

CFUW HISTORY AND HEROINES

This series traces CFUW historical highlights and its movers and shakers decade by decade to provide insight into the scope of CFUW as an important voice for women in Canada and abroad.

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The Roarin' Twenties

Beginnings

On August 26, 1919 University Women's Clubs from Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton and Victoria met in Winnipeg for the inaugural meeting of the "Federation of University Women in Canada."

Dr. Winifred Cullis of the United Kingdom had urged immediate formation of a National Federation so that Canada could become one of the founding members of the newly proposed International Federation of University Women (IFUW) in 1919. Dr. Virginia Gildersleeve of the United States had reinforced this idea and had offered the alternative of joining the American Association of University Women (AAUW). The Canadians attended the first IFUW meeting in 1920 as the Canadian Federation of University Women, a charter affiliate committed to encouraging international understanding and peace.

1919 – 1923: Dr. Margaret S. McWilliams, First CFUW President

1919 – A Vocations Committee is set up, showing CFUW members' concern for the vocations of women.

1920 - First CFUW "Triennial" in Toronto

1921 – The 12 CFUW Clubs, with 1300 members, designate fellowships: one to McGill, one to Radcliffe and a third of \$1000 to the University of Toronto for a woman graduate to research the early history of Canada at the Sorbonne.

1921 – CFUW joins AAUW in presenting \$100,000 to Madame Marie Curie for the purchase of radium for her research work. (A photo of this gesture at Niagara Falls shows the face of Madame Curie obscured by her hat and bouquet, causing some to say that the lady was probably her daughter who frequently took her mother's place when she was worn out!)

1923 – Second CFUW Triennial in Minaki, Ontario – emphasis on the work of individual Clubs and individual members who are pioneers across Canada

1923 – 1926: Mrs. Walter Vaughan, Second CFUW President

- Mrs. Vaughan makes Club visits a priority, travelling widely across Canada. Mrs. Vaughan's lectures raise about \$5000 to support the Crosby Hall Fund. (Crosby Hall, once Sir Thomas More's residence, was a friendly place for IFUW members to stay while in London, England.)

- CFUW surveys on education, libraries and vocations evaluate women's place in Canadian society.

1926 - Third CFUW Triennial in Montreal; 38 delegates

1926 – 1928: Dean Mary L. Bollert, Third CFUW President

Mary Bollert makes education a priority:

- Raises concerns about unemployment among university women and inadequate salaries for teachers
- Urges the appointment of deans of women in secondary schools because of "the declining influence of the home"
- Represents CFUW at international meetings; speaks at the International Congress of Women in Chicago.
- Urges the appointment of women to boards and commissions of the League of Nations.
- Disbands the Vocations Committee due to lack of funds.

1928 - Fourth CFUW Triennial in Vancouver (held a year early to avoid a conflict with the IFUW meeting); 61 delegates

CFUW Heroine of the 1920's: Dr. Margaret S. McWilliams

Dr. Margaret McWilliams, the first CFUW President, was one of the most dynamic Canadian women of her time. An 1898 graduate of the University of Toronto, she worked as a newspaperwoman before marrying and moving to Winnipeg. There, she served as

an alderman from 1933–1940, lectured in world affairs and wrote several books. She took leadership roles in many organizations including the Red Cross, National Council of Education, National Council of Women and the Women's Canadian Club. Active in CFUW for over 50 years, she also served as first Vice President of IFUW. In 1948 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her graduation, she received an honorary degree from her alma mater.

Dr. McWilliams had a keen curiosity, a deep interest in the political struggles of humankind, a fine intelligence, a vivid sense of perpetual crisis, physical beauty, impeccable taste in clothes, and a contagious sense of humour. She did not suffer fools gladly and was a trifle addicted to having her own way!

In 1952, Dr. McWilliams was honoured posthumously for her vision of international friendship and co-operation with the naming of the CFUW Dr. Margaret McWilliams Pre-Doctoral Fellowship.

The Depression Years

The 1930s: Following the flapper years of the 1920s with hemlines and spirits rising and the Art Deco period signalling a modernism of both outlook and design, the increasingly sombre decade of the 1930s was ushered in by two events in October of 1929 that influenced the lives of Canadian women: the landmark Person's Case that gave Canadian women status as persons under the law, and the stock market crash in the United States that sent economic reverberations around the world. Many Canadians referred to the ensuing decade as "The Dirty Thirties." The Great Depression and the years of drought along with the escalating tensions in Europe forced fearful scrimping and saving habits that stayed with many Canadian women for their lifetime. At the end of the thirties, Canada's population was just over 12 million of whom half were of Anglo-Saxon stock, one-third of French ancestry, and the other twenty per cent mainly of recent European and Asian origin. By 1939, Canada was at war.

