanding and growth of religious freedom, social justice, peace and harmony.

This has never been a small task; however, this is the living, breathing fundamental base for members. Each member takes baby steps every day through prayer and action to assure that the least among us are supported, loved, freed and welcomed. Each of us advocates in our respective circumstances for the vulnerable and those who have no voice. It is with pride that I applaud the myriad of small and large undertakings "For God and Canada" and with humility that I find myself one of the 75,463 women who call each other sisters.

Members stand on the shoulders of countless exemplary women of faith who said "yes" to one of, or all causes for which the League is rightly known. They join thousands of women of all ages, backgrounds and geography to use the gifts and talents God has bestowed upon them to work towards a better community, province or territory, country and planet.

When thinking of the \$25,000 donated by members for war relief in the '40s (amounting to more than \$370,000 in today's Canadian dollars), add to that the millions of dollars members donated to Catholic Missions In Canada, Coady International Institute, Catholic Near East Welfare Association, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, and Euthanasia Prevention Coalition to name some beneficiaries. Add to this the millions of volunteer hours freely given in advocacy at all levels and the number of women who have prepared and presented resolutions to federal parliamentarians since 1974. The League is an organization that lives its mandate with all the energy that members with the support of the Holy Spirit can muster.

Please take this year to celebrate all things League. Burst with pride over your accomplishments, the changes you have brought about due to diligence everywhere in the parish and broader community. Celebrate the 100 years of service that have come about through the intercession of our patroness Our Lady of Good Counsel, who continues to guide us and keep us strong. Please continue to pray for each other and hold each other close as we move into the next century full of zeal and confidence that all efforts will make a difference in the advancement of women, faithfulness to Catholic values, and this beloved country.

God bless you, and God bless The Catholic Women's League of Canada.

Your sister in the League,

Anne-M Gorman
National President

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A Timeline of the First 100 Years

1900

1906 The Catholic Women's League originated in England.

1920

1912 The Catholic Women's League (in Canada) began in Edmonton through the efforts of Katherine Hughes.

1920 The Catholic Women's League of Canada was established in Montreal and placed under the patronage of the Hierarchy of Canada.

1921 The League precepts were published under the title, *Founding of a Society*.

1921 The first national convention was held in Toronto. A permanent constitution was adopted. Archbishop Neil McNeil (Toronto), founded *The Canadian League*, the official League publication.

1921 The League became affiliated with the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (now World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)).

1922 The Objects of the League became the cornerstone for all League activity.

1922 "For God and Canada" became the League's motto.

1922 Insignia pins were made available to members in *The Canadian League* magazine.

1923 The League passed a resolution to support the Sisters of Service which continued until 1951 by which time, \$125,000 had been contributed.

1923 The League was federally incorporated and the national organization became official under Canadian law.

1923 *The Canadian League* magazine underwent its first major facelift—larger size, better paper, coloured cover and increased content.

1929-1959 Honorary life memberships were presented to 12 members for exemplary service, but who were not national past presidents. This distinction is now reserved only for national past presidents.

1930

1931 A Relief Movement was initiated which became known as the Regina Fund in aid of drought sufferers in Southern Saskatchewan.

1936 *The Canadian League* magazine was included in the Exhibit at the Vatican, offered in homage to the Holy Father.

1940

1940 A gift of \$25,000 was given to the federal government and a war services convener was appointed.

1942 The national convention was replaced by a national executive meeting. The national president addressed members across Canada over the air.

1948 The League received the formal approval and mandate of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops (now Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops).

1948 Provincial councils were formed.

1950

1955 Pope Pius XII granted the privilege of celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel on April 26th.

1957 The official League banner came into use.

1960

1961 \$1,000 was donated to Coady International Institute—the beginning of the League's long-standing support of the institute.

1964 The Military Vicariate Diocesan Council formed, and in 1967 was granted provincial council status.





1967 A \$100,000 donation for the Vanier Institute of the Family as a centennial project was presented to Mme. Vanier.

1967 For Canada's centennial year, diocesan presidents' transportation expenses to attend the national convention were paid by the national treasury, which was repeated in 1980 for the 60th and 1990 for the 70th anniversary.

1969 The 1% National Voluntary Fund was established in support of the Canadian Catholic Organization of Development and Peace (now Development and Peace—Caritas Canada).

1971 The national office moved from Ottawa to Winnipeg.

1971 "Women in the Church," inspired by the *Documents of Vatican II* was approved for study.

