



HOME & COUNTRY is published quarterly by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO). This newsletter has two objectives:

1. To provide educational material which cultivates more knowledgeable and responsible citizens and promotes good family life skills, leadership development and community action.
2. To provide a "communications link" among all members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario and other related organizations.

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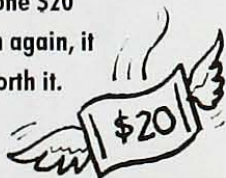
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Letters

Dear Editor:

Last year, there was a proposal to change the name of our organization.

Why? The issue that needs to be considered is what the public thinks of our name.

I surveyed 15 women aged 30 to 50 who knew little about the Women's Institute to get their impressions. They commented that the WI was a group of older women who gathered to chat and visit over a cup of tea. They suggested the word Institute was antiquated and rarely used. And that it presented a formal, rigid and school-like image, resistant to change.

Indeed, these are all valid reasons why our name is often not well-received.

One must remember, however, that this group of women I surveyed does not have the same background that our members do. They belong to a generation of women that did not automatically join the WI. They are not aware of the positive Women's Institute experience. Instead, they fall back on their impressions and they wonder if there is any value in or significance to a group whose name is seen as irrelevant, dated and passé.

Difficulties with our name are compounded when, as members, we try to explain what the Women's Institute is all about in current terms. It is no wonder the public is confused. People are reluctant to join a group that doesn't relay a clear, coherent message.

Originally, our name did not have this discrepancy. Institute meant a place where one could receive expert instruction and vital information. It connotes an early model of education popular in the early decades of the 20th century. The name had a strong appeal to rural women who took advantage of a rare opportunity to educate themselves.

Our organization's approach to educating its members has changed in the last half of this century. It entails a wider manner of learning, including problem solving, weighing fact and opinion and implementing what was learned. This is what we need to communicate in our name.

We must ask ourselves if the word Institute follows the basic rules of good communication. Does it send a message that is clear and concise? Does it communicate who we are and what we are about? Does the word Institute invoke stereotypes? Is the word relevant today?

I propose that our organization adopt a synonym for the word Institute. I am proposing that we adopt: **WI – Women Informed, Women Involved, Women of Influence**

Anita Evans, PRO, Bethesda-Reach WI, 1997-1999

Respond to Anita Evans at the following mailing address: 658 Simcoe St. N., Apt. 9, Oshawa ON L1G 4V4.

The Millennium Tree



For their millennium project, the Bethesda-Reach WI presented a red maple tree to the Uxbridge Secondary School graduating class to plant on school property. Branch President Barbara Rane (far right) and Secretary Margaret Bruce (second from right) pose with the class.

Submitted by Doreen Brethour, PRO, Bethesda-Reach WI, Ontario.