

**PRESENTATIONS FROM THE 2017 WESTERN
REGIONAL ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SERVICE
ASSEMBLY**

“Supporting Our Future”

February 10, 11, 12, 2017

Viscount Gort Hotel

Winnipeg, Manitoba

***Please be advised that this document is intended for AA members only.*

*Thank you.***

**SESSION: Western Canada Regional Delegates
Presentations:**

“Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible...”

Presenters:

Randy C, Alternate Delegate, Panel 67, Area 91

Larry M, Delegate, Panel 66, Area 78

Ian R, Delegate, Panel 66, Area 80

Jade F.-H., Delegate, Panel 67, Area 79

Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible...

Presenter: Randy C. (Alternate Delegate, Panel 67, Area 91)

Good day, my name is Randy C, and I am an Alcoholic. I am replacing Ed S, Area 91 Delegate, he sends his regrets for not being here, I wish I could say that it's too bad that he is not here but this weekend he is getting ready for a trip to Jamaica, so I told him we might miss him a little.

When I was asked to replace Ed to do this presentation i was wondering what I could talk about, what is Growth and Leadership, and how does one become responsible for these actions. As I am the Alternate Delegate, otherwise known as "Ed's Shadow", I have had to reflect on the actual leadership role that I will have in the Area, and as I have been around a few days now growth is measured in sometimes small amounts, not like the leaps and bounds it used to be like when I first sobered up.

In the time I have travelled around in sobriety and our fellowship I have seen many glimpses of what Leadership entails, at the area level, the district level, the group level, and the sponsorship level. I have seen leadership qualities such as humility, humour, knowing when to speak up and knowing when to shut up and let the process run, being able to put AA unity before their interests, and attraction, and our program is after all based upon attraction rather than promotion. I have seen growth, not only in myself through guidance from a sponsor, but also growth in a group that has members with strong sobriety, growth in districts that have active participation and growth at the area level with the tribulations of district restructuring. Growth of seeing the floundering newbie elected to a service position that has them out of their comfort zone and through their term gaining the confidence, humility, and knowledge to be able to lead the next person to step into that position.

As most people probably do, I looked to the google gods for some inspiration on this topic. I came across a few qualities of leadership:

- Has vision
- Motivates and inspires people to engage with that vision.
- Manages delivery of the vision.
- Coaches and builds a team, so that it is more effective at achieving the vision.

Leadership within our program, as i am seeing it, is totally reverse of other organizations, we don't have "bosses" and those with solid sobriety don't want to assume the boss position. Leadership is getting that vision through listening to the group conscience, the sponsor/sponsee, and even hearing the still suffering alcoholic, whether it be the newcomer or the old timer, and leading by example of applying the steps, traditions and concepts in all aspects of our lives.

Motivating and inspiring is done through service functions such as this. Nothing like reinvigorating a group into growth like having a newcomer, or a person young in the program that is bitten by the “service” bug, or finding out that the roundup that you volunteered for came off, as it usually does, in spite of ourselves, and even sobered up at least one person!

Managing delivery of that vision is done through various activities such as participation in the fellowship, service at all levels, sponsorship and practicing the steps, traditions and concepts. By the time we have solid sobriety we have experienced a complete spiritual and emotional change, and we all have a common purpose, to help that still suffering alcoholic to achieve sobriety.

Leadership is coaching and building a team. Each service position, even the person that puts out the coffee for the meeting, is building the AA team, just by being “a part of” we become a part of this fellowship, our sobriety gets enhanced, we pass it on to the newcomer, and our “team” gets bigger. As we go through the service positions newcomers can see how service can benefit their sobriety and the leader coaches the newcomer whether at the group level, the service level or the sponsorship level. A member in any service position has the opportunity to attract others as pass on their experience strength and hope of doing that position, thus building a team of members that are willing and able to take one that position when the spirit of rotation takes place.

In my search through the google universe I came across a few varieties of growth that I think apply:

- Physical
- Abstract
- Modal

Physical growth is tangible, we can see and quantify the results. Like when a resentment and a coffee pot creates a new group, the district all of a sudden has a physical growth of the number of groups. Or when a few members twelve step a still suffering alcoholic, shows them our program of recovery and the newcomer joins us on the road to happy destiny, in this case our group has a physical growth, and if the group has members with some good sobriety, that very same newcomer will find a sponsor and be taken through the steps, traditions and become part of service and learn our concepts, thus the service structure will experience a physical growth. If the fellowship actually has fellowship outside the meeting and offers an alternate way of living to what we had before then the attraction of living sober will result in physical growth of our fellowships numbers.

Abstract growth, wikipedia defines this as “a system becoming more complex, an organism becoming more [mature](#)” In our program this is inevitable, as we all start off as newcomers, we are introduced to

members of AA, they urge us to get a sponsor, that sponsor and the group encourage us to be of service to our fellows and the program by putting our hand up to allow our high power to give us the chance to do spectacular things in service, and through all this our sponsor, group, district, area and GSO lead us through the steps, traditions and concepts, our lives get better, the promises come true, we become better humans and abstract growth is achieved! I know when I sobered up my life was pretty simple, everything led to two goals drink or find a way to get a drink, and as our big books talks of the insanity of drinking, I can tell you my actions were not too mature. Our big book describes the abstract growth we will experience, “Our book is meant to be suggestive only, we realize we only know a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.’

Modal growth is numeric models for describing how much a particular quantity grows over time. In our fellowship we have the 12 steps, the 12 traditions and the 12 concepts. The 12 steps are divinely put together not only as a program of recovery, but also show the newcomer in our basic text what is to come after each step is achieved. Our traditions define a plan of action of how to have unity, spirituality and helpfulness when playing with others in the big sandbox of life. The concepts lay out how AA is defined by the conscience of the whole and not dictated by only a few, also allowing us to be better able to play in the sandbox with others. Our big book explains the “model of recovery” in many places. “Then they outlined the spiritual answer, and program of action, which a hundred of them had followed successfully”, and “if you are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through” are among a few examples of results of modal growth. I have yet to come across a member of our fellowship that has told me they worked and applied the steps, traditions and concepts in all aspects of their lives and that the promises did not come true and they couldn’t stay sober!

What does “Growth-Leadership: I am responsible” mean to me? I think our responsibility pledge sums it up rather nicely

I am responsible - whether it be chairing a meeting, greeting the newcomer, guiding or listening to a sponsor/sponsee, holding a service position, and getting involved in my home group.

When anyone, anywhere – as our program has been around for a few decades we have touched, and will continue to affect, people from many social, economic, racial, religious and geographical backgrounds.

Reaches out for help – our primary purpose is to help the still suffering alcoholic, we all must show leadership when it comes to contact with the ones still suffering, whether its a newcomer, old-timer, group, or district.

I want the hand of AA always to be there –we must continue to promote growth and leadership through service, participation and practicing these principles in all of our affairs, if we keep attracting then there will be a place for the alcoholic, still suffering or not, to become part of a fellowship of recovery.

And for that I am responsible!

I will let you all in on a little secret, as most of Area 91 knows already, i am a heavily skewed numbers guy and would much rather spout off the importance of the seventh tradition through numbers, statistics, charts and trendlines, probably putting most of you into a coma before I've even gotten into the talk, rather than stringing together a few sentences as this is the most terrifying function of life for me. But, as the topic suggests, growth, getting out of my comfort zone, and leadership, having and inspiring the vision of our fellowship, for that I am responsible.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity

Randy C

Area 91 – Alternate Delegate

Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible...

Presenter: Larry M (Delegate, Panel 66, Area 78)

Hi. My name is Larry and I am an alcoholic. I am humbled and honored to serve Area 78 Alberta/Northwest Territories as their Panel 66 Delegate.

I wish to thank the WRAASA committee and their chair Alice for the great job in planning and organizing this important service event for the Western Canada Region of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The topic I was asked to discuss is “Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible”. I must say that I have struggled with what to say about this important but very broad topic. I sat down and began doing a lot of research by reading AA literature and conducting internet searches. I had a lot of threads of thought flashing through the deep recesses of my aging mind but nothing seemed to coalesce into anything of unified substance. In the end, I decided to just speak from the heart.

In the title “Growth-Leadership” the word “Growth” can be a bit confusing. Just what type of growth does it refer to personal growth; growth in service or growth in members numbers. I decided to focus more on personal growth.

From childhood to old age we continue to grow and develop our unique personalities and outlook on life. We grow as we interact with our environment and with others that we are in contact with. We learn from our past experiences and from the experiences of others so that our inner being can grow and be nurtured.

For myself, I tried to model my growth by mimicking some of the traits I most cherished from people I thought were good leaders. Looking back, perhaps the leaders who were my mentors were in fact my life skill’s sponsors. Like a good sponsor these leaders provided wisdom and guidance allowing me the freedom to choose my own path. I wanted what they had and welcomed their guidance so that I could grow. Most growth was positive and I, like all of us here, developed into persons who have a zest for life that hopefully might be respected and admired by others around us. We hoped that we too would become the leaders, the mentors, the sponsors for those around us.