1973 An executive leadership training session was organized.

1974 A National Pro-Life Fund was established.

1974 First meeting of a League delegation with federal ministers to discuss resolutions adopted in 1973.

1980 Newfoundland Provincial Council was formed.

1983 A letter-writing campaign was initiated in support of the Grandmothers of Argentina.

1988 The National Field Worker Program, a leadership training program was established.

1990 The League flag was blessed and raised at the 70th anniversary.

1990 *Except the Lord Build the House...* was released as an anniversary project.

1991 A new Mission Statement was adopted.

1994 Members were urged to speak out and reject euthanasia and assisted suicide. The revised position paper on euthanasia was widely circulated.

1994 *Spirituality: A Day of Discovery*, phase II of the Field Worker Program was released.

1995 A 1990-1995 supplement for *Except the Lord, Build the House* was created.

1995 The national president and national president-elect represented the League at the NGO Forum on Women preceding the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.



1996 *A Personal Letter Writing Guide* was inserted as a pull-out resource in *The Canadian League* magazine.

1996 *The Book of Life* was initiated to honour deceased members.

1997 Project GROW (Generate enthusiasm, Revitalize, Option and opportunities and Walk with faith partners) to promote the League was piloted in Winnipeg.

1997 MaterCare International Project which addressed maternal health problems in Africa was supported as a voluntary fund.

1998 A vision committee formed to unite the expectations of members and potential members with the League's reality and potential. The first phase of the vision process was to identify emerging trends in the League, the church and society using workshops, questionnaires and interviews.

2000 The League participated in the World March of Women, which sought to draw attention to the need for government to address the issue of poverty and violence against women. The League was involved in a planning committee for the march, under the auspices of Women's Inter-church Council of Canada (WICC), but did not support one of the demands—the right to free, public abortion services—and remained firm in its commitment to respect life from conception until natural death.

1970

1980

1990

2000

- 2000** A WUCWO Endowment Fund initiative aimed to raise \$1 million to aid WUCWO in becoming a financially autonomous organization.
- 2001** Catholic Missions In Canada (CMIC) was launched as a temporary National Voluntary Fund, a new evangelization project. Parish councils were invited to twin with a mission.
- 2001** An all expenses paid trip to convention was offered as a membership incentive for a new member and her sponsor.
- 2002** A committee reviewed the structure of the League, examined the roles and responsibilities of its various levels and compiled a clear and informative resource, *Leading the League* to inform new members about the organization and assist facilitators of leadership training workshops.
- 2002** The League scarf was made available to members.
- 2003** The League established CMIC as a permanent national voluntary fund.
- 2004** A National Communications Plan was launched.
- 2005** The resource, *Families: Stories of Faith*, was compiled for the 10th anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family.
- 2006** A temporary voluntary fund was established to support the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City.
- 2006** A League first: the annual government meeting included a visit with the prime minister at his office.
- 2007** The Catholic Girls' League (CGL) was established with membership for young women aged 10-15.
- 2007** The Bellelle Guerin Award was inaugurated to recognize extraordinary service to the League for members who do not qualify for life membership.
- 2007** Voluntary funds collected for the 49th Eucharistic Congress produced 440,000 flyers in English, French and Spanish with biblical texts on the Eucharist for families with a child preparing for first communion or confirmation.
- 2008** Manifest Communications engaged to develop a marketing strategy for the League.
- 2009** Permanent membership cards were created, produced and distributed.
- 2012** *Catch the Fire!* leadership training package launched.
- 2012** Thorough review of the C&B initiated due to the proclamation of Bill C-4, the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*.
- 2012** Foundation established to provide leadership training for Catholic women and accept \$500,000 from Sisters of Service as a legacy. Articles of Incorporation were completed.
- 2012** WUCWO was discontinued as a national voluntary fund.
- 2013** Pornography Hurts postcard campaign beings. Postcards are sent to all members of parliament as a plan spread throughout the year.
- 2013** Velma's Dream (Catholic Near East Welfare Association) was approved as a temporary national voluntary fund.
- 2013** Members support Marty's Dream, a construction project for at risk girls in Ghana in gratitude for his years of service.
- 2013** MaterCare International was retired as a national voluntary fund.
- 2013** *S'Mores* released as a follow-up training package for *Catch the Fire!*
- 2013** The Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation was incorporated October 22. Documentation was filed for charitable status registration.



2010



- 2014 Testimonial videos recorded at diocesan conventions were released at the national convention.

- 2014 A commemorative brick was placed at Juno Beach Centre in Normandy in remembrance of the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

- 2015 A new hymn to Our Lady of Good Counsel was released.

