

The Diocese of Antigonish comprises seven counties in eastern Nova Scotia, including Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, Cape Breton, Victoria, Richmond and Inverness. The Antigonish Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League originated in 1922.



Following the first National Convention, of the newly formed *Catholic Women's League of Canada*, held in Toronto in 1921, Mrs. R.N. Kneil, the first national convener of Organization, travelled to various locations, "filled with enthusiasm for the wonderful new organization of Catholic women from all over Canada".

Having obtained approval from the Ordinary of the Diocese, Archbishop Bishop Morrison, a meeting was held of the Catholic women from Antigonish. Archbishop Morrison presided and "expressed the hope that the CWL would be organized throughout the diocese and made a permanent feature of Catholic activity." Mrs. Kneil spoke of the organization's objective to unite Catholic women to be a strong voice for God and Canada.

The first parish council, of the Catholic Women's League in the Diocese of Antigonish was formally organized, at St Ninian's parish in Antigonish, August 21, 1921. Miss Mary C. MacDonald was the first president and the first spiritual director was Rev. M.A. MacAdam.

Proceeding to Cape Breton, Mrs. Kneil organized a second parish council at Sacred Heart parish in Sydney, on August 22, 1921. The first president was Mrs. F.J. Murphy, and Spiritual Director Rev. D.M. MacAdam.

In Sydney, Whitney Pier, a catholic women's society had been organized in September 1920, by the parish priest. After consultation with the national organization, this society decided to become a CWL parish council. On August 23, 1921, Holy Redeemer parish in Sydney was organized with President, Mrs. Neil MacLean and Spiritual Director Rev. James Kiely.

In 1922, Mrs. Murphy, of Sacred Heart parish, attended the national convention in Winnipeg, and upon her return she visited parishes and organized four parish councils (then called subdivisions). She organized councils in St Joseph in North Sydney, with President Mrs. Matthew Ryan; Stella Maris in Louisburg with President, Mrs. Alex Bates; Immaculate Conception in Sydney Mines, with President, Mrs. J.I. Francis; and St Anne in Glace Bay with President, Mrs. M.T. Sullivan.

By this time, members in these locations felt it was time to meet to discuss forming a diocesan council. The organizational meeting and convention was held in Sydney in November 23, 1922, attended by Archbishop Morrison and representatives from the seven newly formed CWL parish councils. Elections took place at this meeting and the “Antigonish Diocesan Council” of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada came into being!

The first diocesan Spiritual Director was Rev D.M. MacAdam, and elected officers included:

President	Mrs. F.J. Murphy, Sydney
1 st Vice-President	Mrs. Matthew Ryan, North Sydney
2 nd Vice-President	Mrs. M.T. Sullivan, Glace Bay
3 rd Vice-President	Mrs. J.I. Francis, Sydney Mines
Secretary	Mrs. Charles MacKinnon, Sydney
Treasurer	Mrs. V. Mullins, Sydney
Councilors:	Mrs. B. Casey, Glace Bay
	Mrs. Alex Bates, Louisburg
	Miss Mary C. MacDonald, Antigonish

In 1923, Mrs. Murphy organized councils in Canso with President, Mrs. E.F. Moore and Mulgrave with President, Mrs. J. Homes.

In subsequent years councils (subdivisions) were organized in all counties that comprise the Diocese of Antigonish.

Throughout the subsequent 100 years many CWL parish councils have been organized, some for a short time, some for many years and other councils continue to this day.

Some parish councils were disbanded and reorganized at a later date, sometimes with the original charter or often with a new charter. As churches closed or were combined into a pastoral unit, some parishes were closed, and a new council was formed under a new charter and new name.

In 2022, there are 34 parish councils in our diocese.