

Past President / Historian Oral Report July 2019-06-14

Adaptation

The National Geographic Resource Library states, "...simply, adaptation is the adjustment of organisms to their environment in order to improve their chances at survival in that environment".

Historically, the Catholic Women's League came into being as a result of Catholic women responding to the call for help from Bishops to support immigrant families across Canada. Not only did those first women respond to that call; they also banded together and increased in numbers so that they could answer thousands of other "calls" over these 99 years. Each call to service brought with it challenges, encounters, tasks, actions and change. Simply put, the League has continuously adapted over the years.

As historians it is our role to preserve the story of these adaptations. This came to life for the archiving committee this past year. We spent time devouring the well-kept history of the provincial council to ascertain the level of importance for articles, documents and letters to tell our story. Committee members were bowled over to read that members first fought against the legalization of marijuana in 1972, that ethical palliative care and euthanasia had been issues for decades, and caring for our common home has been of concern for just as long.

Our archival work proved timely for members from the Hearst Diocese who had made an initial visit to the women in Moosonee. I'd like to share a bit of their story as told by past provincial president Marlene Pavletic, "Pauline [provided] valuable information. There were photos, and much documentation indicating CWL was active from the early 1970's to the early 1990's in the communities of Moosonee, Fort Albany and Attawapiskat. ...[When the group] visited the community again in January of this year, it was exciting to hear the reaction of the women when the pictures and documentations were shared. Some women recognized the priests, bishop, nuns, and even family members. One woman recognized herself. The woman who had the CWL pin at the fall visit recognized her mother and sister. This experience has "driven home" to me the significance of archives. [Their story] truly came "alive" to me after visiting Moosonee. The women said they had been CWL members. But, they had no records. The provincial council did!" (End quote).

Getting back to the ecological term of adaptation and how it relates to the position of past president / historian, I'd like for you to ponder the evolution of the League; ... think about how we have adapted to survive these 99 years. Some have migrated to other councils to become more vibrant, others have gone into dormancy, taken a rest as such, and many have camouflaged their councils so as to be able to continue their good works without the structure, as we know it. How fortunate for us that the national executive board has seen the need to bring change to the league structure. I am very proud to be a part of an organization that is ready to adapt to change. How about you?