

WESTERN CANADA REGIONAL FORUM FINAL REPORT

MAY 10-14, 2024

LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES

AND NONALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Western Canada Regional Forum was held on May 10-12, 2024. Registration for the Forum was **343**. This included **222** members attending their very first Forum.



Area 79, B.C./Yukon Ask-It-Basket

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Western Canada Regional forum that will be held June 12-14, 2026, in Saskatoon at the Travelodge Hotel Saskatoon.

UNANSWERED ASK-IT-BASKET QUESTIONS

Q. Why does Treatment and Accessibilities and CPC share a Trustee committee when others have their own?

A. In 1998, a subcommittee was appointed to discuss the many aspects and options related to the enhancement of board weekends. The General Service Board reviewed the Board Weekend Subcommittee report and on April 21, 1998, approved the recommendation that the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C) and the trustees' Treatment Facilities Committee (T.F.) be combined. The **trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment Facilities** held its first meeting on August 2, 1998. This combined committee considers separate C.P.C. and T.F. agendas and is served by two secretaries (The C.P.C. coordinator and T.F. coordinator).

Accessibilities was added to Treatment purview in 2009 and is handled by the secretary and trustees committee.

Q. Why is there no literature for sale at regional forums?

A. GSO does not sell literature at Regional Forums. Local entities are able to sell AAWS and AA Grapevine and La Vina literature.

Q. How does one become part of the Grapevine Advisory Committee?

A. Those interested in being on the Grapevine Editorial Advisory Board (EAB), can send an email with your résumé and a paragraph about your interest to the Grapevine office at editorinchief@aagrapevine.org.

For details about the EAB you can visit our website under "Get Involved" ...and you'll find this...

[https://www.aagrapevine.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/GVEAB-How it Works 01.1.20.pdf](https://www.aagrapevine.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/GVEAB-How%20it%20Works%2001.1.20.pdf)

Q. The recent PI Committee survey on anonymity asked if sharing A.A. content on social media breaks one's anonymity. Assuming it does, how can we share or repost on social media without breaking our anonymity?

A. As you may know, the question on the Social Media and Anonymity questionnaire was posed to gauge what members think about this topic. We are still in the process of analyzing those results and therefore our sharing is limited to much of our previous shared experience.

In the meantime, it is important for me to share that GSO does not interpret Steps or Traditions or tell members or groups how to practice these principles. Instead, we look to

our literature and shared experience from the Fellowship to try to share back when questions like these arise.

For instance, the pamphlet [Understanding Anonymity](#) suggests:

At the public level of press, radio, TV, film/ video other public forms of the Internet and social media platforms, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain. When using social media, A.A. members are responsible for their own anonymity and that of others. When we text or post something online, we should assume that we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others.

In that same pamphlet, on page 10, in the section *Anonymity in the Digital Age*, there is more shared experience directly related to anonymity on the Internet.

While our sharing is limited and the experience is wide how members view anonymity principles on social media platforms, when speaking of public platforms, the general guidepost remains the same. If an A.A. member plans to make a public post (or publicly commenting) as an A.A. member, then this would be in conflict with the anonymity Traditions. If a member only discloses that they are a recovered alcoholic, without disclosing A.A. membership, this would not be in conflict of our principles. There are still “grey areas” that are still unfolding, but the experience we have to share is that in the past 5 years the fellowship is gaining more clarity on what is deemed public or a private platform.

Some members have shared that if wanting to share A.A. information in public media they can offer these resources without comment, or with something neutral like “This looks like a helpful resource.” They point out that simply sharing A.A. content does not “break” one’s anonymity. Non-members frequently share A.A. literature, whether they are professionals, concerned family members or members of other Fellowships.

However, other members have shared that they choose to avoid posting anything about (or from) A.A. on public social media in order to really ensure that they are honoring the spirit of Tradition Twelve.

Each individual A.A. member must make their own decisions about these matters, perhaps in consultation with a sponsor or other spiritual advisor.

While social media is relatively new, these questions about anonymity are not. No matter the platform the principles remain the same. The pamphlet [Understanding Anonymity](#) reminds us of the early “problems” in A.A. that inspired our Traditions:

After its first few years of success, the Fellowship attracted much favorable attention in the press. As public awareness concerning alcoholism increased, the stigma decreased, and soon some A.A. members began to publicly acknowledge their affiliation

in the media. ... It did not take long for those at A.A. headquarters to realize that overzealous and self-serving anonymity breakers could quickly jeopardize the Fellowship's hard-won reputation. And they saw that if one person was made an exception, other exceptions would inevitably follow. To assure the unity, effectiveness, and welfare of A.A., anonymity had to be universal. It was the guardian of all that A.A. stood for.

More recently, the arrival of new forms of communication such as social media offers fresh vehicles to carry the A.A. message to the public. Modern communication flows in ways that are instantaneous, relatively open ended and evolving quickly. Reconsideration of how to protect anonymity is key for A.A. members and groups as we use any new channel of communication.

DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS

Great Love & Mutual Trust Through Sacrifice & Responsibility - Lawrence P., Area 80, Manitoba

My name is Lawrence P., I am an alcoholic, serving Area 80 as Panel 74 Delegate. I first started attending A.A. three plus years before my sobriety date of April 23rd, 2009. A slow learner perhaps, but on that evening in April 2009, I had a spiritual experience, which I can only describe as the sudden and overwhelming presence of a million watts of Light, streaming in and exposing my darkness and self-deception, as I listened to family friends and co-workers describe how my drinking had brought chaos to their lives. That evening the Light became the incubated womb for change. I am here tonight to admit, that was not the last time the overwhelming presence of Light was required, for more change and growth. I want to summarize an experience that occurred more recently, in the summer of 2022.

I may be alone in this challenge, but in case there is anyone else in the room who has found themselves “wanting” at times, or even “disturbed” about relationships with other A.A.’ers, I felt compelled to share from my experience, with a desire to build hope and strength, resulting from this awakening in my own spiritual journey.

I’ve often found great anticipation in upcoming A.A. events, whether it’s a Forum, an Assembly, or a service committee meeting. While anticipation often fosters excitement, embrace, and even celebratory emotions, I found that when I distill it down, when I am cognizant of specific individual A.A. relationships, I can and do feel a gnawing discomfort if not also disturbance. This reality, in the midst of some relationship struggles, led me to dig in and dissect what was missing, specifically relating to trust. I don’t know what your experience has led you to, but I came up short on the specific topic of mutual trust. If this is so important, why isn’t there more guidance in our Big Book, or 12 & 12? The more I hunted, the more assured I felt, that either this is such a simple and natural spiritual gift, it doesn’t require exhaustive guidance, or I was unenlightened, (which turned out to be my reality.) And then... I went for a random morning dive into Grapevine writings. I stumbled across “The Shape of Things to Come”, (Feb 1961).

This was to be a strong new ray of penetrating Light to befall my path, and revelatory for my specific growth. In that article I read, “Nevertheless we have come to believe that A.A.’s recovery Steps and Traditions do represent the approximate truths which we need for our particular purpose. The more we practice them, the more we like them. It continues, “So then, if our basics are so firmly fixed as all this, what is there left to change or improve? The answer will immediately occur to us. While we need not alter our truths, we can surely improve their application to ourselves, to A.A. as a whole, and to our relationship with the world around us. We can constantly step up “the practice of these principals in all our affairs.” This was the light bulb moment I have been crying for, since it then pointed me to another writing by Bill W, “Freedom under God: The Choice Is Ours.” This writing, again under the illumination of guiding Light, would produce the keys to a new and deeper Freedom!

I was particularly struck by Bill's sharing on two specific aspects of our Twelve Traditions, firstly the aspect of Protection, and secondly, the aspect of Progress. Who knew, the 12 coins of our Traditions had two sides! It was the second aspect that really caught my attention, and finally exposed the source of the gnawing I felt, the lack of mutual Trust and Great Love. I'll focus briefly on a few lines preceding Bill's Walk through a number of our Traditions.

“Let's now think about the positive, the progressive side of A.A.'s Traditions; the **disciplined sacrifices** and **responsibilities** that we shall need to undertake; the degree of **mutual trust and love** that we shall need to achieve if we are to find the greater freedom we seek.” When I read this, I knew that I was not alone in my struggles, that in all likelihood, Bill W had faced his own demons in this aspect of growth in Freedom, since he went on to say’ “It means that we must sometimes love our Society more than ourselves.

I won't walk through the details, but this was the beginning of weeks of self-examination, reflection and all in the context of a deep hunger I felt for more, more freedom, more trust, and more love. I'll jump forward to a few lines he used in summary to this writing. After his brief walk through some of the Traditions he concludes this way. “Here we clearly see that that only sacrifice can fulfill responsibility; that only high responsibility can lead to mutual trust; and that only mutual trust can be the foundation for great love - each of us for the other, and all of us for God.”