- 2015 \$500,000 was donated from the national treasury to the Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation.

- 2015 Euthanasia Prevention Coalition was approved as a temporary national voluntary fund for five years.

- 2015 Salt + Light Television covered the annual national convention in Vancouver and produced a documentary, *Woman on a Mission*.

- 2016 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care, a day of action for palliative care, was initiated.

- 2016 Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) became a permanent national voluntary fund.

- 2016 Pre-planning stages were initiated for a strategic plan to take the League into its second century with the presidents three (past president, president, president-elect) forming the steering committee.

- 2016 Speakers at the annual national convention were live-streamed.

- 2016 Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, a coalition of Catholic partners to strengthen relationships and partnerships with Indigenous peoples was created by the CCCB with a member chosen to represent the League.

- 2017 Planning strategically was initiated, with the hiring of a professional consultant, a town hall session at national convention with live feedback, presentation of progress at provincial and diocesan executive meetings and formulating a draft vision, mission, values, goals, objectives and identifying critical issues.

- 2017 Sub-committees were struck to develop strategies to meet each of the objectives or critical issues related to planning strategically.

- 2018 The complete strategic plan was adopted by the national executive in August and shared at the national convention. The publication, *The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically 2018-2022*, was released.

- 2018 Stories of League heritage in poster format were displayed at the annual national convention in preparation for the 100th anniversary.

- 2018 A study was undertaken of the CCCB action plan, *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation*.

- 2019 An implementation committee was formed and generated a five-year strategy map with strategic initiatives being approved for year one. The communications plan for implementation of the national strategic plan as well as performance indicators/implementation committee benchmarks were approved.

- 2019 A deacon's stole was made available for deacons who serve as spiritual advisors.

- 2019 The Feast of the Holy Family was chosen as a National Day of Prayer in support of Christians in the Holy Land.

- 2019 In support for *Care for Our Common Home*, councils were requested to send funds directly to CNEWA to support Pieta Bhavan, by providing a drinking water well for women with intellectual disabilities in India.

- 2019 The national executive decided the voluntary fund donations for CMIC in 2020 were to be directed to rebuilding or replacing St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Ahousat, St. Theresa's Church in Telegraph Creek and St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Attawapiskat.



Convention Themes / Titles

1920-1938	No Theme
1938-1940	1939 <i>The Reconstruction of the Christian Family and the establishment of society in the way of peace</i>
1940-42	1940 <i>The Reconstruction of the Christian Family as an Aid to Society Through Christian Education</i>
1942-44	1942 [No convention] 1943 <i>The Necessity of establishing and clarifying the true ideal of peace within the Framework of the Christian Family</i>
1944-46	1944 <i>The Family Rosary. The prayer that never fails to bring Christ into the home. The Christian Family: The Unit of the State</i> 1945 <i>The Active Participation, Spiritual and Material of the Catholic Women's League of Canada in Canada's Rehabilitation Programme</i>
1946-48	1946 <i>Apostolate of the Catholic Women's League for Christian Citizenship</i> 1947 <i>The Apostolate of the Catholic Women's League helping the National Canadian Programme of Immigration, Health and Welfare</i>
1948-50	1948 <i>The Apostolate of The Catholic Women's League of Canada harmoniously uniting all Catholic women in a Federation Freely acceptable for common action as the Voice of Catholic Womanhood</i>
1950-52	1950 <i>The Holy Year</i> 1951 <i>The Apostolate of the Catholic Women's League in the Field of Christian education / Our Lady of Good Counsel</i>
1952-54	1952 <i>The CWL and the Apostolate of Rural Life in Canada / Our Lady of Fatima, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary</i> 1953 <i>The Mother, the Family Catechist / Mary, Seat of Wisdom</i>
1954-56	1954 <i>The Catholic Women and the work of Vocations / Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception</i> 1955 <i>The Teenager, the Hope of the Future / Mary, Queen of the World</i>
1956-58	1956 <i>Parental Authority in the Home / Our Lady of Loreto</i> 1957 <i>The Role of the Home in Fostering Religious Vocations / Queen of All Saints</i>
1958-60	1958 <i>The Return of Lapsed Catholic to the Practice of Their Faith / The Cure of Art</i>
1960-62	1960 <i>The Christian Family Apostolate / Bishop Grandin</i> 1961 <i>Rerum Novarum / St. Joseph, the Worker</i>
1962-64	1962 <i>The Social Teaching of the Church as Defined in Mater et Magistra / The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> 1963 <i>The Revitalization of the Catholic Social Order / Rev. Albert Lacombe, O.M.I.</i>
1964-66	1964 <i>For God and Canada—A Modern Apostolate / Most Rev. Bernard Angus MacEachern, D.D.</i> 1965 <i>The People of God / Fathers Blancet and Demers</i>

