



**cfuw fcfdu**  
UWC MONTREAL INC

**Club Room, Unit #7**  
**Atwater Library**  
1200 ave. Atwater  
Westmount, QC  
H3Z 1X4

## FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



February is “Home Dinner” month at UWCM. For weather and travel considerations, we will attempt to keep you as close to home as conveniently possible.

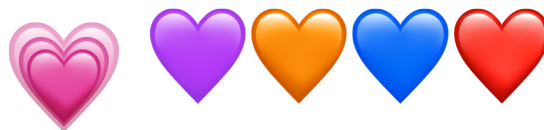
While the organization of the evening will be left partially up to the host and her guests, we do suggest holding it during the week of February 16th. It is intended to create an opportunity for members to meet in a more intimate setting and to make newer members feel welcome. The evening will be potluck, so please coordinate with your host when she calls about bringing an appetizer, a casserole, vegetables, dessert, bread or wine. It’s meant to be a no-fuss evening with lots of time to chat.

To participate, answer the following:

- (1) Would you like to host or be a guest?
- (2) If hosting, what’s the maximum number of people you can accommodate (for clarity, please include yourself in this number)?
- (3) What day of the week of February 16 do you prefer (first and second choice)?
- (4) Would a lunch option be preferable (this is also subject to sufficient interest)?
- (5) Do you have any dietary restrictions?

**Before February 2**, email Leah Trineer (**subject line “Home Dinner”**) so she can draft a schedule for circulation to allow time for each host to receive her guest list to contact guests.

**Don’t wait!** Contact Past President Leah Trineer  
**before February 2.**  
(Be sure to put “Home Dinner” in the subject line)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear members,

January is a great time for planning and new ideas. In that vein, a reminder of two 2026 dates to keep in mind:

**July 20-23: CFUW AGM and Conference in Montreal.** In collaboration with the national federation of university women (CFUW) and the other [Quebec Council of CFUW](#) clubs— Montérégie, Montreal South Shore, Sherbrooke and District, Lakeshore, and Quebec City—our Club will help host the 2026 CFUW annual general meeting and conference. It kicks off with a First Timers Meet and Greet on Monday the 20<sup>th</sup>. The next day features local tours and a dinner. On Wednesday and Thursday will be meetings, information sessions, presentations, and another dinner. We'll need member support to for the many tasks big meetings require. Please consider attending and lending a hand. Details [here](#).

**November 15: 50th anniversary of the 1976 Parti Québécois election** under party leader René Lévesque. CBC [reported](#) the next day, "No one in the arena or in the rest of Canada was more stunned and amazed at the result ... than René Lévesque." The election marked the success of a decade of Quebec's mainly Francophone nationalist organizing and the beginning of an ambitious PQ program. It included the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101), adopted in 1977, that had a radical impact on Quebec's English-language education system. Given our Club's mandate to support education, you might want to read



Quebec Premier  
René Lévesque in 1980  
(photo in [public domain](#))

Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie's article called "Bill 101 and English minority language education in Quebec" [here](#) (starting on page 303).

On this last point, I was gratified to read in our Club's history for the 1967 to 1992 period that "[b]etween 1974 and 1976, a group met to study the French Canadian scene. At one point its members were easily recognized – they were all talking about the works of Gabrielle Roy" (see [here](#), page 7).

As we prepare to work with our Quebec sister clubs, several of which operate in French, to co-host the CFUW AGM (and anticipating the inevitable torrents of media coverage on the PQ election anniversary), I'm toying with the idea of creating a new group to study the Francophone Quebec "scene." We could find English texts (for inclusivity) and meet maybe four or five times Saturdays 10am-noon at the Club Room in coming months. Would you like to join me? If so, feel free to contact me. To keep to a manageable size, up to seven members may join so first come, first served. Hope to hear from interested members!

À bientôt,

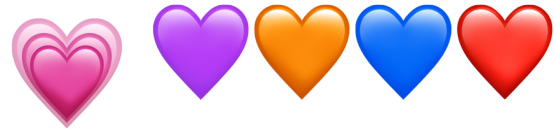


*Lorraine O'Donnell*

**President**

PHOTO CREDIT: © CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
BY LISA GRAVES





## UWCM's Relationship to CFUW

The Board has had interesting discussions at the last few meetings about the relationship of UWCM members to the Canadian Federation of University Women (now referred to as CFUW).

UwCM President Lorraine O'Donnell followed up on this question with the CFUW Articles and Bylaws Chair and Professional Registered Parliamentarian Elizabeth Haynes. She wrote a detailed explanatory document.

