



# AS WE GROW



## **Velma Harasen**

National Chairperson of Organization

**T**o give you a glimpse of happenings in membership, leadership and growth in faith, fun and fulfillment in Canada, we share these stories.

## **Nancy Simms**

B.C. & Yukon Provincial President-elect

The League offers something for every woman in every parish throughout Canada. It has the scope to appeal to and use every gift and talent God has given you. It has the structure and flexibility to carry your gifts, ideas and/or concerns to positive fruition!

Are you sharing this enthusiastic message with the women of your parish? Have you considered hosting a workshop to inform women about the League?

I have had the incredible honour of both developing and facilitating workshops throughout my own Diocese of Kamloops and provincially for B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council. I have observed first hand the zeal with which women embrace the League and its work "For God and Canada" once they have been given the tools and confidence to share their talents with others.

Through a Christian family life workshop, members came to a greater understanding of their calling, the League's mission, and the Christian family life standing committee, and brainstormed ideas on how to achieve the standing committee goals and projects that could be undertaken.

In diocesan resolutions workshops, it was explained how one member's concern could be formulated and developed into a viable resolution and become the voice of all members. One workshop produced eight resolutions.

At "Keeping the CWL Alive in the Modern World" workshops, members came to a greater understanding of each standing committee and how each one helps the world in which we live. It challenged members to step forward in faith and courage to recognize not only their own talents, but the talents of those around them, and how to encourage members to use their talents in the League with enthusiasm. I witnessed numerous times where members arrived without the confidence that they had anything to offer, yet left with a desire to serve on various standing committees.

Provincial workshops on "Leadership Development and Public Speaking" took away the fear of public speaking and helped members with concerns about conducting effective meetings.

B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council is presently working on another leadership workshop that would help members realize their beauty and maintain **peace** with themselves and others and challenge them to become the leaders that they are.

Let's all share the awesome message of what the League is all about!

## **Fran Lucas**

Alberta Mackenzie Provincial President-elect

St. Joseph College Council at the University of Alberta became official on April 26, 2005. Since that date, the interest of parish councils across the province has been heightened.

The presidents of this council have always emphasized fun activities, events and meetings. The council hosted a number of fun get-to-know-you events. One such event was a BYOB (Bring Your Own Banana) to make ice cream sundaes. Yet another began with a pot luck supper followed by a night of mini-golf at West Edmonton Mall.

Recruiting time means hauling out the scrapbooks at the college chapel or at council functions to visualize and remember the fun times and different activities. The chapel is packed to capacity including many sitting on the floor; there is a social aspect to these gatherings, too. Many of the executive bring along other women who feel more comfortable when they already know at least one person there. The members are passionate about the council and all they are involved in so that enthusiasm is a major factor when recruiting.

An inter-collegiate development conference was held in 2008 at the college and generated membership, as future leaders were attracted to this event. Parish councils in the Archdiocese of Edmonton rallied to assist.

The newest parish council, St. Vital, in Beaumont, has many younger members who personally relate to the work the League does and the opportunity it affords them to come together spiritually. They were seeking just this sort of setting for community when membership in the League was offered to them. As young mothers they are not deterred by the work ahead of them. Instead, they wish to leave a legacy for their daughters and embrace the opportunity to build on an organization that has had roots in Alberta for 97 years. At the organizational meeting, a neighbouring parish council brought coffee and goodies. What fine examples of great leadership, sisterhood and solidarity! And so, the League continues to grow.

## **Susan Bernier**

Manitoba Provincial President-elect

A four day road trip by Provincial President Suzanne Kiazzyk, Provincial Spiritual Advisor Rev. Martin Bradbury, Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development Monica Brechka and me turned into a true northern experience.

Every five years, members in the Diocese of Keewatin-The Pas host the annual provincial convention giving attendees a small taste of some of the challenges these members face when travelling to southern Manitoba events. Travel challenges are a daily fact of life for them. They are resilient and committed to the League and each other.

We left Winnipeg with the thermometer reading -50°C to travel eight hours north to Thompson to meet with St. Lawrence Parish Council members. We found an active, vibrant and committed group of women who are a driving force behind parish functions.

On Friday we travelled to Snow Lake, a mere two and one half hours away. We were very grateful for the expertise of Rev. Bradbury who had travelled these roads many times while lovingly serving the people of this diocese for 10 years.

We were welcomed by members of Our Lady of the Snows Parish Council who, along with their spouses, joined us for an informal evening of fellowship and reaffirmation.

As with many communities in northern Manitoba, residents of Snow Lake are dependent upon the mines for their livelihood. It was announced just the week before that the nickel mine in Snow Lake would be closed due to the low market value of nickel. This closure could have meant the death of the community but, in this case, the workers would be relocated to Flin Flon, a short four hours away. The threat of loss of livelihood and community are yet one more reality of life in the north for many communities as people must move away in search of employment.

Back on the road, bright and early on Saturday morning, we headed off to The Pas, just two hours away, to discuss the details of the upcoming provincial convention with members of the host, Sacred Heart Parish Council. With details well in hand, we shared lunch, business, and mass on Saturday afternoon, so that we could be back on the road Sunday morning for our seven hour trip home.

In four short days we travelled almost 2,000 kilometres and visited three of the five parish councils that form the Keewatin-The Pas Diocesan Council. The trip allowed us a brief glimpse into the challenges they face on a daily basis while experiencing the warmth and hospitality of the north. Members in the north do not stand on protocol or formality but rather take the time to be present, lovingly welcoming all with open arms. They are truly sisters in the League.

