



Soroptimist Across Canada

Eastern and Western Canada Regions – Winter 2023-2024



Soroptimists in both Eastern and Western Canada Regions recognize that we live, work and play on the traditional ancestral lands of many First Nations across our country. We acknowledge the tumultuous history endured by the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, and we commit to moving forward with mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

Submitted by ECR Governor Gertrud Hocke

Dear Soroptimists, welcome to the year 2024. We, the Governors of both regions, wish you a good start in the second half of our Soroptimist year. May your volunteer work be fruitful and may you enjoy the successes of your clubs. We wish you health, joy and many wonderful experiences during the next months. We look forward to seeing many of you at our Spring Conferences.



Thank you to the members for giving us feedback on our first Newsletter. We received a lot of positive feedback. Members especially liked learning about what is happening in the other Canadian region. Some members felt overwhelmed by the length of the newsletter.

Thus, we will now alternate reporting about clubs and members between the two regions. Here some highlights of the current newsletter:

The success of one of the smallest clubs in WCR, Central Alberta, will amaze you. With only 5 members they offer not only the dream programs but are active in their local community.

You can read about one of the most seasoned Soroptimists in ECR. She encountered the changes in our organization over many decades. From our African Federation we got exciting news about the chartering of SI TAWI e-club.

Don't miss out on the article about our virtual NGO parallel event "Roads to Overcoming Poverty: Canadian Stories", and the update about non-local LYD Awards funded by SFC.

Enjoy the readings.

Gertrud, ECR Governor



Soroptimist Foundation Canada Boosts Its Support for the LYD Non Local Program

With approval of its 2024 budget, Soroptimist Foundation of Canada Chair April Neave has confirmed an increase in funding for the Live Your Dream non local award program. The Foundation will be contributing \$34,000 as compared to the \$25,308 provided in 2023.

Each of the Western and Eastern Canada Regions have been allocated \$17,000.00 to be disbursed in seventeen \$1,000.00 awards. SFC is gratified to contribute in this way to the SIA goal of reaching more women and girls.

In the early days of the Foundation's involvement in the program, it recruited judges to review applications and the Foundation issued the awards. More recently however, it arranged with the Live Your Dream team at SIA to direct applications to Canada's two online clubs (Atlantic and Canada West). This was viewed a brilliant opportunity to reach eligible candidates in potentially more remote areas, where clubs were not active.

When Atlantic Canada Online ceased operation, the Foundation took a different tack, enlisting the help of the Western and Eastern Canada Regions. It requested that the promotion of the award and application process as well as candidate selection become the responsibility of the Region Live Your Dream Chairs in conjunction with the clubs. It is in this way the Regions, as well as the clubs, receive the appropriate credit and recognition for non local LYD awards. Always looking to improve, the Foundation welcomes any feedback on the delivery of this year's program once the awards are made. Contact chair@soroptimistfoundation.ca with your comments.

The Foundation is delighted to provide financial support the Live Your Dream Non Local Award program in Canada. This is just one line of action by the Foundation leading to fulfillment of its purpose, "to advance the human rights and status of women and girls, and to provide women and girls with access to education and resources to enable them to pursue and achieve economic and social equity." If you wish to join in supporting education and training for women and girls, consider leaving a gift or making a donation to treasurer@soroptimistfoundation.ca and help the Foundation reach its \$3 Million endowment fund goal.

We don't have photos of Canadian non-local LYD recipients funded by SFC, so here is an update on a Canadian SIA federation finalist from 2018. You can read Lucia's story on the SIA site here: <https://www.soroptimist.org/extraordinary-stories/lucia.html>



Here is Lucia accepting her award in 2018 at the SIA Convention, and Lucia now. She is employed as an educational assistant at a school in Coquitlam BC, working with students who have challenges.



Club Profile—SI of Central Alberta

Submitted by Sherri Smith, SI of Central Alberta

Soroptimist International of Central Alberta was chartered in 1988 by SI of Calgary. We are a small but mighty club; in our community we grant Live Your Dream, Violet Richardson, and Ruby awards and put on many exciting projects and events.

Some years we are one of the only organizations in our community that celebrates International Women's Day and this is a celebration event we look forward to as this is when our awards are granted to our winners.



In 2016, our club brought the Purple Light Nights campaign to Alberta and have won a Celebrating Success award regionally for it. This campaign has grown with many municipalities, individuals, and organizations shining purple lights, making declarations for Family Violence Prevention Month, wearing our purple shirts, buying our purple wreaths and lights, and joining to create awareness that Domestic Violence has NO place in our community.

In 2021, we received a grant from the Red Deer and District Community Foundation and the Fund for Gender Equality for the Period Promise Pilot Project. We partnered with the United Way of Central Alberta and brought the Period Promise campaign to Alberta. Our pilot equipped 4 schools with dispensers and free menstrual products in every washroom. Since then the Government of Alberta has funded 50

more schools in the province. We received a Celebrating Success award regionally and also a Mayors Recognition award from the City of Red Deer. We continue to be fierce menstrual equity advocates and encourage businesses, municipalities, libraries, and organizations to provide free products in their washrooms and to help end period poverty.



On November 18, 2023, a successful Power of a Girl conference was held at Festival Hall, with 25 girls attending, organized and sponsored by Soroptimist International of Central Alberta, African Caribbean Centre and Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association.

There were keynote speakers, a career women panel, Dream It Be It sessions such as goal setting, stress management and mental health, other presentations such as financial literacy, how to prepare for your career, fitness break, photobooth, information tables and fun!

Respectfully submitted,
Members of SI of Central Alberta – Sherri, Sue, Melody, Jan and Robyn

Member Profile—Marylyn White, SI Peterborough

Submitted by Dianne Nielsen, SI Peterborough

Marylyn's involvement with Soroptimist began over fifty years ago. Knowing little about Soroptimist in the early years, I asked Marylyn how she first became involved. What follows are her memories and reminiscences about Soroptimist.

How did you become involved with Soroptimist?

My parents were both very active members of the Lion's Club. My mother encouraged me to join a service club. I chose to join the Barrie Venture Club in 1957 when I was twenty, and the Toronto Venture Club when I moved there in the sixties. (Note: Venture clubs were for women too young to join Soroptimist.)

Back in the 1950's, you could not join Soroptimist unless you were 35 years old. Also, you had to be invited to join. Soroptimist wanted established women, either professionals or women in management positions in businesses.



I joined the Soroptimist club in Peterborough in 1979. I was a young mom with two daughters and a busy career. I liked the idea of being a part of a world-wide women's service organization and I enjoyed meeting and connecting with other professional women in my new community. I liked that our club had several international projects.



I have enjoyed being involved in many of our projects over the years. An avid golfer, I especially enjoyed being part of the committee that organized our golf tournament for many years. Funds raised were directed to the local hospital building campaign and the YWCA Crossroads Shelter for women fleeing abusive relationships.

What are the most significant changes you have seen in Soroptimist since you joined?

Club activities were more diverse in early days. Projects were more "hands on" than today. Although we still have projects unique to Peterborough, the signature programs of SIA, ***Dream It, Be It*** and ***Live Your Dream*** are more of a focus than in the early days.

What keeps you engaged with the Soroptimist Club today?

I like that the mission is clearly focused on helping women and girls through education. I also enjoy the international aspect of Soroptimist. When I travel, I always try to contact Soroptimist Clubs in the cities I visit. I think bringing new members to our club keeps it interesting and brings new energy to our activities.

Marylynn was the winner of the 2023 Dream Maker Award for Eastern Canada Region, and SI Peterborough Soroptimist of the Year.



In Memoriam - Donna Bradley 1956-2023

Submitted by Linda Cunliffe, SI Surrey/Delta



We lost a valued member of our club this year. Long-time activist Donna Bradley passed away on October 20 after a long battle with cancer.

She is remembered for her lifetime of selfless and dedicated service to women and families. Donna was an active member of our Surrey/Delta club for nearly 10 years, and a founding Board Member of Servants Anonymous Society Surrey. She was also an active member of the Provincial Council of Women BC, and in addition to her extensive work on Resolutions for the Provincial Council, she was a significant member of BPW (Business and Professional Women Langley) for many years.

Donna was a loving mother and grandmother, and she treasured spending time with her grandkids. She will be missed by many and will be remembered as the loving and caring woman she was.

Rest in Peace, dear friend.

Canadian Soroptimist Event at NGO CSW 68!

Submitted by WCR Governor Suzanne Heron

Canadian Soroptimist Event at NGO CSW 68! (we hope!)

ECR and WCR have jointly applied to present a Parallel Event at the NGO CSW, the event held in parallel to the UN's Commission on the Status of Women in New York, March 11 - 22. Sharon Fisher suggested it and said, "If it's online, they won't say no." Governor Gertrud, Past ECR Governor Jennifer Oliver, SI Victoria Westshore member Karen Sam, SI N&W Vancouver member & LYD Chair Sharon Lockhart & myself worked, with Sharon's assistance, to apply. We have some dynamite speakers lined up and the amazing Bonita Zarillo, of SI TriCities and MP for Port Moody - Coquitlam, will be our moderator. She is the BEST! So mark your calendars now, and stay tuned for more information. Here's the concept:

Roads to Overcoming Poverty: Canadian Stories

Education is a key strategy for individual women to overcome poverty. Empowering women and girls to access education is the Soroptimist organization's mission. Personal stories of Canadian women and women new to Canada demonstrate:

- How the Soroptimist model of access to education enabled them to find a new pathway forward from poverty and move toward economic independence.
- The importance of the Canadian values of diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging, to accelerating economic freedom.
- The gaps still present along the road out of poverty for women in Canada.

SI TAWI e-Club – Chartered 8th November 2023

Submitted by Khayanga Wasike and Cathy Coyte, SI Eldoret , Kenya

Soroptimist International Africa Federation (SIAF) came into being in 2021 and is continuing to build taking the best from around a continent that is full of young people. The average age is under 30, so it seems reasonable to expect African Soroptimists to be younger than the international average. In Kenya, Soroptimist Khayanga Jenipher Wasike, has been running a youth leadership & mentorship training (YLMT) camp for high school girls for 12 years (the last 3 camps being sponsored by SI President Sharon Fisher’s “Road to Equality”) Many of the alumni have developed into social entrepreneurs, caring for their communities and coming back each year to assist in the running of the camp. These women have all the energy, drive and values that make true Soroptimists.

As “Godmother”, Madame Khayanga has brought them and many of their friends and colleagues together to form a modern Soroptimist Online club. After two years of building their Soroptimist knowledge and numbers (over 40), the club was ready for chartering. They chose the name TAWI as it means branch, and they saw themselves as branches of the bigger Soroptimist tree. They requested to be chartered after the 2023 YLMT camp had completed, so they could all get together at the camp that inspired them on their journey and while the visiting overseas Soroptimists were still present to support and mentor them. The Charter officer was Liva Annick Rahajason, Regional Vice President East Africa from Madagascar.



The new Soroptimists had travelled from all over Kenya to be there in time for dinner on the eve of the charter ceremony where SI IPP Sharon Fisher gave them a brief talk about the structure and aims of the Global Organization. Everyone was up early on charter day to show their commitment to the environment by planting trees. This was followed by a visit to a local market to promote awareness about Gender Based Violence, their chosen signature project as it can be done both in person and online (and in the rain!)

After lunch Soroptimists from around Kenya along with overseas visitors from USA, Canada & Germany gathered to watch the women enter the area resplendently dressed in matching modern African style trouser suits. After the serious part of the ceremony where each new Soroptimist was pinned with their SIAF Name badge all the attendees enjoyed dinner and dancing till dawn.



Pillar Report—Membership

Submitted by Heather Rollins, SI Chilliwack

Member Retention at SI Chilliwack

Our club has had the great fortune of having a very active team of enthusiastic members. We work hard to ensure that we keep them engaged and everyone is involved.

A few of the activities that help us stay successful:

- Our membership committee has a representative on the executive committee as well as three other newer members who are engaged in all member recruitment and retention activities.
- Membership committee conducts phone call reminders and check ins on a bi-monthly basis with members & helps with initiation of new members. We make sure new members feel welcome through the on-boarding and mentoring buddy program.
- Newly developed member welcome package includes: the Soroptimist Pin, SIA branded club name tag, an updated roster with all member photos, flyers about our programs as well as the club bylaws, & SIA information flyers. Flowers are given to each new member at our newly developed induction ceremony.
- A greeter at every business meeting to welcomes all members and guests.
- Annually hosting a “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”, small group social dinners to engage members.
- Christmas Hygiene Gift bags for high-risk women in our community. We budget \$1,000 and members donate items. At the November business meeting everyone packs the bags which are presented to the street nurses. They distribute the bags to their clients throughout December.
- “Happy Dollars” to support the Presidents Appeal at each meeting with a specific theme to allow for members to get know each other.
- We host an annual “Night at the Museum” February recruitment event at the Chilliwack Museum. Members attend and get to hear us “brag” about our successes and hear stories from a LYD winner and a DIBI participant.
- We encourage and develop our members to take on leadership opportunities such as Committee Chairs and being on the Executive Board



Most importantly, our meetings are organized, follow a planned agenda, start on time and are 1.5 hours in length. The meetings are fun and informative and with excellent attendance. Club projects have meaning and allow for hands on activities that are recognized in the community.

At our Executive board meetings, we talk about keeping our members engaged and are always open to feedback or new ways of doing things. All of this has proved successful for our club, and we were very proud to have won the Membership Award at our Western Canada Region Conference this past year.

ECR Spring Conference 2024

Submitted by Jean Skillman
Chair of Spring Conference and 90th anniversary committee 2024

Spring is around the corner, as they say. I admit we must get through winter first, but spring follows winter, and so does spring conference.

Spring conference in Ontario this year is very special. In 2024 Soroptimist International of Toronto is celebrating 90 years since its charter in 1934. There will be a wonderful party at the conference for Toronto, Celebrating 90 Years of Dreams. I have been visiting the Archives of Ontario to get ready, to immerse myself in the stories of those women who started a service club between the wars, in 1934. The stories of the war years of the 1940's makes powerful reading, as one is reading history from a woman's perspective.

The spring conference is named A Million Dreams, acknowledging that each of us have many dreams for our lives and for Soroptimist, as we reach toward the goal of education and economic empowerment for half a million women and girls.

The conference is a true collaboration. Soroptimist International of London and Toronto are cohosts. The board is extremely supportive. Toronto is so fortunate to have the assistance of two young women, Mia Jean and Geerisha Ghunowa, as an event coordinator and treasurer, to ensure the smooth running of the conference. Geerisha will be our media coordinator for the conference.



The celebration does have space for non-conference participants at the party and will welcome any guests from afar with great joy for the entire conference.

Eastern Canada Spring Conference "A Million Dreams" will be held April 26, 27, 28 th at the Novotel North York Toronto hotel. There will be no Zoom link for this conference, as we found the cost of this option to be prohibitive in 2023.

With best wishes to all spring conferences in 2024.



WCR Spring Conference 2024

Submitted by Dana Martin, WCR Conference 2024 Chair

Greetings From your Conference Chair.

Before we know it our 2024 conference will be here! Thursday, May 2, 2024 is our kick off event and we will be doing something we have never done before! So, I hope you will join us for a very fun night.

Here are a few things I would like to share with you.

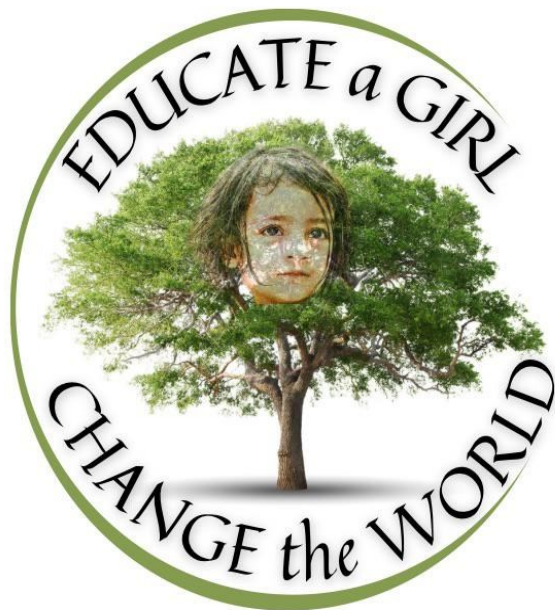
- All information about conference will posted on the WCR main Facebook page. You will start to see posts appearing soon.
- The Call to Conference will be sent to each member. All of the information you need to register for conference, and book your hotel room will be in the call. We have booked lots of rooms so you don't need to worry about getting a room. We will NOT be releasing the registration information early.
- Club Presidents should check with all of their members to ensure they received the call.
- The Hotel is offering us the same rate for a few days before and after the conference if you want to come early (or stay after conference) and see the sites in Kelowna.

In the planning for conference a logo was front and center. Anney Ardiel (Social Media committee) and I spent some time together online designing a logo. We loved it! Yes, it needed a few tweaks but that would be an easy fix. I sent it off to the Governor, and this is what she said... NOPE! More importantly she informed us that this was NOT the theme for the conference at all. It seems Anney and I did not get the memo! (too funny). So, it was back to the drawing board.

This is what Governor Suzanne sent me... circular logo of a tree, superimposed on it is the face of a girlThe Climate is Changing . . . [at the top] around the top of the circle: Educate A Girl around the bottom of the circle: Change The World.

next page...

The CLIMATE *is* CHANGING. . .



And here it is...

Here is what Governor Suzanne had to say about why she wanted this theme for conference.

"I was inspired to this logo by a discovery and a plea.

The discovery is that educating girls is the sixth best way to draw down carbon in our atmosphere - the essential goal to saving our planet. This is where the work of Soroptimist intersects with the climate action that can maintain life on earth - which is *the* issue for young people today. Win-win: save the planet, and

attract younger members to our organization, itself the best in the world.

The plea was issued by Mary Robinson at the SI Convention in Dublin: bring female leadership to the fore, because the planet is on fire and current male leadership is treating this as 'something to be dealt with' and not as the crisis it is. The Dublin Convention was rife with examples of climate action and gender equality.

Hence the logo . . . the climate *is* changing. There is more openness to female leadership and gender equality; there is more widespread understanding that diversity and equality bring better results of all kinds to everyone. At the same time there is pushback to advocacy for gender equality - the climate for women's right is also becoming stormier. Within that maelstrom of push and pushback, openness and violence, there is the undeniable truth that educating girls - and empowering women - is what will save our world.

I hope that this logo, this Conference, this year, calls our WCR Soroptimist members and clubs to action, to programs and projects that combine girls' education and women's empowerment with climate action. To reach out to potential members and supporters in the community who get the connection, the importance of what Soroptimist does to saving the planet. Educate a girl, save the world".

I think this is perfect note to end on.

Dana Martin
WCR Conference Chair

Region Teams

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Suzanne Heron
(SI Victoria Westshore)

Governor-Elect:

Chari Grant
(SI Tri Cities)

Treasurer:

Susan Barber
(SI Chilliwack)

Secretary:

Shirley Stewart
(SI Langleys)

Member-at-Large:

Shelley DellaMattia
(SI Langleys)

Parliamentarian:

Joan Jackson
(SI Victoria Westshore)

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Donna Duvall (SI Abbotsford-Mission)

Public Awareness:

Feezah Jaffer (SI Surrey Delta)

Fundraising:

Anna Der (SI Edmonton)

Program:

Colleen Schmidt (SI Abbotsford-Mission)
Melanie Kenny (SI Saskatoon)

Celebrating Success:

Megan Eastwood (SI Tri Cities)

Advocacy:

Janneke Lewis (SI N&W Vancouver)
Carrell Wingrave (SI Canada West Online)

Friendship:

Darlene Jameison (SI Surrey Delta)

Conference 2024:

Dana Martin (SI Chilliwack)

Website: wcsoroptimist.org
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Fundraising:

Cheryl Ball (SI Thunder Bay)

Program:

LYD Raheleh Barkhordari (SI Toronto)
DIBI Keshala Dissanayake (SI Cambridge)

Celebrating Success:

Serena Reynolds (SI Grand Erie)

Website:

Susan Pierce (SI Kawartha Lakes)

Website: ecsoroptimist.org/
Facebook: facebook.com/Soroptimist.EasternCanada

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