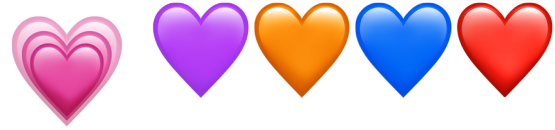
## BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Directors disclosed their intention to continue (or not) with their board positions for the coming year.
- Established Past President Leah Trineer as Nominating Committee Chair.
- Contemplated proposal that members who don't have cheques can pay dues in cash and treasurer will issue a written receipt.
- Further discussed privacy policy guidelines in social media and newsletter.
- Discussed design, content of promotional postcard, new business card, and obtaining CFUW banner.
- Proposed hosting dinner of CFUW executive before its AGM.
- Approved updated task calendar.



### CONDOLENCES

We were very saddened to hear that Dianne Theoret-Major passed away on January 4th. Dianne was a respected UWCM Board member and interest group convenor who enriched many Club activities with her presence over the years. We extend our condolences to her family including her daughter Emma, a former UWCM President.



## EVENTS CALENDAR - FEBRUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 BOARD MEETING	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 PEARLS PRESENTATION	12	13 COFFEE KLATCH	14 
15	16 HOME DINNERS	17 HOME DINNERS	18 HOME DINNERS	19 HOME DINNERS	20 HOME DINNERS	21
22	23 BOOK CLUB BUDDIES	24	25	26 WOMEN'S ISSUES	27	28

## HEART COLOURS EXPLAINED

Cute, bubbly, often platonic

Trust, peace, loyalty

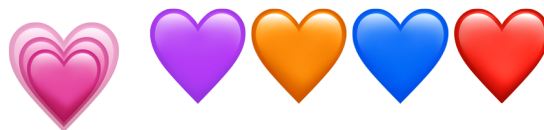
Compassion, general affection

Classic, love, romance, passion

Friendship, encouragement

**Newsletter Editor** Donna Jensen  
**Copy Editor, Proofreader** Lauren Rudy

**If you do not want your photograph to be published in the newsletter, contact Donna Jensen.**



## INTEREST GROUPS

### BOOK CLUB BUDDIES

**Monday, February 16, 4:00 - 5:30 pm**

**UWCM Club Room, 1200 Atwater Avenue**

This group usually meets the third Monday of each month. Each member of the group chooses a book to discuss. The book presenter acts as host and brings snacks and beverages for participants. She also leads the discussion on her book of choice. This month: *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See will be presented by Linda Edgar. Convenor: Tanya Fitzpatrick

### LIBRARY LECTURES & LUNCH

**To resume in February. - 12:30 to 3:00 pm**

Atwater Library Auditorium & our Club Room

After the 12:30 in-person lectures, Carly serves a light lunch for \$5 in our Club Room. Great chance to discuss the lecture and catch up with fellow members. Convenor: Carly Pepler

**NOTE: So she can be sure of having enough to serve, you must let Carly know **before the day of the lecture** if you will attend her lunch.**

### LADIES WHO LUNCH

**Tea Time at the Ritz-Carlton**

**February time and date to come**

The atmosphere is great and the food is delicious. If you would like to join, please contact Adèle. Convenor: Adèle Hebert

### COFFEE KLATCH

**Friday, February 13, 7:45 - 9:00 am**

**Avenue G coffee shop, 1386 Greene Avenue**

We meet on the second Friday of each month, starting around 7:45 a.m. at Avenue G. Convenor: Leah Trineer

### MUSEUM JAUNTERS

**February time, date and place to come**

View works of art and learn of various cultures from here and around the world. Enjoy visits to local museums.

Convenor: Adèle Hebert

### OUTDOOR LADIES

**Outings will resume in the spring.**

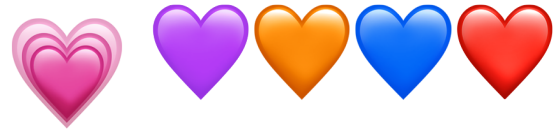
This group enjoys a variety of fun and interesting walks around town and on the outskirts of the city during spring, summer, and fall. Convenor: Rahila Bootwala

### WOMEN'S ISSUES

**Thursday, February 26, 6:00 pm**

Over drinks and dinner at the McGill Faculty Club, the group meets first for a cocktail and then moves to the dining room 45 minutes later. Parking for \$15 is available at the back of the Faculty Club building.

Convenor: Olga Shevchenko



## GWI NEWS

By Veronica Noble

**Graduate Women International (GWI), an NGO based in Geneva, brings together university women committed to international understanding and peace through education. GWI maintains National Federations and Associations in 48 countries. In Canada, the GWI affiliate is CFUW (formerly known as the Canadian Federation of University Women), of which our Club is a member.**

Today, we focus on GWI's Projects and Grants made in 2025:

**Teacher for Rural Futures:** This program sponsored six female students with GWI scholarships, including two graduating, two continuing, and two new students. It also released *Rise and Lead*, a song celebrating project students.