1928 – 1931 Miss Laila C. Scott, Fourth CFUW President

- University women are urged to take more interest in public affairs
- The Vocations Bureau is set up
- 1931** Fifth CFUW Triennial is held in Ottawa

1931 – 1934 Mrs. Douglas J. Thom, Fifth CFUW President

- Clubs are urged to send in articles for the CFUW Chronicle
- CFUW signs a petition for disarmament
- CFUW successfully protests, along with other women's groups in Toronto, against the dismissal of married women from the staff of the University of Toronto
- Club meeting topics include "Mussolini," "Manchuria" and "Social Insurance"
- 1934** Sixth CFUW Triennial is held in Edmonton; 103 registrants; discussion of the alarming discrimination in Germany and the plight of university women in Europe

1934 – 1937 Miss Laura E. Newman, Sixth CFUW President

- Questionnaires on the status of university women and the status of "gainfully employed" are discussed
- CFUW reiterates stand that women be considered for university positions based on their qualifications
- Lists of qualified women are placed in universities
- A study is made of women in administrative positions in Canada

- 1936** Clubs are urged to play a part in demanding a peaceful solution to the problems of the nations of the world
- 1936** Miss Newman attends IFUW conference in Poland
- 1937** Seventh CFUW Triennial is held at Trinity College, University of Toronto; 154 delegates; CFUW deplores the dissolution of the German, Austrian and Italian Federations of University Women.

1937 – 1940 Mrs. W. J. Melrose, Seventh CFUW President

- Refugee funds for displaced graduates are set up
- Plans are made to receive children of British graduates into 300 Canadian homes
- Heart-rending stories are told of Polish refugee women including IFUW President, Dr. S. Adamowicz who is teaching at the School of Hygiene in Warsaw, now under German supervision. Message is received from her: “Home destroyed, health poor”
- 1939** CFUW executive plans to spend \$400 for an executive secretary to work from her home
- 1939** Mrs. Melrose attends IFUW conference in Stockholm but has to sail home as war is declared
- 1940** Eighth CFUW Triennial is held in Calgary; 73 registrants

CFUW Heroine of the 1930s: Mrs. Douglas J. Thom (1879 – 1946)

Mrs. Thom, the fifth CFUW President, was just 24 years of age in 1903 when she helped to found the University Women’s Club of Toronto and was installed as its first president. Born in Elora, Ontario, she was a 1900 graduate of the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts degree. After marrying and moving to Regina, she was active in the Red Cross both locally and nationally, the Women’s Missionary Society and the Women’s Canadian Club.

When Mrs. Thom discussed disarmament with a prominent member of the Government of Canada, he turned upon her indignantly and asked, “Do women really care to accomplish anything when they remain represented by only one member in the Federal House?” He went on to tell her that if CFUW wished to support the League of Nations and have an effect on disarmament, there was only one way to do it. Put women into positions in municipal, provincial and Dominion politics and give them CFUW’s unquestioned support.

As CFUW President, Mrs. Thom encouraged Clubs from all localities to write and send in items of interest so that future chroniclers of women’s activities would “do our day and generation justice.”

The Forties: War and Peace

The 1940s: As conflict escalated, training camps were set up to prepare women for the army, navy and air force. For the first time, Canadian women were in uniform and thousands of young women assumed jobs that had been vacated by men, ran households single-handedly and involved themselves in projects that supported the troops. When the war ended these women “retired” to make way for veterans returning home to resume their jobs. Thus the second

wave of the women's movement was born. The unprecedented post-war baby boom produced daughters whose mothers encouraged an independent outlook that would set new standards as the "boomers" steamrolled through the ensuing decades.

1940 – 1943: Dr. Dorothy Turville, Eighth CFUW President

War work receives CFUW priority

Clubs work on committees like the Red Cross and send parcels of clothing for refugees

Clubs assist refugee university women in Canada

Members are urged to save good French classic texts to send to France, Czechoslovakia and Poland at the end of the war "to

reinstate the means of education"

1943 – Ninth CFUW Triennial is held at Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City "in the wake of the historic Churchill-Roosevelt

Conference" – 118 registrants

1943 – 1946: Dr. Ursilla Macdonnell, Ninth CFUW President

A Chronicle article is entitled: "Is the University Woman pulling her weight?"

CFUW members are urged to assume positions as chairs of community committees and boards

1945 – Communications open with women in France, Belgium and Italy

A proposed meeting in Wolfville, N.S. is cancelled because returning troops need all of the available railway space

IFUW helps Polish women get to Teheran from the USSR

CFUW prepares and distributes thousands of vocational leaflets containing information on job opportunities, qualifications and

pay scales. School guidance counsellors in particular find the leaflets useful.