Recognizing that Great Love for all was something I yearned for, I had to be honest and admit I wasn't present to the degree I felt it needed to be with some of my relationships. This is where I then decided to look at this in reverse. Since great love (for some) wasn't present, was mutual trust the issue? When I examined the mutual trust I desired, and realized it was absent, I had to back it up further, looking at High Responsibility. At this point it became really personal, and self-evident, that more work was needed in the area of responsibility I would need to undertake. When I saw how short I came up in personal responsibility, I had to back it up again to disciplined sacrifice. Who wants to sacrifice, besides I am sober, so what more does it take.

Disciplined personal sacrifice, confronting my ego, and being willing to sacrifice more of it, became the bedrock from which I was to walk into a greater freedom of trust and love. This became a moment where I was able to understand that the word mutual, did not mean, others are also responsible, rather, I and I alone, needed to extend Trust, which would prove to become mutual. In conclusion I'll submit, when Trust had become a willing outcome of my sacrifice and responsibility, Great Love would also come to blossom.

I knew I could never share in seven minutes, what took many weeks to unveil. I pray it may provide some inspiration in the rare chance anyone else has been confronted with these challenges.

Service Sponsorship – Lori R., Area 91, Saskatchewan

My name is Lori, and I am an alcoholic. I am grateful to be serving as Area 91's Panel 73 Delegate.

The topic of service sponsorship and the value it brings has come up quite a few times in the last few years of my journey, so I thought it was fitting for me to speak on it tonight.

The role of the service sponsor is described in detail on pages nine and ten of our most recent service manuals. I am going to expand on this using my own experiences.

A service sponsor is someone who guides us, supports us, and helps us navigate our service journey through the wisdom of their own experiences. They have walked this path we are now on and have faced some of the same challenges we may face. Their experience, strength and hope is invaluable to us as we learn and grow.

My Service Sponsor who is a Past Delegate, offers me encouragement and motivation. He believes in me even when I doubt myself. His encouragement has fueled my confidence, and he has inspired me along this journey. My service sponsor has a calm way about him, I now know that is due to the spiritual growth he has been given due to his recovery and service to Alcoholics Anonymous.

It hasn't always been all rainbows and sunshine though. He has an uncanny way to diffuse any situation I find myself in, sometimes much to my chagrin. I'm finding that those situations are less and less now, and this is due to his calm demeanor, guidance, and experience. He is my sounding board. He listens to my ideas and concerns. This safe space for dialogue allows me to clarify my thoughts and adds to my ability to make informed decisions. He always reminds me to trust the process. This is the most important piece of information I can take forward. Especially concerning decisions made by our informed group consciences.

I would not have been able to be present at the last two Conferences without my service sponsors support and guidance over the years. I mean this literally and spiritually. During Panel 69 I was the Public Information Chair for Area 91. I had decided then that when that rotation was over, my service journey would end. He just gave me that calm smile and told me to wait to see what happened. Somehow my hand went up for Alternate Delegate, and I was elected. Fast forward to the call for resumes for the Panel 73 Delegate. Once again, I had decided I was not going to run for many reasons that I had made up in my head. Once again, he guided me and well, here I am. I have had moments where I was lost in the emotions of being Delegate. When this happens, I know without a shadow of a doubt that all I need to do is reach out to my service sponsor. My Higher Power works through him and thus calms my fears and keeps me relatively grounded.

I have not limited myself to just my service sponsor's input. I tell my sponsees to keep their circle of support wide and have taken my own advice personally by reaching out to

others in service. I have grown more than I could ever have imagined, especially in these last two years, and this is due to the people in service that I have journeyed with. Many of whom are in this room right now. In addition to reaching out to these people, I have paid close attention to how they carry themselves in service. Their examples of grace, love, tolerance, and dignity, along with their pure love for Alcoholics Anonymous speak louder than any words ever could.

Recently, my service sponsor and I were giving a presentation and he talked about the flip side of all of this. The benefits of being a service sponsor. I hadn't given that much thought before he spoke of it, but I have since. What a gift to be able to sponsor someone through their service journey.

I have found that being a service sponsor has enhanced my own knowledge and confidence as I share my experience, strength, and hope in my service history. I am sensing a pattern here. My service sponsees have exposed me to different ways of looking at things and ideas. They have caused me to reflect on myself which has led to spiritual and personal growth for me.

For anyone in service and anyone looking to move forward in their service journey, I encourage you to get a service sponsor, not for just the above, but also for some practical reasons. They will help you discern if you are ready to take the next step in service, asking if your family and employer are onboard with your plans. They will discuss the physical and emotional demands that may be made of you, and there will be many. They will help you navigate the traditions and concepts as well as share their learned experiences. They will help you prepare talks and reports and lastly, they will always remind you that your Higher Power knows exactly what you need when you need it.

As page 10 of the service manual states, "A service sponsor can be defined as one alcoholic who has made some progress in recovery and /or performance in service and who is willing to share this experience with another alcoholic who is starting the journey". I'd like to expand on this to say that **all** levels of sponsorship in Alcoholics Anonymous draw us back to our basic principle of one alcoholic working with another. For this and for all of you I am extremely grateful.

Where do Elder Statesmen Come From? – Karen O.C., Area 78, Alberta/N.W. Territories

When the choices for topics were presented, I laughed when I saw the topic "Where do Elder Statesmen come from," because I know they show up on the back of experience. Often hard-won experience where old ideas have been sorely challenged. The only way to gain experience is to say yes, and then have an experience to learn from.

The terms Elder Statesmen and Bleeding Deacon are found in Tradition Two where we are given an example of the fellow who finds his own dependency in the security of the

group move from fear to where he can quietly let others have the experience of pain towards wisdom.

The point is spiritual growth, where experience has settled into a member's heart, to simply trust the process.

My own experience with trusting the process has been frequently messy, sometimes even painful, often awkward and I usually end up making some kind of an amends. I have watched others in their bleeding deacon stage of sobriety, who like myself, thought they knew something. Perhaps, like me, they had an understanding of the situation that it seemed the rest of the group could not quite grasp.

A past member Tom P saw me struggling to be of service to A.A. and offered me the pamphlet Dry Drunk - I was so offended, but he saved my life and saved other members much heart burn. What I slowly came to realize is that trying to manipulate life to suit me so that I could "have worth" didn't work! Leadership does not lead by mandate, but by example and puts the responsibility for my actions right back in my own lap.

I understand now we all need to go through that humbling stage as it seems to be the path to reach awareness of trusting the process. The bonus is an inner peace and kind, compassion for those not quite yet trusting the process! I believe what we are really talking about here is emotional sobriety.

Life is the train, it's not the station. We are a group of people who, it has been noted, are overly sensitive and emotionally immature. We seek to be happy, joyous, and free for indeed this is what sobriety has promised us, yet the journey is fraught with disappointment and despair. Pain, it seems, is the touchstone to all spiritual growth. And to wean ourselves of those old dependencies on power, prestige, pride, ego, and fear is, for many of us, a long process.

Bill understood the purpose and ultimate utility of pain. How heartily we A.A.'s can agree with him for we know that the pain of alcoholism had to come before sobriety and the emotional turmoil before serenity.

He goes on to give us the recipe - if we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love, given a quiet place in the bright sunshine.

I had the recent opportunity to see the 74th Conference play out, spending six full days watching and listening as we discussed committee recommendations and considerations, floor actions and reports. I saw how every voice, no matter what stage the person was in the journey towards emotional sobriety, as an intricate and important part of our great whole.

No one person was able to mandate, a timid voice had power. Reason, simply said, assisted frothy, emotional appeal. I don't know, you don't know, but together we found the way, surprising us all with the magic of the process. That and the knowledge we are protected from ourselves through the spirit of rotation.

I remember when I first came to A.A., how I believed our Big Book was divinely inspired, I slept with it hugged to my chest at night, clinging to the hope it gave me. I now see our concepts and structure to protect that message as also divinely inspired and that 74 years later the process still works, I can trust it. The web is far, far better than me.

We are all teachers, no matter what we are doing, hearts know the truth. I saw kindness and the offer for understanding. Directions for any service position I have been given, came with the words, read the basic directions then to make that job my own. Given responsibility and not micro-managed, allowed to learn from my own mistakes. And in that process, I learned I had the right to be wrong and it did not make me a bad nor stupid person. It made me human. What a gift. And I did not have to be a perfect human either! My worth and value was not measured in how well I did the job, but that when I lay my head down at night, I know I did that job to the best of my ability.

I gained compassion for myself through the loving guidance of those who understood that to grow up meant finding courage by trusting God. Meant gaining self-esteem that comes through not only finding my own voice but being encouraged as my responsibility to use that voice. I then became a part of our great whole.

I watched those mentors and how they behaved, I wanted to be like them when I grew up, to walk softly, speak gently but with assurance and humility. To stand back just enough to let things unfold in God's perfect way.

My name has been drawn from a couple of hats recently, and so I find myself in front of you today, I know I have gained in wisdom and strength, and I am working towards becoming an Elder Statesmen. Which also means letting go when it's time to rotate into some other great unknown. I still have healing to do, teachings to absorb, truths to comprehend and grow from.

