

# How she started the Women's Institute in Labrador Straits

**COLLECTED BY:** ANN O'BRIEN

**CONTRIBUTED BY:** MARGARET GOUDIE

**Ann O'Brien:**

Today is September 25<sup>th</sup>, I'm at the home of Margaret Goudie and ah... Mag as we always called her is going to share a story on how she ah ..... started the Women's Institute here on the Labrador. Go ahead Mag.

**Margaret Goudie:**

Well, ah.. first me and my friend, Lucy Pike, especially, Lucy was a good friend of mine, we use to walk to ah.. West St. Modeste and that was... at that time you had to walk and that was, I don't know how many miles.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Four or five, about.

**Margaret Goudie:**

Yeah, and then it would be late at night... we use to walk up there because there was a lady up there giving sewing lessons or people got together and sewed. So and every night, every Friday night me and Lucy would go up and ah... but it would be late when it was over, eleven perhaps sometimes twelve o'clock and we'd have to walk home ourselves in the dark. And there was no street lights or anything then. So one day I said to Lucy, I said we don't have to do this, why can't we have our own little sewing class.

So we started in my house, and I think there was twenty-six people, women that I had coming to my house and every Friday night and we'd have ah... every woman .. every lady in their turn took food with them and made sandwiches and we had a little lunch. And we did pillow slips and embroidered aprons and then we'd ah...when they had a time or something, at that time it was called "time" and a concert, we'd auction it off. And we helped to get enough money and then they built a hall, now we didn't get enough money, we had have nothing to do with that. That was only just we put things in it, like curtains and things like that.

So one day there was some men came with Jim Hudson ah something to do with the Park and he brought them to my place. That's where I cooked dinner for them and he was asking me what did the people do for amusement or what... and I told them about the

sewing class I had going, every Friday night. And then he asked me why didn't I contact someone, you know. So he gave me ah... told me about the Women's Institute in St. John's and he gave me Anne Templeton's number and I phoned and she sent out literature, isn't that what they call it?

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yes.

**Mag Goudie:**

Books and things, anyway. And I started up the Women's Institute or ... and we had meetings and I was voted on as the president, but you had to have six branches, 'fer to have a district. So, because what happened is ah... you could send in for grants and things like that see with the Women's Institute was a coordinator. So anyway, I ah...after I got my own branch settled away, I went to West St. Modeste and got them all involved there. They ah... got their own branch going and then I went to Capstan Island and I explained everything there and they did the same thing, got their own members and the branch going. And I came to L'Anse au Loup, here, my own home town and they did the same thing. And Forteau... I went to Forteau.

So we were still missing another branch, so I went to Red Bay and ah...at that time, there wasn't too many in Red Bay but after I left they got a few more involved in it, anyway. But the president at that time was Bud Organ's wife and I forgets her name now. Anyway, everything went good and then we had to have a meeting for all the people, all the branches and ah... so I had to go to Stephenville and become district representative.

I went to Stephenville and I met a lot of ladies from other branches and when I come back then every year we had to have a convention, and all their branches ... the president would tell what they did in the year. What they raised money for and what they did with it and everything like that. So everything went well but I don't know how it's, you know, there's not so many branches left any more anyway.

**Ann Goudie:**

Do you know what branches are left here, now?

**Mag Goudie:**

Yes, Red Bay and Pinware, West St. Modeste, and I'm not sure about Capstan Island, but I think Capstan Island is still in it because ... yes I'm sure it is. And ah... but Forteau is not. I think that's about the only one is out, so far.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So L'Anse au Loup is still ...

**Mag Goudie:**

Oh, L'Anse au Loup is still active.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yes.

**Mag O'Brien:**

Yes, they're very active.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So every year, you have ah AGM meeting.

**Mag Goudie:**

It's called a convention, yes. Where all the branches and the museum and everything is all accounted for and tells what money was raised, the grants they had and things like that, you know. They elect new presidents and ...but you elect your own president in your branch but they elects the district representative because you have it for three years and then somebody else takes over, like that.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So Mag, the Women's Institute built the museum too. Did they?