1966-68	1966	<i>Social Action—The Christian in the Community</i> / Dundurn Castle and Sir Allan MacNab
	1967	<i>He Shall Rule from Sea to Sea</i> / Jeanne Mance and Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys
1968-70	1968	<i>He who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4.21</i> / Bishop Joseph Norbert Provencher (Winnipeg)
	1969	<i>Through Help—Hope</i> / Mother Marie Ann, Foundress of the Sisters of St. Ann
1970-72	1970	<i>The Christian Conscience and Poverty in Canada</i> / Miss Bellelle Guerin, First National President
	1971	<i>Women of Hope</i> / Mother Teresa, Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity
1972-74	1972	<i>Celebrating God's Mighty Deeds</i> / Dr. M. M. Coady, Founder of Coady International Institute
	1973	<i>The Joy of Being Christian</i> / Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I. beloved missionary of Ft. Edmonton
1974-76		<i>Mystery of Christ with Mary His Mother</i>
	1974	<i>Be Doers of the Word</i> / Jean Vanier
	1975	<i>Harmony With God, Within Ourselves, With Others</i> / Bishop Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate
1976-78	1976	<i>Live the Mystery of Christ with Mary, His Mother</i> / Our Lady of Good Counsel
	1977	<i>The Great Voice of God Cries Out for the Fullness of Life</i> / Blessed Marguerite d'Youville, Founder of the Grey Nuns
1978-80	1978	<i>The Family—Church of the Home</i> / St. Boniface
	1979	<i>A Child—The Supreme Gift</i> / Dr. Isabella Stevens, National President 1962-64
1980-82		<i>The Threshold of the 80s</i>
	1980	<i>Faith and Family</i> / Ste. Elizabeth Seton
	1981	<i>Faith and Family</i> / Kateri Tekakwitha – The Lily of the Mohawks
1982-84		<i>League Ministry to God and Canada</i>
	1985	<i>Stewardship—The CWL Journey into the Future</i>
1984-86		<i>Milestones of Change</i>
1986-88		<i>Stewardship in Church Renewal</i>
1988-90		<i>Women: Sharing in the Life and Mission of the Church</i>
1990-92		<i>Parish: A Family of the Local Church</i>
1992-94		<i>The Catholic Women's League of Canada—rooted in gospel values</i>
1994-96		<i>The Catholic Women's League of Canada—calling its members to holiness</i>
1996-98		<i>The Catholic Women's League of Canada—through service to the people of God</i>
1998-00		<i>People of God—A Time for Healing; People of God—A Time for Celebration</i>
2000-02		<i>The Open Door</i>
2002-04		<i>Cast Out into the Deep</i>
2004-06		<i>Companions on the Journey</i>
2006-08		<i>Love One Another</i>
2008-10		<i>Women of Peace and Hope</i>
2010-12		<i>Centred on Faith and Justice</i>
2012-14		<i>We Have Seen the Lord!</i>
2014-16		<i>One Heart, One Voice, One Mission</i>
2016-18		<i>Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call</i>
2018-20		<i>Care for Our Common Home</i>

Women Active in Service and Social Justice

“From its beginning, the League has involved itself in social concerns and has always been ready and willing to speak out on many issues. Topics of a national or international concern are addressed by the national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada to the federal government and other public forums using various methods of communication. The most common method is through the resolutions process... Other ways are through presentations, submissions, briefs, position papers [discussion papers, resource papers] and letters” (*Resolutions Supplement to the Executive Handbook*, pg. 17).

“Resolutions play a major part in the League's work. Through them, policy may be established, programs planned, or concerns and views expressed to governments” (Ibid, pg. 3).

In the active file, there are currently 84 resolutions, seven briefs, nine position papers, nine presentations, nine resource/discussion papers, 10 responses, eight submissions and one statement—Statement on Abortion 1988—(Ibid, pgs. 32-38), besides the many more archived files representing issues that have either been resolved or reflect outdated material. As one reads through the various topics, they reflect the League's commitment to the sanctity of life, youth, seniors, the dignity and rights of persons, refugees, immigration, citizenship, developing countries, wellness, the environment, genetics, media, pornography, etc. Over the years, the issues that have been addressed reflect the concerns of members who recognized injustices and who were committed to making a difference in the world.