But I recognize my own growth, and that helps me see yours. Me, who could not love myself, nor take responsibly for my life. I was dragged off the scrap heap of the merciless obsession of the drunken woman. A failure in all areas of my life, I thought I may as well be dead and drank towards that end.

I was told all I had to do was help others like I had been helped. And though the hours are long and the work sometimes challenging the pay is excellent - I get to stay sober, and the bonus is I get to grow up in heart, mind, body, and spirit.

Connecting the Homegroup to the Conference Throughout the Year, to Better Inform the Group Conscience – Rio D., Area 79, B.C./Yukon

Hello friends my name is Rio. I am an alcoholic who has the absolute pleasure to serve as the BC Yukon Area 79, Panel 73 Delegate. Welcome everyone to Area 79.

Thank you to Dave and our host committee, Eileen, all the METS team and others for helping to get this forum organized. Thanks too, to the other delegates up here. For those that are attending their first forum, you have the amazing opportunity to ask as many questions as you like and learn more about the structure that **you are all a part of**.

My topic this evening is **Connecting the Home Group to the Conference Throughout the Year, to Better Inform the Group Conscience**. This is a perfect topic for me and the reason I chose it is because it allows me to talk about two things that I love about A.A.. First the very important home group which I've heard it fondly called the Heartbeat of AA and second the vitally important communication which is key to keeping our home group members informed and participating in A.A. as a whole.

This year-round communication starts from our General Service Office constantly updating our area delegates. In Area 79 our delegate reports to you monthly through their Area Service Committee reports, also updating information on the website and at our Area 79 quarterly area events. As a General Service Representative, you can review that information and keep your members well informed. That way when needed you can get your informed group conscience on anything happening in A.A. at any time of the year.

Let's do a timeline on this year-round communication. The 74th General Service Conference just ended on April 20th. There were 83 agenda items and out of those 41 advisory actions were approved. That means that in the next year the board, trustees committees, staff and others have to take the action on what we the fellowship have just approved. They also have to either get those 41 things done or report on the progress being made between now and next year's conference. Out of those 83 agenda items 115 committee considerations were reported out and those have to be tracked, updated and sent to next year's conference committees to keep up on what was done at this year's conference. We do this so the work and progress will get communicated from this year to the next and all groups, districts and areas are updated throughout the year.

While that work is being done on our behalf by the boards, trustees and office staff. We the fellowship have the rest of the year to inform our group members what is happening in A.A. as a whole. One delegate cannot effectively reach every member in A.A. We need the District Committee Members (DCMs) to talk about what has been reported out of the last conference to the General Service Representatives (GSRs). We then need the GSRs to report the information out to the group members. This is really hard to do because the information is so voluminous and comes out at different times throughout the year. What the GSR gets to do is be the trusted servant of their own group and report on what they know would be important to their group.

Most GSRs are lucky if they get five minutes at their monthly business meetings to report on the current, accurate and relative information from the general service structure to their home group members. So, if you only have five minutes 12 times a year that is only one hour to report on that gigantic amount of work being done to help us facilitate 12 step work in AA as a whole. Good luck with that! I say that only because I needed all the luck I could get to even get an hour a year from my small home group members when I was a GSR because they weren't that interested in what was happening outside the walls of our home group.

As a GSR I learned from attending district meetings and area events that each year in February the new agenda items for the next conference would be distributed by our area delegate and that even those items could be easily figured out and talked about with my group members if I knew the differences between the items. Each one started with either **discuss, consider** or **review**. Discuss and consider items were ones that required input from my group and that I needed to get our group conscience on each item so I could bring it to the Pre-Conference Committee I was assigned to. Review items were the items where information from our general service office was being sent out for me to inform my group members about the work being done on our behalf. It made life so much simpler to know what was being asked of me and I started to really focus on the ones I thought my group would be interested in.

Communication is tough for every organization. You would think that with all this technology it would be easier, but it isn't, and A.A. has the same communication hurdles that other organizations do. But what we have that others don't is that we have a lot of **passion and love** for our life saving program. We can help make this year-round communication and informed group conscience decision making process happen in a really big way but doing the following:

- 1.Ensure your home group has a GSR. If you don't at least have a group conscience about the agenda items that come out each new year so your group conscience can be included in the district and area voice. Also share with each other the resourceful information at your business meetings about your area delegate reports, area website and "What's New Tab" at the aa.org website. You can even use the Meeting Guide app but clicking on "News" tab.
- 2.Support that GSR and give them some designated time to do a monthly report and ask them some questions so they can work for you doing the research and bring back the answer. They have resources available to them that the average member might not even be aware of. Their purpose is to be the link of communication between your members and your delegate, your annual conference, your General Service Office and to be your groups resource to A.A. as a whole.
- 3.Thank them for their service, encourage them, support their efforts not just financially but spiritually too by listening to them. They are on a journey in service that could be a very big part of their sobriety. We can all help to stimulate interest

in general service if we get behind our trusted servants and help them do the job they are trusted to do.

My experience has shown me that we need to do some more work around this year-round conference and that service all starts in the same place our recovery does and that's in our home groups. It's our GSRs that are Connecting the Home Group to the Conference Throughout the Year and they are helping us to Better Inform that Home Group Conscience.

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Full Forum Presentations

Connecting with Love, Unity, and Service

David S., Alternate Delegate, Area 78, Alberta/N.W. Territories

Hello! My name is David S., and I am an alcoholic. I am grateful to be serving as the Alternate Delegate for Area 78 Panel 74.

On April 1, 2024, at 7:10 am I got a text from our Delegate Karen – Are you going to the forum? Would you like to do a presentation on Connecting with Love, Unity, and Service? I responded with “are you sure this isn’t an April’s Fools joke?”

I have been taught to say yes in A.A. so that is why I am here today. Thank you, Judy!

I am grateful for my suffering, and I am grateful for your suffering. Right now, I’d like to do a little connection exercise. It should take less than minute. Please stand up and turn around to the person to your left, right, behind or in front of you. Stand a little bit in front of them and connect with their left eye. Take a breath in silence. Think of the suffering this person had to get through to get to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Did they lose a job, did they go bankrupt, did they get divorced, did they end up in jail? Did they suffer abuse as a child? In just a few seconds we have a deeper connection with another member of A.A. who is here to learn and to connect.

Please take your seats as quickly as possible – you can find out their names later!

This common bond of suffering is what ignites our compassion, empathy and love for our fellow alcoholics, our love and enthusiasm for this incredible solution that we call Alcoholics Anonymous and our Three Legacies - Recovery, Unity and Service.

As far as love goes, I love alcoholics. They have saved my life over and over again. It is my mission as a member to love the still suffering alcoholic, to carry the message in and outside of the rooms. For me personally, my home group being Unity for the last 21 years, I have experienced the love of connecting with those members every Friday night.

General service has opened up my whole world, made me a better A.A. member, a better partner to my loving wife Val and in general a more loving human being. We have got to stick together. Unity is necessary to keep A.A. here for the next generation to come.

Monica M., Area Chair, Area 79, B.C./Yukon

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Monica, I am an alcoholic, honored to serve Area 79 BC/Yukon as the Chair on Panel 73.

Our topic of “Connecting with love, unity and service” reminds me of my journey in recovery, connecting with a member, which led to a connection with myself, that led to a connection to a group, then district, area and eventually the wider world of Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I think of connections or connecting, I think of plumbing or pipelines. If I use this analogy to describe myself when I first talked with an A.A. member, I was blocked, my emotions were shut off, I was frozen with fear and self-loathing, totally plugged up. My head was condemning me at every turn. No one could get through to me. Nothing was getting through.

An A.A. member reached out to me. I had trouble letting them get close, accepting they wanted to spend time with me.

They shared, listened, were encouraging. Despite myself, I was thawing, opening up. Their love and acceptance were getting through my blockages. I felt a stirring of hope and decided I just might want what they had. Maybe I could go to a few meetings. Despite this stirring of hope, I was a reluctant observer at meetings. I treated them like a workshop I was attending, the kind I could leave at any moment. I didn't want to be there. There was no involvement. My tap was barely on. But despite myself it was on!

Gradually, I saw the connections others had with themselves, each other and the Program. I was willing to consider the steps and the connections grew a little wider in my head and eventually my heart. I was opening up.

The day I became connected to the Fellowship is a very firm memory. I was disgruntled. The person who was to chair the meeting hadn't shown up. People were bantering back and forth. No one was getting the meeting going and I had to get back to work. I can remember saying many things to myself under my breath that I won't repeat here, finally getting to “oh hell, I guess I do belong here” and volunteering to chair. It was a conscious decision to join A.A.

I experimented with going to some meetings, skipping a week now and then, having 'better' things to do. Not surprisingly the flow was slowing down. I was plugging up. Reluctantly I realized I needed consistency to maintain a regular flow. I became aware of the fragile nature of my connection.

My sponsor encouraged me to make a commitment to a home group. She encouraged me to attend the group's business meetings, or as we call them 'members' meetings.' She showed me the importance of being connected to a group, getting to know people,

being accountable. My heart was opening up and I was beginning to understand unity, within the group, within the Fellowship.

