

2018 AGM – President’s Report

During our 2017-18 year, we gained one new active member, Cathy Redfern. However, several members left for a variety of personal reasons, including Neelima Shankardass, who returned to Toronto last Friday. Many of us who knew Carol Blyth were saddened to learn of her passing about three weeks ago. She was an active member of the club until relatively recently and had served on the Executive Committee. So, we end the year with a total of 33 active members, down from 38. On a more positive note, we continue to receive inquiries from people interested in joining the Calgary Women’s Literary Club.

At present, our finances are robust, and allow us to pay for a venue and catered event for our 2018 winter party at a reasonably modest cost to our members. We felt this had become necessary due to the increase in our numbers over the past few years. However, it is important that we proceed with caution and review proposals for all expenditures through the lens of fluctuating numbers.

Once again, we learned a lot about each other and about a wide array of authors during another year with the theme of “My Favourite Author.” Meetings were well attended, even through the Spring session should have been renamed our Winter session because of the awful weather. Despite the seemingly endless snow storms and bitter cold, many people continued to show up early to enjoy the pre-meeting refreshments. Our first winter party held at Amica seniors’ home was a huge success, partly because of the pleasant surroundings, partly because members didn’t have to prepare and bring the food, not to mention wash dishes afterwards, and partly because of the gifts bought and so beautifully wrapped by Cecilia and Mary. In addition, the entertainment was outstanding. Anne directed Pat, Neelima and Cecilia in the wonderful Readers’ Theatre. And let’s not forget our literary songbirds: Flora, who also played the piano, Judi, Kathie McKelvie, Janet Halls, Betty, Wilda and Cathy Redfern. Of course, the cash bar didn’t hurt either.

We continue to enjoy a very special relationship with the Calgary Public Library and, as always, we are deeply grateful for their support and consideration. And that leads me to reflect on several very special circumstances that have arisen during my final year as President.

Near the end of our 2017 Spring session, I received a communication from Sarah Temple, the daughter of one-time member Isobel Temple who had recently passed away. Isobel had wished to bequeath a sum of money to the Calgary Women’s Literary Club in recognition of how much the club had meant to her. Since the club had never received such a gift before so far as we know, we were at a loss as to quite how to use her bequest appropriately. As we struggled with this dilemma, serendipity stepped in. The Calgary Public Library Foundation announced its Windows of Opportunity fund-raising program for the new Central Library and Sarah agreed that a donation of \$2,018 in return for a Personal window in the name of the Calgary Women’s Literary Club members past and present was the perfect solution.

While I was finalizing our donation with the Foundation, I spoke with both Ellen Humphrey and Christine Gingerick about suitably memorializing our founder, Annie Davidson. Our first

thought was to solicit specific donations totalling \$5,000 for a Generational window in Annie's name. However, the good people at the Foundation put their heads together and decided it should be more than that – much more. As a result, I was invited to represent the Calgary Women's Literary Club on a committee that was formed to review how Annie should be honored, which groups or individuals should be approached and to come up with a package of materials with which to approach potential donors. We are still in the early planning stages, but I will be working with Foundation staff to compose a cover letter from the Calgary Women's Literary Club highlighting the club's history and role in raising funding for the city's first public library.

As if those wonderful opportunities were not enough, a third one fell into our lap. Earlier this year, Memorial Park Library was granted the designation National Historic Site. I'm sure you will all agree that for a very beautiful old building it is a well-deserved honor and one worth celebrating. Our good friend Julia Harrington approached me to ask if the Calgary Women's Literary Club would be prepared to participate in their celebration by preparing and delivering a lecture on the history of the club and its connection with Memorial Park Library during Historic Calgary week in the summer of 2018. Thanks to Sue Carscallen, whose grandmother was an early CWLC member, we already have a lot of information as you probably recall from Sue's excellent presentation October 4, 2016. Sue and Mary Carwardine are now delving even deeper into our history and, with the help of Sandi Ens, I'm confident that their lecture will be a real highlight of Historic Calgary week. Few special interest organizations can boast the longevity and continuity that we do. Sue and Mary will co-present both our history and development in Memorial Park Library on Sunday, July 29th this year. I'm sure they will welcome your support.

As I reflect on my two years as President of our venerable club, one thing in particular occurs to me that has doubtless challenged many of my predecessors: how to honour the past while remaining relevant in the present. When and how should we make changes that strengthen the club while retaining the integrity of its purpose? I can promise you that the Executive Committee members I have worked with over the past two years and before made decisions based on achieving both. For example, our numbers have grown over the years, which can make integration more difficult, but we now welcome new members and foster friendships during our social time before each meeting. With the growth of our city and the competition for interest in our club, we have reached out to Calgarians through Swerve magazine and, more importantly, our wonderful website. At the same time, we still expect our active members to research their papers with a reasonable degree of scholarship and present them on a regular basis, we still look for good literature within the program themes, and we still store our important documents in the Glenbow Museum archives.

With that in mind, I would ask you to recognize the members of this past year's Executive Committee. Our Treasurer, Della Mae Wood, has kept us on the straight and narrow where our finances are concerned, always with kind words and a smile on her face. Social Chair Cecilia Krupa has made sure that we enjoyed our weekly refreshments and enhanced our pleasure with flowers and sweet music. Anne Tingle ensured that we had a good reason to attend our weekly meetings by keeping the 2017-18 program on track and doing battle with Swerve magazine to ensure the listings are correct, if not always as she would wish to see them. Mary Carwardine has pleaded, persuaded and provoked people into signing up for what promises to be a wonderfully diverse program in 2018-19. Not only that, but she has spent many, many hours compiling long

lists that document the themes, authors and presenters throughout the club's history. Robin Stanford gamely stepped into the role of Acting Secretary at short notice and has carried out her duties brilliantly. And I'm sure we all remember that Flora Spackman was a hard act to follow. Webmaster Janet Halls, assisted by Judi Lee, continued to do a wonderful job of keeping our website fresh and interesting. Vice-President Doloris Duval is always one of the first people to volunteer to help with anything that is required, so she has been involved in many activities throughout the year as she prepares to take over from me. Sue Carscallen has been equally busy offering her support where needed and has become our de-facto club historian. Sally Gallinari, who joined the club in 1974, has been a font of knowledge and helped us to live up to the past. Finally, Past President Lillian Tickle, has kept track of our membership records, which requires, among other things, issuing new membership sheets on a startlingly regular basis. Lillian also did her fair share of persuading when it came to assembling a slate of officers. But I can tell you from personal experience that the busiest part of her role must have been mentoring me. I have found Lillian's thoughtful opinions and advice invaluable. Furthermore, she always responded to my calls promptly, generously and graciously. I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart. It has been a privilege to work with you.

Finally, I thank all of you, our members, who are the lifeblood of the Calgary Women's Literary Club. Without your enthusiasm and commitment, the club would become just another forgotten book club. I hope you enjoy our long summer break and come back feeling refreshed and renewed. I look forward to seeing you all in October.

Margaret Sparkes
President

25 April, 2018