

The Quilt of Belonging



Well we found it! A perfect summer excursion. We had the buzz from other WI groups that had gone on this excursion that it was a local “gem” not to be overlooked. It was a Canadian moment! It was a trip to the “Quilt of Belonging” in Williamstown, Ontario. This quilt actually has a reserved spot for every noted ethnic and aboriginal cultural group in Canada represented by a minimum of one person. Each of the 273 groups has been invited to produce a handmade textile block that would best represent their unique and varied cultural contribution to the “Canadian fabric.”

“The tapestry will be approximately 140 feet long by 12 feet high,” says Ester Bryan, the coordinator of the project. Each panel is about 12 x 12 feet with each single block being 11 inches square. The design of each block is up to the group represented and is created by them in their traditional needlework techniques, symbols and colours. Not being limited to a traditional quilt formula, the door was opened for a truly creative use of quilts, beads, moose hair, charms, leather, fur and the more traditional needlework flosses. Each block is so different from the next, and each has a flavour unique to the moral and cultural values of the group it represents.

The inspiration of artist Ester Bryan, the quilt project is now a registered non-profit organization with charitable status. Ester told us that she wanted this project to represent the make up of



Russell Village members are being shown quilt blocks that are stored and waiting to be quilted.

Canada. What better way than in a quilt which has always symbolized our cultural history in Canada. Esther’s brochure says it best: “This is an invitation to celebrate together the beauty, complexity and sheer size of our Canadian story. Artists, craftspeople, school children, ethnic groups and communities from across Canada will work together to show a path from separateness to whole to belonging!”

So, as I said, this is a perfect summer excursion through picturesque countryside to the Williamstown Township Hall where the quilt is being stored and worked on by volunteers from all walks of life. Although the cost is free, donations are accepted. Esther’s introduction is inspiring and the quilt itself is magical. To book a tour, contact Esther at 1-877-347-2381 or email info@invitationproject.ca

Submitted by Jean Williams, Russell Village WI, Russell, Eastern Area.

Stories-To-Go

- Combining the Love of Reading and the World of Agriculture



Enhancing the literacy skills of children and adults is a goal of the Women’s Institutes of Nova Scotia (WINS). In 1998, the Federated Women’s Institutes of

Canada (FWIC) initiated the LINKS program – Linking Institutes and Neighbours with Knowledge and Skills. LINKS gave WINS members the skills to learn how to identify literacy needs in the rural community. WINS felt that literacy issues could be promoted more easily to the rural public if there was a common theme for the project. Because agriculture affects everyone, it was chosen as the theme for their new resource project for children called Stories-To-Go.

What is Stories-To-Go?

It is a resource bag that holds a collection of learning tools and activities designed for children up to Grade 3. Each bag includes a good quality children’s book with an agricultural theme, agricultural activity sheets, puppets, literacy activity sheets, an

adult guide, additional resources, and many other interactive items that children will enjoy. Teachers and parents can use these items to encourage role-playing, reading and discussions about agriculture and rural life.

The use of these resources not only enhances the literacy skills of children, but also of adults. The distribution of 250 Stories-To-Go Kits took place between September 2002 and March 2003. Branch and District Women’s Institutes were given a number of Kits to place at various venues in their area. This project not only brings adults and children together through the love of reading, it helps to develop a better understanding of agriculture and an appreciation for rural living.