At the members' meetings I began to hear about other aspects of the program, letting professionals know about us, answering phones, taking a meeting to a treatment center. I found myself wanting to know more.

I wanted to help out. Service was entering my life, enriching me. My world was opening up, my connection was expanding. I began to feel part of the district. To my astonishment, as I helped with some of these things, I found my self-esteem was growing, the flow was getting stronger. I was learning things about myself.

I have come to see how important, how fragile the connections are. How dependent A.A. is on members communicating, serving one another. A member reaches out to a newcomer and invites them to join a group. The group welcomes the newcomer. The group looks for ways to serve the still suffering through their links to the district. The district to the Area and the Area to the General Service Conference.

These are important points of connection or to use the plumbing analogy again, there need to be joins or links along the way. Think of the connecting points, the GSR is the link between the group and the district, the District Committee Member to the Area, the Delegate to the General Service Conference. Each individual, each trusted servant, is a connection, a link. Every connection has to be open for information to flow through, for there to be unity.

In Tradition One on page 129 of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Bill said: "The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or A.A. dies."

Unity is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "the state of being united or joined as a whole." It comes from the Latin word, 'unitas', or 'one'. Have you ever noticed the word unity is part of the words opportunity, community and immunity. For me, the love, service and unity of the community of A.A. have provided me with the opportunity to experience immunity from the disease of alcoholism, one day at a time.

Love was the blow torch that thawed my frozen pipes, my frozen emotions could not withstand the warmth of the love I received. May that same love keep all our connections open so that our Fellowship remains united and serves, striving to reach every alcoholic that is still suffering.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

Service - our third legacy is amazingly covered in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age – page 139 to the bottom of page 140 – "We must carry AA's message, otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those of who have not been given the truth may die."

Alice G., Alternate Delegate, Area 80, Manitoba

Hello, my name is Alice G., Alternate Delegate A 80 P 74 and alcoholic.

I was asked to present on this topic just before the 74th General Service Conference in Brooklyn, NY. Little did I know just how much these words would come to mean to me in that week.

Love in AA is the foundation upon which the fellowship is built. It's the driving force behind the support, understanding, and camaraderie that defines the AA experience. Through love, members find strength in vulnerability, hope in despair, and healing in connection. As we walk the path of recovery together, we embody the transformative power of love to heal, inspire, and uplift. Love is the glue that joins all of us in making sure we are there to carry the message to all who suffer with compassion and kindness.

At the 74th GSC, the love of the fellowship was very evident. There were about 150 + people there for one common purpose. How to carry the message of the program to those that are keeping the company of the Hideous four Horseman Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration and Despair.

Unity Is the understanding that we are all equal and are held together by the common goal of recovering and helping the still suffering. The Traditions allow us in our clubrooms to find a common goal and the ability to allow a Higher Power to guide us in the acceptance of the Group Consciousness. I always said that the traditions allowed me to play in the sandbox with other people. That by standing together we are much stronger than we are when we stand alone.

Service is one the greatest gift that AA has given us. It is the willingness to reach out to those that are still suffering and help them to find their way to sobriety. It also reminds us of where we came from. It transforms our pain into purpose and our struggles into strength.

I was on the literature committee at the Conference. It was a privilege to be a part of the group of people who went through the Plain Language Big Book in its entirety. There were 9 of us, all from different parts of Canada and the US. All of us there because we love AA and wanted to be of Service. I was uncertain how this was going to come about but Our Higher Power had things under control. We went through the book 30 pages at a time. Everyone was given the time to express themselves. Their opinions were given consideration. Once the entire book was done. The magic happened. We come up with different sticking points. We sat and went over each of them and voted on each one. All the votes were unanimous. Never would I ever thought that I would be so unselfish and watch others on the same journey.

The Conference body also showed the love they had for AA and the still suffering. We all came from different backgrounds and circumstances. We listened with respect. We all had different opinions, outlooks, and visions. I saw unity on the floor when we voted on the agenda items. Listened to all the discussions and saw the power of the minority opinion change the direction of the outcome. This to me shows unity for the still suffering. Watching the people that have given of their time, love and the willingness to be of

service. Has given me hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will be there for the still suffering for some time to come.

Garry S., Area Chair, Area 91, Saskatchewan

Good afternoon. My name is Garry, and I am an alcoholic, I am sober today through the Grace of my Creator and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I always start with a disclaimer. I am not an Alcoholics Anonymous expert, nor do I speak on behalf of Alcoholics Anonymous. What I share is my view and my words on the topic. I have decided to start my portion with service in Alcoholics Anonymous, as that is where I really began my journey of recovery. I did not realize it at the time, but service began at my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. People were sharing their experiences, strength, and hope, and I was oblivious to it. All I heard was yada-yada-yada and a lot of blah blah blahing. I have learnt over time; Service permeates through every single aspect of Alcoholics Anonymous. It brings us together no matter what role or position we are in, including members sharing at meetings, roles in the Home Group, committee members, Intergroup Reps, GSRs, DCMs, Committee Chairs, Table Officers, Delegates, or Trustees we all have one thing in common and that is carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic and ensuring the newcomer has a place to go to receive support through our Twelve Steps. As written in Alcoholics Anonymous's Twelve Steps and Traditions P. 109 on service, "...The wonderful energy it releases and the eager actions by which it carries our message to the next suffering alcoholic and which finally translates the Twelve Steps into action upon all our affairs is the payoff, the magnificent reality of Alcoholics Anonymous."

In my opinion, service in Alcoholics Anonymous generates a sense of community and unity. We solve our common problems by banding together despite our differences. Alcoholics Anonymous' Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts provides principles, guidelines, and warranties to assist us to keep this ship called Alcoholics Anonymous afloat without munities and protection from the power driver or any other calamity. Those thirty-six principles teach us how to work together and solve minor issues, such as when our personalities come before the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our Big Book states, "We are people who would not normally mix." Unity is all members of Alcoholics Anonymous embracing the "we," starting in Step One. We are in this together so we must row the boat in the same direction and work together or we will "surely die alone." And in my case my death would be in a cold, dank space void of light, happiness and love.

When I first heard the phrase Love and Tolerance is Our Code I was stumped. I, like thousands of others in early recovery, had some significant deficits in this area. 'Live and Let Live' were alien concepts. Only by practicing the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous in all of my affairs have I discovered the meaning of those phrases. It has been by working with others that I have learned to love people and ignore their personalities. We can disagree but that does not mean I cannot love someone because they think differently than me. Love is a feeling, and I have a deep love for the fellowship of Alcoholics

Anonymous and the people in it. I have transferred that love and tolerance to my personal life and family. Alcoholics Anonymous showed me that in order to love, one must have respect and trust for a person, place, or thing. One of the most precious gifts I have been given in Alcoholics Anonymous is the ability to feel and accept love in my heart and soul.

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WORKSHOP REPORTS

Anonymity Online

Moderator: Janet T., Area 91, Treasurer and Kathy M., Area 80, Chair

Reporter: Crystal W., Area,79, Alt. DCM

The meeting started with the reading of the definition of anonymity in A.A.

Question 1: As an individual A.A. member using the internet and social media, what can I do to protect my anonymity and the anonymity of others?

Anonymity is humility. What is the reason and motivation behind posting on social media?

What is the purpose of posting A.A. birthdays or milestones on social media? Important to check your motivation. Important to remain humble.

Importance of sponsorship and guidance. Informing of the traditions and what it means to break anonymity on social media.

Importance of not breaking others' anonymity by posting something and tagging someone or posting a picture of someone at a meeting or A.A. event. You can break someone else's anonymity and not just your own.

Leading people back to the literature, especially the Traditions on anonymity

Question 2: How do you protect and respect both people's anonymity in online meetings when one person's camera is off, and it says "just listening"

A.A. groups are autonomous including online groups. It is up to the group how they want to proceed when someone's camera is off.

Many shares about the benefit of having a co-host and moderator to verify people in meetings.

Perhaps the person with no camera on is a newcomer. Suggested to message them in the chat to reach out and let them know they are safe, and you are willing to talk to them - be welcoming.

Ask people to identify themselves by turning on camera and then they can turn it off and just listen

First Nations Inuit Metis Recovery Story Project

Moderator: Drew W., Area 79, Alt. Delegate

Reporter: Wendy S., Area 79, DCM, District 24

The idea for this project came from a Pre-Conference discussion regarding revamping the “A.A. for the Native North American” pamphlet, when we saw an unmet need in Area 79 for stories that were more specifically reflective of our local population. Sharing sessions were held, and a motion was passed with substantial unanimity at our Area 79 Voting Assembly in September 2022, which read: “For Area 79 to develop a pamphlet, book and/or audio recording containing personal recovery stories from members of Alcoholics Anonymous from Indigenous, First Nations and Métis and Inuit communities within the BC/Yukon Area.” Because this publication is not meant to serve A.A. as a whole, it therefore does not need to go through the General Service Conference approval process. Every area is autonomous, and AAWS/GSO has no objection to locally produced literature (See SMF-29 “Conference-Approved Literature” for more information).

We consulted widely to bring in more voices, and talent was drawn from our own backyard. Help was also received from members who have had experience with similar literature projects, such as the Military Audio Project, the Area 79 publication ‘Pioneers In Skirts,’ and long timer story projects. An ad hoc committee was struck (team members: Drew W., Dean G., Joanne C., Shannon H., and Michelle B.), and we started by holding a closed sharing session – by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis members, for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis members. Other committees were consulted as well, such as Corrections.

A website portal was set up to collect stories, either typed or recorded by audio. Handwritten letters could be mailed to our area mailbox. Or, a member could choose to be interviewed by Michelle B. (writer and journalist by profession), and their stories would then be transcribed. (The interview method was meant to honor Indigenous oral tradition and was selected by most of the participants). Michelle shares that the experience was similar to hearing Step 5 and was honored as such. Afterwards, she would proceed to write the interview up, staying true to the storyteller’s words, who would then review the story (sometimes with another trusted individual), to ensure it was properly captured. Interviewees were anonymous, sobriety lengths were varied, and all stories were received in English. After the stories were collected (25 in total), the committee worked together to proofread and to get the layout ready for the printer.

Although no audio recordings were received through the website portal, more may be revealed around the audio portion of this project – we aren’t sure what the Fellowship wants in terms of a “Phase 2.” There are lots of possibilities even at the local level, but we will need more resources if we want to go ahead with something of this sort. We did have one member read her own story aloud for a recording that was played at the 2023 Area 79 June Quarterly, which was very impactful to the listeners.

The final cost of this project is still TBA, as it is not published yet. This will be an Area 79 publication for purchase, so the goal is for it to become self-supporting. The books will be sold at cost. The intention is for this material to serve a local need as we don’t have the means to distribute it beyond Area 79.

At this time, the goal is to have the written booklet published and ready for the next 2024 Area 79 June Quarterly. We hope this project inspires many and remember: there is nothing stopping your area from meeting local needs in a similar fashion!

Remote Communities

Moderator: Stewart B., Area 78, E- Services

When I ask A.A. members what a remote community is, the discussion typically steers towards indigenous and far north communities. While these are included, there is much more to Remote Communities. The Remote Communities committee is dedicated to helping carry the A.A. message by supporting those who are isolated by geography, language, and culture.

Area 78 is the largest area geographically in the North American A.A. structure and includes:

- All of Alberta
- The South and Northeastern corners of British Columbia
- Maidstone, Saskatchewan
- Northwest Territories (NWT) – with the capital city of Yellowknife (45,668), NWT includes the regions of Dehcho, North Slave, Sahtu, South Slave and Inuvik. NWT has eleven official languages.
- West half of Nunavut - east to the Hudson's Bay and the beautiful community of Rankin Inlet which is now facing challenges due to the opening of a liquor store during the pandemic. (Thankfully the seeds of AA have been replanted). The city of Iqaluit is Nunavut's capital (7429) and the smallest municipality by population is Grise Fiord 'place that never thaws' with 140 residents, which is an Inuit hamlet on the southern tip of Ellesmere Island.

The official NWT languages are Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, French, and English.

According to a Canadian federal census report, languages most spoken in Alberta, other than English, are Tagalog (Pilipino), German, Punjabi, Cantonese and Spanish.

A.A. Loaners Internationalists and Homers is separate from Remote Communities but the two collaborate to carry the message through newsletters.

We have various cultures such as Hutterites, Mennonites, Immigrants (multiple cultures) and those who “don't have alcoholics because their religion doesn't condone drinking alcohol”.

Much focus has been given to connecting with Northern communities, but this committee is more than about geography. So how do we reach out to various cultures that may be in your back yard? Perhaps it starts with opening the dialogue at the committee level asking questions such as:

1. Who do we need to talk to?
2. How can we best approach them?
3. How do we understand and address language & cultural barriers?

4. What technologies can we incorporate?

Some of the initiatives Area 78 has been doing/considering include:

1. Along with other areas, has been involved with translating A.A. slogans, the 12 steps and traditions and various other writings into some of our indigenous and Inuit languages.

2. Creating a “Meeting in a Box” which includes items needed to start a meeting such as pamphlets, Big Book, 12+12, Preamble, Meeting format, Blue/Green/Yellow cards, Spirit of The North poster, etc.... The committee isn’t sure what to do with them yet, but, hey, build it and they will come, right?

3. Working with other Areas to get Spirit of the North mentioned on their website and listed among their meetings.

4. We have reached out to GSO to explore how we can get SOTN listed in the Meeting Guide app. Currently, meetings in the app are associated with a geographical region. Perhaps a region called something like “On-line” is required as an option?

5. Sometimes solutions come from within a particular culture. For example, a daily “word of mouth” A.A. meeting via WhatsApp takes place for 82 Hutterites and reaches from Dawson Creek, BC to the Dakotas, Montana, Washington, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

Perhaps a positive step would be for Remote Communities to better collaborate with other Area committees. Treatment, Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and perhaps even Corrections may already be talking (or at least considering it) with these communities. Let’s work together for a common solution.

Now, what is this SOTN I’ve been talking about? It is an Area 78 Remote Communities hosted Zoom meeting (originally held by teleconference calls) that was created in 2013 – yes, prior to the pandemic. Since then, SOTN has expanded to three meetings per week:
Sunday – Step, Tradition, Daily Reflection, Speaker, Grapevine
Monday – Big Book study and discussion
Wednesday – Big Book selection & discussion

Remote Communities is not a new “flash in the pan” as the conversations have been recorded back to the 70’s. In 1984 Area 78 created the NWT Travel Fund to assist those in the far north to attend assemblies. In 2006 it was renamed the Travel Assistance to Assembly fund; since then, A.A. members across the Area have utilized this fund.

1993 – an informal meeting was held at Toronto during the 50th anniversary of A.A. in Canada to discuss the creation of a Remote Communities committee.

1996 – a meeting at the Western Canada Regional Forum was held with delegates, Trustees and the GSO Manager. Later at the 46th Conference, another meeting was held, and a staff member was assigned. Later, that year, the first Remote Communities

Conference was held in Toronto.

1997 - The Remote Communities Committee met prior to the 47th general service conference to further formalize the committee and review and recommit to the definition of a remote community.

Today – a GSO staff member continues to support and assist the Chairperson of the committee as well as coordinate the committee newsletter “Remote Communities Communicator.”

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PAST TRUSTEE SHARING

Irma V.N., Western Canada Regional Trustee, 2020-2024

My name is Irma, and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is June 17, 1987, and I am a member of the Sunshine Group in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, Canada. I have had the privilege of serving AA in various positions. I served as a Panel 59 Delegate for Area 91 in 2009-2010 and as a Western Canada Regional Trustee from 2020 to 2024.

When I received the call informing me that I was elected Western Canada Regional Trustee during the 70th General Service Conference, there was a mix of excitement, fear, and immense gratitude. I recognized the significant responsibilities that this role would entail, and after tears of gratitude, I had to catch my breath. I believed I was in for a ride of my life and not on my horse. I did not want to let you down. My reliance on my Higher Power has helped me demonstrate the stability and serenity that comes from reliance upon that Higher Power, especially in times of change, uncertainty, and challenges. This experience has shaped me, fostering personal growth and a more profound connection with my Higher Power. Thank you for your trust in me over these past four years. It has been truly amazing, an experience that will stay with me for the rest of my life!

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I was relatively young. I thought at 23, and the older members and longtime members used to tell me to listen for the similarities and not the differences. We are all one drink away from a drunk, and what kept me coming back was the traditions, especially Tradition 3. I was at that jumping-off point, and I truly believed that drinking again would lead to certain death for me. I was told the Traditions were as necessary to the life of A.A. as the Twelve Steps were to the life of each member. They are the key to unity, the functioning and even the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength and hope.

When I was relatively new, and our group was struggling we thankfully had a visit from a DCM (I had no idea what this position was initially). She talked about the importance of a home group and how each group has a primary purpose of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. But also it must be understood that a group has many other important responsibilities. The entire structure depends upon the participation and conscience of the individual groups, and how each of these groups conducts its affairs has a ripple effect on AA everywhere. I am so grateful she introduced me to service and that I was given the opportunity and was willing to serve first as Alternate GSR and soon as District Secretary and then others. I learned how we are part of a greater whole.

The AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility and authority for our world services. At the 1955 International Convention, the General Service Conference was designated as the actual voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society, up until this point Bill W. and Dr. Bob and some trusted friends were the self-appointed trustees of alcoholics anonymous, This was done over the objections of those who worried that such a gathering would result in politics, confusion, expense and fruitless strife. Our founders believed that future generations of A.A. members could effectively take responsibility for maintaining our vital world services. Every delegate, trustee, director and staff member who serves as a voting member of the General Service Conference is a direct, personal beneficiary of that faith. Each of us justifies that faith by participating at the Conference in a spirit of fellowship and trust. We respect the committee system, which brings matters to the Conference for consideration. We trust that a democratic process engaged in by people acting in good faith will be in the best interest of our Fellowship, even though we may not agree with all of the decisions made. We trust that future Conferences will carry on A.A.'s wonderful legacy of service, just as those who came before us have placed that same trust in us.

