



IODE CANADA *EXPRESS NEWS*

Founder's Day Message 2021 Continuing to Meet Challenges

On January 13, 1900, our founder, Margaret Polson Murray, began sending telegrams to the Mayors of Canada's major cities asking that they invite influential women in their cities to come together to form an organization to support Canadian soldiers volunteering in the Boer War. The Mayor of Fredericton called a meeting on January 15 at which women gathered and began to raise money. After this first chapter started, Mrs. Murray renewed her efforts in Montreal and formed the second chapter. Further chapters were established across Canada thereafter. On Founder's Day, we celebrate the optimism and vision of Mrs. Murray and think about the thousands of IODE women whose tireless efforts have contributed to making Canada a better place. During the past 121 years, IODE's focus has broadened from supporting patriotism to become a registered charity dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals through education support, community service and citizenship programs.

With the social and economic changes of the last century, the percentage of women working outside the home has increased to over 80 per cent and women have less time to devote to charitable and volunteer activities. Along with the membership of other civic and volunteer groups, IODE membership is not increasing, but we should not let these statistics discourage us. There are still women who have an interest in meaningful volunteer work and have the time to dedicate to it. IODE is well-placed as a successful charity that can provide an organized structure and groups of committed women to work with in many Canadian communities. We continue to receive inquiries on our national website about membership and have bestowed a new chapter, IODE Evolve, during this past year. IODE has the flexibility in its structure to provide women with a platform that suits them for participating in charitable support and services in their communities. We also have capable members who are ready to help establish new chapters.



During this past year, with Covid-19 interfering with all the usual things that we do, we have all experienced the frustration of trying to continue our usual IODE activities to raise funds for our projects and awards. We miss seeing other members of our chapters. We miss the tasty treats prepared by members to share at our meetings. We miss meeting the people in our communities at our open houses, our craft and rummage sales. Regardless of our frustrations, we have come up with ways to do things differently. We have figured out how to comply with safe distancing rules and still get together outdoors for meetings in good weather. We have learned how to use Zoom for virtual meeting and how to participate by talking to our iPads, tablets and computers. We have also discovered with the new world of work from home, that work no longer satisfies all our social needs and that our neighbours, neighbourhoods and communities are increasingly important to us.

How can IODE tap into this revival in community connectedness? We can invite neighbours to join our chapters when the lockdowns ease, allowing us to meet again. We can throw a nice and neighbourly get-together early in the fresh days of socializing and invite potential members.

What should we do about the year that was? Write down our stories so we have them to share. when we look back on these challenging days. Tell the story of how we handled them and our mission to help others in need. Describe how we kept in touch with each other and helped our local food banks and shelters. Record the ideas we had for doing things differently to keep everyone safe. Celebrate our resilience! Please jot down notes to help remember what you did so we can share our stories on our websites, Facebook and Twitter. We had the imagination to continue to contribute during these difficult times and it is important to remember and record how we did it.

Each year at this time, we think about our founder Mrs. Murray and how we can celebrate her mission to establish a patriotic women's organization. Patriotism at that time was an expression of civic responsibility. Today, civic responsibility includes patriotic loyalty and means active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good. IODE has been honed by its members over the decades into a modern women's organization that is the embodiment of these values. We continue to be strong and can meet the momentous Covid challenges that will continue into 2021. I find myself thinking these days of Norman Vincent Peale's 1952 self-help book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. It helped me at various times to refocus and face challenges with a can-do attitude, and it is as relevant now as it was all those years ago. We can celebrate our resilience and keep positive in our day-to-day approach to life. Being upbeat in these anxious times is a significant demonstration of our civic engagement and our respect for others. Reaching out with kind greetings and warm telephone check-ins can dispel a bit of loneliness. Remember to be optimistic, to have a sense of humour and to laugh easily. We can certainly put smiles on people's faces, even if they are behind face masks.

Carol McCall

President

Founded in 1900, IODE Canada is a national women's charitable organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals through education support, community services and citizenship programs. For more information about our organization and charitable work, please visit our website.

www.IODE.ca