**Bina Roy Partners in Development:** This program funded six projects in Egypt, El Salvador, Nepal, Senegal, Turkey, and Uganda, addressing women's health and

hygiene, environmental action, digital and financial literacy, and community education.

**Hegg Hoffett Grants for Displaced Women:**

The Hegg Hoffet Committee reviewed 30 applications and awarded six grants to recipients for English lessons, project management, and medical certifications.

**Rose Sidgwick Triennial Fellowships:** At the GWI Triennial General Assembly held in Lusaka, Zambia last September, six awardees from Ghana, the UK, Peru, the US, and China were selected from 80 applications, enrolled in PhD programs in 50 universities worldwide.

**Heritage Fundraising Wall:** This project, created for the GWI 105th anniversary, raised about US \$15,000. The purchase of a brick further supports GWI missions.

For more information on the above Projects and Grants, as well as on GWI's other activities in 2025, including its Triennial General Assembly, its Membership activities, its role at the United Nations, its Communications and social media outreach and its international advocacy, you can consult [this link](#).

(Source: GWI Update- 14 January 2026)

### Let's Talk Pearls

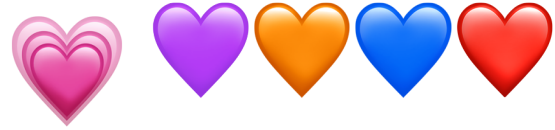
**Wednesday, February 11, 5:00 to 7:00 pm**  
UWCM Club Room #7, Atwater Library  
1200 Atwater Avenue, Westmount H3Z 4X1

Presented by Olga Shevchenko, certified gemologist and jewelry designer.

Beverages and snacks will be served.

Bring your friends. Bring your pearl jewelry. Maximum 20 people, so first come, first served.

**RSVP to Olga by February 8.**



# FOUNDATION FACTS

## WHY USE CANADA HELPS?

Canada Helps is a non-profit organization. Its mission is to increase charitable giving, and it tries to pass along, as much as possible, every dollar it collects.

You receive a tax receipt for 100% of the value of your donation. The UWCM Foundation is charged a processing fee of less than 3% of your donation. There's no need to write or mail a cheque. Simply use your smartphone to scan the QR code below or click [HERE](#) to donate to the Foundation any time.

**Watch here for details about our spring fundraiser!**





**SAVE THE DATE!**

## BENEFIT EVENT 2026

Thursday, May 28, 2026  
6 p.m.

Maison Principale Montréal  
872, du Couvent street  
Montréal

Ticket sales open  
in January 2026

Sponsorship opportunities  
available

For information:  
[don-donation@chezdoris.org](mailto:don-donation@chezdoris.org)



**RÉSERVEZ VOTRE SOIRÉE !**

## ÉVÈNEMENT BÉNÉFICE 2026

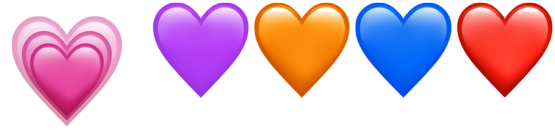
Le jeudi 28 mai 2026  
dès 18 h

Maison Principale Montréal  
872, rue du Couvent  
Montréal

Ouverture de la billetterie  
en janvier 2026

Plusieurs possibilités  
de commandites

Pour information:  
[don-donation@chezdoris.org](mailto:don-donation@chezdoris.org)



## CENTENARY COMMITTEE

### *A Century of Empowerment*

*Who was the first woman to earn a medical degree in Quebec?*

**By Susan Button**

In 1888, Octavia Grace Ritchie, one of the “Donaldas,” became McGill’s first female valedictorian – the top student in her graduating class. The ladies in this first class were called “Donaldas” in recognition of the gift of \$50,000 from Sir Donald Smith (1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal) that endowed the funds for the first two years of separate classes for women. He gave a further \$70,000 in 1886 to pay for the third and fourth years, completing what was to be known as the Donalds Endowment for the Higher Education of Women. In 1896, he fulfilled his promise to build a separate college for women students and gave \$300,000 for the construction of the Royal Victoria College located on the corner of University and Sherbrooke Streets. This is now known as the Strathcona Music Building, with an adjoining building, the Elizabeth Wirth Music Building, named in honour of our own valued and distinguished UWCM member, who is a McGill alumna and devoted supporter.

Octavia, in her graduation ceremony speech, thanked Sir Donald Smith for his contributions and reflected on the progress made by women during her time as one of the first female students at McGill. At the time, there were debates about the preference for

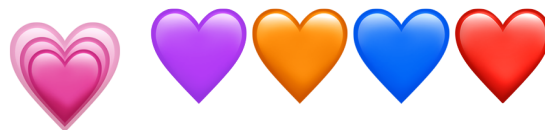
*It was one of the UWCM founding members, Octavia Grace Ritchie England, who in 1891 received her medical degree from Bishop’s University.*



co-education, under which the sexes would meet in the same classrooms, versus separate education, under which the teaching of the sexes should be given at different hours.

