



WI Connections

Monthly Newsletter of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada

President's Message

Joan Holtke, President

22nd National Convention And Triennial Celebration!

Monday July 5th & Tuesday July 6th, 2021 Via Zoom ...registration details to come!

Yes, it is finally going to happen, 'come hell or high water', as the saying goes. On July 5th and 6th we will be together again. The planning committee is really on the ball, making sure we have two days of fun and interesting workshops, inspirational speakers, traditional rituals and of course a review of the business that has happened over the last three years.

I want to send out bouquets and medals to the previous planning committee headed by Donna Jacks from BCWI and Elizabeth Young's group from Newfoundland and Labrador W.I. They were going to set up a fabulous event, in that province, but it unfortunately could not come to fruition.

So, Onwards and Upwards, I say! No, I cannot use that expression, as it is similar to the one that Ruth Blenkhorn created for use for member recruitment in her term as FWIC president in 2009. Congratulations, Ruth, you are a deserved candidate and recipient of the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless FWIC Woman of the Year Award for 2021.



Thank you Nova Scotia, for nominating such a deserving person, she is only one of the numbers of talented people coming from your province.

Our Connection/media committee has a great schedule of blurbs and notices coming out in the following months about our upcoming event, so watch for those on our social media sites. The creation and release of the registration form will be out soon.

I will end on that note, got a million things to do, so will leave you with my wish that everyone stays healthy, until we can meet again.

Our Diversity is our Strength submitted by Joan Holthe, President

Yes, a fine theme for our combined FWIC and Area Canada Sessions and I hope that the word diversity recalls for everyone that it means more than nationality, but, also includes the promise of everyone's talents, ages, sizes and abilities. A simplified version of what I mean would be the example of my local branch and our yearly turkey supper project. Mary always does the gravy, Joan organizes the piemaking, Judy rounds up vegetables and gets a crew to ready them, another couple cuts up the turkey, and of course, then there is the cleanup crew and a few husbands doing the door. There happens a successful event, or project because we utilized the diversity of our members. For other Branches, diversity looks completely different.

I have engaged to the extreme, the abilities of the Provincial Representatives. During these difficult two years of the Pandemic, every one of them has contributed their time and talents generously to successfully manage the business of our organization. Diverse?? You bet!!

So here is the challenge....

What does diversity look like in your Branch? How do you all use your 'gifts, talents, and personal attributes'? It is not a question we reflect on nearly enough, but why not try it in preparation for the 22nd Annual Convention (Triennial Convention)? And speaking of time and talents...what sort of numbers do your members come up with for volunteering?

Please send your comments to me, and we will summarize in the next issue of WI Connections.

Please forward to Angela.Scott@bellaliant.net



Congratulations Ruth

It is with great pleasure that the Community, Culture & Heritage Committee sends their congratulations to Ruth Blenkhorn, recipient of the prestigious

Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Canadian Woman of the Year Award.

Nominated by Eleanor Lilley, President of Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia, Ruth has emulated the qualities of Adelaide and has inspired others with her leadership skills in both the Women's Institutes and serving her community. She has been a member of WI for over 30 years, holding positions at the local, district,

provincial, national (a Past President of Federated Women's Institutes of Canada) and international levels. Ruth is currently a Regional Director of WINS.



Here are some excerpts from the letters of recommendation:

Ruth is a great promoter of WI, enthusiastic worker, keeps us informed of what is going on nationally and internationally and encourages us to think beyond ourselves. ...She has great leadership skills but with a humble attitude." I have been pleased to write this note and offer my vote that Ruth Blenkhorn be considered for her passionate, committed, and leadership skills for the volunteer of the year award." ***Elizabeth Johnson, President of Port Williams Women's Institute***

Ruth has my deepest admiration and respect and I am delighted to provide a recommendation for her candidacy for WI's "Woman of the Year" award 2021." ***Judith A (Judy) Parks, Cambridge. NS***

"Adelaide Hoodless was a woman of vision. Ruth shares that trait. Ruth Blenkhorn merits the recognition of her leadership and dedication in being the recipient of the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Woman of the Year Award." ***Ellen McLean, Past President WINS, FWIC, ACWW***

Ellen's Corner

Ellen McLean has been an active WI member for close to seventy years. Over that time, she has served in many roles including President of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) and President of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). Testimony to her excellent leadership and service, Ellen has received a honorary doctorate degree from St. Francis Xavier University, been inducted to the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame, received the Order of Canada as well as being the first recipient of the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Women of the Year.



