

Award of Excellence – 2021
Recipient Diane Smith
45 Years for Home and Country

Diane Smith first joined the Women's Institute in England, at the age of 22 as a young mother. Women's Institutes and the Church were what held the villages together at that time. Women's Institute played an important role in village life.

In 1972, Diane's family moved to Canada to the Rimbey area of Alberta, and Diane joined the WI Branch there. In 1974, the family moved to the Manning area; however, the Manning WI Branch had already folded. When Diane received her Canadian Citizenship in 1975 in Peace River, the Peace River Women's Institute provided the refreshments. Marie Plaizier, who was the Provincial WI President at the time, encouraged Diane to join the Grimshaw WI, which was the closest branch to where Diane lived. It is a 74 km drive from Deadwood, where the Smiths had settled, and Diane is to be commended for faithfully making that long drive to attend meetings and other WI events, over many years. After the passing of her husband, Diane made a significant donation to the Provincial office. They used these funds for the purchase of a large desk which was much appreciated by then Executive Director, Fern Killeen for many years.

In her 45 years of membership, Diane has been a valuable active member at all four levels of Alberta Women's Institutes. She served as District 1 Director for three separate terms. Attendees at the AWI Provincial Conventions will know Diane from her outgoing personality and many activities, whether it is as the "Queen", or getting matching donations for the Office Fund. Her Convener reports for the "Home and Country" were always interesting and informative. District Meetings had very interesting speakers, and were well run. One District Meeting had speakers from High Prairie Second Stage Women's Shelter and Diane had asked members to bring donations for the shelter to the meeting. Much was collected, and she and Frances Bogner went to deliver the donated items, and have a tour of the shelter. Diane was very diligent about sending Thank You cards and showing appreciation.

As well as being Constituency Convener for the Peace River Constituency many times, Diane also held various convenerships at the Constituency Level. She hosted enjoyable conferences for members. She enjoyed doing the Branch visits.

In her Grimshaw Branch, Diane served in various Convenerships. She instigated craft sales, and led the Branch in many projects such as the WI tree for the Festival of Trees; a community Christmas Party to include non-WI members; various afternoon teas and garage sales; fund raising activities; sitting for Hospital Teas. As the former President of the Grimshaw Branch, a position she held for many years, she was the "glue that held the Branch together" in later years.

Her generosity and kindness are felt no only in WI, but throughout her community, and with her many friends. She gives rides to many, helped with the reading program at the school; works in the thrift store once a week.

Diane's enthusiasm and commitment to Women's Institute and her community would be hard to match. She is a strong advocate in making the WI known, and introduced WI to the wider community. She has had outstanding attendance at the events of WI and is an active community participant in all she undertakes.

Diane Smith is indeed a very deserving recipient for the 2021 Alberta Women's Institutes Award of Excellence.