

**SELF-PROFILE:**



# Designing & Weaving the FWIO Tartan

*By Nelda Morrison*

I was born and raised in Beamsville, Ontario, and farmed with my husband, John, after we married in 1950. Even though raising three sons and farm work filled my days, my yearning to have a loom of my own didn't go away. My mother wove with linen quite extensively as a young girl; it was the custom then to make a dowry, by hand if possible. I had discovered as a young girl that weaving was an exciting, fulfilling craft. This conviction was reinforced after taking a short course in weaving in 1968.

However, I did find time to join the Union Branch of the Women's Institute in 1957. As well as having held most Branch offices, I was President of the Lincoln District in the early 1970s and of the Hamilton Area in the late 1970s.

After moving to Utterson in the Muskoka District in 1982, I joined Falkenburg WI. Even after my move to Bracebridge four years later, I remained with this Branch. After they disbanded, however, I joined the South Macauley WI. I try to be as active as time allows, participating at Branch and District level and attending provincial and national conventions when possible.

Following the loss of my husband in 1988, I purchased my first loom. I felt life had a new purpose. I immersed myself in weaving books and periodicals and took short courses on weaving and seminars in basketry. In June of 1994, I approached the FWIO President at that time, Donna Russett, expressing my wish to design and weave a tartan to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the WI.

I began the project in January 1996. By the end of February the colours began to fit together. I warped my loom and began to weave. I was pleased with the results. A sample was taken to the Spring Board meeting of the FWIO. In order to register the tartan with the proper authorities, a letter of approval was sent from the FWIO Provincial Office with the tartan sample to the Scottish Tartans Authority in Pitlochry, Scotland. The Certificate of Registration and a sample of the original tartan was presented to the FWIO Board of Directors at the August meeting.

The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario Tartan will be commercially woven and made available to members throughout Ontario. It is my hope that in 1997 members will proudly wear articles made from the new Tartan to Convention '97 celebrations commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institutes.

**The colours in the FWIO Tartan symbolize the following:**  
**White** - snow and clouds  
**Gold** - golden grain that sustained Ontario families in early years  
**Green** - beautiful verdure so evident throughout Ontario  
**Red** - red fruits grown in southern areas  
**Blue** - cornflowers and other cultivated and wild flowers  
**Black** - the trail of the black walnut that led early settlers to Southern Ontario

*Nelda Morrison is the designer and weaver of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario Tartan. She is currently a member of the South Macauley WI in the Muskoka South District.*

