

CFUW Brief History

The remarkable industrial expansion that occurred after the beginning of the First World War opened up many opportunities for women. The increase of urban populations with its consequent industrial growth, led to opportunities for women in industry and in social work. At this time women were already well established in the teaching profession and entering medicine, law, journalism, nursing and social work in larger numbers.

Some of the leaders among university women in Canada had long dreamt of a national federation, but the effective impulse to found it came from Great Britain. Early in 1919, Dr. Winifred Cullis of Britain, who had spent time in Canada during the war years lecturing at Toronto University suggested that women in Canada might wish to organize a national federation so that Canada might become one of the first countries to join in the emerging International Federation of University Women. A similar suggestion came from Virginia Gildersleeve of the American Association of University Women to the effect that, while she hoped the Canadians would form their own federation, but that they might if they preferred, be allied with the American Association.

Canada's response was immediate. In March 1919 at a conference of four of the leaders in university organizations – Alice Cooper, President of the Toronto Club, Margaret Stovel McWilliams, President of the Winnipeg Club, May Skinner, then representing Canada on the American Association's committee on International Affairs, and Laila Scott in Toronto – it was decided to create the Canadian Federation of University Women. A constitution was drafted and the work of getting the approval of the clubs in the establishment of the federation, their approval of a constitution and of a meeting in the coming summer was undertaken. May Skinner dealt with the Eastern clubs and Margaret Stovel McWilliams with those in Western Canada.

The various clubs responded enthusiastically to the appeal and the organization meeting took place in Winnipeg in August of the same year. **Six clubs – Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton and Victoria – as well as McGill Alumnae sent delegates.** The delegates adopted the proposed constitution and set the federation on its way by selecting the first officers and Chairs of Committees. Education in all its phases was declared to be the first interest of the new federation. The first matters of business included the plan to set up a Fellowship, to get women to stand for election to Board, and support for women to engage in politics.

Representatives of the University Women's Clubs of Canada met in Winnipeg in 1919 to organize the Canadian Federation of University Women. The first Officers of the Federation were:

Margaret Stovel McWilliams: President
Miss May Skinner: First Vice President
Mabel Chown Thom: Second Vice President
Mrs G.L. Lennox: Recording Secretary
Mrs Charles Schofield: Treasurer
Mrs Digby Wheeler: Archives
Miss Elsie Moore: Membership

The Committees of the Federation were Education, Libraries, Vocations, Scholarship, Publications and Recognition of the Standing of Colleges and Universities.

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The Clubs that joined at that time were:

Edmonton
Kingston, Queen's Alumnae
London
Montreal, McGill Alumnae
Ottawa
Regina
Saskatoon
Toronto
Victoria
Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Wesley Alumnae

In 1921 when Madame Curie visited the United States in 1921, CFUW made a substantial contribution to the fund raised by women to purchase radium for her and invited her to Niagara Falls. This visit highlighted the value of the work of an international federation.

By the time of the second CFUW Triennial at Minaki, Ontario in 1923, CFUW was well established with 1300 members from 75 universities, thus immediately establishing the international character of the national body. Three Fellowships had been awarded including one to a Canadian studying at the Sorbonne and another at Radcliffe. At this time study on women's employment in Educational Institutions was undertaken and another on the conditions in Libraries in Canada.

The Membership Lists recorded totalled 27 different kinds of degrees. Eighty one percent held the Bachelors degree, 11 percent the Masters. Only one percent had a doctorate. A number of members held other types of degrees (e.g. MD, LLB etc).

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In 1918, Miss Spurgeon had visited America as a member of the British Educational Mission to discuss the interchange of lecturers and students and then the British Federation appointed a Committee on International Relations chaired by Dr. Winifred Cullis. The American Association of University Women (Virginia Gildersleeve) and the British Federation of University Women jointly called a meeting together.

The original purpose was: *"To promote understanding and friendship between university women of the nations of the world, and thereby to further their interests and to develop between their countries sympathy and mutual helpfulness."*

Women from all five continents attended this first meeting eager to forward the cause of women. The meetings were jointly chaired by Professor Winifred Cullis of the London School of Medicine for Women and Dean Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard College, New York. The countries represented at that first meeting were:

Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Holland, India, Italy, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United States of America. Countries sufficiently well organized as federations to be granted votes were: Canada, Czecho-

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Slovakia, France, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Spain and the United States of America. Canada's closest ties in the early days were with the American Association of University Women and the British Federation of University Women.

At this first meeting, the foundation for international scholarships was laid down.

The first CFUW Scholarship valued at \$1000, was called the Federation Scholarship.

At the Conference in London, July 12th – July 14th 1920, representatives met to consider an International Federation, stating that the foundation of a national federation is a natural step on the way to the establishment of an international federation. International federation was seen as a way for university women to increase their influence, their strength and their usefulness. The British and the American group made themselves responsible financially and in other ways for the organization of this meeting.

The promotion of peace was a key topic for discussion, with the keynote speaker stressing the need for international goodwill and the need to work together toward international understanding to promote peace. Additional speakers spoke of the need to work together to promote education, international friendship, scholarships and equality. Equal pay for equal work was discussed too.

First elected Board was:

President: Professor Caroline Spurgeon, Bedford College, London

Vice President: Margaret McWilliams of Canada

Treasurer: Mrs Edgerton Parsons, USA

Secretary: Theodora Bosanquet: London

At the second meeting in 1920 in Toronto, delegates spoke of the pleasure of working with other women for a common cause. The first definite piece of work was to raise money to establish scholarship and at this time all of the Clubs worked together to establish a national program. Two major concerns were the academic and economic status of teachers and the fact that women were paid far less than men for equal work.