There were also views held by some that young women were not suited to higher education. The Blue Stockings Society, an informal women's social and educational movement in England in the mid-18th century, emphasized education and mutual cooperation. From the early 1750's, Elizabeth Montagu began hosting intellectual gatherings or salons. Soon, other wealthy, accomplished women followed her lead. The term “Blue Stocking” came to mean an educated and independent woman.

As Margaret Gillett says in her book, *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill*, throughout most of the 19th century, the term took on negative overtones and a “Blue Stocking” became an object of scorn, even pity. “She would be doomed to a sterile, lonely existence, unmarried and unmarriageable, for who would want an opiated, strong-minded woman? Nothing could be worse.”(1)  
(Article continues on next page.)



## CENTENARY COMMITTEE (cont'd)

In spite of some societal views, Octavia also used her speech to advocate for women to be admitted as students to the Faculty of Medicine. At the end of her speech, she said to the crowd, "A medical course should be provided for women in this city and in this province. Sometime it must be done; the only question is when?"(2)

Despite Octavia's brave plea, it would take another 30 years for women to be admitted as medical students at McGill.

Octavia herself wanted to study medicine at McGill, but unable to, she went to Kingston Women's Medical College in Ontario. Later, she moved to Bishop's University and finished her medical studies there in 1891. This made her the first woman in Quebec to get a medical degree.

While studying at Bishop's, Octavia Grace Ritchie and her friend Maude Abbott, who followed Octavia as McGill Class Valedictorian in 1890 and earned a medical degree in 1894 (also a distinguished founding member of the UWCM (see May 2025 Newsletter article) started an important group. It was called the Association for the Professional Education of Women. This group helped other women who wanted to get advanced degrees, especially in medicine.

Following study abroad, Octavia was appointed assistant gynecologist at Western Hospital (opened in 1874 on Dorchester Street and merged with the Montreal General Hospital in 1924) and

as demonstrator in anatomy at Bishop's. In 1897, Octavia married Dr. Frank Richardson England and the couple had one daughter, Esther, in 1905. Esther, who became Mrs. Eric Cushing, was also a founding member of the UWCM in 1927.

Octavia was active in local, national and international groups promoting humanitarian causes and women's rights. From 1911 to 1917, she was the president of the local Council of Women. She led the Montreal Women's Liberal Club starting in 1921. She was also a vice-president of the National Council of Women in Canada. Octavia traveled to represent Canada at international meetings. In 1914, she attended the International Council of Women meeting in Rome, and went to the 1922 Pan-American Conference of Women in Baltimore.

Dr. Octavia Grace Ritchie England died in 1948 at the age of 80.

In 1979 the Octavia Grace Ritchie England Scholarship was established in her memory by the McGill University Alumnae (now the McGill Women's Alumnae Association).

---

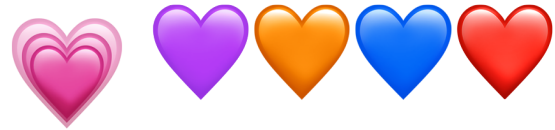
### Notes:

1. Margaret Gillett: *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill* (Montreal, Eden Press. 1981), pg.13.

2. *Octavia Grace Ritchie: First female valedictorian - Bicentennial*, McGill University (<https://200.mcgill.ca/history/first-female-valedictorian/>)

### SUBSCRIBE TO:

- CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) *Club Action* newsletter [HERE](#).
- GWI (Global Women International) *The Update* newsletter [HERE](#).
- NCWC (National Council of Women of Canada) newsletter [HERE](#).



## LADIES WHO LUNCH AT THE RITZ



Adele Hebert and her group visited the Ritz-Carlton for high tea on December 20, 2025, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

## BIRTHDAYS



Gretchen Cheung: February 6  
 Dominique Racanelli: February 12  
 Donna Jensen: February 15

**Was your birthday missed? Contact Donna Jensen (donjenvar@yahoo.ca) to set the record straight.**

## CFUW NEWS



**Vice-President Adèle Hebert will share details on this new partnership in next month's issue.**

## GOOD READS

Check out the **Canadian Women's History Project** [HERE](#).

.....  
 If you like reading short stories, read **More Than a Footnote: Canadian Women You Should Know** by Karin Wells. It is full of "stories of many outstanding Canadian women, including Alice Vibert Douglas, who was the first Canadian president of the

International Federation of University Women (now GWI) from 1947 to 1950. Her chapter alone, titled 'Allie', is worth the read for the whole book!"

(Source: Facebook post, January 2026, CFUW Public Group)