For myself, I feel that my growth was positive until I entered my alcoholic years. During my alcoholic years, my growth was erratic and negative and I spiraled into a deep despair. I used the leadership or sponsorship of other practising alcoholics to be my model of growth. The ideals I once cherished became confusing and were now in contrast to the lifestyle I was now living. The growth I was experiencing by modelling these behaviours was for a long time acceptable to me but those qualities of dignity, love and self-respect I once cherished were gone. To others my growth was not something to be respected and

sought after. I thought all was well but others around me felt differently. Eventually I realized I did not like what was happening and something had to change. To quote Bill W. in “As Bill Sees It”, “I wanted the good that was in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. But first of all, I wanted sunlight since nothing can grow in the dark.” End Quote. I had no idea how to go from the dark to the sunlight. I needed leaders to show me the way. I joined Alcoholics Anonymous.

As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, I discovered that if I ever wanted to again experience the positive growth that gave me comfort and positive self-worth that I had to experience a re-birth. I had to recognize and overcome the many obstacles and walls I had built that were roadblocks to my positive growth experiences. I could not do this on my own. To quote Bill W. “I became a pupil under the leadership of the AA movement.” End Quote. I needed the guidance and wisdom from another mentor or sponsor. As it says in the pamphlet Questions and Answers on Sponsorship: “we seek a member who seems to be using the AA program successfully in everyday life”. End quote In other words we may chose a person who we thought to be good mentors or leaders. These sponsors hopefully led us carefully and slowly through AAs steps so we could examine and overcome the obstacles to positive growth. Over time we started to again grow but this time in a manner that gave us the courage to develop our own person and leadership style.

For many AAs the growth stops here and we stagnate. We become contented with our new life. To quote page 25 from “As Bill Sees It” “How many of us would presume to declare, “Well, I’m sober and I’m happy. What more can I want, or do? I’m fine the way I am. We have to continue to grow or else deteriorate. The status quo can only be for today, never for tomorrow.” End quote.

For a small minority of us we continued our growth by becoming involved in General Service. To me, this is the third stage in our growth and it is this growth that requires the greatest amount of leadership. Sadly, that leadership is not always there – or if it is there it is not being effective in passing on its qualities to others in service.

Many enter general service work through coercion or by volunteering because “no one else will do it.” They do it without any form of mentorship. They do not know what their role as a General Service Representative encompasses and they quickly become disillusioned and quickly drop out of continuing in General Service.

I feel that that mentorship should first come from the sponsors. In the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” there is a statement that reads: “The sponsor impresses upon the newcomer the importance of our Traditions. They try to give the newcomer some picture of the scope of AA, beyond

the group, directs the attention to AA literature about history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of AA -wherever the newcomer may go.” End quote.

I wonder how many sponsors are actually making their sponsees aware of our program beyond the Legacy of Recovery. How many sponsors actually guide their sponsees through the Traditions, their development, their meaning and their application to one’s recovery. As sponsors, we all need to take a greater leadership role in mentoring our sponsees so they gain a thirst for General Service.

And what about the role of Past General Service Representatives. I wonder if they should be taking a greater role in passing on their experience, strength and hope as past trusted servants to the newcomer. These past servants have a vital leadership role to play in ensuring that growth occurs in the people new to service.

Do we as sponsors and mentors and groups provide Tradition and Concept workshops and studies? We are dutiful and responsible for making Big Book Study or recovery studies available but are we lax in doing the same for the Legacies of Unity and Service? I think much more can be done and we are the leaders who should be doing it.

But the growth should not stop with encouraging group members to become involved in General Service. We as leaders must mentor those already in service. It appears to me that we do very little to promote growth within those newly appointed or elected to positions as Committee Chairs and Table Officers. There is a period of transition it appears to focus more on exchange of materials between the incoming and outgoing officers. Are we doing enough in education of Area protocols, the Twelve Concepts of Service, the scope and procedures for each committee- to name a few. The old adage – “fake it until you make it” - does not apply. Much time in a rotation appears to be in learning rather than doing. Perhaps this education should be transmitted by the leaders, past and present, and should begin long before a person considers further involvement in service work.

In short we need good leadership in the form of service sponsorship. Many of us have a service sponsor but do we use these leaders well. Do we learn from them or do we only use them when there is a crisis. Our service sponsors should be our guides, mentors who lead us to grow so that we too can become better leaders.

The pamphlet Questions and Answers on Sponsorship has a whole section on Service Sponsorship. To paraphrase in part this section it states that the “Service Sponsor’s responsibility is to present the various aspects of service to the sponsee; to help them understand the distinction between serving the needs of the

Fellowship and meeting the personal needs of another group member; to share knowledge of AA history and service structure; to assist the sponsee in understanding the Traditions, Concepts, Warranties, Service Manual, AA comes of Age. The important role of the service sponsor is to help the sponsee learn that whatever level of service they perform it all aims toward the same end – sharing the overall responsibilities of Alcoholics Anonymous”. Wouldn’t it be great if all of us as service sponsors took on this valuable role as leaders for those currently in service and thinking of entering General Service.

Mentorship and sponsorship – two forms of leadership that would help the member grow in service and help insure that others become involved in service. This is truly growth in our fellowship as a whole.

I have heard many times inside and outside A.A. that certain persons are “born leaders.” To me no one is a born leader. They learn to become good leaders by careful observation and hard work. Some of the qualities of good leadership are stability, vision, dedication. They drive by example and not by mandate. They see the positive when faced with opposing views. They accept that the prideful and angry may have a valid point. They exercise discrimination and do a great deal of soul-searching. They accept criticism. They can make critical decisions when the need arises. They listen.

Do all these qualities sound familiar? I hope so – they all came directly from what I believe to be one of the best essays written on leadership - Bill W.’s Grapevine writing from April 1959. It is titled: Leadership in AA – Ever a Vital Need.” It is found in two places in our AA Service Manual. An abridged version on page S52 and the complete article on Page 36 in Concept IX.

We are all leaders and in AA and it is our duty as leaders to lead. We lead by example and we lead by passing on our knowledge to others. I believe that each one of us, as leaders, have a responsibility to mentor those entering service and to those already in service to become better leaders. The paradox of AA is that we must give away what so freely we were given. This not only applies to recovery, but to service as well. As leaders, we must want others to grow as we have.

If we believe in leadership and if we become good leadership mentors and sponsors we will help others to grow in service. If these people do grow they will want to take our place. That is so important for the growth of our fellowship. If we are good leaders, then there will be no problem filling the various positions we have in our Area service structure. People will line up to be elected and appointed. The Fellowship will benefit and grow. As leaders, we should want people to take over and do a better job than we did – that is service to the fellowship.

I am so blest to be sitting here at this table with my colleagues from Areas 79, 80, 91. Their leadership styles are so important to my continued growth. And I am so blessed to work with all the Area Committee Officers, District Committee Members and General Service Representatives. Their leadership insures growth not only in myself but within our Fellowship. And, of course, it is the membership of this Fellowship that gives us the most inspiration to strive to become better leaders. It is through our growth as leaders that they too grow.

During a recent video conference, a statement was made to the effect that you can tell the second-year Delegates at the Conference because they walk around with an air of confidence. Well, I am one of those second-year Delegates and I believe that that perceived confidence comes from experiencing phenomenal growth as a first year Delegate that was inspired by the leadership of those that came before me. People like Cate our Western Canada Regional Trustee and Scott our Trustee at Large for Canada and all Past Trustees and Delegates.

Leadership is so important for growth. As Bill W. wrote at the end of his essay on leadership: “Nowhere is leadership more true than in the area of Twelfth Step work itself – something at which nearly all of us most eagerly work. Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are huge. A human life, and usually the happiness of a whole family, hangs in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example – well these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death. Thank God Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in each and all its great affairs”. End quote.

The moment a newcomer walks into the rooms of AA they need and want our leadership so they can grow. To grow in the three legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service they need our leadership. Without good leadership, our membership would not grow and if we do not have growth our fellowship we will stand still.

We must provide leadership - we must grow – it is our responsibility.

In Fellowship, Gratitude and Service

Larry M.

Panel 66 Delegate

Area 78 AB/NT

Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible...
Presenter: Ian R (Delegate, Panel 66, Area 80)

Good evening, My name is Ian R and I'm an alcoholic and currently have the privilege serving as your Panel 66, Area 80, Manitoba Delegate. I would like to welcome all of you to WRAASA, especially all of our guests from Areas 78, 79, and 91. Welcome to Winnipeg.

As I pondered this topic it seemed huge and overwhelming. As we have seen over the last few years the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous, both in membership and financial support stagnant and staying very flat. Of course, this is so difficult for me to understand because the love and commitment I feel to the organization that gave me my life is infinity. There is no way to pay back in service or dollars this precious gift. And I feel that anyone that ends up at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous should and would feel the same way.

I am Responsible.

I started thinking what it would be like if AA had another Jack A moment. Bill called that moment "a ten strike". His story March 1/1941, in the Saturday Evening Post "rocked drunks and their families all over the nation" Bill said. In one year membership sky-rocked from 2000 to 8000 people.

