

Joy Guild
Women's Editor



Between Ourselves

LIKELY there are few of you who have not heard of — or had some contact with — the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, the organization of farm women that stretches not only from our Atlantic to Pacific, but which has spread into other countries, too. Canada has had branches established in every province for almost 70 years and their good works have left indelible marks of improvement on Canadian farm life.

It's pointless to catalogue their many projects here, because likely you have benefited from them yourselves. But in recent years the Ins-ti-tutes have turned their attention to Canada's North and have established groups among the Eskimo and Indian women in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Fortunately the Institutes resisted any impulse to attack the project with missionary zeal which, though commendable for its enthusiasm, is not always realistic. Instead, Institute organizers realized that though the Eskimo and Indian families have much to learn in their changing world, "there is much they should preserve and share," according to Florence Eadie, a field organizer. Consequently the programs and meetings conducted by our northern sisters would amaze the traditionalist in Canada's South. Like those at Reindeer Station, for example.

The Institute there organized familiar projects such as sewing bees, where clothing is made for residents of the Old People's Home in Ak-lavik. They've attended health talks and food demonstrations. But the rest of their program is quite a different matter. Take their annual Reindeer Day, as a sample.

This is the day when residents of other northern communities come by snow and air to view the hundreds of reindeer in their winter quarters. This influx of visitors gives the Institutes an opportunity to raise funds through the sale of handicrafts. According to the Northern Lights Bulletin, the weather was perfect at the last Reindeer Day, though too warm and wet for a demonstration of igloo building. Visitors camped by the frozen lake, then strolled about to see the handmade dolls Institute members had for sale and the reindeer horn carvings the men had contributed. Apparently the Institute members' husbands are their enthusiastic boosters, for they provided dog teams to take visitors onto the lake for a closer look at the herds before coming back to refreshments of reindeer soup, reindeer sandwiches, hot tea or coffee. And lots of conversation. Indeed the programs of all the northern W. I.'s are unique, interesting and practical, as Jeanne Wayling tells in her adjoining article. It gives a revealing glimpse of how they've adapted the Institute program to their own needs.

The Institutes have another group which they have welcomed warmly. In Nova Scotia the Acaciaville Institute has the distinction of being the only one in Canada composed of Negro women. And an active group they are. The group had its start back in 1962 when the Acaciaville Community Betterment Association was formed. The women, watching this stirring of community spirit, voiced the opinion that they, too, wanted a wider horizon and an opportunity to participate in some way. The Institute seemed the answer. Under the spirited guidance of home economist Yvonne Chisason and Mrs. Florence Hilehey, Supervisor of Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia, the Acacia-ville group was organized. And never looked back.

One of their first projects was an unqualified success — a variety concert that was so popular the members were asked to repeat it for their church. This may not have been the first time the community had worked together as a whole, but it did serve to point up the ef-fects of the organization taking hold, said one member, because they were getting to know one another. Since then they have taken on many projects — attending talks and demonstrations on food manage-ment and homemaking; classes in rug-making. Such was their zest, they convinced their husbands to help them beautify the local cemetery that had been long neglected. Through W. I. activity they've acquired several books for the community library. They've sent delegates to provincial annual conventions to discuss projects and mutual problems with Institute members from other parts of the province.

Their future plans are ambitious — to instigate a proper sewage system for the area and organize adult education classes. But even more important, Negro women who previously had little contact with one another have been brought together with other Institute members to discuss mutual problems. And to try to solve them, together.

Joy Guild



Mrs. Lizzie Stewart and Sarah Rufus, Eskimo delegates to first Northern Canada W.I. convention in Inuvik, present drum dance.

The W. I.
Moves North

By Jeanne Wayling

PHOTOS BY D. G. SUTHERLAND

AN EXCITING tale of trapping wolverines in Canada's northland, a report on fishing in the eastern Arctic, an account of how the white man first brought whiskey to the North, these are a few of the fascinating stories told at Reindeer Station Women's Institute meetings by Eskimo members.

Their popularity is evident in the attendance record set last winter, a full house each month. "A different member is appointed to tell a story about life in the North at each meeting," says Mrs. Sheena Thomas, former secretary of this branch. "The stories have been a most successful part of our program because they bring every member into the circle."

Reindeer Station is an Eskimo settlement north of the Arctic Circle. A Women's Institute branch was organized there in 1964 by Mrs. Florence Eadie, a part-time field worker for the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

"The Western world has moved in on the people of the North," says Miss Eadie. "It is most important that the Eskimo and Indian be accepted in this new and bewildering world, not only as people who have much to learn, but as individuals who have much to preserve and share with other Canadians."

The Northern Canada Women's Institutes which have been most suc-cessful bear out this philosophy. At one meeting, when wash-day hints were discussed, an Eskimo member explained how to wash leather mukluks. At

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