1946 - Tenth CFUW Triennial is held in Winnipeg with 93 registrants

1946 – 1949: Mrs. Richard B. Crummy, Tenth CFUW President

Regional conferences are encouraged

Leaflets on vocational guidance are distributed across the country

The issues are penal reform, children's reading, the teacher shortage, Indians, and women in the civil service

Women in administrative positions in Canada are studied

1947 – First IFUW Triennial Conference in Canada is held in Toronto

1949 - Eleventh CFUW Triennial is held in Vancouver with the theme, "The Challenge of Today and Tomorrow"; 235 Registrants

CFUW Heroine of the 1940s: Dr. A. Vibert Douglas (1894 – 1988)

Alice (Allie) Vibert Douglas, a twentieth century heroine, was first honoured in 1918 with an MBE for her work as a statistician at the British War Office and Ministry of National Service. She received honorary degrees from McGill, Queen's and Queensland, Australia and in 1967 was named to the Order of Canada. In the same year she was named by the National Council of Jewish Women as one of the ten "Women of the Century".

Dr. Douglas, an internationally acclaimed astrophysicist, was a lecturer and professor of mathematical physics and astronomy at McGill and Queen's for 41 years as well as Dean of Women at Queen's from 1939 until her retirement in 1959. She drew attention to the sorry status of women in the Queen's

academic community and asked, "Why are women not equally accepted at Queen's?" Among other firsts, she successfully urged the admission of women to Queen's medical school.

Along with numerous publications, in 1956 she wrote a biography of the astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington, with whom she had worked at Cambridge Observatory. Dr. Douglas was President of the Canadian Humanities Association and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, and was a long-time active member of several international scientific organizations. A crater on Venus has been named after her.

Dr. Douglas was the first Canadian President of IFUW from 1947 to 1950. In her opening address she urged the IFUW members to "work unrelentingly as professional women to narrow the gap between actual practice and ideal human rights through government action, through education, through mass communications and through home and community influence."

She chaired the CFUW Fellowships Committee and served on it for 18 years. In 1958 CFUW set up an IFUW fellowship in her name.

The Fifties

Post-war immigration increased Canada's population from thirteen to nearly twenty million in twenty years. Trade with Britain decreased from twenty per cent to eight, and about sixty-six per cent of Canadian trade flowed to the US. American radio, TV, press releases and magazines influenced Canadian women. Some articles advised married women to defer their own opinions to their husbands' and to keep the children quiet so that the breadwinner could rest on his return home from work. By 1957, the Canada Council and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival had been formed. The St. Lawrence Seaway was opened to ocean shipping in 1959.

1949 – 1952: Dr. Marion Elder Grant, Eleventh CFUW President

- Dr. Grant visits almost all of the CFUW Clubs, including four new Clubs
- CFUW sends out leaflets to over 3000 women graduates from Canadian universities
- **1952** - CFUW sets up the office of Provincial Director (later called Regional Director)
- **1952** - Academic Appointments Committee is disbanded; Status of Women Committee starts list of "Competent Women" suitable to stand for public office
- **1952** - Twelfth CFUW Triennial is held in Ottawa with the theme, "Women and the State" – 368 registrants

1952 – 1955: Dr. Martha Law, Twelfth CFUW President

- Eighteen new Clubs bring CFUW membership to 7,427
- Dr. Law visits all 80 Clubs and sends newsletters to be distributed to each member, three times a year
- On behalf of CFUW Dr. Law receives a Coronation medal and two tickets to the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II
- CFUW grants to IFUW relief funds are the highest per capita of any IFUW national affiliate
- **1955** - Thirteenth CFUW Triennial is held in Edmonton with the theme, "Constants and Variables – Our Changing Society"

1955 – 1958: Dr. Doris Saunders, Thirteenth CFUW President

- CFUW has 9140 members in 89 Clubs
- **1956** – Penal Reform/Corrections Committee supports Elizabeth Fry Society on federal prison for women, the criminal sexual psychopath and rehabilitation of female offenders
- **1957** – UWC Vancouver celebrates 50th anniversary, with UBC recognizing all university women by conferring an honorary degree on Miss Saunders
- CFUW Brief is presented to Parliament on estate taxes, and another urges Canada to accede to the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women
- **1958** - Fourteenth CFUW Triennial is held in Montreal with “344 of the brainiest females in Canada” (Canadian Press, August 14, 1958)

