

Local Women's Group Celebrates 60th



The Women's Institute was founded in Canada in 1897. Today, there are WI branches throughout the world, including in such diverse places as New Zealand and Iran. The AWI was founded in 1909.

Carol Brown, the historian of the EVWI, said the group's dedication to helping others is perhaps its greatest legacy.

"It is all rural women working to help each other, working to better themselves, working to help their families through better education, and helping their fellow man," said Brown.

Members of the Eagle Valley Women's Institute and visiting dignitaries at the group's 60th Anniversary celebrations in Sundre last weekend.

About 50 people attended ceremonies at the Seniors Recreation Centre Saturday to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Eagle Valley Women's Institute (EVWI).

EVWI president Elaine Kaiser said a good turnout went a long way towards making the anniversary celebrations a success. "I'm pleased with the results of the attendance" she explained following the ceremony.

Featuring several speeches and acknowledgements, the tea and ceremony showcased some of the group's proud history of community involvement, both locally and through the larger world-wide Women's Institutes.

Founded on February 14, 1935, the EVWI was previously part of the DEL Institute, made up of the Derbytown, Eagle Valley and Lobley WIs.

During the weekend ceremony, Eagle Valley residents Catherine Bach and Margaret Dinnsen performed a delightful "musical history" of the EVWI for guests, outlining many of the group's activities over the years.

(Dinnsen, who wrote the musical history, said the project took six months to put together).

Cards and letters from many well-wishers were read to guests. Among the highlights of those correspondents was a note from EVWI charter member Mary Rogers.

The WIGC Tiger Lilies - a girls club with the EVWI as its mother club - served tea and treats to guests during the ceremony. Tiger Lilies co-leader Sharon Pederson explained that the 18-member club served guests to "show our support for the mother club."

During the speeches, guests heard how the EVWI has been involved in many community activities over the years, donating both time and effort to improving the lives of local people and groups.

One of the EVWI's historical highlights is the group's extensive efforts in providing clothing and other supplies to soldiers and refugees during the Second World War.

Alberta Women's Institute (AWI) president-elect Doris Northey attended the ceremony. She presented a 50-year pin to EVWI member Edith Wilson, and a 25-year pin to EVWI member Donna Leckie.

Northey congratulated the EVWI on the occasion of its 60th anniversary, adding, "we wish you many more years of service".

Eagle Valley resident Marie Sihlis accepted a commemorative plaque from the EVWI for the Eagle Valley Community Hall. The plaque - depicting in photographs many past and present EVWI members - will hang in the Eagle Valley Hall.

"We really appreciate all the support the Eagle Valley Women's Institute has given the community over the years," said Sihlis.

EVWI president Kaiser explained that despite a downturn in membership over the past number of years, the group hopes to continue its involvement in the community for many years to come.

"Before, when more women were at home homemaking, this was their once-a-month outing, to come to a WI meeting and help their fellow man," she explained. "But of course with working women now, that just

continue to give it out."

Today the EVWI is involved in a host of projects in the community, including annual pie sales at the rodeos, and funeral teas.

As part of the 60th Anniversary celebrations, the EVWI sponsored the 10th Annual Golden Oldie Variety Program at the Senior Centre Saturday.