Can you imagine if we saw growth like that again.

Perhaps it's time we all look at our responsibility as real. I know I might be talking to the Converted. But I believe we all still have a lot to learn about ourselves. After all Bill continually addressed himself to the subject of leadership in AA. He noted "students of history recognize that the transference of the original leadership of a society to its successors in leadership is always a critical turning point. This difficult question of leadership, must now be faced."

As Bill faced that daunting question then. We still face it now. I must share this with you. I just returned from New York as I attended the Board of trustees meetings for Alcoholics Anonymous. We are in good hands. The dedication and commitment of both Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous and our workers in the General Service Office are one in a Million.

I know that we will survive and grow and continue to fulfill our responsibilities. But we must always be clear that the need for leadership in AA has never been at a more critical point. Bill knew this years ago and we continue to see it today. Bill said "with leadership we will have a continuous problem.. hence great care needs to be taken. In this area a degree of weakness tends to persist. It seems to be a matter of increased care and responsibility and education". That statement alone speaks volumes to me about all of

our responsibility and opens up a conversation we need to continue having around our role individually in developing leadership through each of our own commitment to sponsorship.

I believe we have a great need for dedicated service people. If we can all agree that AA needs and must have the best obtainable delegates, how can we assure that if we do not have the best available people as our committee members and GSR's? Here's the question? If we could have an abundance of these knowledgeable and dedicated people, would it not strengthen and stimulate our groups? I vision growth can only come from such a phenomena.

We have some rather unsettling facts to look at squarely. Many of our own members don't really know what it means to be an AA member. Let's dig deep and be honest and evaluate the facts about ourselves? Could it be possibly true that we have many members with long term sobriety who settle for the 12 steps and practice the traditions by accident. How many members are even acquainted with the Third Legacy or even AA comes of age, where the story of our history is written is written for us.

If we know about or we are excited about the Grapevine, why do less than 15 % of us buy it. I am a perfect example of this. Until I became Grapevine chair for this area, I really didn't pay much attention to it. I didn't buy it or support it. It took being forced into action that I understood its vital as a service tool for our beloved fellowship.

I believe that only a strong, educated, knowledgeable and committed leadership made up of members that are dedicated to the self-denying principles of service leadership will be sufficient to provide our fellowship with the necessary warrantees against the needs the future will demand of us.

I am responsible. As we experience by action and participating in the 12 steps and recovery. As I learn to practice the 12 traditions out of spiritual principle and ultimate necessity to play part in the absolute unity for our fellowships survival. And finally as I fully partake in the 3rd legacy of AA service and understand the need for this incredible fellowship to thrive and continue for those yet to find the room of AA. Its then I fully understand responsibility. It is up to us. It is up to me. its our duty a third legacy workers to be the very best and meaningful examples for those that are clearly right behind us. We must pass them the torch in a significant way " with depth and weight".

It's up to us to plan and carry out those actions, having an ever improving informed group conscience. Of course we will run into problems. We will meet this problems with the grace of god, but with the conscience of our beloved fellowship in mind and these problems solved with our shared experience and effort.

As third legacy workers, we have a miraculous message to carry and there infinite ways in which our message can be shared and made known inside and outside the fellowship. Alcoholics anonymous has needs, those needs are not constant but everchanging.

Bill said “ a leader in AA service is therefore a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job.” Attraction is our goal. How do we become the best examples of alcoholics anonymous, so much so that other see the beauty in the principles that govern our 36 steps, traditions and concepts.

In our AA world of today, what are our needs? And what are our priorities? How can we attract leadership to help us grow and prosper as leading spiritual fellowship of love and service.It’s quite simple, let’s consider a few things. We need informed third legacy service workers at every level of service. In our groups and districts, in general service and intergroup. This means better leadership, a much better job of training and educating—we have to be better ourselves and I have to do better myself.

As my old sponsor, Tom use to say. “Service means putting other people first, we have the greatest “people first” program in the world—everything we have is based in sharing. People first is part of our primary purpose.

Our growth needs to start with our groups and especially districts.

Our districts need to become the strength and backbone of our structure. Our priorities should be suggested, contemplated, and shaped to meet our needs by these district committees, our groups need to choose the best GSR’s, this might be our single greatest need to have dedicated committee members. District meetings can become the training centers for valued service work. A well planned district agenda will result in an improved informed group conscience, better sponsorship and a fulfilling and active group life. Our leadership must be chosen, educated and trained out of our membership, in and thru the whole depth of AA and then nurtured by the strength of our brilliant service structure. This is a vital and prime responsibility.

Bernard Smith, one of the truly great friends of AA and an architect with Bill of our service structure, spoke at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto. Let me quote now from Bernard’s remarks to what was then the largest AA gathering in history. As 10,000 people listened, he said, “You have something great and awesome going for you. Treat it tenderly, respect what it has done for you and what it can do for others... As long as one man dwells in darkness you once knew, you cannot rest; you must

try to find him and help him become one of you. By the grace of God, may Alcoholics Anonymous last for all time.”

I am responsible.

Growth – Leadership: I am Responsible...

Presenter: Jade F.-H. (Delegate, Panel 67, Area 79)

-Hi Everyone...My names Jade, I am an alcoholic, honoured to serve as BC/Yukon Area 79 Panel 67 Delegate.

-I have been asked to talk about **Growth – Leadership: I am Responsible.**

The theme for the 2017 General Service Conference is: “Supporting Our Future.”

-First of all, please let me say thank you Area 80 and the WRAASA planning committee for having us this weekend.

- I chose today to speak more from the language of the heart than textbook anecdotes ... all I have is what I have. Our literature, the wisdom that’s walked the path before me and all of those little God lessons along the way that have helped me to make that long journey from my head to my heart on any given truth, for me. I can know it... but until I *know* it...until its made that journey, it doesn’t stick.

-So, I’d like to share a couple of stories to show how some of that’s happened for me.

-Growing up alcoholism was very much a family disease in my house. I didn’t bring friends home and I moved out just as fast as I could.

-My first God shot (but I was yet to know it) was I quit school at 16 and needed to work – I circled a job in our local paper and ended up working for a man named Angus...he was 10 years a sober member of AA. I myself had never heard of it, but I watched him. He walked, talked, breathed and lived AA. I began to trust in what he said and I eventually shared with him...

-You see my mom was an alcoholic... he would give me pamphlets to leave around the house for her. (I was now 17...and one night got a call ... I was called to the hospital to find her with a bloodied face, missing teeth, her legs in stirrups and police and Doctors milling about. She was drunk. She didn’t know what happened. I looked upon this horrific sight with my 17-year-old heart bursting with love, and filled with disgust at the same time. It was that moment I swore I’d never be like her.

The morning after the hospital incident, I went to see mom in the ICU. The seed was planted! She said, Jade “I think I need to talk to that man Angus”. In typical alcoholic fashion, she didn’t want to go to a meeting in our little border town where people might see her, so he wasted no time taking her to one in Washington State!

- God Shots... I Love the word Synchronicity...nothing is a mistake.

- 17 more years went by and I continued to turn the pages in the making of my own story ...I ended up just like my mom, but through a series of OMG's and perfect timing...I picked up the phone and was able to say "mom I think I need to go to one of those meetings?". We went, and she knew to let go and you would take care of me...and you did.

-My 1 year cake came...my daughter was 7 and my son was 10. My daughter stood up at the beginning and said...my name is Brandi and my mom's an alcoholic and she went on to read "How it Works"

-When I got home that night and was surrounded in the love...the flowers, the trinkets and cards...I opened up a poem from my mom that I need to share with you because it is fitting to the topic being discussed.

Moms Poem

There was a hole in my soul, that nothing could fill.

I tried to with alcohol, I to tried to with pills.

The booze took control, day after day.

It was the drug of my choice, and drunk I would stay!

My life became hell, I had nothing to give,

I lost everything, and didn't want to live.

One day you came to me, "Mom let's try AA",

There's a man I know, and he'll take you today.

I found what I needed, in the basement of a church.

In the rooms of A.A., I ended my search.

With the love of the people, and the wisdom of the Big Book,

I cleaned up my life, and took a hard look.

In order to keep it, we must give it away.

So always remember Jade, in these rooms we must stay.

For we are responsible, for those who need help.

The hand of A.A., should always reach out.

Thank God, it was there for you, One year ago, today.

I'm so proud of you, you have come a long way.

"Happy Birthday Sweetheart" I wish you a lifetime of A.A.

Love Ya! ...Mom xox

-Little did I know then to the extent I do today, that the lessons and the God shots are always there if I care to open my eyes to see them. I'd like to share some of mine with you.

- I was at a meeting and during announcements they would ask for people to Speak in schools- then one day it stopped- I said what's going on...OMG, my kids are in high school! - What kind of place is this that they let something this important slide...Someone very gently said to me "why don't YOU do it then" - Lesson step up...be accountable... When the hand of AA reaches out... you are responsible!