1958 – 1961: Dr. Vivian Morton, Fourteenth CFUW President

- CFUW gains 14 new Clubs and holds 14 regional conferences
- Dr. Morton suggests a permanent CFUW head office and executive secretary.
- CFUW urges teaching of French in the lower grades
- For first time ever, CFUW sends delegation to Prime Minister to discuss appointment of a woman to National Parole Board (soon achieved), support for a National Library and Gallery, and admission of many tubercular Hungarians to Canada in World Refugee Year, 1959-60
- **1961** - Fifteenth CFUW Triennial in London; theme “Ideas Afoot”; 429 registrants

CFUW Heroine of the 1950s: Dr. Marion Elder Grant (1900 – 1989)

Dr. Marion Elder Grant was born in Quebec City, graduated from Acadia University and took post-graduate degrees from the University of Toronto. Following post-doctoral studies in London England, Harvard, UCLA, Chicago and Tavistock, she taught at Branksome Hall in Toronto and Baylor College in Texas. She later became head of the Psychology Department at Acadia University and served as Dean of Women there from 1936 – 1960. Besides teaching psychology and education, Dr. Grant helped to found the Acadia University Institute and the Fundy Mental Health Clinic.

In 1938 Dr. Grant helped to establish the CFUW Wolfville Club. Thereafter she was involved at the CFUW national level for over fifteen years, taking on the presidency from 1949 – 1952. During her term her focus was on improving the status of women and encouraging women to first pursue and then take advantage of their education. She visited over 60 Clubs from St. John’s NL to Victoria BC. Until her mid-eighties, she attended all CFUW National and International conferences.

Dr. Grant was a charter member of the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Committee and a delegate to the Second Commonwealth Education Conference in New Delhi. In 1984 she was chosen Acadia’s “Woman of the Century” in celebration of the centenary of the first woman graduate. The award citation read, “... a woman of eminence without pomposity, of presence without ostentation, of adaptability without inconsistency, and of gentle self-mockery and wit...”

A significant portion of her estate was left to CFUW Wolfville. With the funds, the Club established the national CFUW Dr. Marion Elder Grant Fellowship in her honour.

The Swinging Sixties

In 1960 Canada welcomed its 2-millionth immigrant, a harbinger of multiculturalism that would soon transform Canadian society. The Trans-Canada Highway was officially opened in 1962, the same year that Canada became the third nation with an orbiting satellite. In the workplace secretaries welcomed the widespread use of the electric typewriter.

The Canadian flag, adopted in 1965, graced Expo '67 as Canada celebrated its centennial in Montreal near the end of a socially turbulent decade. The hippie youth culture that roared through the 1960s was identified with The Pill and its resulting sexual freedom, drugs, Beatlemania, long and bouffant hair and mini-skirts. The CBC's Take 30 and Front Page Challenge attracted large viewing audiences while books such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* (1967) challenged conventional thought. By 1969 *Chatelaine's* circulation had quadrupled to 1.8 million readers with consciousness-raising articles on the wage gap, birth control and discriminatory divorce laws featured amongst the magazine's recipes and beauty tips. Second-wave feminism gave rise to "Women's Lib" and in 1967 to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

1961 – 1964: Miss Margaret MacLellan, Fifteenth CFUW President

- Miss MacLellan is active in the Corrections field and with the Elizabeth Fry Society
- CFUW urges equality of women in Canada
- Local Clubs award over \$37,000 yearly in scholarships and awards plus CFUW donations to the Winifred Cullis Fund and the IFUW Relief Fund
- Ontario Clubs send \$5000 to CUSO (Canadian University Services Overseas)
- By 1964 CFUW membership is over 10,000

1964: The first Provincial Council is formed in Quebec

1964: Sixteenth CFUW Triennial is held in Winnipeg with the theme, "The Canadian Mosaic: Changing Patterns in Canadian Culture"; 301 delegates vote for publication of *The Clear Spirit* as a centennial project.

1964 – 1967: Dr. Laura Sabia, Sixteenth CFUW President

- CFUW Survey on Continuing Education is taken.
- Laura Sabia brings together a coalition of 32 women's organizations across the country, demanding that the government "pursue the human rights of women in Canada." As a result the Royal Commission on the Status of Women is formed by the Government in 1967.
- Twelve new Clubs are formed, bringing the total number of CFUW Clubs to 114.

1967: Seventeenth CFUW Triennial is held in Vancouver with the theme, "The Arch of the Century"; 371 registrants.

1967 – 1970: Dr. Margaret Orange, Seventeenth CFUW President

- In order to bring informed opinions to the CFUW Triennial, Clubs study topics ahead of time: Unrest in Education, Environmental Pollution, and Disadvantaged Canadians-Indians.

