

STORY OF NURSING HISTORY NOVA SCOTIA –SOCIETY – 2024

By Gloria Stephens, Past President

The Nursing History Nova Scotia, which it was first titled, was started with nine nurses in the Fall of 2007 under the leadership of Gloria Stephens (Victoria General hospital, class 1953, VGH)

During the College Registered Nurses NS (CRNNS) Annual meeting (May2008) two VG Alumni members ,Joyce Baxter and Edith Ward had a display, put together by Gloria, showing historical nursing artifacts along with an application form to join the Nursing History NS. The result was encouraging.

The first meeting was held at 7 pm on September 24, 2008, at the home of Mary Sue MacKenzie, Halifax, with 11 attending, representing different Nursing Schools and chaired by Gloria Stephens. There was a positive response to continue, knowing that a considerable amount of ‘ground work’ had to follow. It was agreed that Gloria would have the responsibility of ‘spearheading’ the organization.

A second meeting was held November 13, 2008, at 2565 Roosevelt Dr, and the following became the Founding members of Nursing History NS: Joyce Baxter, Barbara Fulton, Mary Sue MacKenzie, Madeleine McNeil, Marguerite Muise, Norma Price, Edith Ward, Maxine Young and Gloria Stephens. At this meeting a ‘draft’ of objectives and bylaws was presented. A Treasurer/Membership was selected, that being Maxine Young. The fee for membership at this time was set at \$5.00 per year. This was increased to 10 then to 15 (2016) and currently to \$20, 2019 (5 put aside for a plaque to honour nurses).

A third meeting was scheduled for January 21, 2009 at 2 PM at 2565 Roosevelt Dr, Halifax. The draft bylaws, objectives and fee was presented on the CRNNS website for a response. It was decided that meetings would be September, October, November, April, May, June for an executive and a general membership meeting to be held during the CRNNS Annual meetings in May. Two attempts were made to hold a general meeting during the CRNNS Annual resulting in a ‘no show’. The CRNNS is not a venue to hold such a meeting as their meeting is too busy and the delegates have had enough by the end of the day.

During 2009 a motto and logo was agreed as developed by Gloria Stephens. The motto of the group is: ‘Honouring the Past’. The logo interpretation: is symbolized by Florence Nightingale lamp with blue for nursing, waves for Atlantic Ocean and the NS colours, white, blue green and yellow. The motto and logo have a copywrite in Ottawa.



During the year of 2010 a Secretary was appointed and a chair for Publicity. The Executive now consisted of a President – Gloria Stephens; Secretary- Joyce Baxter; Treasurer/Membership – Maxine Young and one ‘Standing’ Committee chair-Publicity – Mary Sue MacKenzie. To get all the background work accomplished meetings were held monthly. The philosophy, beliefs and mandate statements were completed in 2010.

Changes occurred in 2011, Maxine You died suddenly of a heart attack and the next appointed Treasurer/Membership was Lesa Light of Truro. Mary Sue Mac Kenzie moved to Ottawa, she was replaced by Edith Ward., as Publicity. There is now a Nursing History ‘Core’ Committee (2011) which presently manages the organization. Other members are kept informed via email or post. This Core committee consists of the Executive and chairs of the Standing Committees who currently (2016) are Book of Remembrance- Allan Tobacca, Publicity- Edith Ward, Web site – Iris Shea, Profiles- Charlene Day, Publications list – Maureen Manuge and members who live within the HRM with easy access to meetings. There are members in Cape Breton, Yarmouth and with the intention of making the organization a truly provincial one. Other members are from the US, BC and Alberta.

Further changes occurred with the Executive in 2015: Lesa Light resigned as Treasurer/Membership (2011 -2015) Treasurer replaced by Betty Walker. The Treasurer/Membership separated with Allan Tobacca as chair of membership making the Executive 4 members. Around this time the Nursing History NS became a member of the Joint –Stock Companies and has remained as such and by doing so, Society was added to the name of the organization. . Betty Walker resigned due to a health situation and was replaced by Ida Berry in 2016. The secretary position was changed when Joyce Baxter resigned and replaced by Cathy Gibson and Allan resigned as Book of Remembrance chair and replaced with Peggy Wilson. The current Executive 2024: President Peggy Wilson (Gloria Stephens resigned in 2023); Secretary – Cathy Gibson, Treasurer/Membership – Ida Berry; Book of Remembrance – Peggy Wilson ; The other standing committees have remained the same chairs: Profiles- Charlene Day, Publicity – Edie Ward; Reference List – Maureen Manuge; Website – Iris Shea.