In “normal” times plans would have been completed or been well underway for our provincial Women’s Institutes’ Conventions or Annual General Meetings. And our membership would be looking forward to those events- the opportunity to meet with friends from other parts of the province, to receive inspiration from the guest speakers, discussion on finances, plans for the next year and Resolutions. However, with restrictions as they are, those responsible for the planning are faced with quite a challenge to have a virtual Meeting and cover everything that the Agendas for an Annual Meeting require

I think that I have read and heard the word “advocacy” more in recent years than ever before. We can be very proud that our Women’s Institutes have been advocating for change since they were organized. Our members have seen issues and been concerned about all that impacted their homes and families and communities. And doing that has been by adopting Resolutions which have been forwarded to our policy and decision makers in Government. Over the years I have heard members say “Resolutions, not again” or, “what is the point, little changes” or, “do we have to listen to all that discussion”. One important reason for researching the issue, drafting a carefully worded Resolution and sending it to the persons who can do something about it, is that we show that we are still a voice for rural women who are very concerned about what is happening, or not happening around them. It would be an interesting research project to go through all the Minute Books of the Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada and learn all about the issues the Resolutions have dealt with since 1919.

The report of the founding Convention of FWIC in Winnipeg in 1919 shows that the members of the Women’s Institutes across Canada were already being advocates for change. A uniform divorce law for all the provinces, equal parental rights, a clean bill of health before marriage, equal pay for equal work for women were each approved in Resolutions passed unanimously by the new Dominion organization. Other Resolutions included that the anti-loafing law and the registration act be made enactments of the country and that the age of consent be raised from 16 to 21. The Committee on Legislation was instructed to investigate conditions surrounding and laws dealing with wife desertion, of which there is an appalling number of cases, delegates asserted, the state becoming liable for the support of deserted

families. The federation also decided to conduct an investigation into the alleged corner on “foodstuffs in the Dominion.” That was our founders advocating for change. Since I started writing this I had a chat with a non WI member, but someone who is very much an agent for change. She ended our chat with the words “Do you really feel that Resolutions can make a difference?” Now that could be a topic for debate or discussion at your next Branch Meeting.

*22nd WI Canada FWIC National Convention (Triennial Convention)
Tentative Schedule of Events.*

Registration to open soon - \$25.00 each

Presentation 1 July 5th	Draw the Circle Wide – Women Leading the World
Plenary Session 1 July 5th	Opening Ceremonies
Presentation July 5th	Advocacy & Writing Resolutions
Presentation July 6th	The Mindful Way to Self-Care
Plenary Session 2 July 6th	Business & Installation of New Officers



22nd National Convention

WI Canada FWIC Triennial Convention

Plan now to attend and hear from our keynote speaker,

Professor Linda Ambrose.

“The latest piece of my life story has to do with the: The Laurentian University 2018-2023 Strategic Plan launched on January 17, 2018. In my role as Special Advisor to the President, I guided the process of developing our strategic plan for the next five years.

Before I was involved with strategic planning, I was (and still am!) a History Professor.

I have been teaching Canadian History in the History Department at Laurentian since 1994. My areas of expertise include women's history, gender history and family history. I am an active researcher with publications on rural women's organizations, (specifically the Women's Institute movement), biography (*A Great Rural Sisterhood: Madge Robertson Watt and the ACWW* is my latest book with U of T Press, 2015), and Canadian Pentecostalism (my current project). I belong to several professional associations including the Canadian Historical Association (CHA), the Ontario Women's History Network (OWHN), the Canadian Committee on Women's History (CCWH), the Rural Women's Studies Association (RWSA), the Agricultural History Society (AHS), the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), and the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (GloPent).