-I was told to give back...so I was cutting hair at a local recovery house and leaving my purse lying around thinking I was being "trusting". I needed to be told to think outside myself, I may be putting someone in a horrible position, one that they are not yet ready for. Lesson -I am responsible to think of others and where they may be on their own journey.

- A few years back about \$10,000 went missing from our home Group. We were a 7 day a week meeting, this was over a period of a year and half- As you can imagine we had some very heated discussions about getting the authorities involved and "making him pay" but God, speaking to us through our Groups Conscience taught me that we were the ones at fault. Every single one of us...We became complacent with AA's money – we allowed it to happen, we actually owed that man an amend. We were responsible.

-Then there was Darlene- Darlene couldn't stay sober. I decided to ask her to come to a Soberider Pig Roast camp out with me, to learn how to have some sober fun...she kept saying to me, "this is so much fun Jade!". I'd never seen her smile so much. At one point I saw her standing at the gate and asked her what she was doing. She said, "waiting for BCAA, I locked my keys in my car". I smiled and looked over at the sea of motorcycles and black t-shirts and said "I'm pretty sure we could have found someone to take care of that for you :)

A few weeks after we got home she called me one night drunk...We talked about duck taping her to my couch so she could just get a sober day under her belt. She said naa Jade "I'm not ready". She called back another night drunk again and laughing saying "hey maybe I *should* take you up on that duck tape idea". Well my car was in the shop and she didn't want to drink and drive and we talked about a cab, but it never

happened. The next time I got a call it was to tell me that she had put on her bathing suit, got in the tub, the empty vodka and pill bottles were found beside the tub and she laid on her tummy to be sure when the booze and pills started working the water would do the rest...

As hard as it was, through good sponsorship I was also able to learn, when the responsibility was not mine to carry.

-As far as growth goes. All we have is attraction...we don't promote. We need the conversations about safety and diversity. We need the conversations about technology as Bill suggests in "Freedom Under God: The Choice Is Ours," AA Co-Founder, Bill W., November 1960 The Language of the Heart:

"A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches ... Nothing can matter more to the future welfare of AA than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination. Should we handle this great instrument badly, we shall be shattered by the ego demands of our own people -- often with the best of intention on their part."

-We need those conversations for sure, but I've also heard over and over show me don't tell me...my husband and I came home one evening from our home group and we pulled around the corner and our house was in flames. The very next day people showed up at my mom's house with a full roast beef dinner and all the fixins, bags of clothes were left in the driveway, envelopes of anonymous money left in the mail box!

My kids saw this sea of Humanity and Love...What I could spend a life time telling them, trying to teach them **YOU** showed them. I said to my mom/sponsor how can I give this back? We have insurance? I was told, you say thank you and you give it forward.

See, you *showed* me. That is how I want to be. You have what I want. That is attractive. That's what we do.

-All of these lessons, these little God shots...with 20/20 hindsight vision, have helped me to make that journey over and over from my head to my heart.

-We have a wonderful reading from Bill W. on "Responsibility of Leadership" given at the 1963 General Service Conference where he goes on to say:

"...everybody carries the language of the heart to the guy or gal still suffering. This is the supreme leadership, this is the greatest trusted area, but there are those of us who find ourselves cast into assignments of service leadership. This is nothing but a specialty in which we are supposed to become expert and dedicated to the task of making the primary leadership possible. If life is to be carried to the

newcomer, he has to be brought within reach. This is our business here, it is the business of every Intergroup, every group committee. And we who man these special enterprises are commonly called trusted servants, and this implies leadership of the highest order, minus the usual implications. What are some of the requisites? I think the greatest of all is love and understanding and forgiveness of the sins of all kinds and conditions of A.A. members with whom we deal. There must be that communication of the heart, otherwise we shall have no right or authorization to serve in this capacity. This is number one."

- Bill also goes on to tell us in Tradition Two about "John Doe, a good A.A., moves - let us say - to Middletown," with "Growing pains that beset the group" and Bleeding Deacons verses Elder Statemen. I am sure we have all been *both* of these two examples at one time or other.

- But 17 years sober when I found myself struggling to make a decision to let my name stand for Delegate and my mom's poem falls out of a book – and those 2 stanzas jump out at me...

In order to keep it, we must give it away.

So always remember Jade, in these rooms we must stay.

For we are responsible, for those who need help.

The hand of A.A., should always reach out.

- today I sit up and listen.

- all of what I have shared with you and much more, along with wonderful sponsorship has helped me to grow and recognize how "I am Responsible" and I believe to "Support Our Future" it's the willingness to suit up and show up with an open mind and open heart.

-I'll close with a...

GRAPEVINE Quote of the Day **January 20, 2017**

"The language of AA is the language of self-discovery, of speculation, of wonder. It has a dual reality: While it describes experience, it also creates experience, and allows each member to grow in the search for personal meaning."

"The Language of AA," Thornbury, Ontario, August 1984- AA Grapevine

Thank you for my life, until we meet again...

Jade F-K, Delegate Panel 67, BC/Yukon Area 79

SESSION: “Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction”

Presenters:

Gail P, Alternate Delegate/Literature Chair, Area 79

Susanne W, GSR, District 6, Area 91

Stuart S, Past Chair, Area 80

Noni M, Alternate Delegate, Area 80

Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction

Presenter: Gail P (Alternate Delegate, Literature Chair, Area 79)

February 10th 2017

Good evening everyone, my name is Gail and I am an alcoholic. I am also privileged to serve as the Alternate Delegate for BC Yukon Area 79, Panel 67. I am here on my own dime because of my gratitude for this amazing program of Alcoholic Anonymous and my strong belief that without you and every other member of AA, I would not be here today.

I am very grateful to be here - as this venue is where I had my first drink when I was 16 in 1964 and God willing I will be sober 32 years in June.

I was both honored and terrified when I was asked by Alice to take part in this presentation on Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction. Honored because I want to be of service and terrified because I didn't know where to start with what to say – but I asked for help.

When I read Alice's email, I looked at all four words “growth” “diversity” “outreach” and “attraction”.

I'll start with “**growth**”. It's been said that there has been little growth in membership numbers for some time and while that is difficult to determine in an anonymous organization... the current AA Fact File tells me that worldwide the approximate number of members is 2,131,534 and the approximate number of groups is 114,642. The Big Book I bought when I sobered up is a 3rd edition. In the forward to the Third Edition, it says that in 1976 the total worldwide membership was more than 1,000,000 with almost 28,000 groups in 90 countries. The footnote says that in 1980 there were 40,000 groups in 106 countries. In “AA around the Globe”, it says that the AA way of life is practiced in approximately 170 countries. Pretty good for the biggest organization in the world that nobody WANTED to join! I don't know what the solution is to our slow or stagnant growth in Alcoholics Anonymous, but I am confident that as we are all aware of the necessity to attract and keep more members, a way will be found.

Next I will try to say something about “**diversity**”. What a big word that is.... And it covers so much. A dear AA friend gave me this partial definition as used in reference to multiculturalism or ethnic diversity (the promotion of multiple ethnic cultures), cultural diversity (respect of different cultures and interculturality), functional diversity (a term for special needs, disability, impairment). We could even go further and add gender diversity and sexual diversity as current expressions of diversity. When all is said and done, we ALL have one thing in common: our desire to stop drinking. In every meeting room in

every country in world, our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety and most importantly.... Step 12 and the need to carry the message of hope and recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers. I ever need to ask myself: “am I inclusive?” In one of my favorite pamphlets “The AA Group – Where it all Begins” one question under the group inventory section asks the question very well:

“Is our group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community, including those with special needs?”

We are all responsible to be welcoming and open to “everyone” who qualified for membership as per Tradition 3 which says that the **only** requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking!!

I just want to interject here with a bit of Area 79 information. If you haven’t read Box 459 (spring 2016 edition), the front page article “Alkali Lake: A Native Community Sobers Up” is well worth the read. And, with their permission, I can tell you that on our BC Yukon Area 79 General Service Committee we have two new members for Panel 67 – one is a member who speaks Punjabi and the other is transgender. I think that is diversity!

Now for “**outreach**”: When I searched the AA.org website with the word outreach in AA – two items come up; the pamphlet “AA for the Alcoholic with Special Needs” and “The Correctional Facilities - AA Group Handbook”. I think the days are gone when we can hang out in bars and look for (as Bill called them) “prospects”. But there is much we can do with our group, district and area committees on Treatment, Corrections, Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community. There are so many ways today for us to “carry the message” and I need to ask myself: “am I doing all I can to help carry the message?” Besides the outreach to new members or potential members, what about our “elder states-people”? AA is now over 80 years old and there are many members with 40, 50 or more years of sobriety (in Victoria I know a few) who struggle to get to meetings. They don’t go to evening meetings because they don’t like to drive at night, perhaps they don’t get to many or any meetings. What can we do for those members? Can we take a meeting to them? Can we offer to pick them up for a meeting? Can we make a phone call to say “how are you”? That is a necessary “outreach” in my opinion.