Note the IFUW Meeting of 1923:

Headquarters were in London, England. IFUW had a relationship with the League of Nations, the International Council of Women, Unions des Associations Internationales, International Women's Suffrage Alliance, English Speaking Union and the National Bureau of International Education. IFUW initially had a Biennial system, changing to a Triennial system in 1928.

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Federation Scholarship Winners:

- 1921 Isobel Jones MA Toronto
- 1922 Dixie Pelluet MA Alberta
- 1923 Margaret Cameron MA McGill and Radcliffe
- 1924 Dorothea Sharpe
- 1925 Doris Saunders
- 1926 Alice E. Wilson
- 1932 Lillian Hunter
- 1933 Constance MacFarlane
- 1934 Marion Mitchell
- 1935 Marie Hearne
- 1936 Naomi Jackson
- 1937 Gwendolyn Toby
- 1938 Phyllis Gill
- 1939 Dorothy Lefebre and Phyllis Brewster

In 1940 the issue of displaced university women comes up for the first time and the kernel of the idea that later became the Hegg Hoffet Relief Fund.

List CFUW Presidents

Elected at

1. Margaret McWilliams	1919 - 1923	Winnipeg and affirmed in Toronto (1920)
2. Mrs Walter Vaughan	1923 - 1926	Minaki, Ontario
3. Dean Mary L. Bollert	1926 - 1928	Montreal
4. Laila Scott	1928 - 1931	Vancouver
5. Mabel Chown Thom	1931 - 1934	Ottawa
6. Laura Newman	1934 - 1937	Edmonton
7. Charlotte Melrose	1937 - 1940	Toronto
8. Dr. Dorothy Turville	1940 - 1943	Calgary
9. Dr. Ursilla MacDonnell	1943 - 1946	Quebec
10. Mrs. Ruth Crummy	1946 - 1949	Winnipeg
11. Dr. Marion Elder	1949 - 1952	Vancouver
Grant	1952 - 1955	Ottawa
12. Dr. Martha Law	1955 - 1958	Edmonton
13. Dr. Doris Saunders	1958 - 1961	Montreal
14. Dr. Vivian Morton	1961 - 1964	London
15. Margaret MacLellan	1964 - 1967	Winnipeg
16. Dr. Laura Sabia	1967 - 1970	Vancouver
17. Dr. Margaret Orange	1970 - 1973	York University, Toronto
18. Dr. Gwendolyn Black	1973 - 1976	Ottawa
19. Dr. Ruth Bell	1976 - 1982	Quebec City
20. Margaret Strengitharm	1982 - 1985	Winnipeg
23. Linda Souter	1985 - 1988	Calgary
24. Thomasine Irwin	1988 - 1990	Ottawa
25. Peggy Matheson	1990 - 1994	Edmonton
26. Phyllis Scott	1994 - 1996	Winnipeg
27. Betty Bayless	1996 - 1998	St. John's, Newfoundland
28. Mavis Moore	1998 - 2000	Kelowna, BC
29. Roberta A. Brooks	2000 - 2002	Guelph, ON

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30. Jacqueline Jacques	2002 - 2004	Richmond, BC
31. Rose V. Beatty	2004 - 2006	Regina, AB

The early years of the Federation were marked by a sense of purpose and pride. CFUW formed as a Federation in the same year as IFUW and members were present at the first IFUW Meeting. Both Federations worked hand in hand at that time.

CFUW's earliest interests include pay equity and on the establishment of a Federation Fellowship to support higher education for women. CFUW and IFUW took great interest in the work of the League of Nations in the inter-war period, and with women's advancement into a variety of different fields and in intellectual cooperation among nations.

By 1923 there were 16 CFUW member Clubs.

The 1923 – 1926 Triennium was one of consolidation and the President visited as many Clubs as possible, to strengthen the feeling of being one national body and raise awareness of CFUW's role in the International Federation.

Dr. A. Vibert Douglas: Convened the CFUW Fellowships Committee in 1934. Dr. A. Vibert Douglas served on the IFUW Fellowships Committee through to the 1940s. She reports in 1943 on the War Guest Committee and throughout the war years, the IFUW Fellowships Committee continued to meet in the US. She became President of the International Federation of University Women 1947 – 1950. She was Dean of Women at Queen's University at the time. Her background was in astro-physics and there is a crater on Venus named after her. In her speech she dwells on the following

IFUW has promoted friendship and understanding among people of many nations. It has striven for high standards of education and integrity in scholarly research. It has had its influence through consultative status on the various United Nations bodies. It has carried our intellectual and physical relief on a large scale. We believe that its work has been wholly constructive in a world shaken by the First Great War, disillusioned by a vast economic depression, again shaken to its very foundations by the horror of the Second World War, and now rent by discordant ideologies.

One of the positive achievements of the United Nations has been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood. Dr. Douglas challenged the federation members to look at how far the actual precepts of the Declaration are in accord with what is happening in their countries. Our task as university women, to whom great advantages have been given and therefore on whom much responsibility lies, our task as citizens not only of one country but of the world, our task as individual member of this human race inhabiting the planet Earth for some millions of years in the vastness of time is to help make the human record a worthy chapter of cosmic history.

The earliest years of the Canadian Federation are marked by efforts to build a vehicle for cross country cooperation leading to the advancement of women. Many of our earliest leaders were rooted in the academic community. Issues studied relate to the status of women within the community and in the workplace as well as the

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promotion of education in particular through the foundation of a Fellowships Program. In and during the Second World War, Clubs entered a different phase when many Clubs engaged in activities that supported the war effort, the International Red Cross, Women in the Forces and so on. The years immediately following the Second World War were ones of great expansion for CFUW. During this time, Club Charter were established for the largest group of Clubs founded.

Also at this time Clubs grew in strength, established programs, their own local Scholarship Programs and Study and Interest Groups. The resolutions process became well established.