



With the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaching quickly, this project was launched to try to gather 100 years of history of the Peterborough Diocese.

I visited with several council members on site before the pandemic and in and out of restrictions of gathering during the pandemic for close to three years. Several phone calls and mailings helped to gather details for various events. The information is based on multiple records in the council archives as well as CWL websites in Ontario, Wikipedia and historical documents. It is a journal rather than a book due to the lack of specific referencing.

A copy of this Historical Journey has been gifted to each council, 2022 executive member and Life members. I hope you enjoy this journey.

I am going to highlight today the formation years of the Catholic Women's League in Canada.

## IMMIGRATION IN 1920



Unfortunately history tends to repeat itself.

In the 1900s, A [chaotic period](#) of warfare ensued in the Ukraine after the [Russian Revolutions](#) of 1917. The partially-recognised [Ukrainian People's Republic](#) emerged from [its own civil war](#) of 1917–1921. The [Soviet–Ukrainian War](#) (1917–1921) followed, in which the [Bolshevik Red Army](#) established control in late 1919.<sup>[11]</sup> The [Ukrainian Bolsheviks](#), who had defeated the [national government](#) in [Kyiv](#), established the [Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic](#), which on 30 December 1922 became one of the founding [republics of the Soviet Union](#). Initial Soviet policy on [Ukrainian language](#) and [Ukrainian culture](#) made Ukrainian the [official language](#) of administration and schools. Policy in the 1930s turned to [Russification](#).

People fled the country with families and single women travelling by ship to several Canadian Ports. Many arrived in Western Canada by train in a foreign city with a foreign language and no accommodations in place.



KATHERINE  
HUGHES

FOUNDER OF  
CWL OF  
EDMONTON

1912



THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF EDMONTON, was founded by Katherine Hughes (1876-1925) in 1912. It was the first organization in Canada to model the Catholic Women's League in England, a benevolent group started by Margaret Fletcher in 1906. Incredibly, the Edmonton League was the first branch of an organization that would nationalize as The Catholic Women's League of Canada eight years later in 1920.

Katherine was a renowned journalist, teacher, public servant, author, and Catholic social activist on behalf of immigrant women and native families. After travelling in England in 1911, she advised Bishop Émile Legal of St. Albert about the British organization and asked about forming a similar group to support the influx of immigrant women, many from Ukraine, seeking work and housing during Edmonton's economic boom. Bishop Legal called on Katherine and Abbé Casgrain, a man known for working with immigrants in eastern Canada, to fulfil the initiative.

Katherine and Abbé agreed that Edmonton should provide Catholic immigrants with a hotel that would include accommodation, a community house, and employment bureau. She later related: "We found on inquiry that financial conditions would not permit the sale of stock in such a venture at that time. That was the decision of the men. Fortunately, neither of us despaired, we simply turned to the women."

Katherine extended an invitation through Edmonton's seven Catholic parishes and 20 women attended an inaugural meeting at St. Joachim's Church Hall on November 13, 1912. They formed The Catholic Women's League of Edmonton, with Mrs. Samuel Gorman, president and Miss Katherine Hughes, corresponding secretary.

The pioneering members met every train arriving in the city to welcome new immigrants and established one of the first social service agencies in Alberta. Within two years, they set up a safe, affordable hostel named 'Rosary Hall' and a free job placement service staffed by volunteers.



## BELLELLE GUERIN

FIRST NATIONAL  
PRESIDENT OF THE  
CATHOLIC  
WOMEN'S LEAGUE  
OF CANADA

Their feat was truly remarkable, as women in that era did not have the right to hold public office or vote in provincial or federal elections. Furthermore, there were no TV, radio, or internet services to broadcast their crusade and gather momentum.

The League's roots began in 1920 with its first National President, Bellelle Guerin, who had a vision, faith and a dream "to see it [Catholic Women's League] rooted in every major centre from Halifax to Victoria."

Bellelle was a very interesting lady. She was the oldest child of parents with French and Irish roots who settled in Montreal. She attended a boarding school led by the Sisters of Notre Dame and was said to be a poet and historian. She remained a single woman all her life but did raise two young children of her brother James when his young wife died. Her public life began at the age of 61, when her brother James was elected Mayor of Montreal. She accompanied him to many public events, including an International Eucharistic Congress in Montreal which fuelled her desire to gather like minded Catholic women in order to serve the welfare of others.

With the encouragement of the Bishop of Montreal, she formed a local Catholic Women's League based on the Edmonton model, in November 1917 in Montreal. She became the first president.

For the next three years Bellelle presided over the Montreal branch, which by 1920 would grow to 440 members. The league was organized into various departments: art and literature, civics and education, current events, home economics, music, the Loyola Convalescent Home, the Community House, and the junior branch. Weekly meetings with guest speakers focused on political and women's issues.



## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA

1920 – Meeting in Montreal to Form a National Federation

- Expand Membership

1920 – First Dominion Convention held in Toronto

- 1923 – 50,000 members

The Federal government was looking for input into the needs of vast numbers of immigrants who were arriving in Canada weekly. The CWL in Edmonton and Montreal had vast experience, however, the government was looking for national organizations to form an advisory committee.

In June 1920, Bellello organized a meeting in Montreal to consider the unification of the League. She was elected the first president of the national federation, The Catholic Women's League of Canada. There was strong support for the unification.

The first dominion convention was held in Toronto in 1921. A constitution, set of bylaws and structure for a national executive, diocesan and parish subdivisions was passed by motion.