And finally: “**attraction**”. I looked up the dictionary definition of attraction and one was: “the action or power of evoking interest, pleasure or liking for someone or something”. I remember being very curious in my early days in AA about the idea of “attraction rather than promotion”. I was fortunate to read “AA Comes of Age” very early in sobriety and learned how and why “promotion” doesn’t work. I remember being told that I might be the only Big Book that someone ever reads (or something like that) and it struck me that I was responsible to do the very best I can to be an example of “a member of AA”. In the

Traditions Checklist (available from AA Grapevine), question 6 in Tradition Eleven asks “is my AA sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?” I then need to look at my home group. My responsibility at business meetings to make sure we are doing all we can to “attract” new members. Do we take a phone shift for 12 step calls? Do we have greeters for our meetings who welcome everyone? Do we have a chairperson who makes sure that all who wish to have an opportunity to share? One of the things my home group does is a group inventory every year. So, from my home group, to my district and to my area.... **I am responsible.**

I will be forever grateful to the woman who answered the phone when I called AA. I am grateful that I had to **call** to ask for help. I sobered up before we had internet, email or texting. Before I went to my first meeting, I had a brief understanding of the AA program, I knew about anonymity, I knew about the 7th tradition, I knew about crosstalk and much, much more. I felt safe and protected by that wonderful woman who took me to my first AA meeting and many more thereafter. Sponsorship is, in my opinion, a necessity for my continued, contented sobriety. The same holds true for service. I need a service sponsor who can help guide me in my service journey.

I want to end with a quick story about someone very close to me. He came into Alcoholics Anonymous almost 10 years ago. Before going to AA he had done lots of online research about AA and having made the decision to get sober, walked into an AA meeting and joined it. About six months later he called me and said “I thought you told me I’d have lots of friends if I joined AA.” I said: “Knowing you, you strolled into that meeting like you had it all together. Do they know you need them? Have you told the people in those meetings your story? Have you cried at a meeting?” “Cried he said... of course I haven’t cried.” I said “Well, you need to do something to let those people in your meeting know how much you need them!” He then came up with his 20/20 rule. He arrives 20 minutes early and stays 20 minutes after the meeting and makes friends. That exchange with him reminded me how fortunate I was to have known nothing about AA before I picked up that 300 pound phone and to have been desperately willing to go to any lengths.

I am so happy to be here in Winnipeg for WRAASA 2017, for the privilege of spending the weekend with you and also to have so many members of Area 79 here with me!

Thank you!!

With love in service,

Gail P

Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction
Presenter: Susanne W (GSR, District 6, Area 91)

Alcoholics Anonymous has duly moved towards progressive strides in creating an inclusive group philosophy since its inception. Today Alcoholics Anonymous has a presence in more than 181 nations worldwide, with an estimated total of 117,700 groups and more than 2 million members. Over 75 pamphlets and flyers provide outreaching evidence of a no person left behind motto. The book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, has been translated into 69 languages. In its fourth edition, the forward states, “As the message of recovery has reached larger numbers of people, it has also touched the lives of a vastly greater variety of suffering alcoholics. When the phrase ‘We are people who normally would not mix’ (page 17 of this book) was written in 1939, it referred to a Fellowship composed largely of men (and a few women) with quite similar social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Like so much of A.A.’s basic text, those words have proved to be far more visionary than the founding members could ever have imagined. A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”

That excerpt from the forward, to me, is the introduction and the conclusion to this topic.

What that language states, in all its power and simplicity is that A.A. is big enough for everyone. Each one of us is created with unique identifiers: race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, mental/physical abilities. We have created our own identifiers such as beliefs, ideologies, professional, social backgrounds, status; add a tattoo here and there, etc. At the door of A.A., we arrive with our identity. When leaving through that same door, our identity and dignity should remain intact.

There was nothing appealing or attractive upon the threshold of my first A.A. meeting. Taking that final step down some dingy basement, turning myself in to a group of who knows who, indicating that I was living a sickly life, was as baffling to me as the hold that alcohol had on me. With less than 24 hours from my last drink, I walked in looking for strong evidence that I was using the wrong approach regarding my drinking problem. I was in the wrong place and hoped to realize that I was with the wrong kind of people. That very action of presenting my trembling self to that meeting was recognized as a reach out for help. The hand of A.A. extended theirs and genuinely, respectfully welcomed me the only female in that room of 11 men. (I was 12th stepped in.) In all its power and simplicity I understood and identified the language of their hearts. We spoke the same language-the language of alcoholism. The attraction is in the power of one alcoholic helping another alcoholic. The attraction is in the power of group. That beautiful group had a wealth of healthy quality sobriety and I wanted what they had. The Dunlop Group, (Yorkton’s original group) where I sobered up in the first year, fellows mostly staunch long timers. The oldest just celebrated 55 years in January. And they had enough faith in me that I began serving as their

GSR six months into my sobriety. Our mutual understanding of what it was like, what happened and what it's like now connects us powerfully. This is a substantial improvement from the days of the 30's, 40's, and 50's when the stigma was greater for the alcoholic woman.

"Nice women" drank politely, if at all. When the first woman came for help, "Dr. Bob threw up his hands and said, 'we have NEVER had a woman and will NOT work on a woman.'" The idea of admitting a woman caused dissension within the fellowship. "Whole groups got into uproars and a number of people got drunk. We trembled for A.A.'s reputation and for its survival," Bill W. stated in *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*. It's hard to imagine being identified as low class citizens and Bob and Bill's initial reluctance of being associated with "beggars, tramps, asylum prisoners, queers, plain crackpots, AND fallen women," as labelled in the (12X12, p. 140)

I have discovered, from the literature and books that I have read in preparation for this topic, the movement towards building diversity in Alcoholics Anonymous without controversy must have been incredibly challenging. Prior to 1970, Blacks could go to any meeting as long as they sat in the back and didn't share. In 1937, a man who described himself as a 'sexual deviant', who in today's terms would be relatable to the gay-lesbian-bi-transgender-queer community, asked if he could become a member. After much heated deliberation he was accepted and so were the beginnings of the 12 Traditions. That 'sexual deviant' inspired the traditions and this is how Bill described it at the General Service Meeting in 1968: "And that is the beginning of the AA tradition that any man who has a drinking problem is a member of AA if he says so NOT whether we say so...It takes in the whole world of Alcoholics Anonymous. Their charter to freedom to join AA is assured. Indeed it was an act in general welfare."

As the movement of Alcoholics Anonymous progressed with each decade and the current times of the day, so was the goal of acceptance and equality for all in its fellowship.

The language of the heart will recognise, respect, and value people's differences. The language of the heart, in Alcoholics Anonymous can assist the full potential of recovery with the code of love and tolerance and of love and service. No matter where you are in the world, what community you come from, what lifestyle you possess, what identity you were born with or created, what your age is or your affiliation, "our very lives as recovering alcoholics depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may be of help" (Bill W.)

Today, I am the antithesis of what one might consider who contributes to diversity in my community. I am a white, middle aged, middle class, heterosexual, English speaking Canadian. But when I was plunked into another country, like this past January, in Mexico, I culturally became the minority.

Gratefully, I found diversity in Mexico when I needed an English speaking meeting. I am the recipient of Bill W's vision's belief that there could be a "one world of A.A. to assure all of us that help would always be available for sick alcoholics where ever they might be or whatever language they might speak".

It's critical to remember the sacrifices, made decades ago, by our selfless anonymous members. It struck me at one of my home group meetings when my Kipling long timer fellow member shared how before 1987 communist Soviet Union days, members of Alcoholics Anonymous risked their lives crossing the borders to spread the message underground to those afflicted with alcoholism. If caught, they could have been labor camped out or most likely executed on the spot for being an organization outside government control and for holding a belief of turning their lives over to God of their understanding. How many of us would go to those lengths of outreach? Not I!

However, it does provoke the stirrings of how I and we, with the freedom we have, can become more selfless by removing boundaries and barriers that prevent us from reaching out. Acknowledging our barriers is the beginning to proceed towards change and inevitably growth.

Perhaps it is time to take inventory. What are the walls within our region, our area, our district, our group, ourselves? What remote areas could we further extend ourselves demographically or figuratively? What obstacles of fears, hang ups and ignorance's to growth, do we have within our fellowship that we cannot afford?

I brought up the history because it's important to know how far we have come along in society as a whole which reflects our membership. Even with the progress of a growing democratic, diverse, inclusive fellowship, concerns have been voiced that our numbers are stagnant. There are different theories and opinions for this. But I found it more appalling than interesting when Area 91's past delegate, Chris S., presented to the Forum in Kamloops, that almost 60 percent of groups do not participate in the Seventh Tradition. 60%! If they are not participating in the Seventh Tradition, what else are they not being accountable for that may be detrimental and affect the attraction towards recovery and growth? Is the problem more internal than external? Or are their numbers so low that they are basically surviving to keep their door open? I don't find it a coincidence that churches are experiencing the same problem. The correlation between a decrease of faith believers and the decrease in A.A. is uncanny. Perhaps more options and choice of recovery are available diluting A.A.'s potency. My hope is that we are not inadvertently turning off newcomers. I would love to ask every new face that came in for the first time why they didn't return. Why they didn't come back? Where did they go?

