

## **Saskatchewan Provincial President Connie Crichton**

In 2023, Saskatchewan Provincial Council membership has somewhat diminished from pre-pandemic numbers. Several councils have disbanded, and others are considering doing the same, mostly due to ageing members, lack of potential for new members to join and unwillingness to take on leadership positions. Diocesan councils also are feeling the pinch, with all three of the diocesan councils not having a full executive. Two of these councils as well as the provincial council, do not have a vice president. All options for the future are being considered. Rather than seeing this as a negative, we will look at this as an opportunity to build a better future.

The Unity Project is getting off to a very slow start, but we hope that the fall will bring us the opportunity to meet with many of our 120 councils and, through their participation, will provide us with information to guide us on just where we can best assist them in their desire to stay active and relevant in their parishes.

Parish councils are now moving to the new structure, with many new executives being formed in the new year. With this change, there are many questions and diocesan and regional gatherings and workshops have focused on this topic. To best serve our membership, the provincial executive has transitioned to the new structure also. Newsletters have been produced in this format showing both the old and new positions. Starting with our July newsletter, only the new positions will be used in our communications.

Although the parish councils in each diocese are working on many projects, time allows me to mention only a highlighted activity from each. Prince Albert Diocesan Council focused on outreach to the northern communities. Regina Diocesan Council, which celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, has honoured our priests by promoting The Spiritual Motherhood of Priests that is now spreading throughout the province. Saskatoon Diocesan Council, for a number of years, has been focusing on human trafficking, with St. Anne's Parish Council being successful in having the city of Saskatoon declaring February 22<sup>nd</sup> Human Trafficking Awareness Day with a flag it designed, flown at City Hall for a week.

Archbishop Donald Bolen (Regina) has a desire to have our Catholic organizations work together with Catholic Health Care to ensure the needs of our Catholic community are being met. To further this initiative, members of the League have been invited to take part in a workshop in the fall with the Knights of Columbus to look at ways we can advocate for increased palliative care resources and protection of the conscience rights of our healthcare professionals.

I chose last June to take the theme *Walking Together* for my term as president. I sent out a challenge to all our councils to provide educational opportunities to their members to learn more about Indigenous history and residential schools. Some councils from all three dioceses have participated in the challenge to date, and over \$2,500 has been raised to date for the Bishops' Indigenous Reconciliation Fund.

Our 75<sup>th</sup> annual provincial convention opening Eucharistic celebration incorporated Indigenous spirituality beginning with a smudge conducted by Elder Sharon Genaille. Members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Council, an Indigenous and Métis parish, formed the choir led by Sandy

Harper. Songs and mass parts incorporated some of the Cree language. Working with the Parish Life Director Debbie Ledoux, a moving experience was created for members and our Indigenous sisters felt we were truly *Walking Together* on this occasion.

Our banquet guest speaker was Cristin Dorgan Lee, a Métis woman and principal of St. Michael's Community School in Saskatoon that focuses on teaching through a Métis perspective.

Our convention was further enriched by the presence of National President Fran Lucas, who provided interactive presentations on "Relationships" and "Servant Leadership." The strong leadership of Regina Diocesan President Janette Rieger was recognized by her diocesan council and a service pin was presented to her by Fran Lucas. We also welcomed two new members to life membership; Marge Appell and Helen Kayfish. Sadly, we also reported the passing of former provincial president, Life Member Marge Szabo.

Our convention closing Eucharistic celebration was also a time to say farewell to our spiritual advisor, Fr. Peter Nnanga MSP. He served our provincial council with much enthusiasm and always brought a message of joy to all our gatherings. Fr. Peter established a new parish council in his parish, attended all our meetings and, starting in May 2020, provided 153 weekly reflections to our provincial council Facebook page and engaged with many spiritual advisors in the province. We also welcomed our new spiritual advisor, Fr. Francis Hengen, who has been a very devoted League supporter and spiritual advisor over the years.

Our 2024 national convention planning committee continues to work hard to bring you next year's convention in the City of Saskatoon. Plan to be there!

While I started this report on a more negative note, I am feeling very hopeful that the future holds brighter days for the Catholic Women's League and its members in Saskatchewan. We are an organization that puts faith first, and it guides us in all we do.

From Proverbs 16:3, "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."

This concludes my report. ✚