

Young rural community leaders could benefit

By Marie Zettler
Editor

Young rural community leaders could be the beneficiaries of a memorial gift presented to the North Renfrew District Women's Institute (WI) at their annual meeting May 15.

President Julie Thur accepted a cheque for \$1,000 from Dawnalda Sutherland, who gave the money in honour of her mother,

the late Hazel Davis, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute.

"Although I do not wish the WI to be burdened by a very specific stipulation for the use of this money, I would kindly suggest that the WI donate some or all of it to young rural adults in Renfrew County in 1997 who have made a positive impact on the rural community and/or who have taken advantage of

rural resources for the benefit of others," she said.

Mrs. Sutherland was also guest speaker at the meeting.

"I have a historical reference with the WI," she said. "My grandmother, Rachel Guest, was a charter member of the Queen's Line WI," she said. "My mother was a charter member of the Locksley-Rankin WI. Its first meeting was held in our house

in 1939."

Mrs. Sutherland went on to say that her mother, in those days best known as Mrs. Leslie Davis, was president of the North Renfrew District WI in 1945 and 1946. She donated the Davis Cup for the best compilation of Tweedsmuir Histories, the exhaustive record of local history kept on an ongoing basis by WI branches.

"I, too, want to congratulate the members of the WI

for the absolutely marvelous and outstanding histories of the farms in Renfrew County done by the members," she added referring to the house logs kept by many individual members.

"Sometimes, not all of us agree about the benefits to be had from studying the past," she said. "However, there is no basis for our society save its past. There is no guide to business decisions except that given by experience. There is no personal maturity that is not built upon reflection on events of yesterday. It has been said that when we can pluck an example for the past and use it to help us today that it is a very practical use of history."

She said some find history depressing, because the upward curve in the record of human affairs is so slow.

"But if there are many mistakes and folly revealed, there are also great moments of inspired action," she said. "It is the spark from one age that may illuminate a problem and help us plot a future course."

She spoke of Adelaide Hoodless, who, after the death of her own son, was moved to work for pasteurization of milk. She noted that many other important WI resolutions have been acted upon by provincial and federal governments, and then told the group of local example of change brought about by the WI.

"In 1947, my mother presented a resolution to county council requesting a county-wide public health unit," she said. "She stated that her organization represented more than 700 mothers and urged the formation of a unit to guard the health of children, 'the county's most precious asset.'"

The motion was turned down by a margin of two votes.

"A local newspaper editorial said that some local reeves would be in for a bad time when they went home to face all the WI members," said Mrs. Sutherland.

The WI continued its campaign, and a county health unit was formed only a few years later, no doubt due to the continuing efforts of that group.

She said that her mother was involved in many organizations, but it was WI which provided her with the greatest friendships and sense of community interest.



This is the 1997-1998 executive of the North Renfrew District Women's Institute. Seated, from left: Peggy McLeod, Margaret Ann Griffith, Dwyla Pilgrim, Susan deHaan, Julie Thur. Back row: Christine Reaburn, Alice Berger, Myrtle Bromley, Elaine Hennessy, Noreen Desjardins, Irene Stephens, Ruby Bulmer, Cathy Green, and provincial board director Ann McDougall.



These are six of the eight WI members from North Renfrew District who will be receiving the organization's centennial award later this year. Front row, from left: Peggy McLeod, Gwen Kidd, Christine Reaburn. Back row: Mona Hill, Viola Krause, Audrey Gutz. Absent were Minetta Collins and Mary Eckford.