By 1923, the national membership had grown to 50,000 women.

## PETERBOROUGH SUBDIVISIONS 1921

PETERBOROUGH-IN-CHAINS  
PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, LINDSAY  
ST. JOHN'S KIRKFIELD  
ST. LUKE'S DOWNEYVILLE  
ST. MARTIN OF TOURS, ENNISMORE  
ST. PETER THE APOSTLE, LAKEFIELD  
ST. JOSEPH, POWASSAN  
ST. PATRICK, KEARNEY  
ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION, HUNTSVILLE  
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE, PARRY SOUND  
ST. PATRICK, KINMOUNT  
ST. PAUL'S, GRAVENHURST  
ST. JOSEPH, BRACEBRIDGE  
SACRED HEART, PETERBOROUGH  
TROUT CREEK & ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, KEENE



From January 31-November 2021, several councils were established in the Diocese of Peterborough. On January 31, 1921. St. Peter-in-Chains Subdivision was organized by Mrs. Knell of Toronto. Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lindsay; received their charter dated March 1921. Mrs. K. Neill of Edmonton and Mrs. G.H. Popham of Peterborough organized Lindsay subdivision and their first meeting was held April 21, 1921. In July 1921, Mrs. McGough and Mrs. Ward attended St. John's Kirkfield to form a CWL subdivision. In December 1921, Mrs. Walsh and Mrs. Murphy formed the CWL in St. Luke's, Downeyville. Peterborough and Lindsay members organized St. Martin of Tours, Ennismore; St. Peter the Apostle, Lakefield; St. Joseph, Powassan; St. Patrick, Kearney; St. Mary of the Assumption, Huntsville; St. Paul the Apostle, Parry Sound;

St. Patrick, Kinmount; St. Paul, Gravenhurst; St. Joseph, Bracebridge; Sacred Heart, Peterborough; Trout Creek and St. John the Evangelist, Keene. Mrs. B.J. Gough (Annie) of Lindsay took the leadership role of President. The Peterborough Diocesan Council was granted a charter on November 5, 1921.



## PD SUBDIVISION/COUNCIL

- 1922 – ST. PAUL, NORWOOD
- OUR LADY OF MERCY, PORT HOPE
- OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, HASTING
- 1927 - VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, CAMPBELLFORD
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- 1934- ST. JOSEPH, DOURO
- ST. MARY'S, GRAFTON
- 1936 –ST. JOSEPH, BOWMANVILLE
- 1939 – ST. ALPHONSUS, WOOLER
- 1948 – ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, PETERBOROUGH
- 1949 – COMBINED OTONOBEE-KEENE
- 1953 – ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, COLBOURNE
- 1954 - ST. JEROME, WARKWORTH
- 1956- ST. ALPHONSUS, FENELON FALLS
- 1957-ST. ALPHONSUS, PETERBOROUGH
- 1958 – ST. AUGUSTINE, SOUTH RIVER & SUNRIDGE
- 1958 - HOLY ANGELS, BRIGHTON
- 1978 – ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, NEWCASTLE
- 1988 – ST. JAMES THE GREAT, MACTIER
- 1988- OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE, BOBCAYGEON

I found several dates for formation of councils in parish council records.

There is:

- the date the first meeting was held and a council was formed
- the date a charter was requested
- the date on the charter .
- the date that the council was reinstated

There can be a year or a month difference in the various dates.

The original charter date may be the more consistent but there is historical preference in councils as well.

The National office has had challenges confirming dates for councils. Some of the archives are not as complete as we might wish.

 <p>PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN COUNCIL of CANADA A Historical Journal</p>  <p>THE ROAD TRAVELLED 1921-2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·SETTING: A HISTORY OF THE 1900S</li> <li>·FORMATION OF CWL IN CANADA</li> <li>·OVERVIEW OF EVENTS OF EACH DECADE</li> <li>·HISTORY OF EACH CONVENTION</li> <li>·PICTURES OF EVENTS, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES</li> <li>·LIST OF PRESIDENTS &amp; SPIRITUAL ADVISORS</li> <li>·PHOTO OF RECENT P D EXECUTIVE</li> <li>·PHOTOS - FAITH, FUN &amp; FULFILLMENT</li> <li>·75 PAGES.</li> </ul>
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You will receive a copy of the historical journal soon via mail or a council member courier. Thank you to the many councils and members who assisted with the collection of this information.

My 3-year COVID project is finally finished. I had anticipated having this document for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations but with COVID, my accessing to records was a start/stop exercise. This is the best I could do with the records available.

Please be gentle as this is a volunteer project. It has been edited several times but may have errors left unseen by our team.

It has been fun to look back on the various decades of our lives with all the fun and challenges.

There will be further information coming to you re: ordering additional copies. Order by mid June. Central pick up or Fall Meeting.

WHAT DO  
YOU DO  
WITH THIS  
JOURNAL?

1. PLACE A COPY IN THE PARISH COUNCIL ARCHIVES
2. SHARE WITH PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS
3. PURCHASE A COPY FOR YOUR MORE SENIOR MEMBERS
  - THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED ON YOUR EXECUTIVE.
4. ADD A COPY TO THE ARCHIVES FOR THE PARISH
5. GIVE A COPY TO FAMILY MEMBERS
6. ENJOY THE LOOK BACK AS WE BUILD BACK BETTER.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS