

History of University of Regina Women's Club

On March 18, 1963 several women, wives of faculty members of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, met at the MacKenzie Art Gallery to discuss "the need of this group". By the end of the evening they had formed the **Regina Campus Faculty Wives Club** open to all faculty wives with an annual membership fee of \$2. Mrs. Audrey E. McKinnon was named President, Mrs. W. A. Riddell, wife of the Regina Campus Principal, was named Honorary President. They appointed a treasurer, a secretary, and several other executive officers. The Club was set up rigorously with motions and room for discussions before voting and recording of minutes.

At first, the Club's mission was more of service rather than a social group. Club members prepared a tea to honour faculty members who were leaving Regina, as well as a farewell supper and dance. They put together a welcome package for new university appointments, which included a welcome letter from the Faculty Wives, a map of the city of Regina and information about Saskatchewan and Canada in general. They also provided help with Regina Campus functions where needed. In late September they organized a Welcome Back Tea to greet the wives of new faculty who had arrived during the summer, just as we still do 50 years later.

In October of 1963, the Club membership was extended to "all wives of instructional and administrative staff". Thus the name was changed to **Regina Campus Women's Club** and a constitution was adopted. One year after the initial meeting, 15 members were present at the Annual General Meeting; they had \$7.02 in the bank and the membership fee was raised to \$3 per year.

The University began development of a new campus on a 300-acre site on the southeast edge of the city of Regina, and in the summer of 1965 physically began the move to the new Classroom and Laboratory buildings. Other buildings followed rapidly. The Regina Campus Women's Club continued to organize diverse activities such as Christmas parties, dances, suppers, teas, a family day, collection of clothing and food hampers for the John Howard Society and arts and craft sales of objects made by the women themselves.

The varied interest groups existed from the very beginning such as a cooking club, a reading club, a tennis group, an arts and craft group, a bridge club and a curling club, among others.

In 1974, the Club reached its peak of 150 members registered. In 1975, the membership was down to 92 members and the fees were raised to \$5. In 1979 the membership fees were raised to \$10 and to \$15 in 1989. By then

the membership was down to 79. In 2005 the membership fee was raised to \$20 and the number of members fluctuated around the same level. Membership dues in 2013, continued to be \$20 for a membership numbering 55. In 2018, dues were raised to \$30 because of an increase in costs. Membership continued to be about 55.

On July 1, 1974, the University of Regina became an autonomous degree granting university. The Regina Campus Women's Club continued to serve the University and continued to provide an avenue for women of the University of Regina to meet in a social atmosphere. One of the major service functions of the Club was their hosting of the spring and fall Convocation Teas, the first being in 1967. Members volunteered to serve tea and coffee and hors d'oeuvres to the graduates and their families. When the College West building was added to the present university grounds in 1972, the Convocation Teas were held in the College West cafeteria. With the advent of larger graduating classes the cafeteria proved too small and the Convocation Teas were moved to the main lobby of the Centre of the Arts building. Convocation ceremonies were held in the main theatre of the building and moving the receptions to the main lobby unified the convocation experience. The Receptions are now held in the lower convention hall to accommodate the increasing numbers of graduates and their families. Hosting the Convocation Receptions continues to be an important service University of Regina Women provide to the University.

The idea of giving a scholarship to a female student was first discussed at the AGM in the spring of 1973. In 1974 a bazaar was organized by Eliane Parslow and raised \$350 towards the scholarship. In January 1975, Mrs. Bonnie Buck, a fourth year Social Work Student, received the first U of R Women's Club Bursary. A second bursary of \$350 was awarded in 1976, and then the bursary program was discontinued when only 50% of the membership voted for continuing to raise funds to sponsor the Bursary.

The bursary idea was revisited at the AGM in 1989 and changed from fund raising to a voluntary donation by Club members. In 1990, a bursary in the amount of \$400 was named in honour of Duna Barber, the Club's Honorary President. The bursary was awarded to Lorna Ahlquist, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing student. The bursary recognized Duna's retirement as Honorary President after 15 years' service to the Club.

In 1991, under the presidency of Kay Antrobus, the following motion was passed at the AGM: *An annual bursary be established in the name of the U of R Women's Club funded by donations from the membership with the option of honoring a worthy past or present member. It is to be given to a female student in financial need who has completed her first year of studies with a grade point average of at least 70%. The Faculty and area of study is to be selected by the honoree.*

The student recipient was chosen by a committee of the U of R Women's Club Executive Officers in conjunction with the University of Regina Awards Office. The donations were administered by the Awards Office and individual tax receipts were issued to the donors.

With the recent emphasis on privacy concerns and policies, University of Regina Women Club names the bursary honoree, the honoree names the Faculty to receive the bursary, the amount to be awarded is fixed by Executive Officers based on a combination of donations received from Club members and funds drawn from U of R Women general accounts. The University of Regina's Awards Office receives the information and refers it to the Faculty to name the successful candidate. Donations to the bursary fund continue to receive a receipt from the University for tax purposes.

A bursary has been awarded each year since 1990; the amount has changed and increased over the years, the most recent bursaries offered were for \$1,200. It is the desire of Executive Officers to increase the bursary amount and, in doing so, offer significant assistance to women pursuing a university based career path.

At the AGM of March 19, 1975, it was decided that: *The constitution can be amended or altered by a majority vote of the members present at any regular business meeting, provided that at least 25% of the membership is present.*

The Constitution adopted in 1963 is a living document, and reflects the interest of women of our Club to serve within stated guidelines and to revise articles of the Constitution when needed. It has been amended several times over the years, including changing our name, all done to keep the document in tune with changes in society and women's place within our society. The Constitution was revised in 1996 to change the name of the Club to the name it is today, the **University of Regina Women**, reflecting a subtle change in status but the same interest in providing an opportunity for involvement in social activities and fellowship. The Club membership has evolved from a small group of faculty wives to the inclusive group of women associated with the university as it is today. If Mrs. Audrey McKinnon and the first members of Regina Campus Faculty Wives could be here now, they undoubtedly would be impressed that their endeavors have endured, expanded, and are still being pursued 50 years later.

In celebration of the founding 50 years ago of the predecessor to University of Regina Women, a special award in the name of the Club's first president, Mrs. Audrey E. McKinnon, was offered to a woman studying in the Faculty of Engineering. Mrs. McKinnon's husband, Alexander McKinnon, taught descriptive geometry and drafting to students who were studying towards a

degree in engineering. The McKinnon's daughter, Eleanor, and her husband James Coomber, also donated \$1,000 towards the bursary. The Club's \$1,000 contribution was matched by the *Innovation and Opportunities Program* of the Saskatchewan Government, bringing the amount of the award to \$3,000. The bursary was awarded in the fall of 2013. The Club felt this award was a significant way to mark our 50th Anniversary.

The Executive Officers of the University of Regina Women for the academic year 2012 - 2013 in which the Club completed 50 years of service and social opportunities for women of the University of Regina were as follows:

Honorary President Vianne Timmons, U of R President
Past President Sheila McKague
President Françoise Kenny
Vice-President Susan McLaren
Secretary Carmelle Beaudry
Treasurer Kay Antrobus
Social Program Convenor Joan Kruger
Interest Groups Convenor Toby Willis-Camp
Membership Convenor Sandra Flegel
Publicity Convenor Ruth Heinrichs

Ⓜ Researched from U of R Women archives,
and the memories of women who were there at defined times