

# PC Express - February, 2005

*Judy Maurice, Provincial Commissioner*



2005 marks the 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada. Guiding has witnessed multiple changes in society during that time and hundreds of global disasters and catastrophic natural events. But few have been as overwhelming in scope and comprehension as the earthquake and tsunami that struck Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and others during the holiday season. It is one of the largest natural disasters of the past century and has had far reaching repercussions.



As we approach World Thinking Day (WTD) this year, I hope we have gained a greater awareness of the struggles of citizens on the other side of the world and of how interdependent we all are. Many have also realized how fortunate we are to live in Canada and how much we often take for granted.

The theme for WTD 2005 is "Food". The hope is that all members experience and celebrate the variety and diversity of foods that are eaten by our many different cultures. There will also be opportunities to learn about the kinds of food that keep us healthy and to remember the many millions of people in the world who do not have enough to eat. Especially, as I am writing this, at the end of the holiday season, we are all very aware of the thousands of people in the Asia/Pacific Region who do not have even the basics of food, water and shelter. They are relying on the good will and support of the international community in order to survive. And yet, they are already looking forward to rebuilding their local communities, to reestablishing connections with family, friends and local groups.

In many WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) countries, Guiding helps and supports girls and women by providing opportunities related to improving basic health, sanitation and nutrition. India, Sri Lanka and Thailand are members of the Asia/Pacific Region of WAGGGS. Our Canadian World Friendship Fund (CWFF) helps to support the WTD fund, which is used partially to support Mutual Aid and to help member countries to respond to natural disasters. I hope that you will all keep that in mind when you are



teaching your girls about international program and when you are raising funds for the CWFF.

In spite of hardships and deprivation, people everywhere look for reasons to celebrate. Ninety-five years of helping girls and women be the best that they can be is a great reason. Guiding may not be quite the same as it was in 1910, as it has tried to change with the times and keep up with society's demands and expectations. We may not always like the added 'pressure' those changes put on us, but far better that we are prepared, than be caught by the unexpected.

The book of the Polar Express, which I mentioned in the last issue is 20 years old in 2005. A milestone for it, too. When we watched the movie during the holiday, it was not what I expected or remembered from the book. A simple, gentle story had become a fast-paced, glitzy movie. It had adapted to the expectations of our society. In the development of the characters, however, the children learned the value of friendship and gained self-confidence and leadership skills. Does that sound familiar? Learning can happen in so many different ways. On their journey, the children on the Polar Express were thrown here and there as the train hurtled seemingly through thin air. In Sri Lanka, a real train was picked up and thrown by waves, as if it were a toy. Something we thought was impossible became possible and real.

Guiding will have an important role to play in the Asia/Pacific Region over the next few months and years. It also has an important role to play in Canada. Our motto from the beginning has been "Be Prepared". Society demands an increasing level of risk assessment and preparedness, so that when the improbable happens, we are better able to cope and can minimize or avoid tragedy.

As we celebrate in 2005 and also look forward to our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2010, I hope that we can all learn from the events of the past year and teach our girls about compassion, understanding and support. But also, I we can all learn about being prepared to meet any challenge or unexpected event in the best possible way.

Guiding has often been on the leading edge of social change and we can be again. Let's steer our girls in the right direction and keep them on track, as we help them to prepare for life and enjoy the celebrations of our 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday.