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Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) West Vancouver

A hundred years ago, the First World War was raging. Three years later, as the world emerged from the ashes of that bitter time, a small group of educated British women came up with the idea of forming a worldwide organization of university women who would foster friendship and understanding in order to prevent another such catastrophe. Their dream became a reality in a group called the International Federation of University Women (IFUW).

Today, thousands of women throughout the world belong to the IFUW and they still share the same dreams that inspired those early leaders.

The astonishing power of this group starts with its small, grass roots branches, which are connected to national affiliates in over 60 countries. Collectively, this network of women from diverse communities has a global voice, which is a dynamic force for change for girls' and women's' access to quality education. Having consultative status with several different United Nations Councils enables the IFUW to advocate for women at the highest levels of influence in the global arena.

There are 107 Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) clubs across Canada, including a West Vancouver branch, that are affiliated with the IFUW. These Canadian clubs fund about \$1 million annually for scholarships, fellowships and awards for women.

The West Vancouver branch of the CFUW funds educational foundations at BCIT, Douglas College, Langara, SFU, UBC and others through fundraising events and donations from both members and the public.

As well, graduates from all five public high schools in the Sea-to-Sky area have benefitted from CFUW West Vancouver's scholarships and grants. Given out annually, these awards are funded by the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, which has been granting this Club funds through Gaming Education Awards.

Besides fostering higher education for women, this group helps the community too. Places like the North Shore Youth Safe House, a safe haven for troubled youth, have received funds from them.

A part of the CFUW West Vancouver's mandate is to support continuing education for women of all ages. To this end, keynote speakers at this year's meetings, selected by current president Ieva Cornford and the executive, have included experts in subjects as diversified as art for social change, technology in medicine, tourism in northern Vietnam, and strategies for aging well.

Interest groups within this Club provide opportunities for fostering friendships and for professional networking. International Studies, book clubs and Financial Literacy are but a few of the many kinds of sub-groups that convene monthly.

All in all, the dream of three women planted as a seed one hundred years ago has blossomed to fruition in many more ways than they could have foreseen. Perhaps that is why the following quote by Naomi Wolf spoken at a woman's graduation class seems particularly apt:

"Your education was lent to you by the women of the past, and you will give some back to living women and to your daughters seven generations from now."

Who knows? Maybe by then, we will finally have world peace, just as our foremothers imagined.

For more info, go to cfuwnvww.vcn.bc.ca

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