1968 - Briefs are presented to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women

1970 - Eighteenth CFUW Triennial is held at York University in Toronto with 462 registrants and the theme, "New Attitudes for a Changing Society."

CFUW Heroine of the 1960s: Dr. Laura Sabia (1916 - 1996)

Dr. Laura Sabia was a Canadian social activist and feminist who was one of the most dynamic figures in the women's movement. As CFUW President she headed a coalition of 32 women's organizations called the Committee for the Equality of Women and campaigned for the creation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, threatening a march of 2,000,000 women on Ottawa if the Commission was not established. In 1967 the Prime Minister called for the creation of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women whose final report was made in 1970.

The daughter of Italian immigrants, Laura Villela grew up in Montreal and later lived in St. Catharines with her husband and four children. Following her term as CFUW President from 1964 to 1967 Dr. Sabia was a founding member and, from 1969 to 1973, the first President of the [National Action Committee on the Status of Women](#) as well as its Ontario counterpart. She was an alderwoman for seven terms, organized a Home and School Association, and wrote columns for [The Toronto Sun](#). On her open-line radio programme she became famous for her challenges to government on subject such as incest and family violence.

Laura Sabia's significant contributions to women's equality were recognized with a Centennial Medal in 1967 and, in 1974, the designation of Officer of the [Order of Canada](#) "for her devoted service to the cause of the status of women." She was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 1977 and the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the [Persons Case](#) in 1983. Brock and McGill Universities conferred honorary degrees upon her.

The Seventies

The Seventies was a decade of firsts for women. Rosemary Brown - first black woman elected to a provincial legislature; Pauline McGibbon - first woman appointed as Lieutenant-Governor (Ontario); Pauline Jewett - first woman to head a major university (Simon Fraser); Grace Hartman - first woman president of a national labour union (CUPE); Flora MacDonald - first woman to seek leadership of the Progressive Conservative party; Jean Lumb - first Chinese-Canadian woman to earn the Order of Canada. The first four Canadian women Rhodes Scholars were chosen.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), first rape crisis centres and first for-women-only credit unions were formed. A CPP amendment provided equal treatment to all contributors, regardless of gender. Female flight attendants won the right to continue working after marriage and past the age of 32. In 1975 Canada attended the International Women's Year World Conference on Women in Mexico City.

In 1970 the average price of a home in Montreal was \$19,000, in Toronto \$37,000 and in Vancouver \$30,000. The federal minimum wage was \$2.90 per hour and a domestic stamp, 10 cents. Eaton's discontinued its 92-year catalogue publication in 1976. By 1979 Canada reported a population of 23,671,500 and its first case of HIV/AIDS.

1970 – 1973:

Dr. Gwendolyn Black, Eighteenth CFUW President

Biographies of 50 women are submitted to the office of the PM for the Roster of Qualified Women.

CFUW writes letters on abortion, Aboriginals, environment and status of women.

Archival materials from orange crates and filing boxes are sorted, catalogued and transferred to Public Archives of Canada.

1973 - Attended by 446 delegates, the nineteenth CFUW Triennial is held in Ottawa with the theme "Our World Tomorrow". Dr. Black states that the complexity of national issues demands attention at the local level where problems are more readily discernible.

1973 – 1976:

Dr. Ruth Bell, Nineteenth CFUW President

1975 – 47 per cent of Clubs take part in International Women's Year projects.

Dr. Bell reported that "53 per cent of Clubs think the status of women is not a nice subject for university ladies."

Clubs are encouraged to participate in "Foster the Roster" of qualified women nationally, Family Property Law Reform provincially and elimination of gender stereotyping in schools locally.

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1976 - Twentieth CFUW Triennial is held in Saskatoon with the theme, "Partners in Progress – Progress Towards Purpose"; 284 registrants. Delegates turn down idea of permanent head office, possibly in Ottawa, mainly for financial reasons.

1976 – 1979:

Dr. Jean Steer, Twentieth CFUW President

Dr. Steer is committed to the promotion of unity within the Federation and within Canada.

A grant from the Department of the Secretary of State allows CFUW to translate all its documentation and most correspondence into French; another grant is used to hold mini-conferences on Canadian unity.

CFUW establishes the Charitable Trust Fund for scholarships, fellowships and creative arts programs.

1979 – CFUW has 12,000 members.

1979 – Twenty-first CFUW Triennial, the Diamond Jubilee Conference, is held in Quebec City with 462 registrants and the theme, "New Attitudes for a Changing Society."

CFUW Heroine of the 1970s: Dr. Ruth M. Bell (1919-)

Dr. Ruth Marion Bell is a long-time participant and activist on issues that advance the status of women.

Entering the workforce at age 18, she was determined someday to attend university. In 1955, she graduated with a B.A. in Political Economy and in 1965 with an M.A. in Political Science. Subsequent careers as a Political Researcher for the Progressive Conservative Party and Research Economist for the Bank of Montreal led to a position as Dean of Renison College, University of Waterloo.

During her CFUW Presidency, Dr. Bell encouraged members to take an active role in advocacy and leadership, setting an example herself of dedicated volunteerism for women, children and youth.

She convened the IFUW Membership Committee, attended seven IFUW Triennial Meetings as a delegate, and served on the Fundraising Committee for the Virginia Guildersleeve International Fund.

Among her many other involvements, Ruth was a founding member of Match International Centre, Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) and UNESCO's Sub-Commission on the Status of Women. She served as President of Forum for Young Canadians and Vice President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

In 1981 Dr. Bell was invested as a member of the Order of Canada, and in 1984 was awarded a Doctor of Laws degree from Carleton University. Her autobiography, *Be a "Nice" Girl*, chronicles her life's journey. Dr. Bell is also the winner of the Governor General's Persons Award.

The Eighties

During the eighties, Jeanne Sauvé was appointed first woman Governor-General of Canada, a coalition called Sisters of All Women in Canada (28 women MPs and senators) fought for equality of Native women, Alexa McDonough became first woman leader of a provincial political party, and Bertha Wilson became the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. The House of Commons erupted in laughter when MP Margaret Mitchell raised the issue of violence against women. That response galvanized the nation's attention to the issue.

One year after The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was signed, discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and family or marital status was banned. Judge Rosalie Abella, appointed to lead a one-woman Royal Commission on Equality in employment, coined the expression, "employment equity" to describe programs and practices necessary to achieve workplace equality for women and other disadvantaged groups. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) organized the first televised debate on women's issues by the three federal parties. Election voter turnout was 69.3 per cent. Audrey McLaughlin became the first Canadian woman to lead a national political party.

1979 - 1982: Eileen Clark, Twenty-first CFUW President

CFUW advocates to all levels of government during public debates to ensure that equality for women is entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

CFUW supports the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Canada on Dec. 10, 1981

During this Triennium Clubs examine the social and ethical implications of rapid technological advances especially as they affect women

Seven new Clubs join the Federation

1982 – The theme of the twenty-second CFUW Triennial Meeting in Winnipeg is "Communication through Microelectronics".

1982 – 1985: Margaret Strongitharm, Twenty-second CFUW President

Clubs sponsor conferences, workshops and seminars on a study and action program called "Women's Work and the Reality of Tomorrow"

Resolutions focus on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, pornography, pension reform and peace and security as they affect and concern women

Two "firsts": two out of three annual meetings are held in hotels instead of universities; the mechanism of an "Urgent Resolution" is introduced

CFUW welcomes six new Clubs

1985 - M. Strongitharm chairs Asia-Canada Women in Management conference at University of Victoria

1985 – Twenty-third CFUW Triennial Meeting is held in Calgary

1985 – 1988: Linda Souter, Twenty-third CFUW President

Study theme is “Women and the Economy – Influence through Knowledge”
CFUW establishes a permanent Head Office in Ottawa
CFUW moves from a triennial to a biennial system
A Policy Book containing all adopted CFUW policies is prepared and sent to CFUW Clubs
Work on a Procedures Handbook is undertaken
1988 – Twenty-fourth CFUW Triennial Meeting is held in Ottawa

CFUW Heroine of the 1980s: Linda Souter (1930 -)

Born in Montreal, Linda Souter holds a BA from McGill University and a college course diploma from Boston’s Katharine Gibbs Secretarial School. As well as contributing to community work in Sudbury with groups such as IODE, YMCA, the Multicultural Centre and the Disabled Children’s Treatment Centre, she has devoted many years of service to CFUW and IFUW.

After serving as CFUW Provincial Director, Ontario North, Linda became CFUW Vice President Ontario (1982-1985) and was elected CFUW President (1985-1988). She initiated the first joint national meeting of CFUW and AAUW (American Association of University Women), demonstrating an international interest that led to her election as Vice President of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW). In 1995, Linda presented workshops at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Linda was elected President of IFUW for the 1998 – 2001 Triennium, the second Canadian to hold this influential international position. In 1998 she led the IFUW delegation to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, and in 2001 presided at the 27th IFUW Triennial Meeting in Ottawa. Linda’s many honours include the Avon Women of Inspiration Award (2001) and National Life Membership in CFUW (2002).

The Nineties

In the early 1990s, Canada’s population was 27,701,000. Minister Barbara McDougall initiated a plan to increase immigration from 200,000 to 1.22 million in five years. By 1993 the unemployment rate stood at 11.4%, and a Statistics Canada study showed that housework represented an unpaid labour value of 30 – 40% of GDP. Demonstrators across the country called for more jobs, better job protection, an end to the Bosnian war, environmental protection and an end to free trade.

In 1992 Roberta Bondar became the first Canadian woman to enter outer space. The following year five nations elected female prime ministers: Turkey, Burundi, Rwanda, Pakistan and Canada (Kim Campbell). Within months, Sheila Copps became Canada’s first woman deputy PM. Louise Arbour was appointed head of the UN War Crimes Prosecution Unit at The Hague in 1996, and was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999.

Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol and was the first country to sign and ratify the treaty banning antipersonnel land mines in 1997. Sandra Schmirler’s curling team and speed skater Catriona LeMay Doan won Olympic gold in Nagano in 1998. In 1999, Canada created the new territory of Nunavut with Iqaluit as its capital. Adrienne Clarkson became Canada’s second woman Governor-General.

1990 - 1994: Peggy Matheson, Twenty-fifth CFUW President

- Themes of the two biennia are “Time to Care” and “Visions for the Future”

- 1991-1992: CFUW undertakes project, “Women in Universities: A Survey of the Status of Female Faculty and Students at Canadian Universities” (CFUW Oakville)
- Emphasis is on issues of violence against women, health care, the environment and increasing CFUW membership
- CFUW supports National Referendum on Canadian Unity
- CFUW is incorporated.
- 1994: CFUW celebrates 75th anniversary with a calendar/history and a one-time commemorative fellowship for a native woman
- CFUW Task Force on Structure and Finance presents recommendations at AGM 1994 in Winnipeg

1994 – 1996: Phyllis Scott, Twenty-sixth CFUW President

- Theme of Biennium is “Access to Education – Meeting the Challenge”
- CFUW meets staff in ministries of Justice (regarding gun control) and Status of Women
- Phyllis Scott represents CFUW along with other women’s groups in a nationally televised Press Conference on gun control, and via teleconference on Post-Budget issues; speaks on The Girl Child at a Regional Consultation of Status of Women Canada
- Three appointed Chairs (Implementation, Nominations and Constitution and By-Laws) address CFUW Task Force recommendations adopted at AGM 1995
- This biennium is the last year for a 29-member Board of Directors

1996 – 1998: Betty Bayless, Twenty-seventh CFUW President

- Biennial Theme is “Choosing to Lead: Opportunities for Reasoned Change”
- CFUW initiates new Board and Committee structure
- CFUW participates in discussion on Canadian unity
- Betty Bayless testifies at Federal Pre-Budget hearings, participates in Landmines Treaty Conference, and meets with many Government Ministers
- CFUW works with Coalition for Gun Control and Firearms Control Centre
- CFUW domain is established with Louise McLeod as website coordinator

1998 – 2000: Mavis Moore, Twenty-eighth CFUW President

- CFUW attends session at the Firearms Control Centre on the legality of the gun control laws
- CFUW is invited to attend the UN “Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects” conference in New York
- Mavis Moore represents Canada on Canadian delegation to UN Status of Women meetings in New York
- CFUW takes action on the environment (including pollution, mines and water), health, gun control, and nuclear non-proliferation
- CFUW receives special consultative status at the UN

CFUW Heroines: National Life Members

CFUW has three national life members.

Johanna Michalenko advocated as a national committee member and later a provincial president of the

Canadian Association of Consumers for the standardized sizing of clothing. In 1961 the first standardized body sizes were published and in 1972, clothing labels became mandatory. Care instructions and colour-coded pictographs were gradually added to the labels. Johanna was also involved with the Standards Council of Canada, Amnesty International and the United Nations.

Elizabeth Cureton was the first CFUW Executive Secretary when “Head Office” was established in 1985. In 1988 she was named Executive Director – a position she held until her retirement in 1993. She was noted for her organizational skills, fine intelligence and tact. Elizabeth was trained as a dietician, held a pilot’s licence for many years, and traveled widely. Originally from Victoria BC, she was a niece of Emily Carr and the Aunt of R.H. Thompson. As a member of CFUW Ottawa she led the Diplomatic Hospitality Group, providing a warm and welcoming program for the wives of diplomats.

Linda Souter was elected President of CFUW for the 1985 – 1988 Triennium, and President of IFUW for 1998 – 2001. She was active in community organizations, profiled in national publications, and honoured with the Avon Women of Inspiration Award for her work worldwide. Details of her accomplishments are outlined in History and Heroines, The Eighties.

