

# Jadwiga Dobrucka

(1892-1963)

Teacher, educator, community activist



Jadwiga Dobruska's greatest life achievement was founding the Polish Canadian Women's Federation in 1956, to assist immigrant women in preservation of their cultural heritage. Under her direction, the founding Branch No. 1 in Toronto focused its work on charity, culture and education. Inspired by her vision and passion for charitable work, new branches were opened in London, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Ottawa. By 2008, the organization has grown into twenty branches. Dobrucka also created the Jadwiga Dobrucki Youth Fund to support talented youth.

Born in Warsaw and educated in Lodz, then in the Russian-occupied part of Poland, Jadwiga Dobrucka became a teacher in a private girls' school. Wanting to help poor children, she moved to a public school in the slum district of Baluty. During the First World War, she taught Polish in Moscow, became the Chair of the Union of Polish Teachers and editor of the newspaper *The Teacher's Voice*. In 1918, in the midst of the Russian Civil War, she organized the exodus to Poland of a Polish kindergarten and over a thousand teachers and their families. On returning from Russia, she sat on the governing bodies of the Union of Secondary School Teachers. She taught at the Władysław Giżycki high school, relocated from Moscow to Warsaw in 1918, organizing the school's self-government structures and extracurricular activities. During the Second World War, under German occupation, she ran an underground high school. In 1946, she traveled to London as a delegate for the Women's League and met with her son, who graduated with M.D. from the University of Edinburgh.

After immigrating to Canada in 1954, she mobilized immigrant women who fought in the Polish Underground to keep the Polish spirit alive in Canada. She inspired them to help each other and to help other women and children in Canada and in Poland. Her vision being so strong and clear, it survived so many years. Her views on the need to preserve one's language and culture were recognized by Canadian organizations: the Local Council of Women and Catholic Immigration Council of Canada. Being a modest hardworking woman, she did not receive any official awards. The more so, she deserves to be recognized now as the Founder of the Polish Canadian Women's Federation.



POLISH SPIRIT

Photos from top left clockwise:  
• Jadwiga Dobrucka, founder of the Polish Canadian Women's Federation • Dobrucka with some of the first members of Branch 1 of the Federation • Branch 1 meeting, 1959  
All photos – the Polish Canadian Women's Federation's archives