

A Seminar For Indian Women

A condensation of an article by Mrs. B. Cochrane, Secretary, Country Women's Council (U.S.A.)

A National (U.S.A.) Seminar for Indian women was held at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, in August, 1970. Sixty-eight Indian women representing forty-three tribes from twenty-three states attended and voted to create the North American Indian Women's Association.

Mrs. Eugene Survant, A.C.W.W. Area Vice-President, U.S.A., attended the Conference and assisted in the formation of the new organization. Mrs. James M. Cox of Oklahoma, a Comanche Indian, was elected the first President. She is a gifted woman who has helped the Smithsonian Institute in Washington set up a display of Indian costume — she attended President Nixon's inaugural ball. It was planned to hold their 1971 annual meeting in Oklahoma.

A complete program had been planned, based on Education, Employment, Environment and Health as these were problems common to most tribal communities. The program was loosely structured and delegates soon realized this was to enable them to change or add to the program to meet their interests and desires.

Every effort was made to encourage participation of delegates and stimulate their leadership qualities. With the development of trust and confidence, problems were freely discussed in small groups as well as in general sessions. Topics of paramount importance were: (1) lack of employment on Indian Reservations; (2) lack of recreational facilities and Youth Activities; (3) need for improvement of Community facilities; (4) the need for care of the aged who are left on the Reservations when the young people leave to obtain employment; (5) problems caused by the abuse of drugs and alcohol which go hand in hand with unemployment; (6) pollution of streams, affecting yield of fish for food; (7) use of pesticides that contaminate wild fruits and berries and reduce bee population, thus cutting the honey harvest (all foods that are staple diets on some reservations). Airing these stimulated discussions and many possible solutions and means of approaching problems were presented. As one delegate said, 'We can work to solve problems we recognize as such — the dangerous problems are those we don't recognize'.

Each delegate was given equal opportunity to explain and exhibit examples of her tribal crafts and culture. The differences in these were minor and due largely to physical environment. Essentially all were similar and were for the health, comfort, enjoyment and well-being of the tribe. These experiences cemented a close bond of friendship and respect among the delegates.

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The Secretary of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario received the following letter of thanks from Mrs. Mungo Barr, Honorary Treasurer of the Associated Country Women of the World after Mrs. Zoeller presented a "Pennies For Friendship" cheque at the A.C.W.W. Council meeting in London, England, September 1970.

Dear Mrs. Miller: I was thrilled and delighted when Mrs. Zoeller gave me the most generous cheque for Pennies For Friendship and listen to say a very big Thank You for your members' generous co-operation.

Will you please tell everyone how much we appreciate your support.

The official receipt is enclosed.

It has been so nice having some of our overseas friends with us during these very busy but I hope happy days.

With renewed thanks to all, the best of good wishes in your many projects.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Barr, Hon. Treasurer.

ENTRIES TO GO ON AND BE JUDGED AND ANNOUNCEMENT MADE IN 1971 AT THE OSLO CONFERENCE.

Place Mat Class No. 1, 18 x 12 needlework and embroidery

- 1—Mrs. Julia Parker, R.R. 1, Cobourg
- 2—Mrs. Charles Wallace, Metcalfe
- 3—Mrs. Paul Pederson, R.R. 1, Fingert

Place Mat Class 3 2, 18 x 12 weaving

Mrs. H. Neely, R.R. 8, London

Essay My Countryside, To-day and Tomorrow

- 1—Mrs. C. Y. Tilden, R.R. 3, Lambeth
- 2—Mrs. W. J. Stauffer, Box 236, Stittsville.