During 2023 the membership agreed to have the website under professional care and ‘Dino of Rivendell Software’ was selected as website master. A meeting occurred with Dino, Iris, Peggy and Gloria to discuss the setup and this project is well under way to completion with Iris as website liaison.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

- ACTIVE; current or retired Registered Nurses from any nursing school who has paid the annual dues to NHNSS(- as of October 2019, dues \$20
- ASSOCIATE; a student enrolled in a nursing degree program or an individual, who is interested in promoting the objectives of the organization/, within the bylaws and has paid the annual dues.
- Nursing History NS affiliations include VGH School of Nursing Alumni, Association Health Sciences Archives and Museums of NS and the CAHN with one of our members holding the office of ‘Member-at-Large.

HISISTORICAL EVENTS FIRST IN NOVA SCOTIA

Many health historical events occurred first in Nova Scotia. An example, the first legislation in Canada for nurses to append the letters RN after their name occurred under the ‘Graduate Nurses Association of NS (GNANS – 1909 -1910 incorporated, amended 1922). This also gave the Association the authority to establish branches throughout Nova Scotia, and to create the position

of registrar. The first Nursing Registra was Florence Fraser (VGH graduate class 1908) who issued the first two registration certificates in 1925 to Evaline Pemberton and Catherine Graham (VGH class 1895) who was president of GNANS at the time. (E. Pemberton is recognized in Canada by the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) as the first Registered Nurse in Canada) The first Canadian official nursing examine was held in Halifax, 1925. The name GNANS was changed this year to Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (RNANS) Catherine Graham and Florence Fraser were founding members of GNANS and in 2009 were awarded the College Registered Nurses NS the Centennial Distinction Award. .

Incredibly this small historical nursing group has accomplished a considerable amount: to date, 2024:

- Nominated 9 nurses for the CNA Memorial Book, and all were accepted
- Remembrance Day- placed wreaths at the Cenotaph and/or Camp Hill
- Represented Nursing History by having a booth at the CRNNS Annual General Meetings
- Publicity pamphlet developed
- Membership cards for publicity
- Note pads developed for publicity
- A web site has been developed by Iris Shea: www.nursinghistorynovascotia.com
- Nursing History NS Book of Remembrance
- Nursing profiles are being collected (oral and written)
- A data-base for historical items housed in hospitals throughout the province has been started
- Conducted a display booth at the Canadian National Medical Historical Society, first time a nurse display was accepted (May 2013)
- Many nursing historical projects completed and can be viewed on the web
- Maintain a display Cabinet at the entrance of the Dalhousie School of Nursing, Forrest building.
- Conducted 'fund-raising' events
- Currently assisting graduate students of Saint Mary's University with their history projects using artifacts from the VG School of Nursing Archives for their thesis in the program of Public Art
- Presented a bench to Fort Needham, Park honouring nurses who assisted victims of the 1917 Halifax Explosion, who held 'the fort' before assistance arrived from afar.
- Hosted nurses, December 2017, who came representing the Massachusetts nurses who came to assist following the Halifax Explosion, 1917
- Number of members travelled to Boston by bus, for the 'Tree Lighting' ceremony November 2017, hosted by Nursing History NS Society
- Gathering 'nurses' related stories for a booklet; stories which have not been published with regard to the Halifax Explosion of December 6, 1917, under Charlene Day
- Future goal- membership provincially represented
- Hosted the Canadian Association History of Nursing annual conference, Halifax, June, 2019

- Participated in honouring the 14 nurses who drowned in the sinking of the Llandoverly Castle during tWW1, on the anniversary of leaving the Halifax port, June, 2019. This occurred on Halifax water-front, at the memorial ‘Last Step’
- Currently, 2023, two major projects are underway: 1) enlarging the stories written about the original schools of nursing in NS (12) under direction of Maureen Manuge; 2) under the chair of Dolores Wilmshurst, investigating the possibility of placing a plaque in a strategic location within Halifax which will honour NS nurses

Nova Scotia is filled with historical events some of which are the first in Canada. One area which has a proud and important impact on history is the health professions of which nursing is a major player. The history of nursing in Nova Scotia and the nursing pioneers (past & present) of this province could be lost over time if there is no mechanism to coordinate the written facts. The legacy is inherited from the knowledge of the past and captured by the zeal inspired by a vision of the future.

QUOTE from JOSEPH HOWE:

“A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its monuments, decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead, repairs its great public structures and fosters national pride and love of country by perpetual reference to the sacrifices and glories of the past”.

To complete the story, none of the above accomplishments would have been completed if not for the enthusiastic, committed and ‘good-natured’ members of whom the writer is so proud to be associated.