It's our human nature to reach out to others who are like us. Our long timers came at a different generation than I did. The fellowship and program of Alcoholics Anonymous was just as important and relevant for my friends 30/40 years ago as it is for me today. My sobriety began 2 years and 8 months ago. I am going about my drinking problem the right way, I am in the right room and I am with the right people. I know why I returned, I know why I keep coming back and I know where I am going.

The language of the heart is open to share experience, strength and hope. The language of the heart will always communicate love and tolerance and service. So that when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, the hand of A.A. will be there, fulfilling its primary purpose – staying sober and helping others achieve sobriety – within our growing, diverse, attractive fellowship which we all belong to and we equally are responsible for.

My name is Susie. I am a grateful alcoholic in this Fellowship; in love and service.

Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction

Presenter: Stuart S (Past Chair, Area 80)

Hi my name is Stuart I am an alcoholic, and have been asked to present on outreach (is an activity of providing services to any populations who might not otherwise have access to those services) and attraction (attraction between people which leads to friendships and like mindedness). I got into AA through a Foreman (Brian a member of AA) at work; he made an appointment for me with a councillor (Ron also a member), who gave me a choice, a 28 day treatment program or AA. I chose AA (so here I am) Brian soon had me at a meeting where he bought me my first big book. Walking in to that clubroom and seeing the word god I was ready to bolt. With some insight into Bills Story (the part about the motorcycle trip had me intrigued) it was not long before I had the first 164 pages of the Big Book read. With the encouragement of the members of the group and the help of Brian answering questions I was back for the next meeting. This would be my first introduction to outreach and attraction in AA.

In my home group we also welcome new comers, we give them a new comer's package which contains literature on AA, along with a Big Book and a card with members names .The group also made up cards describing AA; these were distributed to police, the hospital and doctor offices. Some of us have left our names at the local hospital as contacts, while others are on speaker lists or 12 step lists. I personally have received call from hospitals and 12 step lists, the most memorable was a call placed to my sponsor (then our DCM) looking for a meeting for a young man training horses in our district, after a few phone calls we found someone willing to look after this young man. About a year later I was asked to speak at a meeting in western Manitoba. I was also asked to present a cake to a young man with four years of sobriety, the same young man that we had help find a meeting the year before, oh what a feeling!

Other groups in my District have done similar things to carry the message, from newcomer packages to packages for the professionals. One group went so far as to put on a pancake breakfast for the community. Our district was also instrumental in the creation of a toll free number for our central office.

Getting into service at the area level was an eye opener for me. Here I learned about our service committees, Treatment /Special Need, Corrections and Public Information, what they did and how they carried the message. I also learned about the general service conference and their committees. What great care is taken in producing pamphlets and book that are conference approved and deals in alcoholism only. That they carry the message, are also attractive and that no traditions are broken. This also applies to the Public Services Announcements that are produced.

At our Central Office we sell AA conference approved literature, keep an up to date 12 step list and speaker list. We also publish meeting lists, both rural and urban. The area also has a web site that has both

meeting lists, plus a Google map which shows where every group in the area is located plus an events page which will list upcoming events. All our committees meet at Central Office throughout the month. Our Intergroup is responsible for the running of our Central Office. Intergroup is also responsible for answering the phone when the office is closed. This is accomplished by our TAS Chair making a schedule and assigning groups to answer the phone.

It is this Declaration that has kept me coming back. This we owe to AA's Future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

It is this Declaration that got me here. I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Over the years I have chaired many a meeting at my home group, we have always had honest sharing with a lots of humour and camaraderie. I have been to every group in my district and have even chaired meetings at these groups, even as far as chairing an open meeting (as no one from the group would step up) and sharing my story at that meeting (no one booked a speaker). I also have picked up new comers and taken them to meetings. I also enjoy going on road trips with my sponsor. I also have helped with a few step classes

Do we need to make a lot of changes I think not. I believe that if I take both of these declarations seriously, and not for granted, that I can make a difference to the next alcoholic who walks through the door. I for one will always remember that warm welcoming feeling that I received when I walked through the doors of that clubroom. I will always be thankful to Brian and Ron for what they did for me. Just like leading a horse to water, we can't make him drink. The same is with the alcoholic, we can get him through the doors but we cannot make him stay, the choice is theirs and we have done our part in planting the seed.

Growth-Diversity: Outreach and Attraction
Presenter: Noni M (Alternate Delegate, Area 80)

Hi everyone, my name is Noni and I'm an alcoholic. I'm privileged to be serving as the Alternate Delegate and Grapevine Chair for Area80. Thank you to the WRAASA Committee for asking me to share with you today about the topics of Growth -Diversity: Outreach and Attraction.

First let me say how much fun it was preparing this talk. I surrounded myself with books and pamphlets, Grapevines (which is a must since I'm the Grapevine Chair), and my iPad. My favourite source is the internet. First stop was aa.org where I came across an article in a Box 459 from 1963 titled 'Public Information - Attraction or Promotion'. An interesting article but I have to say it was a picture in that newsletter that caught my eye. It was a picture of a women with a caption that read 'This nice blonde is one of the first people you will meet when you come and visit us'. She was the 'tour girl'. I thought hmm, that's telling of the decade in which it was published. In 2017, I don't think we'd refer to her as 'this nice blonde'.

Our 2014 membership survey tells us 38% of our members are women. In my experience, we are treated equally in the rooms and throughout the service structure. I am grateful to be one of the three female table officers currently serving Area 80. Our voice is heard.

But our diversity is not only in our look, the colour of our skin, or hair, or our gender. The disease of alcoholism doesn't care what we look like or what we do. We attract people of different ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, professions, educational levels, races and religions.

As Bill W. says it best on page 17 of the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous 'We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful... The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us.'

This common peril helps one alcoholic relate to another alcoholic sharing their experience strength and hope. This common peril binds us in spite of our differences,

Our diversity is captured in our conference approved literature and many personal stories told in the Grapevine. Our diversities are embraced in stories by people who are young, seniors, those with special needs, and those in prison. Our future depends on reaching these diverse populations and letting them know we are here.

Let me take you through some of my own journey where outreach and diversity mesh. I spent my first year of sobriety in a large group with a diverse membership. I went to at least one meeting a day, stood outside chatting after meetings and went for coffee with people I would not previously have socialized with. There was a young woman in her 20's living in an aftercare home, a gay woman, a middle-aged doctor, a man who drove around on his bike and collected metal, native men and women old timers struggling with issues I didn't even know existed, and a young woman just out of prison and living in a halfway house, who became my second sponsee.

This group, this diverse group, shared their experience, strength and hope with me as I struggled to get sober, struggled to build a new life. This group of individuals that I likely would never have had a conversation with if God hadn't put me in their path in the rooms of AA, saved my life. They took time from their lives to be at those meetings both for their own sobriety and to carry the message, and for that I'm truly grateful. And because this group and my sponsor were there for me, I want to do the same for others.

After that first year I moved across town and within a few weeks of changing groups I was blessed to meet another sponsee. She was legally blind so when we met I read to her and shared my experiences as we went through the steps together. She purchased an audio version of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous which she listened to along with speaker tapes she purchased at the conferences we attended. I typed out the preamble and printed it in large print so she could be part of the meeting opening and she memorized the steps for that purpose as well. Her and I attended the San Antonio International Convention where we were allowed to sit in the American Sign Language section so she could use her monacle to watch the screen. It was a truly unforgettable experience from the opening flag ceremony to the old-timers stories, exemplifying the breadth and depth, the diversity of AA, around the world.

It was getting into service that brings me to the outreach part of my story. While I was the Alternate GSR for my group my sister was placed on life support for a month while she tragically died from this disease. Dealing with the professionals who were trying to help her, I realized the need in that hospital for knowledge about alcoholism, about Alcoholics Anonymous. These professionals needed to know where we are, what we are, and what we can do. Something positive had to come of this experience. The seed of passion to carry this message to others through the professionals who might be the one sitting in front of them, was planted.

The first opportunity came when I was asked to go with the Delegate and PI/CPC chair to Cross Lake and Norway House, reserves in northern Manitoba. I was full of hesitation and fear as I embarked on this trip. What was I getting myself into? Where was I going to sleep? Why hadn't I brought a blanket? As I was driving alone up Highway 6 I heard an obscure song from a movie my sister and I had seen when I was 15. I thought of her alcoholic death, her hopelessness and I knew that carrying the message to the people we were to meet was the right thing to do. The fear was lifted. When I met up with the others to share the rest of the long drive north, Jason said something that he repeated as we met with the professionals over the weekend, something that was so simple and yet powerful. He said that even if we help one or two people, they are human beings, they are important to someone. They are someone's husband, someone's father, someone's brother.

