

Ninety W.I. members attend district meeting in Lougheed

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Lougheed

On February 18, members of the Alberta Women's Institute stood up and were recognized in the Alberta Legislature, President Elect, Maxean Brigley told the 90 plus members who attended the district three conference and workshop held in Lougheed last week.

"It was a proud day," says Brigley, who admits she didn't expect a letter to Agriculture Minister Ed Stelmach would get her this far.

She wrote the MLA to request that the government declare February 19, Founders' Day, as W.I. Day in Alberta. She was told that the government doesn't make declarations anymore but was given three options to get the recognition she sought for the organization. She chose to have Stelmach give a one minute speech on the Women's Institute in the Legislature followed by a one minute rebuttal from the opposition.

Twenty-two women, including all but one past president, stood and received a very warm and welcome response in the form of applause from the members of the legislature, said Brigley. And though, it wasn't on Founders' Day, she pointed out, it was just the day before.

Ironically, however, all of this comes as the W.I. is experiencing dwindling numbers causing some branches to rest or

L to R: Maxean Brigley, Marcella Bacso, Eileen Fedderson

even close.

The Lougheed W.I., founded in 1916, is currently comprised of 15 members. "Membership is as low as it's ever been," says President Hazel Skoberg, who has been an active member of the organization since joining in 1945.

Despite being low in numbers, the local W.I. chapter continues to make a positive difference in the surrounding community. According to Skoberg, recent quilting projects have raised money for renovations to the Lougheed Community Hall and a new playground for the Lougheed School. Earlier this year, with the cooperation of the Village of Lougheed, the W.I. designed and installed a granite cremain memorial in the Lougheed Cemetery.

In Brigley's address at the district three conference, she stressed the importance of developing a focus for the W.I. if the organization is to continue the tens of thousands of volunteer hours members contribute to their communities.

"Last year you reported 19,200 hours," she said, "but I think it's more like 24 to 30 thousand hours." If a dollar figure was put on the work this group does, it would be worth over \$240,000, she pointed out.

Brigley challenged members to look at the W.I.'s objectives and ponder them, determine if they are okay as they are or if they need revising in order to make the organization stronger.



Put to the challenge: President Elect of the Alberta Women's Institute,