



## IODE FOUNDER'S DAY MESSAGE



On Founder's Day on 13<sup>th</sup> February, we celebrate the vision of our founder, Margaret Polson Murray and think about the thousands of IODE women whose tireless efforts have contributed to making Canada a better place during the past 122 years. IODE's focus has broadened from initial patriotism and support of Canadian soldiers in the South African War to become the present-day registered charity "dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals through education support, community service and citizenship programs". With the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic still present, the usual activities of IODE members in planning fundraising and community projects continue to be curtailed. Despite the frustration of missing in-person meetings with members of our chapters, members have worked at doing what they can do to help and benefit others. Every bit has added up and together all our efforts have made a difference. Although resilience has been an oft-used word during the pandemic, it accurately describes what IODE members have shown during the past two years.

IODE has been through a pandemic before. It is not surprising to learn that what IODE chapters and members did during the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic was to organize in church kitchens to make quarts of custard, broth, gruel and lemonade for many weeks to help families stricken by the influenza virus. In 1918, Canada's population was about eight million and about 50,000 people died from the flu virus in just a few months. IODE survived that pandemic and is surviving this one and continues to help people get through COVID-19.

Today, the ingenuity of many chapters led to organized drive-by donations of toys, grooming products and food bank items with socializing at drop-in garage coffee parties. Members have put together Afternoon Tea in a Box, Christmas wreaths, butter tarts and red pepper jelly; have sold chocolates, cupcake vouchers, poinsettias and gift certificates from nurseries; and one chapter even had a car rally that provided lots of distancing and raised funds successfully. Quite inspired! Donations in each of the past two years to IODE National Funds have exceeded the pre-Covid 2019 level. In particular, members made donations to IODE Snack Pack and TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW that achieved the 2021 goals of each fund. The donations to TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW were the equivalent of four hundred and four members' national annual fees! The contributions from members in service, goods and funds have been strong and show how much they honour the mission of IODE and are prepared to support the collective effort of IODE across Canada during these difficult times.

We continued to move forward with the completion of the revision and update of the 2004 version of the IODE Constitution and have implemented a Statement of Values.

*IODE Canada's core values of respect, integrity, inclusiveness and dedication to excellence are the foundation of service to the public and IODE members. These core values provide us with a means of guiding and evaluating decisions, operations, planning and teamwork in support of IODE's mission.*

Although these values have been held by IODE members, articulating them in a clear and concise statement serves to remind everyone that IODE members hold them as their guiding ethics. IODE is a successful charity that has organized groups of dedicated women who, alone and with other community organizations, work in many Canadian communities. With its mandate covering support for education, citizenship and individual and community services, this breadth of purpose allows members and chapters to design projects and programs that respond to the specific needs identified by each local chapter. Chapters and members can help in their own way to create a Canadian society in which everyone can flourish. Small local actions matter, and IODE women are doing things that are meaningful and important in their communities.

What should we do about the year that is ahead? We have had the imagination to continue to contribute during the two past years of difficult times. It is important to continue doing what worked well and to share it with other IODE chapters. It is important to share stories of what chapters are doing on IODE websites, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. To expand membership, we need to let the public know what IODE is all about and what we are doing in the community. Using social media is the most accessible and affordable way of communicating this information. At the National Annual Meeting, there will be online Zoom workshops on both fundraising ideas and using social media to assist chapters. We can appreciate what we have done and share it with others. Worrying about membership numbers accomplishes little but telling others about what is happening and how to find us can lead new members to us.

Each year at this time, we think about our founder Margaret Polson Murray and how we can celebrate her mission to establish a patriotic women's organization. As I have written before, patriotism at that time was an expression of civic responsibility and today civic responsibility includes patriotism and active participation in the public life of communities to contribute to the common good. At the time IODE was founded, women did not have the right to vote in Canada either provincially or federally. Property rights and legal rights to sign contracts in Canada are a matter of provincial jurisdiction and in 1900 were not available to all women across the country. The women who founded and joined IODE in the early years were trail-blazers and had amazing dedication and enthusiasm in organizing IODE. Later members honed it into a modern women's organization that has continued to benefit others through past decades. Today, we are bringing the organization through another pandemic so we can help Canada and Canadians thrive in the future. What we do doesn't have to be perfect to make a difference. Just keep positive, appreciate what you have and keep caring about IODE and thinking about how you can help to make someone else's life a little better.

*Carol McCall*

Carol McCall  
National President

13 February 2022