The national president presents the League's position and members support the initiatives undertaken through letter writing and personal contact with their members of parliament. Since 1974, delegations have met with federally elected officials, their policy advisors and staff, and sometimes senators, to lobby for issues of social and economic justice. The united voice of Catholic women across Canada echoes the commitment to the sacredness of life from conception to natural death as each delegation commits to furthering the cause of justice in the world. Indeed, the clarity and comprehensiveness of the resolutions pursued is admired and respected in government as well as church circles.

His Eminence G. Emmett Cardinal Carter, Archbishop of Toronto (1978-1990) commented, “I cannot imagine a more forceful, more dynamic and important group than The Catholic Women's League of Canada to promote the ideals of Christian marriage, stability, peace, marital and family harmony and integrity” (*Except the Lord Build the House...*, pg. 73).

Complementing the annual government visits, meetings take place with executive members of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), Catholic Organization for Life and Family, Catholic Health Alliance of Canada and more recently, the apostolic nuncio representing Pope Francis in Canada. The League has observer status at the plenary session of the CCCC, attends biennial gatherings of Catholic lay associations from across Canada, attends the National Council of Catholic Women's annual conference, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations' general assemblies, as well as its North America region assemblies, and is regularly represented at events of national and international scope.

Indeed the League is fulfilling its core purpose, to unite Catholic women to grow in faith, and to promote social justice through service to the church, Canada and the world. ✚

POSITION PAPERS

Status of Women Brief to the Royal Commission (1968)

Advisory to Senate Committee on Poverty (1970)

Statement on Abortion (1988)

Position Paper on Euthanasia (1994, 2014)

Definition of Marriage (2003)
Position Paper

RESOLUTIONS

2017.04 Protection from Coercion of Conscience for Healthcare Professionals

2016.04 Amend the *Canada Health Act* to Identify Palliative Care as an Insured Health Service

2014.02 Electronic Cigarettes

2011.01 Prohibition of Practices re Human Reproductive Material

2004.01 Protection of Human Life

1998.03 National Pharmacare

1995.02 Abortion Funding

Women of Faith

No historical documentation of League activity would be complete without specific attention to the faith component of the organization. “Spiritual growth is the very heart of the League and the essence of its existence” (*Executive Handbook*, SD-27).

As you peruse the history timeline, it becomes obvious that specific mention is not made of the faith-oriented programs undertaken. That is because spirituality is an integral part of every activity embarked upon by the League. Every endeavour has been/is motivated by the core values, first and foremost of which is faith. As a national organization, members proudly support the core purpose i.e. to unite Catholic women to grow in faith, and to promote social justice through service to the church, Canada and the world.

The advocacy efforts reflected in resolutions, briefs and position papers are grounded in Catholic teaching. Strides are made to keep members current and engaged in the changes taking place in the church, through study and reflection of papal documents. The leadership and educational opportunities at workshops and development days are framed in scripture and prayer. Many faith development programs are available for members to access. The highlight of conventions at all levels are the liturgies—both Eucharistic and para liturgies. How can one not be overwhelmed by the united voices of Catholic women raised in praise and thanksgiving?

Through the years, many varied projects, programs and

initiatives have been undertaken to further, deepen and enrich members’ faith journey: *Women in the Church* Study Kit (1971); Pope John Paul II Papal visit (1984); *CWL Prays* (1990); *Humble Prayer and Beatitudes* (1991); *Spirituality, A Day of Discovery* (1994); *Prayer Partners* (1995); *Called to Cana* (1997); pilgrimage walk to St. Dunstan’s in Charlottetown (2000); peace candle presentation (2000); *Belonging* (2000); *Step Forward in Faith and Action* (2001); establishment of small Christian communities (2002); World Youth Day pilgrim kit (2002); reconciliation service at national convention (2003); *Discovering My Story* (2004); *On Being Kinder to Each Other* (2005); *Families: Stories of Faith* (2005); 40th Eucharistic Congress Eucharistic flyer (2007); *CWL Day of Peace and Hope Activities Kit* (2009); *Prayers and Workshops for Women of Peace and Hope* (2010); 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care (2016); and lap quilt project for hospices.

Faith filled members today are proud of their accomplishments. “We, who carry the League dream of those dedicated, courageous first pioneers... know that indeed the **‘Lord did build the house’** and that is why it cannot and will not fail. It is up to us, the members of today and our daughters, the members of tomorrow, to ensure the fulfillment of that dream into the 21st century” (*Except the Lord Build the House...*, Page 98).

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain” (Psalm 127.1).