LaurentianUniversity
Université Laurentienne

Exploring the possibilities of Women's Institutes submitted by Mary Shortt

April in Ontario

As we are all aware the Pandemic has disrupted our lives and presented many difficulties and one of the main is meeting and exchanging personal experiences and thoughts. Covid-19 shows that, as soon as there is a strong enough reason, things can change, and it has awakened the chance to explore alternate ways to communicate and many are doing things they never thought they would. Hesitancy to use virtual options has disappeared almost as fast as vaccine hesitancy! Using Video communication platforms – like Zoom – has opened the doors to relatively inexpensive meetings/gatherings and our Ontario Board of Directors have become quite adept at holding monthly meetings using this technology in some form over the past 12 months.

Our Membership committee has been holding ZOOM BLOOMER gatherings over the past 12 months with fun topics and an increasing number attending. This spring during a meeting with one of our departments the use of 'breakout rooms' in Zoom was discussed. The idea developed into holding an 'open house' where each department would host a 'room' and be prepared to do a presentation or discussion with members who wished to attend. This did present a large learning curve for us as most did not have much experience. By attending similar events of other organizations, we got the general idea on how to use it.

EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES of WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

**You're invited to our
VIRTUAL
OPEN HOUSE**

April 29 2021 7:00 P.M.

Online meeting via Zoom



Over a period of a couple of weeks the following was developed:

EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES ROOMS:

Growing WI-Membership

What do you want from Education – Education

Preserving our History – Tweedsmuir

Exploring Our WI Virtual World- Digitizing

Connecting Women Worldwide with Common Causes – Advocacy & ACWW; Erland Lee Museum Committee.

Each presenter would be prepared for about 20 minutes per session. Some had video & slide shows with questions after, some set up questions to generate discussion. There was a brief introduction at the beginning and at the end of 2 hours we ended the sessions and thanked everyone. We prepared a 'poll' with a couple of simple questions and received positive feedback.

We used Eventbrite to help with registration and some promotion along with our Facebook page, Website, and newsletter to let members know about it. We recorded about 95 registrations (free) with 75 attending. Attendees could choose where they wished to go and there was a 3-minute warning sent out before it was time to end the session and move onto another. Presenters all report how fun it was to engage with the members, discussing each of the topics and sharing important information. The attendees also loved the experience of chatting with each other, and several were taking what they had learned back to their branches.

Overall, it was thought to be successful. There were glitches and a few things to change before the next time but after discussion we know there will be a next time. There were many ideas on how this could be used to benefit and engage with our members. The biggest questions now are how often!



EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Join us as we move from room to room in our Virtual Open House!

- . Have your say about education opportunities in WI with Elaine Tulley
- . How to grow the WI with Sue Cushing
- . Explore our WI Digital World with Linda Mitchell and Irene Robillard
- . Connecting Women Worldwide in Common Causes with Anne Innes & Valerie Smith
- . Preserving our history with Florence Butcher & Evelyn Peck
- . Meet the Erland Lee Museum Committee

Come join WI members as we move from room to room.
Bring your questions and comments, we want to hear from you.

Final thought – “I know this Pandemic will end and we will all be changed forever including WI and I hope it will be stronger and better ready to meet the future for home and country.” Mary Shortt President, FWIO



International Peace Gardens

Manitoba / North Dakota



WI Canada FWIC

- Joan Holthe, President
- Margaret Byl, President Elect
- Jill Copes, BC Executive
- Linda Mason, AB Executive
- Lynn MacLean, NS Executive
- Karen Gerwing, SK
- Denise Joss, MB
- Mary Shortt, ON
- Judy Page Jones QC
- Angela Scott, NB
- Miriam Lank, PE
- Elizabeth Young NL



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