

Laura Rose organized first five branches

At the centre of Canada lies Thunder Bay, a city also known for its large inland port, its giant ski jump Big Thunder and more recently the monument which marks the end of Terry Fox's marathon.

Thunder Bay is also the home of two Women's Institute districts - Thunder Bay North and Thunder Bay South.

Thunder Bay South extends from the United States border in the south to the middle of the City of Thunder Bay in the north. Lake Superior is to the east and the Thunder Bay District border lies to the west. Highways 11 and 17 divide the district which features some dairy farming and cash cropping as well as the forestry industry and some light manufacturing.

According to district president Rebecca Johnson, Thunder Bay people are warm and friendly. A past FWIO president from Thunder Bay South, Edith Purcell agrees. "We used to be one big happy family, before Thunder Bay was divided into two districts, north and south. Now, we have an annual rally for both districts which brings our members together again," she explained.

The first WI branches in Thunder Bay District were formed in June, 1906 by Laura Rose, who travelled up from Toronto to organize the

women. At that time, five branches were created and the members were represented at the Toronto-Hamilton Convention. In 1921 however, Thunder Bay became part of the Northern Ontario Area and began meeting in Fort Frances each fall.

In 1959, Thunder Bay was split into two districts and the rally was initiated then. Mrs. Purcell explained Thunder Bay South district maintains a Tweedsmuir History and co-ordinates the 4-H work in the region. Scholarships are an important part of district business, but many of the special programs and projects are carried out at the branch level, she added. There are 10 branches in Thunder Bay South District, they are; East Fort William, North

Blake, O'Connor, Pearson-Pardee, Rosslyn, Slate River, South Neebing, Stanley, Vickers Heights, West Fort William.

In 1981, The Women's Institutes provided leadership for sewing the costumes for the opening and closing ceremonies of Jeux Canada Games in Thunder Bay. They also prepared a special cookbook which they sold and a quilt. The proceeds from these projects went towards providing daycare during the games.

Mrs. Purcell stressed Thunder Bay South District is not a moneymaking group, but rather an organization which provides learning opportunities for its members. "Being a Women's Institute member develops stature and strength," she added.



Thunder Bay South District is located east of Lake Superior and north of the United States border.



A young Thunder Bay woman was the recipient of this year's FWIO Hoodless-Lee Scholarship. Rachel Johnson (centre) was awarded the \$175 scholarship by FWIO board director Jeanne Davies (left) and Ann Hankinson, rural organization specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Thunder Bay. Rachel received the award for outstanding work in 4-H and will use it to further her education as a developmental services student at Confederation College.