**Mag Goudie:**

Yes I.... I'm not to sure.... about that one because I was gone by that time, I left and went to Goose Bay and I think Stella Fowler was the ... yeah... no... first there was a Craft Shop in Pinware and when they moved the Craft Shop from Pinware it went here to L'Anse au Loup. It was suppose to be here in the middle of the Straits and then it was called a museum. Yeah. But the craft shop was in Pinware first.

**Ann O'Brien:**

And they sell crafts in the museum?

**Mag Goudie:**

Oh yeah, they sell and they had so many people like ah... different people like Hazel O'Brien and Kathleen, they're making parkas and a lot... anyone could bring it there and get it sold, or sell it, like that. I know they did that and ah... they had Sylvia Buckle was on it for years, sure. Even bake bread for when the tourist would be there in the summer. She even baked bread, baked pies and everything like that went on. But like I said, after I left that's when the museum they got it up there... they put it up there anyway.

**Ann O'Brien:**

That was to show the tourist ah...

**Mag Goudie:**

Yes.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Show the tourist our traditional foods...

**Mag Goudie:**

Right. Yeah, 'cause they use to come there and buy the bread. I remembers that. Sylvia baked bread everyday I think in the craft shop, 'cause she was the one who took care of the craft shop. I was president of that for a little while, but I didn't stay very long, because I went to Goose Bay, see.

**Ann O'Brien:**

After you went to Goose Bay, now, you was there for so many years.

**Mag Goudie:**

Yeah.

When I come back, I went president again of our own branch, but I wasn't district representative anymore. Ah... they had good people on at that time, I think Stella Fowler was still on, I don't know about Agnes Pike, I'm not sure, she might have been when I was gone. I know Stella was on it for years.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So that was on the district board.

**Mag Goudie:**

On the district board that was called.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Ruby Cabot and...

**Mag Goudie:**

It was made up of all the presidents of the branches and voted on from there and someone from the ...and then they had someone from the museum up there but that's what the form was made of.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So are you still a member?

**Mag Goudie:**

I am still a member. Yeah. Last year we had our convention in West St. Modeste and I .. they gave me a plaque.

**Ann O'Brien:**

That was in May 2009.

**Mag Goudie:**

June 2009. I was the first district representative for the Labrador Coast. So I guess, I'll keep going.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So you got a group of women together.

**Mag Goudie:**

Oh yes, yeah. I mean it was a big thing to take on because everyone was looking at you wondering I wonder what she's saying, do she know. But I told the truth, I didn't know really what it was all about. Why couldn't they give it a try. So I pulled off enough, that everyone did, have their own branch, hey. Everyone went along with it. Everywhere, I went.

So think if it had to be more branches, more people but 'tis not so many anymore, the young ones don't want to take it on them see, 'cause they haven't got the time like we had. We didn't go out to work, we stayed home and worked so we had lots of time. But there are still people on it that are working too.

**Ann O'Brien:**

But the majority of the young ones now, are out working and they got young children.

**Mag Goudie:**

They're out working. Yeah. Yes. And it's different now see. People got a lot of things on their plate. But that's how we all started my dear. That's how we all got along too. I tell you, I won't forget it.

**Ann O'Brien:**

I guess that was a good many years that you enjoyed.

**Mag Goudie:**

I did enjoy it but little did I think that someday I would be interviewed for something like this, I'm proud of it now. I'm really proud of it. I wish that I could have got down to Pinware and got a hold of the books and things like that. After, you know, there's all different presidents and they said most of it went in the old hall, I guess. 'Cause they got a new hall down there now see.

But I didn't get to keep it, because it's past on to the next one see, like that. Not thinking see Ann, anything like this.... but they can follow on from there, someday, if they don't give it to someone else.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Well they can all look back and say well, this was started.

**Mag Goudie:**

This was started by ...

**Ann O'Brien:**

Mag Beals.

**Mag Goudie:**

In 1973, yeah, I was Mag Beals at the time. Yeah.

**Ann O'Brien:**

And the year was ah?

**Mag Goudie:**

1973. I'm not sure but I'm almost sure.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Well is there anything else now Mag, you wanted to...

**Mag Goudie:**

Well you could stop it and we can think.