

Name of Branch: Cosmo Women's Institute

Location: Cosmo is near Sangudo, which is about 99 km northwest of Edmonton

Organized: Jan. 9, 1952

Charter Members: Mrs. Jas. Holt, Mrs. Jack Johnston, Mrs. Thos. Holt, Mrs. F. Smithson, Mrs. Wm. Johnston, Mrs. Wm. Hall, Mrs. John Nemuth, Sr., Mrs. John Nemuth, Jr., Mrs. R. Torvalson, Mrs. G. Sottas

First Executive: Mrs. Jas. Holt, pres; Mrs. Jack Johnston, first vice-pres; Mrs. Thos. Holt, sec-treas; directors: Mrs. F. Smithson, Mrs. Wm. Johnston; auditor: Mrs. Wm. Hall

Disbanded: 1982

Activities: The following history of the Cosmo WI was sent to Elizabeth Lefsrud in 1975 by Mrs. Tom Holt:



A Group of 10 Ladies were gathered at the farm home of Mrs. Frank Sim on January 9, 1952 to hear our guest speaker Mrs. Otto Raesler of Onoway. Mrs. Raesler was Constituency Convenor for Lac Ste. Anne Stony Plain and had come to tell us about the WI its aims and objectives. After hearing her speak our little group decided to form a branch of the WI. It was known as Cosmo Women's Institute.

We started out working for the Mayerthorpe Hospital. Many slippers and pyjamas were made, toys for Christmas and Easter baskets were sent to the Children's Ward. As well as this, flowers and candy were sent [to] any member who was sick or to their family if they were hospitalized.

We worked toward furnishing the restroom in Sangudo. Purchased material for the building of tables and benches for the Old Cosmo School which was our main place to meet. Once we could afford it, we purchased the building to use as a Community Centre. Eventually we were able to get the power put in it and its interior freshly painted.

Much of our money was raised from our fall bazaar, bake sales and candy sales, raffles, some bingos, crib drives, serving at auction sales, and serving lunches at the Auction Mart.

As the years went by, we started to hold our Annual Plant Sale; this replaced our bazaar. Each member growing plants, as they got to be such a popular thing, we now have to order extra plants from a local nursery as well. Once of our members starts our plants

now under lights and distributes them about for us to take care of; this results in a much better product.

Our plant sales now are a real success; people come from a long distance and we can always be sure we sell all the plants we can grow it seems.

Over the years, a club grew to as many as 27 members in 1965. Shortly after this Sangudo organized a WI so we lost some of our members to the Sangudo Gay 67's.

Many donations were made over the years to charitable organizations, burnt-out families, to families leaving the community. As well as this, spoons were given to new babies, trophies supplied to 4H groups, flowers and gifts and cards to the sick. For some time, we have been sending birthday parcels to the Old Peoples Home.

The Cemetery Clean-up was always an annual event and still continues to be. Many flowers and bulbs were bought and planted.

Each summer our branch took a trip for a day to interesting points in and around Edmonton finishing up at a shopping centre often. This is always a much looked forward to outing and we always manage a busload of ladies, as members bring along their friends.

Since 1963, showers have been put on for all the boys and girls of the community with WI members doing the decorating and advertising for them.

1967, Centennial Year, was an interesting and active year for us. We organized and assisted the girls when they started the WI Girls Club; this was known as the Cosmo Centennials. We were the hostesses to the Constituency Conference on May 3rd in Sangudo Ukrainian Hall. All branches were asked to come in Centennial costumes which they did, making the Conference a very colourful event. The long old-fashioned dresses, feather plumes, and old style bonnets reminded us of long ago.

We put on a Centennial Dance, doing all the old time dances. This proved to be a lot of fun as many had to learn the dances not to mention try to get used to the long gowns and bonnets which seemed to be in the way.

We put a float in the 24th of May parade which was comprised of members of the WI in their Centennial Costumes.

We had a scroll made to honour our pioneers; this hangs in our Community Centre. A donation of \$20 was given to the Centennial Youth Travel Fund. We purchased a dozen stacking chairs for our Community Centre.

In September we viewed slides on Expo 67 which were taken and described to us by Mrs. Sam Lenko from Sangudo.

Since then, we have been a quite active group, losing a few members when they moved away or passed on. But we always seemed to gain a few more new members to keep us an active group.

Our 13 members this past year [1974] have been working toward adding on, and improving, our Community Centre along with our other activities. Just recently our branch has grown to 16 so we are looking forward to a good active year. With our 25th Anniversary just 2 years away, we are trying to think how we can Celebrate!

Notable Members:

Life Membership:

- [Vera Holt](#) served as the first president of the Cosmo branch after several years of wishing to belong to a women's group. Widowed early, like her mother before her, Vera worked at anything that would keep the family afloat. She served as Sec-Treas of the village for 12 years; took teachers in as boarders; managed the Farmer's Market for many years; and was the editor of the local history book along with her volunteer work for the Red Cross, Agricultural Society, and the United Church. For the WI, she filled leadership roles as Constituency Convenor and District Director. The Agriculture Society awarded her "Citizen of the Year" in 1982.

Sources: [PAA 91.3041/10 AWI Branch Listing and Contact 1944-1961; *Life Membership Book*; personal correspondence to Elizabeth Lefsrud, 1975; Cole, Catherine and Judy Larmour. *Many and Remarkable: The Story of the Alberta Women's Institutes*. Edmonton: Alberta Women's Institutes, 1997. 125-131.]

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