While serving on the General Service Board, I always tried to keep our mission and primary purpose first and foremost and asked myself when making a decision what was best for the Fellowship as a whole and to help the still-suffering alcoholic. The GSB is the guardian of AA's Traditions and Concepts, ensuring the fellowship remains true to its foundational principles.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous symbolize the sacrificial character of our life together and are the greatest force for unity that we know" (A.A. Comes of Age, p. 96-97). The unity of A.A. is the most cherished quality our Society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God..." (Twelve Steps Twelve Traditions, p 129).

I would like to share how important participation is and how your voice can be heard through your group conscience or at an Area or Regional event. One example is when the cover for our soft-touch velvet softcover finish was being revised on our portable Big Books; I asked at our Regional WRAASA (Western Canada Alcoholics Anonymous Regional Assembly) for input on the upcoming cover to be revised. When I attended the next A.A.W.S. Meeting as a Director on the Board I shared what was suggested and how we hoped the lettering would still help the book look anonymous. We can see how this was incorporated into the new soft cover.

I was privileged to serve as chair of the trustee's Literature Committee last year as trustee. It was truly an exercise born out of love for this fellowship, and I was able to spend a lot of time reading drafts and stories for upcoming literature this past year. The work from the conference and the finalization of the approved projects, including the Plain Language Big Book, are now passed on to the next committee members.

Through the committee process, after thorough review and revisions, the final draft of the literature is presented to the General Service Conference for approval and then ultimately to the General Service Board for acceptance. This step ensures that all literature aligns with AA's Traditions and has the full support of the Board.

Thanks to contributions from the Fellowship in recent years, AA has continued to expand its translation efforts to include more languages, especially those of smaller linguistic communities or countries where AA is emerging.

- A.A. Literature is translated in **more than 100 international languages**, with these (just to mention a few) moving forward today – directly a result of the Fellowship's contributions helping to make this work possible:

Haitian Creole, Guarani, Shona, Lesotho, Inuktitut, and Kinyarwada, to name a few. Carrying the message around the world, ongoing.

- Translations of the Big Book, in particular, are being undertaken the world over by local committees, and these are nearing a total of 75 translations.
- Many of these translations are also available in digital formats, accessible through AA's websites and affiliated platforms.

In summary during my four years as trustee on the General Service Board I have met thousands of recovering alcoholics-at assemblies, Regional Forums, conferences and service weekends. I have made many friends throughout my travels. We are in this Fellowship together, with one primary purpose –to carry our message to the still suffering alcoholic. Our Traditions ask that we strive to settle our differences and relearn to trust each other. We know in our heart of hearts that our love for A.A.- individually and collectively-is pure in spirit.

I would like to invite each and every one of you to the next International Convention will mark the 90th anniversary of the beginning of our Fellowship's founding. It will take place from July 3 - 6, 2025, at the Vancouver Convention Centre and BC Place Stadium.

“90 Years – Language of the Heart.”

Watch for registration site links, forms, and hotel booking links that will be communicated to the Fellowship in /September 2024. I look forward to seeing you all again as we trudge this road of happy destiny.

With love and in service, Irma V.

Trish L., Trustee-at-Large Canada, 2019-2023

It's wonderful to be at a Western Canada Regional Forum in one of the many smaller cities in this vast Area and Region. I think it speaks to the heart of what Dr. Jack Norris and the other visionaries of the time had in mind when they set up the Regional Forums as a way to break down the barrier between the Board and the Fellowship. The chance to be in a smaller centre allows not just for all of us to share the experience in a more non-urban setting, it allows the local committee a rare opportunity to experience that larger A.A. world, to learn just how big A.A. is (and how small we are) and then generate an enthusiasm for general service in A.A. that will likely be generational. So, thank you to everyone for that.

I do want to take some of my time to acknowledge the passing of one of our truly beloved past trusted servants in this Region, Alex P., past Trustee at Large. Alex once said to me with a deep sigh, as he was describing his TAL adventures, and his desire to throw a backpack on and roam the countries of South America where he found such love for A.A.: "But I have to remember. I'm not 80 anymore." Pure Alex.

I also want to take some time to acknowledge and thank my husband Arnie for the sacrifices he made during my term as Trustee at Large and for his unswerving support. Our families walk this journey alongside us. We don't do any of this alone, and they are a huge part of that.

My term as Trustee at Large was 2019-2023. I was going through some Box 459's recently, and honestly, it was like watching my life flash before my eyes. My term as TAL was unlike any TAL before me, and I dare to say any coming after me, given that it was smack dab in the middle of COVID so was affected on every level. I sometimes get pangs at events like these, where I get to hear other TALS's like Scott and Joanne share the extent of travel that was part of their terms. But again, I got to experience things that no other TAL previously or in the future will. I got to witness the A.A. world coming together to see how best we could support each other and keep the lights on for global A.A. I got to witness the unity that was created in our home zone, REDELA (Meeting for the Americas) as we began to meet monthly to support fellow GSOs and service structures through this tumultuous time period. I got to be part of an Argentinian//Chile/US/Canada initiative called "North South Connections, which brought the far north together with the far south and everything in between.

To tie this back to being in smaller centers, when I did get the blessing of international travel, I think of Portugal, a country with a relatively small A.A. population, and one that does so much with what is so little compared to us. Everything is about how we can stretch and grow to include more and better. I was at their first post-COVID gathering, and the desire to just come together in quiet gratitude for being alive, for being A.A. members, for the ability to just share. It was inspirational and humbling.

You need to know that your 7th Tradition, if your group contributes to the levels of service and contributes to the General Service Board, has a direct impact. The radio PSAs that

we might be using quite so much in the US and Canada these days, have been very valuable in Brazil, in terms of reaching their remote Amazon communities. It was your 7th Tradition money that got those produced. Translation of our Big Book, and our literature, are hugely important to the 12th Step work in countries around the world. And you are part of that.

Before I get the bell, and/or a hug and in my case the hook, I just want to thank you all again for being here and for my sobriety.

Cate W., Western Canada Regional Trustee, 2016-2020

Hi, I'm Cate and I'm an alcoholic, past Delegate, Panel 60 Area 80 and past Western Canada Regional Trustee. And I've been so excited about attending this forum. And for lots of reasons.

I always enjoy Forums. One of the things that I didn't expect to get from my service journey is the life-long friends that I've made along the way. So, I look forward to Forums because they give me an opportunity to mingle with and catch up with the many, many new friends I now have.

I have been listening throughout the weekend and one thing that strikes me is the quality of the people we have here serving our fellowship. I listened to the presentations of the Delegates on Friday night. I don't think as a Delegate I was ever that articulate. And I have listened to the staff members, the Trustees and the NTD's as they have done their presentations or responded to our questions. And it strikes me just how lucky we are to have people of that caliber working for us or giving their time to us. Our fellowship is truly in good hands.

I have been looking forward to this Forum to be able to immerse myself in the fellowship and in service, to get refreshed and inspired and that has happened to me by listening to you all.

But for me this particular forum is extra special. There are two reasons for that.

One reason is our new Western Canada Regional Trustee. This is Gails' first Forum as Trustee, and I am so excited for her and for our region. I have known Gail since we were both getting active in service in our respective areas. I spent a lot of quality time with her and with another past regional Trustee Marty Watters. I would sit with the two of them and just feel their passion for A.A. and it inspired me to want to do more. I have seen Gail in action, and I just know she will do a great job as our Western Canada Regional Trustee. So being able to be here to support Gail is one reason this Forum is extra special to me.

The other reason is Scott. We've already said a lot about Scott this weekend. It is just so exciting to have the new Chair of the Board come from our region. And to have him make history as the first-Class B Trustee to be elected to this position. I know you have seen him in action over the course of the weekend. And you can see how committed he is, how articulate he is, how knowledgeable he is, how thoughtful he is. And for those of you who know him well you know how captivating he can be as a storyteller. But I will share just a

bit more. He was serving on the Board as Trustee-at-Large Canada when I was elected as the Western Canada Regional in 2016. Normally the previous regional trustee would orient the new trustee. But because Marty had passed away halfway through his term, there was no immediate predecessor to provide guidance to me. So, without being asked, Scott filled that role. He spent hours with me explaining what would happen at the Board weekends, why things were done as they were, what sorts of problems to be prepared for. He really eased the way for me, and I have always appreciated the time he took to help me out and make me feel more comfortable in my position. And when I was facing some stressful issues during my time on the Board, he was the best sounding board I could have hoped for. So, I am very excited to be here to support Scott at his first Regional Forum as Chair of the Board. I know he will do a great job for us.

As always, I will walk away from this Forum inspired. I believe that when we get together as A.A.s, whether it's at a meeting, an assembly or a Forum like this one, we each bring something to the room. And we each walk away with so much more than we brought. So, I thank you all for being here.