A New Millennium

When the new millennium arrived, Canada’s population was 30,770,000, unemployment was 6.7% and average family size was 3.0 people, down from 3.7 people in 1971. By 2002 a record 60.7% of women were in the labour force, but women held only 14% of corporate officer positions in Canadian companies listed on the Fortune 500. By 2003 Canada had fallen to 8th in the world in the Quality of Life ranking.

Thirteen million immigrants had entered Canada since 1901. In 2000 Montreal was ranked as the poorest city in Canada and by 2007 Toronto had that designation. The Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Federal Government had the right to make and impose gun legislation. Health concerns were heightened by the Walkerton contaminated water disaster and the SARS crisis, while security concerns escalated following the attacks on the World Trade Towers in NYC.

Sheila Fraser was the first woman appointed auditor-general. Governor-General Michaëlle Jean increased awareness of the need to combat violence against women. Canadians were concerned about climate change, water, poverty, aboriginal rights, childcare and Canada’s involvement in the war in Afghanistan. Women’s organizations from across the country joined in coalition to try to restore cut programs and funding. By 2008 women comprised only 20.8% of the Members of Parliament.

2000 – 2002: Roberta Brooks, Twenty-ninth CFUW President

2001 - CFUW hosts its third IFUW Triennial Conference – in Ottawa with Canadian IFUW President Linda Souter presiding

CFUW’s policy brief to the Government includes prostate cancer testing, sustainable grain production, poverty and homelessness, child soldiers, children in armed conflict and small arms transfers

CFUW President travels extensively to encourage Clubs to bring in new members and establish new Clubs

CFUW expands its website to attract new members to the Federation

CFUW initiates CFUW Charitable Trust Breakfast at AGM

2002 – 2004: Jacqueline Jacques, Thirtieth CFUW President

The President and CIR participate in the UN Status of Women Council in New York where the issues of violence against women and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) are addressed

Advocacy includes the Kyoto Protocol, the Romanow report, a letter to the Prime Minister urging that Canada not participate in the Iraq war.

A CFUW Ad Hoc Committee reviews all Board and National Office job descriptions

The President invites American Association of University Women (AAUW) to do more Club exchanges with CFUW and to consider joint projects

2004 – 2006: Rose Beatty, Thirty-first CFUW President

Biennial theme is “CFUW in a Changing World: Taking Responsibility for the Education and Needs of Women”

CFUW sets a strategic goal for 2010 of national recognition as an organization that promotes equality for women and girls

CFUW Women in Action, a CFUW Procedures and Information Manual and a CFUW External Annual Report are introduced

The President urges Clubs to include a gender aspect in proposed resolutions for more focused advocacy

CFUW welcomes new Club: CFUW Corner Brook

2006 – 2008: Ardith Toogood, Thirty-second CFUW President

Biennial theme, “Visible Voice – Voix Visible” is reinforced with a CFUW Visible Voice Wall of Fame
CFUW joins Ad Hoc Coalition on Women’s Equality and Human Rights, Canadian Department of Peace Initiative and GEAR (international coalition on Gender Equality Architecture Reform)

CFUW testifies before House Standing Committee on Status of Women on funding and other cuts; advocates on the environment, gun control, Court Challenges Program, women’s prison reform, child care, poverty, UN Resolution 1325, UN Agency for Women, Millennium Development Goals and a culture of peace for Afghanistan and Darfur

CFUW moves toward more inclusive membership

CFUW welcomes new Clubs: CFUW Fort McMurray and CFUW Georgian Triangle

CFUW Heroines: National Honorary Members

Roberta Bondar became Canada’s second astronaut and first female to enter outer space (January 22, 1992). Dr. Bondar, a neurobiologist, was admitted as a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1981. Her expertise in the human nervous system, in particular the relationship of the inner ear balancing system to the functioning of the eye, made her an ideal candidate for performing a series of experiments on the space mission. She is also an acclaimed photographer.

Flora MacDonald was a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament from 1972 to 1988, and in 1976 the first woman to run for the leadership of one of the two major political parties in Canada. In 1979 she became Canada’s first Secretary of State for External Affairs, and later served as Minister of

Employment and Immigration and Minister of Communications. Much honoured including the Companion of the Order of Canada and the Pearson Medal of Peace, Flora devotes her time to international humanitarian work.

Catriona LeMay Doan, one of Canada's most decorated speed skaters, won gold medals at the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano in 1998 and in Salt Lake City in 2002. Catriona had come from dead last at Lillehammer to the best in the world, and was the first Canadian to defend an Olympic title. In 2003 Catriona retired from speed skating to spend her time doing inspirational speaking in public and as a TV commentator. She has two young children.