The first night in Cross Lake, where we were billeted in a nurses' residence, we attended a 'telehealth' meeting. There were 8 Cross Lake residents in attendance including three young people. We suggested they start their own meeting, in addition to this weekly meeting. We explained the benefits of more frequent meetings and the support they could give each other. It took a few more years but I've heard the very good news from our Remote Communities Committee that there is now a meeting in Cross Lake.

The next day we met with a doctor, several nurses and a NADAP(Native Alcohol Drug Abuse Program) counselor. Our PI/CPC representative gave a presentation and provided books, Grapevines and pamphlets. They had many questions which we answered based on our personal experiences. One mental health professional was surprised to hear that you could sober up without going to treatment. Two of the three of us had sobered up by going to AA meetings, getting a sponsor, and doing the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. We went on to Thompson at the end of the day where the delegate gave her report from the General Service Conference and I told my personal story of recovery at a roundup of northern community attendees including a dozen young girls from Nelson House Medicine Lodge. I had nothing in common with these people, other than my alcoholism, the common peril that binds us. Outside at the end of the evening a few of these young women, thanked me for my honesty and inspiration. What a privilege. As we drove back to the hotel I fought back the tears as I told the others about the song on the way up Highway 6 and how my sister had helped me to carry the message to these people, these young women, someone's sister.

Our 2014 Membership Survey tells us 1% of our members are Native American. There is a pamphlet 'A.A. for the Native North American'. In it, men and women, all Native people, share how they gave up drinking. Following this Northern trip, my district purchased several of these pamphlets. We gave the

pamphlets and Grapevines we collected to our remote communities committee who have taken them to the reserves.

Outreach continued to be part of the service work in my district as we decided to reach out to the young people in the schools. I met with the counsellors in the district to tell them about AA and provided them with the poster 'Can You Spot the Alcoholic', the pamphlets 'Young People in AA', 'Too Young', 'Is AA for You' and the Young People's Videos(a collection of videos submitted by AA members who got sober in their teens and early twenties talking about their experiences in Alcoholics Anonymous).

Bill W. talked about the need for education in the article 'Let's be friendly with our Friends' published in the March 1958 Grapevine. He talks of the millions of alcoholics who haven't come to us and how many of us would respond 'They aren't ready - they don't know how sick they really are. If they did they would flock to treatment, just as though they had diabetes or cancer. The problem, therefore is to expose them to the facts that will convince them they are gravely ill. More than anything, the answer seems to be in education - education in schoolrooms, in medical colleges, among clergymen and employers, in families, and in the public at large'. He goes on to say 'Even now, we are seeing a great many younger people coming to AA as a direct result of the recently more widespread information about the disease'. That was in 1958. So, I say to you today, let us educate through providing both our literature and our voices in schools.

And remember, education starts at home. When I sobered up my son was 19 and off to the bars as many teenagers at that age are. When I mentioned my concern about his drinking to my sponsor she suggested I leave AA pamphlets and books around the house. Sure enough, a few months later we were sitting around talking and he told me he had read every single piece of literature I'd left out. He said he thought he was destined to be an alcoholic because he was my son and he was Irish. He's 31 now and doing ok. As Bill mentioned in that same article, perhaps living with us alcoholics is preventative education at its best.

Our 2014 survey tells us 19% of our membership is retired, an increase from 17% in 2011 and perhaps an indication of our aging population. I was looking for an opportunity to reach seniors so when I saw a 'Services For Seniors in the Community' session being offered at a local Senior Centre I called up the coordinator and asked if I could bring a display. I set up a table with grapevines and pamphlets, gave pamphlets to the counselor who went to seniors who were unable to leave their homes and stocked the display racks at the Centre. I was sure to bring along the pamphlets 'AA for the Woman', 'AA for the Older Alcoholic(Large Print)' and 'Is There an Alcoholic in your Life?'

In the 'Sober After 60' October 2008 issue of the Grapevine, in the Article 'Time in a Bottle -Any time is the right time to come to AA' the writer states 'yes, I came into this wonderful program, late in life, but as I have learned, it was not a minute too soon or too late. Sometimes when I listen to young people share, I envy their bright futures, but I also realize how my alcoholic past has made me appreciate all that has come after I found sobriety in the rooms of AA.

Our survey of 2014 tells us 57% of our members said they were referred to A.A. by a counselor, medical or mental health professional.

I found a contact person at the hospital where my sister's struggles occurred and with her help we now have ongoing information about Alcoholics Anonymous going into that hospital. We set up a table each year during National Addictions Awareness week where staff show up and take our pamphlets back to their wards. We provide pamphlets to the social workers, the psychiatric nurse who's called in to meet with any suffering alcoholic brought into emergency, and the spiritual care workers. The emergency room and all other waiting rooms are now stocked with pamphlets. At an assembly last year our Treatment chair announced that one of the members of her group was given pamphlets that I left at Emergency and as a result came to a meeting and is still sober.

This awareness of the need to inform non-alcoholics who might have an alcoholic cross their path is ever present in all that I do and God keeps putting the opportunities in my path that allow me to talk about it and carry the message. Perhaps even tonight as I speak to you one of you will think of a way to reach out to a professional you see. Perhaps your doctor, your lawyer, your counselor, the treatment center where you might chair a meeting. Perhaps you'll carry pamphlets or grapevines in your car and leave them behind in waiting rooms. Or pack them in your suitcase when you travel. I have a stack of La Vina's, our Grapevine in Spanish, I'd be happy to give to anyone going to Cuba or Mexico this winter. Our pamphlets are an inexpensive yet effective educational tool to spread the word that we are here and we have a solution.

I recently was making a trip following a request for more pamphlets from the Social Work Department when a young man opened the door for me and asked if I was visiting someone as we walked down the tunnel into the hospital together, I had a stack of pamphlets in tow with the top one openly displayed. It was 'Is there an Alcoholic in Your Life?' He said 'Can I have one of those? My brother's drinking and his life are out of control.' I happily handed him the pamphlet and remembered my sponsors words 'Is that odd or is that God'. I felt grateful that someone's brother might be helped.

In closing I'd like to say, this once agnostic (now spiritual), senior in age, vertically challenged in height, Norwegian, English, Irish, in ethnicity, blonde woman would like to thank Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you all for attracting me with your experience, your strength and your hope and for the privilege of sharing some of mine with you today. I will close with our Responsibility Statement 'When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help; I want the hand of AA always to be there. Perhaps you'll remember they are someone's husband or wife, someone's father or mother, someone's son or daughter, someone's brother or sister.

Yours in love and service,

Noni

**SESSION: “Contributions – Fully Self-Supporting Our
Obligations”**

Presenters:

Brenda M, Treasurer, Area 79

Cyndi V, Treatment/Accessibilities & Grassroots Chair,
Area 79

Gordon F, DCM, District 20, Area 78

Robin S, Past Treasurer, Area 80

Contributions – Fully self supporting our obligations

Presenter: Brenda M (Treasurer, Area 79)

Hi, My name is Brenda M and I'm an alcoholic.

Thank you Area 80 for asking me to speak today on the topic of "Contributions – fully self supporting our obligations".

I looked up the word contribute. It said:

Contribute is to give something in order to help achieve or provide something. It is to help something advance.

Obligation is an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound to do something - a duty or commitment. A debt of gratitude for a service or favour.

Morally is defined as principles of right and wrong behaviour – in a way that is considered right according to the code of behaviour of a particular society.

Each one of us who has walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous and has been freely given this life-saving program has an obligation to keep the doors open for the next suffering alcoholic.

It is our responsibility to contribute both time and money.

As you know, being of service is twelve step work. It is not about me. It is about being of service to others. It is not for any personal recognition or to satisfy my ego. There is no place for me to make a name for myself in this anonymous program.

Bill Wilson came to understand that he needed another alcoholic in order for him to stay sober. Over time he came to understand that the 12 steps could help others, around the globe, to stay sober. Thank goodness because service is what saved his life, my life and your life.

Early on, Bill complained to Lois, that he couldn't get anyone sober, but Lois replied "but you're sober!" ---- He then had a conversation with Dr. Silkworth, who told him he was preaching and that he needed to explain the physical and emotional malady of the disease to the suffering alcoholic. This changed the way Bill talked with other alcoholics and AA was born.

It is important for alcoholics to know they are mentally and physically different, like I am. Once I take a drink I have to have another. My mind tells me I'm uncomfortable in my own skin and the only way to help is to start the insanity all over again. It doesn't matter how I try to stop – I can't – I never could before I came to AA.

We are a sick group to work with. We break hearts, disappoint, and wreck families.

It is easy to forget in today's world that alcoholism is fatal. What can kill me and you are seen as not as destructive. Alcoholism for us – is a death sentence.

Excessive alcohol use led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost each year in the US from 2006 – 2010, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years.

In 2014, nearly 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly 31% of all traffic-related deaths in the US. Of the 1070 traffic deaths among children ages 0 – 14 years in that same year, 209 or 19% involved an alcohol impaired driver. I'm sorry I don't have Canadian stats.

I know that today some people woke up like we did. Some people woke up and have no clue that today is the best day of the rest of their lives.