## **Shari Guinta**

Ontario Provincial President-elect

Membership in the League is a journey to spiritual enlightenment, a richer faith experience, knowledge of the

church, and appreciation of sisters in Catholicism and the clergy. Members share a vision for helping those who are marginalized in society and an active interest in other social issues.

Members are educated by attending workshops, conventions and development days. In November 2008, organization chairpersons from the 13 arch/dioceses in Ontario gathered in Toronto for a development day. Membership, League development and parliamentary procedure were discussed. Through use of round table discussion, role playing, workshop activity and an address from a professional parliamentarian, the attendees had fun while learning more about sharing the good news of The Catholic Women's League of Canada. Everyone agreed that the day was worthwhile and enjoyable, gave attendees confidence in their committee work and ultimately prepared them for possible presidency.

Catholic women in the pews need to know about the League, its history and purpose, and the work members do. I have suggested that parish councils ask a member to speak at weekend masses and inform all women of the parish about the League, mentioning membership in the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and the League's dealings with government. Young women particularly like this and many members do not know about this important part of the mandate.

We need to continue to market the League in a positive light. Women in the parish need to see other women just like them who belong to this vibrant organization that speaks in unity with the church. Bulletin boards, parish bulletins and letters to members should publicize presentations, retreats, speakers and social events with the words "hosted by the CWL of your parish". Invite all women of the parish to events, not just members. We must always be inclusive, inviting and positive.

A catch phrase that came out of a development day in the Diocese of St. Catharines has become a favourite part of my committee when inviting women to join .... "One woman at a time."

## **Diane Lemay**

Quebec Provincial President-elect

In the spring of 2008, the national chairperson of organization challenged members to increase the membership to 100,000. I brought the challenge to the provincial convention in June 2008. Since Quebec is one of the smaller provinces with 28 active parish councils, it set a goal of 100 new members. If every council recruited four members the goal would be met. Councils were encouraged to be open to new ideas for the recruiting process, but also to continue approaching women and issuing a personal invitation.

One parish council found a very creative way to recruit new members. Members participated in a Christmas concert hosted by the parish youth group and presented a skit using an acrostic of "Christmas" on a paper plate symbolizing baked goodies. For instance, the "C" represented "charity" and "compassion" during the Christmas season and the "R"

represented “reflections” of why Jesus was born. At the end of the skit, members sang *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* and gave everyone a pamphlet about the League along with a candy cane.

I was invited by this council to attend the installation of its new executive. Much to my surprise they also had an enrollment ceremony for new members. Seven new members were enrolled, with the majority under the age of 40. I visited a second time with this council and realized that I was becoming a “woman of hope”. Many members are young, and it was heartwarming to see a young mother with her baby, with lots of “grandmas” and “aunts” eager to hold the little one. The members jokingly said that by the time this child reaches 16 and can join the League they would have to give her a 15 year pin!

Since members are asked to be *Women of Peace and Hope*, this really gives me hope that other parish councils will have the same experience. So far I have heard from two councils that have increased their membership by at least four new members.

I am waiting with anticipation to see what ideas parish councils used to recruit new members and how their ideas were successful.

### **Agnes Kenney**

Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial President-elect

One fall day, I received a call from Sister Gladys Bozec expressing a desire to have a League presence in her parish of Stephenville Crossing. I was invited to come. I contacted the provincial spiritual advisor and a local parish council president

from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Council, in Lourdes, to invite them along. They agreed that they and their parish council members would be there. The day began with a workshop, “Executive Incentive”. The local parish council president spoke of her experience, and passed on practical suggestions for chairpersons to help them fulfill their duties. The parish council in Lourdes is very active and I was sure these two councils would work well together, an asset when one council is just getting started. The workshop proved to be a success with time for prayer, reflection, open discussion and dialogue. The ladies from Stephenville Crossing had homemade muffins, tea and coffee for break and soup, sandwiches and homemade desserts for lunch! At the evening liturgy, I gave a brief summary of important dates in the life of the League since 1912. Then followed the installation of four officers; president, chairperson of spiritual development, secretary, and treasurer. And Our Lady of Assumption Parish Council was formed! Twenty members signed the charter that day so the remaining positions were to be filled at the next meeting. Rev. Patry was very welcoming and was pleased that his parish now has a League presence.

I then visited Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Council for a “meet and greet” for members who couldn’t attend the workshop at Our Lady of Assumption Parish Council. I really enjoyed my visit and they appreciated being there.

Newfoundland and Labrador now has 27 parish councils once again! This is encouraging for all of us at provincial and national levels! †

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## THREE GENERATIONS OF LEAGUE MEMBERS

### **St. James the Great Parish Council, MacTier, Ontario**

St. James the Great Parish Council was pleased to welcome Talitha Tolles as a new member. Sixteen year old Talitha joins her mother Joyce and her grandmother Bertha as members of a small but vital council.



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## WELCOME

TO NEW COUNCIL St. John Bosco, Brockville, Ontario  
TO REACTIVATED COUNCIL St. Joseph, Shannon, Quebec

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

*Congratulations to the following centenarians!*

Pearl Lutzko – 110 years on February 15, 2009

Martha (Martina) Bonomi – 102 years on October 25, 2008

Lillian Griffin – 101 years on September 6, 2008

Helen McKenzie – 101 years on February 7, 2009

Monica Boll – 100 years on January 7, 2009

Sarah Chiasson – 100 years on November 26, 2008

Marguerite (Peggy) Gregoire – 100 years on January 9, 2009

Geneva Morrell – 100 years on November 26, 2008

Margaret Beale Splane – 100 years on March 25, 2009

Gen Weiss – 100 years on February 2, 2009