



Women Inspiring Women WI

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Women Inspiring Women WI: From a Whisper to a Roar
By Maggie Wilson

After the meal, and after paying membership fees and after a group photo and signing of the guest book, charter members of the Women Inspiring Women WI gathered in the Bradford room of the Arlington Hotel. The inaugural meeting commenced.

Kate Belair congratulated the women on becoming the first new Women's Institute in 65 years. She shared the story of how the WIW WI came to be.

Belair, who followed the WI's in the United Kingdom on social media, was inspired by the novel activities and "outside the box" attitudes of the younger branches. She described a WI banner that listed "axe throwing" among its activities. In other words, "having fun" is on the agenda.

Kate wanted that. "I would love to take part in the silly and inspired programs like those offered in the UK," she whispered to herself.

A year later, she broached the subject with some friends. "Sure!" they said, "We could do that." Now a louder, collective voice urged her forward.

Last summer, Belair asked Maggie Wilson to volunteer at the Adelaide Hoodless Homestead, the birthplace of the co-founder of the WI and the head office of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Canada. Before long, Wilson was also enchanted by what she saw happening across the pond. "I want that, too!" she declared.

Together, the two women joined forces, held information sessions and promoted the venture online and in print media. The whisper morphed to a declaration and then to a roaring cheer, almost thirty voices strong.

Next on the agenda, Wilson read greetings from Margaret Byl and Marie Kenney, presidents of FWIO and FWIC. Hon. Sheila Copps OC, also sent greetings.

Congratulations on this inaugural Brant meeting. You are starting another chapter in an organization with a history of making positive changes and even saving Canadian lives.

“Volunteerism is a hallmark of our shared Canadian experience. What better place to volunteer than with an organization that has more than 100 years of doing good and doing it so well.

The evening’s roll call proved to be a highlight. Belair said “We asked women to share, ‘What inspires you to join WI?’ It was very moving and humourous. I laughed so hard I had to wipe tears from my face at some of the answers. It felt good to be part of that camaraderie. I think we are learning for ourselves what WI is all about and how it has survived for so long.”

As the women spoke, it was plain to see that social media played a vital role. Several women said that they were invited by a Facebook friend to consider joining. Some hesitated. But then, these same women became inspired to lead committees such as Special Events, Advocacy, and Tweedsmuir.

New WI member Anne Ehrlich gave her presentation of Women as Water Keepers. Ehrlich is involved with local public health risks to water, farmland and the sustainability of food and health for all. In particular, she is concerned about the local risks to the health of women and children and what we can learn about from evidence around the world.

The next meeting of the WIW WI will be May 14th in the Bradford Room of the Arlington Hotel. New members are welcome any time.

WI Meetings are held the second Thursday of the month, except July and August.

For more information call Kate Belair 519-448-3873 or Maggie Wilson email womeninspiringwomenwi@gmail.com or visit Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NewBrantWI>