Victor P., General Service Trustee, 2008-2012

I said something about the wisdom of the trustees — I am going to try to be evidence in support of that claim. What always strikes me is “continuity.” There is a member of my home group in Medicine Hat, here today, who is serving as a committee chair of Area 78. They've met new G.S.R.s and other people. While we really can't predict who is going to be standing up here or doing this twenty years from now, it will be those people. They don't know it, I don't know it, but that's what's going to happen.

One time, we were going to Yorktown up through the Qu'Appelle Valley. Tom was a delegate in Area 91, and I was the chair in Area 78. I phoned Tom and said, “I flew into Regina, can you pick me up on the way?” It must have been an assembly. He said, “Sure!” When I got into the car there was another fellow there who I'd barely met, but I knew who it was — the Western Canada regional trustee. So, I was with a trustee and a delegate. I was a junior. All three people in that car eventually became Western Canada regional trustees. It is such a wonderful thing — it never stops. The quality of the people serving on the General Service Board, the non-trustee directors, and the staff always impresses me. I think, “They weren't all this smart, capable and in control when I was a trustee.” So, I am quite sure A.A. is in excellent hands for the next four years. That's what coming to these forums is all about. It doesn't matter if you are new — it's great to see so many new people here. We leave here with an enormous sense of continuity and permanence — there is something eternal about it. Thanks to everyone for making it happen.

Jo-Anne L., Trustee-At-Large Canada, 2007-2011

It's not about me this morning, it's about you. You're the future of A.A. and I am so grateful. As I look around this room, I see so many people that I love. I wouldn't have met them — and all of you — if it hadn't been for A.A. I can tell a story about every one of these people. I can take up their time *and* the rest of the morning.

This weekend is a moment of history in A.A. It belongs in the archive history because of what has happened on our board. It's really a miracle. We should know that. I remember when our new board chairperson was elected delegate for your Area 79, and I've spent a lot of time with him. As you know, while learning how to live, one day at a time in Alcoholics Anonymous, we learn so many things. I had no idea, when I came into A.A., what was going to come to me. In my years of sobriety, I met a wonderful man, and I've been married to the same guy for almost 35 years. We are both in the program. He's 40 years sober, and I am coming up on 40 years sober.

You've heard all about the board this weekend, but I am going to tell you a humanities story, because we are all human. One morning in New York City, Tom K. (your past trustee) and I were going to a board meeting. We headed to the subway to get to the meeting at G.S.O. We get on the subway, and it's busy but I find a seat right away. I hear someone yell, "Don't sit there!" I look behind me and a guy has passed out, his beer had spilled, and it was coming down the seat, and it was all over my sweater.

So, we got to the General Service Office.

I headed to the washroom to squeeze it out. I come back, sit beside Tom. Business is going on, and after a few minutes, Tom leans over and says, "What's that smell?"

If I went up and down the rows of seats here, there would be a story to tell. I could pinpoint people that I've met with, served with, and talked with, eyeball to eyeball. If I've spoken with you then we have a story to tell. We've all done things because of Alcoholics Anonymous. Learning to live one day at a time is the most special thing. It's not about me. I've learned through the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts how to live one day at a time. They each have a place in the process and I'm only just a vessel. Thank you so much.

Ray M., General Service Trustee, 2005-2009

What an event this has been. Over the years I've been to many events, but the humor that I heard this weekend. That was the big attraction to me when I walked into these rooms — the laughter. My goodness, the laughter! Even from the general service staff, trustees and non-trustee directors. Those presentations were outstanding. People learn better — I learn better — when there is lots of humor involved. So, thank you for that. I always refer to myself as being from the dark ages, I am a Panel 44 delegate, so I go back a little way. When I did an orientation at our assembly, I said that, and then I thought, "Oh my goodness. That's 30 years ago. I never meant to get *this* sober." But here I am. My heart is full, and it has been full for a very long time.

I served as a non-trustee director from 2001 to 2009, serving on the Grapevine board and I was a general service trustee from 2005 to 2009. Lots of experience and stories. One thing I would like to share with you is that the work is hard, but the pay is good. I've heard that already here this weekend. Some of the work is easy, but some of it can get

challenging, as those who have been involved in the Conference over the years know. But we all support and love one another. A lot of times, after those meetings, we'd get together, walk down to Central Park or down Fifth Avenue and we'd have debriefing sessions. Sometimes trying to digest this stuff as it's happening is hard, so we'd go for those long walks and get back so that the next day we'd be off and running. To be a part of that... I remember going back a long time ago, there was a trustee named Phil, from Manitoba. I was driving him back to Calgary after the assembly. Our elections were coming up and I said to him, "I don't know if I'd ever be able to fill the shoes of the person there before me." He said, "We don't fill the shoes of anyone. We simply fill our own and we walk together, hand in hand, in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous." I will never forget that. I never thought I was good enough or smart enough, and when I came in here, you guys were speaking a totally different language. A lot of you are likely experiencing that today because of the acronyms we use. But, as I kept coming, I started to learn. I became more "a part of." It was very similar when I became a G.S.R. and I sat down, didn't know anybody, but some people came over, sat down, and said, "We'll help you, Ray. We'll show you the way." That's Alcoholics Anonymous.

I'm going to share a story outside my general service work. Back in 2019, I traveled to Russia. When I got there, through an Al-Anon connection (my wife is an Al-Anon trustee), they indicated that there was an A.A. convention happening in Moscow. "Ray, would you like to go?" Sure! My Al-Anon connection picked me up and was my translator. We went to the event; I signed in at the registration desk and put my years of sobriety down. But they kept on trying to get my age of sobriety — no one in Russia has that amount of sobriety. When they finally got the message, they began bringing people over to introduce them to me.

I think sometimes we take what we have — the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous — for granted. The great gift that was given to us. For the longest time, when I was trying to get sober, I turned my back on it. But the rest of the world is starting to get the message. That report that Robert gave yesterday is what we do in A.A., we carry the message, not just here, but abroad. To watch that in other societies is absolutely a miracle. The delegates' presentations? I gave some of them hell because they made me feel bad — I was never that good when I was a delegate. It was a fabulous event, and it was nice being part of A.A. in this capacity. I see a room full of future trustees and past delegates. Thank you for allowing me to be here.

Tom K., Western Canada Regional Trustee, 2001-2005

The first regional forum I attended I was not quite three years sober. I didn't have a home group, so I went to lots of meetings. A co-worker, who was involved with the regional forum in the Regina Saskatchewan Hotel in 1986, happened to bump into me and asked what I was doing that weekend. I said that I hadn't anything planned, and he said, "We could use your help." He didn't say that it'll be good for you, or that you should go and enhance your sobriety, he said, "We could use your help." I don't remember a thing that I heard there, but I remember the feeling in the room. That sense of what I belonged to had

changed. I'm so grateful to the people who encouraged me. What a gift we give when we encourage newer people and long timers.

I'd like to give a special welcome to all of the new people here at their first forum. Those people who are newer to service or even recovery. And a special thank you to those of who may have stepped out of your comfort zone in order to be here. Some wisdom that I heard along the way and believe to be true is this: "Our recovery doesn't really begin until we start to work for the recovery of someone else." That was my experience. I am grateful for the people who encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone, the people who said, "You would be good at that." Because of the credibility and unconditional love in the rooms of A.A., I believed them. For the first time in my life, I believed that I would be good at that. There was no angle or anything. So, I encourage you to encourage people to step forward, say yes, and put up your hand.

As I look out over all the people here, it is exciting for me to know what you are going to experience in your lives and your recovery — the quality of your recovery. It is so exciting, and I am grateful for the people who inspired me when I was coming along. Some are sitting up here at this table — the ones I got to serve with. Thank you to the General Service Board for the opportunity to do this. I look forward to this part of the regional forums. I was inspired by people who have gone before us and sat up here. It gives credibility to the continuum of what we are doing. Regardless of what is happening in our lives or around the world, there is continuity in Alcoholics Anonymous and the gift of carrying that message, sharing it, and passing it on. The thread that continues to lead us through whatever circumstances we are going to face or have to deal with — the good and the challenging. Thank you for my retinue of "ne'er-do-wells" who traveled up with me — I'm one of them. I'm looking forward to the ride back home.

Gerry F., Western Canada Regional Trustee, 1992-1996

I dragged my butt into A.A. on January 16, 1977. I was never going to have any fun in my life, I was never going to be able to enjoy anything — no sports, obviously. I didn't know the words, but stupid, boring, and glum fit me exactly. This was my prospect in A.A. But it didn't turn out like that. The first thing that happened was a "meeting after the meeting" after about 4 or 5 months. It was one of the Oldtimers, a past delegate/past trustee, and we were having coffee. He starts telling drunk stories. All of the sudden, I burst out into a real belly-laugh. I stopped mid-stream and realized that that was the first time I had a real laugh in a very long time. I remember thinking, "Maybe this thing can work."

