

From Rainbow Country



By Elsie Stephenson

Good day from Rainbow Country! The fall foliage of red, orange and yellow was spectacular. Snow has now covered the barren trees and ground.

The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) Board Meeting was held from July 9 to 12 in Brantford. At the meeting, I suggested a national project to help people in Northern Canada. At the FWIC Board Meeting in November the Executive members chose to adopt a northern community and the title of the project is "FWIC - Into the North." The project will be launched early in 2005. The FWIC Convention will be held in Red Deer, Alberta, from June 14 to 17, 2006.

The "ROSES are Blooming" Forum on August 20 to 21 at Georgian College in Barrie was well planned by Julie Wheeler, the ROSE Program Manager, and her ROSE team. At the opening ceremonies the Provincial Board challenged the members to become "Blue Hatters for WI" and to wear their blue hats to every WI function. The Manitoba WI News reprinted from our Fall 2004 *Home & Country* the "Join the Blue Hat Challenge" article written by Rose Marie Smith. Perhaps there will be blue hats from sea to sea to sea!

Ontario - what a vast and beautiful province! I travelled to 12 Area Conventions from Bergland in the west to Huntsville in the north and from Ridgeway in the south to St. Bernardin in the east. Programming ranged from prescription drugs to fashion accessories, from the Ombudsman to the movie "Calendar Girls." But one thing remained constant - "friendship." At the conventions, I announced that the Provincial Board had decided that open Provincial Officers' positions will be nominated at Area Conventions in 2005

using a similar format to the one currently used for the Provincial President-Elect.

At the FWIO Provincial Conference in Oshawa the Ontario Historical Society presented the Scadding Award of Excellence to all past and present Tweedsmuir Coordinators. At the Area Conventions I had the privilege of presenting each Branch in the province with a copy of the Scadding Award and a letter of congratulations. Keep up the good work Tweedsmuir Coordinators!

During the Area Conventions, I was presented with cheques for "Focus High for WI" for the Erland Lee (Museum) Home Operating Fund. Monies raised from March 1 to October 31 totalled \$17,200. This money will be used to do much needed repairs to the Lee Home. FWIO thanks and applauds the members for their overwhelming generosity.

At the Erland Lee (Museum) Home Annual Meeting on November 25, the Lee Committee planned the events for 2005. Activities from January to June include a lecture during Heritage Week in February on the Vinemount Community and the WI, a Teddy Bear Making Workshop on March 17 and 18, a Pancake Breakfast on April 2, a Ladies Day Out on April 23, the Stoney Creek Spring Blossom Art Tour on May 28 and 29 and a June Luncheon and Murder Mystery on June 8. The 2005 Lee Committee Executive are Chair Mary Whitwell, Secretary Lynda Brooker and Treasurer Marian Austin.

The Erland Lee Award of Appreciation is presented by FWIC to a man who most exemplifies those qualities of Erland Lee, which led to the founding of the WI. Ontario is entitled to two nominations per year. See page 9 of the Spring/Summer 2004 edition of the *Home & Country* for details.

At the November Provincial Board Meeting, the Provincial Policies, Roles and Responsibilities and the FWIO *Handbook* revisions were reviewed. One copy of the revised *Handbook* insert will be sent to each Branch, District and Area in the spring. FWIO is offering Areas a workshop on the *Handbook* at the 2005 Area Conventions. Christine Reaburn, a member of the Handbook Committee, will cover the changes and the layout and why they were made. The Auditor presented a draft of FWIO's audited Financial Statements for the year ending September 30, 2004. It was the first time since 1998 (when the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food gave FWIO a final grant of \$8,000) that there was not a deficit. Copies of the final Financial Statements will be forwarded to Branches, Districts and Areas either by email or mail.

Since 1996, FWIO has recognized the significant contribution made by a woman in agriculture at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair by presenting her with the prestigious Woman of Excellence in Agriculture Award. Unfortunately, there were no nominations this past year. Refer to the Spring/Summer 2004 edition of the *Home & Country* for details on how to nominate a deserving woman for this Award.

I would like to thank all of the Women's Institute members who so graciously hosted me in their homes during the Area Conventions. Your thoughtfulness will always stay with me.

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