



# Sue Mephram



by Emily Holbrook

**The Ron Judd Heart of RIMS Award recognizes the volunteer contributions of a RIMS member who serves as a role model while keeping the chapter, and hence the Society, vibrant and resilient, thereby truly exemplifying the “Heart of RIMS.”**

**W**ithin weeks of Sue Mephram beginning her career in risk management, someone from the RIMS Saskatchewan chapter—fondly known as SKRIMS—tracked her down, introducing themselves and the organization and inviting her to a chapter meeting.

“I went to my first meeting in 1996 and there was only one other woman in the room and 20 men and I was more than a bit overwhelmed,” Mephram recalled. “And when they started talking about insurance and risk, I wondered what I had gotten myself into.”

But it did not take long for Mephram to realize that if she was going to succeed in her new posi-

tion, she was going to have to rely on others in the industry, notably, those at the SKRIMS meetings. There was no internet or Google searches or online networking to fall back on. In the mid-90s, people were the only resource. With drive and ambition, Mephram used that initial meeting as a starting point for a storied and celebrated career in risk management and insurance.

## **SUCCESS IN SASKATCHEWAN**

**J**ust four months into her risk management and insurance career with the Province of Saskatchewan, Mephram worked on her first insurance claim at a post-secondary technical college with more than 7,000 students—the largest fire loss her organization had ever experienced.

“Again, the SKRIMS members came to my rescue,” she said. “Nowell Seaman—then risk manager with the University of Saskatchewan—called me the day after the loss, offering advice on adjusters and the availability of classroom space if needed.”

Within one year of being a member of SKRIMS, Mephram was asked to join the board and, as she said, “the rest is history.”

For 25 years, Mephram has served as a key member of the SKRIMS



board, volunteering in various capacities, such as chapter secretary, vice president, representative of the RIMS Canada Council (RCC)—a standing committee of RIMS—and the SKRIMS Chapter Nominating Committee, among others. And though Mephram retired from her full-time position with the Province of Saskatchewan back in 2013, she remains a committed volunteer to her chapter and RIMS to this day.

Mephram is currently focusing on her responsibilities as secretary of the Saskatoon Host Conference Committee for the 2023 RIMS Canada Conference.

"Without Sue, the conference would be difficult to plan," said Katherine Dawal, SKRIMS chapter president and Host Conference Committee co-chair. "As a co-chair for the conference, I look to Sue for everything, as she has been involved in past conferences." Dawal explained that, as a first timer with the Conference Committee, she would be "completely lost" without Mephram's assistance.

Mephram's volunteer efforts extend well beyond the chapter level, however. Her commitment to RIMS has been demonstrated during her extended term as secretary on the RCC and in her current role as secretary for the National Conference Committee (NCC), a subcommittee of the RCC, of which she has been a dedicated and instrumental member for several years.

Mephram is currently the longest-tenured volunteer of the RCC and its subcommittees, having served in a variety of capacities for more than 20 years. With her long-time involvement with RIMS at the chapter level and the national level, she has naturally assumed the mantle of both "historian" and "librarian," Dawal noted, due to a combination of her remarkable memory and her strong organizational expertise.

### NO CHALLENGE TOO BIG

**D**uring her time with the Saskatchewan government, Mephram saw her share of challenges. In her early years, she took on the task of writing the first RFP for broker services and consolidating the risk management program under one umbrella. (The program in place when Mephram was hired was with two different brokers and directly with an insurer—there was no broker intermediary.) The insurance program included property insurance for over 1,500 Government of Saskatchewan properties located in 180 communities, all of the construction projects in government buildings, a fleet of 6,000 government vehicles and a fleet of government aircraft, including executive, air ambulance and fire-fighting aircraft.

In 1999, Mephram earned her Canadian Risk Management (CRM) designation from the University of Toronto at a time when few schools offered such courses. Mephram had to complete her coursework by mailing in assignments. Comments from the instructor were only received long after participants had submitted their next assignment. Mephram was one of the first five people in the Province of Saskatchewan to earn this designation.

**Saskatchewan is well known for its volunteering spirit. I was raised to help out where I could and pay it forward and that is how I have lived my life.**

On the chapter side, one of the biggest challenges Mephram faced was securing the financial commitment from the SKRIMS board to send the chapter's RIMS delegate to the annual RIMS conference. Some board members were supportive of the idea, while others were not, resulting in healthy conflict among the members.

"Sue decided to study the idea further and contacted her fellow RCC members to see what the other chapters were doing," Dawal said. "She then put forward a proposal that included the financial impact, what the other Canadian chapters were doing and the benefit to SKRIMS."

Following what Dawal calls a "spirited discussion," the proposal passed and SKRIMS is now represented at the annual RIMS Conference House of Delegates meeting.

### PUTTING THE FUTURE OF RISK MANAGEMENT FIRST

**M**ephram has always looked for opportunities to grow the risk management profession. Through her work with the chapter nominating committee, Mephram is involved in identifying and encouraging new members—some of whom are just starting their risk management careers—to join the chapter board.

Her interest in continuing professional development led her to book a number of Risk Fellow workshops and she continues to be instrumental in bringing PERK sessions to the Saskatchewan chapter. She continuously promotes the RIMS Canada Conference to the chapters as well as the CRM designation, Risk Fellow designation and the new RIMS-CRMP certification.

Mephram also mentors both colleagues and students. During her time as a practicing risk manager, she mentored colleagues and those new to the risk management field and never hesitated to reach out to those that could assist her with a challenging issue. On the higher education side, she worked on chapter outreach with the University of Regina and Saskatchewan Polytechnical Institute to encourage student involvement in the chapter.

"The province of Saskatchewan is well known for its volunteering spirit. I was raised to help out where I could and pay it forward and that is how I have lived my life," Mephram said. "I was a successful risk manager because of my involvement with this organization. I hope that over the past 25 years, I have had a positive effect on the chapter members. From what I see with the new generation of risk managers, the chapter is in good hands and will continue to be a vibrant member- and community-focused chapter for the decades to come."

Mephram said she owes much of her career success to RIMS and her fellow risk managers that helped her along the way. "I can't imagine how my career would have progressed without the support and knowledge of my fellow risk managers," she said. "Through my volunteering at the local and national level, I developed confidence in my risk management knowledge and abilities and learned to deal with anything that came up. I also learned to tell people to take a hike in such a way that they enjoyed the journey, and that is a necessary skill in this line of work." ♦