But that was just the beginning. What happened next was that I was adopted by a newly elected delegate who happened to be in our group. He dragged me to assemblies, different meetings, and regional forums (whatever that was!) in Edmonton. I was a fledgling G.S.R. There were suits at the front — I was impressed. But it all ended up having to do with service. I decided, when I was rotating out of D.C.M., that I might be able to be area treasurer. I got a lecture from my adopted sponsor that it was not my decision — the assembly makes the decision. He said that if I have the time, if I am willing to do the work, then "I want to see your name up on the board. Okay?" Ok. I was in every

position on the area committee that was available, except treasurer. They elected me delegate, as well. For some reason, my name was eventually put out as a nominee from Saskatchewan for the Western Canada regional trustee. I got this phone call. I am in the classroom, and some lady phones and says something about a new trustee. I am thinking, "Why is someone phoning me about a new school trustee, anyway?" She says, "Gerry, shut up. You are the new Western Canada regional trustee. On the General Service Board." I thought, "They have made a mistake." When I show up at my first board meeting, I look around at the group, and thought to myself, "What is this farm kid from Saskatchewan doing in a group like this? Way out of line." Turns out I was just as likely the right person, at the right place, at the right time. As usual. But who would know?

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CLOSING REMARKS

Gail P., Western Canada Regional Trustee

I'm so incredibly grateful for this opportunity to serve Alcoholics Anonymous one more time as your Western Canada Regional Trustee. Also, thank you to Dave, and District 70 for doing such a great job of keeping us supplied this weekend.

My first communication after I was elected and about this event was from Eileen, GSO staff, regional forums coordinator. She, along with Charlene, Attallah, and Rebeka made sure I had absolutely everything I needed to prepare me for this weekend. Thank you. You were my first life jackets. Scott, your general service board chair gave me all the encouragement I needed to let my name stand back in 2023 as nominee.

And Bob, I look forward to working with you. You are a treasure. The rest of you, Andy and Kevin, the classiest class A's I've met in a long time. Thank you. And of course, Robert, Teddy, John, Chris, I'm so glad I met you this weekend, and I look forward to working with you. I'm so glad we met here this weekend and that we had that opportunity.

Tom, if you're still in the room, and I'm not sure if you are, uh, I'm so happy that you're my trusty buddy, and thank you for making the trip, and I'll, you know, I'll see you in New York. To everyone from Area 80 Manitoba to Area 79 BC Yukon who made the trek to be here. I'm so glad you did. I have no idea, no, what's going to happen.

But I do know that this weekend with all my amazing Alcoholics Anonymous friends and people, people I didn't know and people I've known for a long time, I'm going to have a great time. You've set me up for what's to come and I thank you for that. I can tell you that the final attendee count was 343. Of that, 222 were first-time attendees. Just all I can tell you, you first time attendees, is hang on tight because you're in for one hell of a ride. Thank you.

Bob, General Manager, GSO

What a wonderful forum this has been. I heard one of the past trustees say, "my heart is full." My heart is full, too. That's one of the beauties about getting to do this job and getting involved in service. These weekends are a supercharge. It reminds me of my purpose and why I am here. First of all, I want to wish all the moms a happy Mother's Day — and my wife, the mother of our six children. I think of the years where sometimes things like this happen and I might not be at home. Many of our spouses and loved ones are doing just that right now — holding the bag and doing different things. I think they are serving Alcoholics Anonymous as much as we are. It's important to remember them. Thank you, all. My wife even mowed the lawn on Tuesday. She took a picture. I didn't tell her the lines weren't straight. Beggars can't be choosers, right? But seriously, what a blessing.

In my opening remarks, I talked a little about trust and how that is a good by-product of forums. I think it was one of the intentions that Dr. Jack had. I can feel that build here. Each year, at our General Service Conference, the same thing happens. We feel the trust build and it gives us the opportunity, when we come together in various service roles, to build that trust. There is no other way to do that other than coming together to these venues. I talked a little about some of the quotes I have on my office walls. One of them is that quote about contempt prior to investigation. That's another great by-product of forums like this — we come here, get answers to lots of questions, and we get the opportunity to ask questions, to find and formulate facts. There is another quote on my wall from the Tenth Step in the Twelve and Twelve: "Whenever I am disturbed, there is something wrong with me." It's within that that sometimes I equate it with a non-A.A. person named Victor Frankel. He suffered a lot in concentration camps. He said, "In stimulus and response, there is a pause." I've always equated that to my Tenth Step and if I can take that pause to my Tenth Step and keep myself from getting into that contempt prior to investigation, I open the door in my heart. Coming to forums like this does that. I got that here and I've felt that many of you got that here, too. I hope that you did. So many of you serve in so many different roles, in service in general, and in my experience, it's always been important to keep my recovery first. What I just shared about my recovery is an example of that. That my Step work has to come first, and I can't lose that. It's not necessarily what we do, but how we do it. More importantly than that is how we treat each other. There has been such a wonderful example of that at this forum: the decorum and the bit of disagreement we had was done in an A.A. way. That true spirit — and I feel your true spirit here. I'd like to close and turn it over to Scott.

This is non-Conference-approved, but I love music, so bear with me. These are some lyrics from a beautiful song by an incredible musician and singer-songwriter, Tim McGraw. It's from the song "Humble and Kind:" "Don't take for granted the love this life gives you. When you get where you are going, don't forget — turn back around and help the next one in line. Always stay humble and kind."

Scott H., General Service Board Chair

I think it is very fair to say that this has been a very special weekend for so many reasons. For me, personally, this is the first event that I have been to in my new role. To be able to do this in my own region, surrounded by all of the friends that I have met in service in this region has been truly wonderful.

Along with being Mother's Day weekend, it was also the anniversary of two events. As we were reminded by John W., this was the very time 89 years ago Bill W. found himself pacing in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel and made that phone call. And, as my friend Tom H. reminded me, it is the anniversary of the first meeting of Bill W. and Dr. Bob.

When I said on Friday night, if you see someone sitting by themselves or standing by themselves, grab them up and pull them into the center of A.A. As much as I was never physically sitting or standing by myself, I still feel like you have all grabbed me up and let me feel the love of belonging in the middle of Alcoholics Anonymous in a position that is new and a little scary. Thank you, and Bob and Eileen, the other staff from the

office, and Chris from the Grapevine office who were here this weekend. Thank you to the trustees and directors, Gail, Andie, Kevin, Robert, John, Carolyn, and Tom. Thank you for your love and support.

There are so many memorable moments from this weekend. I have a few little things written down from every presentation, from so many of the comments and questions, that just enrich my service and my sobriety. I hope one of the things that you witnessed this weekend was the care and support that the people around us in service provide to each other. There is a sense of fun and camaraderie to be found here. I hope you felt that amongst yourselves.

This morning, we had a chance to hear from those elder statesmen in our region. Those past trustees who have served us so well and provided such fine examples for you. I am reminded of what I heard Karen say and that is “where do elder statesmen come from?” They come from saying “yes.” They come from sticking out their hand. From saying “I’m willing to be of service.”

For many of you, this weekend will have been a lot. A lot of information, a lot of spiritual presentations and discussions – and I hope to spend a lot of time with friends old and new. It is a lot because A.A. is a lot.

I really hope this weekend has given you an even a little clearer picture of the enormity of Alcoholics Anonymous and the enormity of the work that goes into making sure that AA remains available to the still suffering alcoholic. We don’t always see this from our home group. I hope this weekend has provided you with a slightly different perspective. The presentation that Robert made shows us just how big a deal Alcoholics Anonymous is. None of us are big deals, but Alcoholics Anonymous is.

I hope you got to meet those “New York people” that you hear about and found that they are not just New York people anymore. They are your friends in Alcoholics Anonymous. They are the same people we meet in meetings every day. They are the same as the people you and I already know in Alcoholics Anonymous. So maybe not every home group has the people with the socks and the buffalo nickels and the juggling bee slides.

But what each of your home groups has is you. On Friday night, Bob said something that most of us have heard before in service. “What A.A. needs from each of us to bring ourselves”. I want to thank all of you for bringing yourselves this weekend. Bringing yourselves is what has made this weekend the spiritual event that it has been.

For the first-time attendees, it was wonderful to hear of your experiences. I hope you know how important it is that you have been here. I hope you heard something that makes you interested enough to come back. I hope you met some new friends that you want to see next time we get to come together at this event again in Saskatoon, two years from now.

Rio spoke about how it all begins in our home group. How that is the place from which our connection to the rest of A.A. begins. Robert spoke about how it is the GSR that opens the door to our fellowship’s group conscience.

Teddy spoke about how his service began in his home group, and how his service as a

delegate, and now as a non-trustee Director, has really just made his home group a little bit bigger.

I hope that for all of you, this weekend has given you the sense that maybe what is your “Home Group” in A.A. is just a little bit bigger, moving toward a time and place where all of Alcoholics Anonymous, no matter where those A.A. members may live, or what language they may speak, is your Home Group.

I hope you have that experience, and you will join us in Area 80 in February for WRAASA.

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