

# LOCAL NEWS

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## The quiet evolution of the CFUW

By Matthew McCully

Somewhere in an African village, a group of grandmothers, charged with caring for young children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, are expressing gratitude for the support of a group of women in Sherbrooke.

Closer to home, a student nurse is training to care for the region's elderly, thanks to a scholarship from these same women.

The depth and breadth of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) spans the globe.

The Record sat down with CFUW President Marie Trousdell, Vice-President Judy Hopps, Director of Publicity Bev Taber Smith and past president Carol Mooney to learn more about the organization and its mission.

"It really is all about education," Trousdell said.

The CFUW is a non-partisan, self-funded organization with over 100 different branches across the country. The Sherbrooke and District CFUW, with around 105 members from across the Townships, is one of five clubs in Quebec.

In 2018 the local branch will celebrate its 50th anniversary. The following year, the federation as a whole will celebrate 100 years of promoting equality, social justice, fellowship and lifelong learning for women and girls.

If ever one were to wonder how and why the federation came about, the history of the CFUW is self explanatory.

Trousdell said she had the opportunity in recent years to visit the Vancouver CFUW branch. Along the halls were portraits of past presidents, none of which could be identified because they had no names. The women were known at the time as extensions of their husbands.

"Women couldn't own property; they didn't have equal rights," Trousdell explained.

Other CFUW members remembered as late as the 1970s transitioning from the daughter of so-and-so to the wife of so-and-so.

While women's rights in developed countries have improved, there is still a long way to go to eliminate discrimination globally, and no shortage of issues for the federation to address in an effort



MATTHEW MCCULLY

CFUW past President Carol Mooney, current President Marie Trousdell, Vice-President Judy Hopps, Director of Publicity Bev Taber Smith

to promote equal employment and leadership opportunities.

"It's an amazing, welcoming group of women. I remember feeling, almost instantly, as a part of a community," Mooney said, when she first joined.

The CFUW appears on the radar occasionally throughout the year. Many look forward to the annual high school public speaking contest, sponsored by the CFUW, or the organization's annual book sale and silent auction, the club's main fundraising activity.

What people may not know is that those CFUW initiatives are just the tip of the iceberg.

Through their interest groups and the work of the CFUW members, the club is a quiet, guiding force in the community with a global impact.

At the recent CFUW annual general meeting, the Sherbrooke and District club was recognized for its work with the aboriginal program at Champlain College.

In 2015, 11 students, and in 2016, 22 students in the aboriginal program at Champlain benefitted from financial support from the CFUW. Members also helped the students with scholarship applications, to help further their educational opportunities.

"The goal is to help the students gain

equal access to education and also be advocates for them," Judy Hopps pointed out.

The local CFUW also received kudos for initiating a program to offer English language classes to Syrian refugees.

In a more global context, one of the CFUW interest groups, grannies for grannies, has raised over \$90,000 over the last ten years for the Steven Lewis Foundation, which provides care and support to women, orphans, grandmothers and people living with AIDS in Africa.

The CFUW also offers scholarships through its affiliated Lampe Foundation.

Last year, Lampe gave out \$30,000 in scholarships to local students in high school up to university in a variety of fields of study including health, agriculture, science and vocational training.

"We follow the issues, that's what keeps us relevant," Mooney said, even though people's lifestyles are very different now than they were when the CFUW was first formed.

"The situation is changing, but that doesn't mean there aren't still causes," Trousdell said.

Part of what keeps the CFUW relevant is the constant connection the members maintain through their various interest groups, as well as their monthly meet-

ings.

"It's a very active board," Mooney said.

"We want people to know we have a purpose," she added, reiterating the mission of access to education, lifelong learning, rights advocacy and equal opportunities.

The members also pointed out that while the group is called the Canadian Federation of University Women, they are more comfortable being referred to by the acronym.

"You don't need to be a university graduate," they said. "The real focus is education, but it doesn't matter what kind of education."

The CFUW counts on word of mouth and the 'bring a friend' strategy to sustain its membership. Members of the public are invited to attend the monthly meetings, which often include a guest speaker. The most recent meeting included a presentation and discussion about sustainable agriculture.

"The power of women working together, it creates a synergy. I feel very privileged to be part of this group," Mooney said.

For more information about the CFUW, visit the Facebook page for the Canadian Federation of University Women-Sherbrooke and District or the website at [www.cfuwsherbrooke.org](http://www.cfuwsherbrooke.org).

## Sherbrooke Budget discussion

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"I am one of those who feel that a city council, like the council of ministers, like the ministry of finance in Quebec or Ottawa, needs deliberation spaces behind closed doors," explained Mayor Bernard Sévigny, pointing out that the presence of a camera or observers changes the way people behave.

Several of the councillors who voted against the motion gave credit to the question, but ultimately stood with the mayor's position that some things need to be discussed out of the public eye. Brompton Councillor Nicole Bergeron said that she has no issue with talking through items before the budget vote to clarify

things, but stressed the fact that opening up the conversation to the public might be needlessly confusing and stressful

"The budget preparation is a working session where there are frank discussions between councillors to mutually influence each other and make decisions," Bergeron said. "Would any of the city council members hope that their committee sessions become public? We have a job to do; we're elected every four years and it is the citizens who elect us. Making hard decisions is a part of our job."

Bergeron advocated for the notion of transparency, but argued that to expect it in every-



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