

President's Message

It has been a great year for CFUW, from our delightful picnic in Harrison Park in July, 2019 to our last face-to-face meeting at the Intersections with Wood studio and gallery in March, 2020. You will receive a detailed report about all of this year's activities in the package for the annual general meeting which will be sent to you later in June.

I have enjoyed my time as president of the Owen Sound and Area club, and I have been honoured to lead such a wonderful group of women who are active in the community in so many ways. I will be happy to welcome Ann Magner, our current vice-president, to take us into the future.

The pandemic prevented us from getting together following our March general meeting, but the executive committee and some of the interest groups have continued with Zoom meetings. Our members are reaching out to each other with phone calls and email messages. Our motto lives on: *the power of women working together*.

We recognize, as do organizations everywhere, that the pandemic presents new challenges for us in engaging our members and recruiting new members to our club.

Before the shutdown began, CFUW National conducted teleconference calls with small clubs across Canada. The focus was on clubs most at risk of declining membership beyond the sustainability margin. A full account of the results can be found in the *Membership Matters Newsletter: April 2020 Edition*. Our Owen Sound and Area club was not one of the participants. We have managed to increase membership numbers in recent years and to remain vibrant and engaged.

The object of the teleconference was to hear about local problems in attracting members, and strategies that have proven to be effective. The clubs involved spoke of challenges in getting members to take on leadership positions, and difficulties in marketing and profiling the club to increase visibility.

Almost all of the clubs indicated that their members were doing well within their own club programs, with a variety of activities and interest groups. However, many identified that a large number of their members were seniors, and that they had difficulty attracting younger members. Several participants in the discussion recognized that their media profile was very low, while others had regularly updated websites. Few had a presence on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. A problem often noted was having members who didn't use these kinds of media—while also recognizing the need to reach out to potential members who do communicate in these ways.

Members of our Owen Sound and Area executive committee have included the topic of member engagement on our agenda at each meeting since lockdown procedures were in place. We are actively planning to maintain membership interest and participation in our club and to increase our membership during this challenging time.

We are always open to suggestions from all our members about the kinds of outreach you would like to see. We are particularly interested in hearing from members with the technology skills to help us operationalize new ways of contacting members.

These challenging times will bring out the considerable strengths of our strong group of women. We have a proud thirty-year history in this area, and it will take more than a pandemic to cramp our style! Our members do a lot of good work in raising money for scholarships and the

Scientists in School program. We engage in advocacy outreach in the community, and support our own members in need. We have interesting meetings and maintain lively interest groups.

We can count on the creativity and flexibility of our members to keep the Owen Sound and Area club a strong and committed group of friends in spite of the current challenging situation, and for many years to come.

Janet Glasspool, President