

The Women's Institute



For Home and Country

# The Women's Institute Celebrating 100 Years

On February 19, 1897 a group of women met in Stoney Creek, Ontario. From this meeting came the organization of the first Women's Institute branch. Throughout the past 100 years the Women's Institute has become a worldwide organization of women striving to improve their homes and communities.

The 9 branches that make up Prince Edward District Women's Institute are celebrating this centennial with the following activities. Anyone wishing to join with us on February 19, 1997 or to learn more about the Women's Institute organization please call 968-3320, 393-2052, or 476-5125.

**Cherry Valley** will meet at 1 p.m. at Athol Twp. Hall in Cherry Valley for special centennial celebrations.

**Hillier, Consecon, Wellington** will celebrate together at Hillier Township Hall at 1 p.m. with a commemorative program and special centennial menu. Former W.I. members, interested friends and neighbors most welcome. Wear a centennial costume if you wish.

**Demorestville and Gilberts Mills** invite you to a Centennial Tea from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Christian Education Centre, Friendship United Church, Demorestville.

**Rednersville and Mountain View** will be meeting at Cunningham House in Ameliasburg at 5:30 p.m. for supper followed by commemorative program.

## Women's Institute celebrates 100th anniversary

*PICTON GAZETTE FEB 15 1997*

### *Survival attributed to simple goal of fulfilling members' needs*

Over 15,000 women are expected to gather in homes and community halls across Ontario to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 1997. An agenda for those branch meetings was designed by a committee from the Eastern Area of Ontario to celebrate the impressive history of the

Women's Institute.

On Feb. 19, 1897, 101 women and one man, Eriand Lee, met at Squires Hall in Stoney Creek. The outcome of this meeting was the organization of the first Branch of the Women's Institute in the world. The WI's grew steadily across Canada, and today offers women the vehicle and the

environment to make decisions which will improve the quality of life for themselves, their families, their communities and the world.

Throughout the past 100 years, not only has the Institute developed the personal growth of its members, but it has also been instrumental in initiating government legislation to

protect the environment, and the citizens of Canada.

Survival of the organization for 100 years can be attributed to its very simple goal to fulfil its members' needs. Despite constant changes through the decades, the WI throughout the world continues to adapt to meet the new challenges.

## From horse and buggy to space shuttle

Convention chair Peggy Knapp has announced that the keynote speaker for the Women's Institute (WI) Centennial Celebrations in June will be Dr. Roberta Bondar. Bondar will address the expected 4,000 delegates celebrating the 100th anniversary of the formation of the first WI branch in Hamilton on Saturday, June 21.

The theme of the convention is *Indebted to the Past; Committed to the Future*. In her announcement, Knapp noted, "The symbolism of the change from horse and buggy days at the turn of the century to the present space age is profound." In February, 1897, Erland and Janet Lee travelled by horse and buggy, inviting women who had no public voice, to a meeting where Adelaide Hoodless suggested an organization where they could meet and learn from each other, thus developing their minds and their practical skills. These women were facing the changes brought on by the industrial revolution. In the 100 years of the history of the WI, society and the WI have undergone many changes; those being faced today are a result of the tremendous advances in science and technology, as illustrated by the space travel of Roberta Bondar.

WI is an international organization for personal growth and community action.

Bondar is a national role model who is a proponent of higher education for females in particular. She believes it is critical that Canadians, young and old, embrace science just to live in this world. Dr. Bondar, Canada's first woman in space aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* in 1992, is at present conducting research into the effects of weightlessness on the blood flow to the brain; she is doing this research at the University of Western Ontario in London.

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*the County Guide, Feb. 22, 1997*

## Our View

### Rural force

This week Federated Women's Institutes all over the County celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Institute.

The W.I. idea started with one small meeting a hundred years ago, but the idea was quickly embraced in rural areas where the local W.I. meeting was often the only place where women, normally isolated, had a chance to meet with other women.

The social aspects were profound for these women. It was a place of comfort, a place of communication, but even more importantly, a place of challenge.

Whether it was providing practical, matter-of-fact support for those in need, or addressing an issue that was impacting on their communities, the W.I. was one of those rare, early places where women found their voices and learned about strength in numbers.

The W.I.'s political agenda has remained the same over the last 100 years - making their communities a better place for themselves, their children and their neighbours. Did you know, for example, that mandatory stopping for school buses with flashing lights exists because the Women's Institute worked tirelessly for it? In the political world, this may seem a small victory, but the W.I. has always realized that every journey begins with one step.

For the women who have been involved in the W.I. over its hundred years, the Institute has provided a forum for their personal growth as well. Many rural women have written that the W.I. meeting was a place where their horizons were expanded and where they began to realize their potential for the first time.

Here's to another 100 years of working "For Home and Country".

