

# Fast Facts about the Women's Institutes

The Women's Institutes are a unique organization which provides many opportunities for learning, leadership, friendship, travel and involvement in a variety of issues and interests.

## OBJECTIVES

- to assist and encourage women to become more knowledgeable and responsible citizens
- to promote and develop good family life skills
- to help discover, stimulate and develop leadership
- to help identify and resolve needs in the community

## STRUCTURE

The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) is a non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-racial organization whose motto is "For Home and Country". It operates for the equal good of all citizens in a democratic manner.

FWIO is made up of 12 000 members (1998) in 790 branches across the province.

It is the largest member, numerically, of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC), the national body which coordinates the ten provincial units and initiates nationwide programs.

FWIO and FWIC are constituent societies of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). This is the international organization of Women's Institutes and other organizations with common aims and objectives. The ACWW does everything possible to work towards a better and more united world by furthering friendship and mutual understanding between peoples of all nations.

## HISTORY

The first Women's Institute was formed in 1897 in Stoney Creek, Ontario. Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, a tireless campaigner for better education for women, and Erland Lee, a prominent broadminded farmer were its co-founders. The original constitution was penned by Janet Lee, wife of Erland Lee. The FWIO purchased the Lee home in 1972; today, it is known as the

The Women's Institute movement spread quickly. In 1919 the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada formed to unite women across the country, creating an umbrella organization to coordinate the various provincial organizations. In 1921, the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario was legally recognized as Ontario's provincial governing body.

Similar women's movements were taking place in other countries. A Canadian, Mrs. Madge Watt, foresaw the possibility and advantage of uniting the world's rural women to improve their welfare and home life through a closer association. After the failure of several previous attempts, she founded the first British Women's Institute in 1915. In 1933, she was elected president of the Associated Country Women of the World by delegates from 34 countries.