Some people woke up and their lives are changed forever. Things happened yesterday that will never be erased. Families were torn apart yesterday. Some won't be free for years. This is the heartbreaking truth about alcoholism.

When I put my hand up to be GSR I really had no idea what I was volunteering to do. Fortunately, since coming into AA I have been willing to do the next right thing. That willingness has kept me in fine stead. I then moved on to District Secretary then DCM and now Area 79, panel 67 Treasurer. With each new position I learn a little bit more about humility and I become a little less rigid. To steal a quote the late great, Leonard Cohen, "There's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in". So I thank God, that I am cracked! Over time I have come to have a far greater understanding and reliance on the God of my understanding.

I am learning more about patience, tolerance and understanding. I am willing to do the next right thing, hopefully with a little more patience, tolerance, humility and love.

AA started for fun and for free and in 2017 that concept is still valid. AA is free, but it does have expenses.

From the beginning, AA has always had expenses — whether it is the cost of a pot of coffee or the price of a place to meet.

I want to tell you where some of your 7th tradition contributions go.

All groups benefit from GSO activities, although not all groups contribute to GSO.

I often hear that we are 50% funded by literature. That is not true. 72% of services are funded by contributions to the tune of approximately \$7m annually. 28% is funded by profit from our literature. Some groups are so poor they can't contribute in any other way except through the purchase of literature. **We** need to make up that shortfall for those who truly cannot contribute money to the basket.

In 1996, 100,000 people went to aa.org website. It was put up in 1995. There were a lot of websites that claimed to be us. Because that was confusing for newcomers and members alike, GSO launched their website.

In 2016, 13 m people visited the website.

Last year 500 people per day clicked “do you need help with a drinking problem?”

Phone calls are down because today people go online for information. We need to make sure the right information is there. Otherwise how is the newcomer to know?

- This year GSO will process 1500 requests ---
- They ship 8 m books and pamphlets every year ---
- Staff at GSO open 85,000 individual envelopes that make up that 7m \$ ---
- A 15-cent contribution is treated with same dignity and grace as a \$2000 cheque. ---
- 90,000 emails, letters and phone calls will be processed this year ---
- GSO receives 20 letters per day from corrections facilities ---
- 400 AA members in remote places will be connected with other AA members, through Loners international. ---
- The Big Book is in 69 languages, pamphlets have been translated into 89 languages, and there are 63 other countries with General Service offices.

People are dying. ---- AA gives millions of people hope for a better future.

As a member of AA, I need to give generously of both time and money in order to live sober. It is our responsibility to reach out and share our voice.

In 2015, GSO introduced recurring contributions. In 2015, 93 members signed up. In 2016 there were more than 500. If each of us signed up to make a 3 or 5\$ recurring contribution, we would solve AAs financial shortfall. I've heard it said that AA does not have a money problem. It has a participation problem. There is plenty of money in AA. It is in the pockets of AA members.

Area 79 recently set up e-transfers for contributions.

It is important to take great care in electing our trusted servants. Elect those who will show up. We need to ensure the message gets to quarterlies and assemblies and back to the individual members in our home groups.

The GV Quote of the day on November 17.... Sums it up perfectly for me. "Few of us will ever be famous, but we can all be great because we serve each other. (October 1997 GV issue).

I have done my best to serve the fellowship well and I am grateful for the opportunity I have been entrusted with. I will continue to practice the principles of AA in all of my affairs.

Because of AA, I get to wake up with joy, love and hope in my heart.

I'd like to end this talk with a quote from Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, ... "think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love".

It is awe-inspiring to participate in any meeting of Alcoholics anonymous. Thank you for this humbling opportunity to be of service.

Contributions – Fully Self-Supporting our Obligations

Presented by: Cyndi V (Treatment/Accessibilities & Grassroots Chair, Area 79)

Hi Friends, my name is Cyndi and I am an alcoholic. I currently serve as Area 79 BC/Yukon Panel 67 Treatment, Accessibilities and Grassroots (our Area 79 newsletter) Committee Chairperson. I am here this weekend with my husband Dan. We are absolutely thrilled to be here. It's our first time in Winnipeg! WRAASA holds a special place in my heart as my husband Dan chaired WRAASA in 2011. We both are grateful and feel blessed to be here. Friday, we woke at 3:30am to catch a 6am flight out of Abbotsford. While Dan was parking, I went in to get us checked in. It's early and I am having trouble entering the reservation code. So, a kind employee decides to help me. It is in that moment that he points out to me and I realize we may not be going to Winnipeg. You see, my husband decided to book our flight, as he knew I have been extremely busy these days. Our flight was booked for April 10th not February! Well, as you can see, we are here so all worked out. In fact, I must add, the airline felt so sorry for us (well me) that they upgraded us to first class and free baggage. So yes, yet another reason we are grateful and truly feel blessed to be here.

I want to give a huge shout out to the planning committee and all the volunteers that have given their time to make this such a fantastic weekend of unity amongst all the AA members of the 4 Areas within Western region and so many others.

Thank you to Alice and the team for asking me to share today on Self Support our obligation. I must confess and share with you I am the worst person to speak on anything to do with monies. Not only do I spend more than I have but as well when it comes to understanding any financial statement, well, I'm a mess. I sit at our monthly GSC meetings stating to myself 'today I will understand these things', only to get lost. I will ask questions and have them answered with such love and I will still not understand as I respond 'oh okay'. When the new members to the General Service Committee ask me a question, I chuckle slightly and say 'you may be better off to ask another member'. I would love to help them but I would most likely only take them into a dark, scary place. Don't get me wrong I do understand the basics and then it stops there. Now, that being said, the topic is 'Self Support, Our Obligation'. That I can do even with my lack of understanding of financial statements. That topic can be covered with authority and confidence no matter where any of us are in our understanding of the financial details. This topic can, and should be discussed, regularly – it is good for the soul – the spiritual direction the discussion can lead us can offer for lively unity.

When I first came to AA and saw the hat going around – well wait let me first say in the early days of my sobriety I wasn't a pleasant soul – abrasive, guarded and defensive are just a few adjectives to describe my emotional state – so needless to say when I see this hat going around asking for money I thought 'ya, not going to happen – you people will not get a penny of my money'. The lack of understanding was

obviously forefront but the lack of gratitude and respect was nowhere to be seen. I try and remember that today when the hat goes around and allow everyone to be right where they are with dignity, grace and love. You never know one day this wonderful program might catch on and their gratitude will shine through.

First, allow me to focus in on 'Self Support; our Obligation' and my general understanding of it.

Immediately my thoughts go to the early days. Rockefeller's statement to self support "I am afraid that money will spoil this thing." Specifically referring to not accepting outside contributions.

When I think of self support I first think of monies but it doesn't get lost for me that for this alcoholic it also means how much am I giving back to AA of my time or am I leaving it to others. Or worse yet, to a non AA member. I remember once helping a group to organize their Christmas party when a member said "I'll get my mom to make the decorations". Apparently, through our drinking career we hadn't taken enough. It was when another member stated 'we are self supporting' that the self support understanding broaden for me.

Through learning what self support and my obligation meant in AA it naturally filtered into my personal life. When I was out there drinking, I wasn't supporting myself. I would constantly get myself in financial binds and turn to my dad to get me out. When I came to AA, this stubborn alcoholic started to become open, honest and willing. It was through guidance to help me understand personal responsibility and self support, my obligation that I approached my dad and said "No matter what I say Dad, no matter what! – don't give me any money. I need to learn how to be responsible and take care of myself." I truly believe through loving sponsorship and those that came before me I started to understand, respect and practice self support at a personal level. Now, I must also add that a few months later I went to him asking for financial help and he said, with a heavy heart I might add "No I can't – it's important for your sobriety".

Self support means, at the group level, when my Dad attends my cake and is so grateful to AA and how it saved his daughter's life that he does not continuous try and put a \$20 in the 'hat' because we are self supporting.

To me, self support; our obligation in Alcoholics Anonymous is (a quote from The Language of the Heart) '... when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessing and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.' Gail P is our Area 79 Alternate Delegate but at one time she was our Area 79 Treasurer – once a treasurer always a treasurer. It's in her blood. She often, with extreme passion, states the importance of being self supported by AA members. She says things like 'AA has lots of money, it's in the pockets of the AA members'. One of my favourite statements from her is "How grateful are you for your sobriety?".

Powerful and impactful question. Gail often asks this question of many. So much so one day Jade, our

Area 79 Panel 67 Delegate, shares with me how she is contributing monthly to our General Service Office. Instead of encouraging her or praising her I go “Gail got to you!”. Thank God for those that come before us and show us the way!

Carrying the message, Tradition 5, our primary purpose. Bill says ‘without this vital activity, we would literally wither and die.’ When we practice financial self support, and recognize our obligation we don’t hoard money, we give it to each level of service, group, district, area, intergroup and our general service office to fulfill services to carry the message to the alcoholic that still suffers. So, why is self support our obligation? “AA offers to the new person a spiritual way of life that can eliminate the alcohol problem.” Can this be done without any financial support from us? Should we expect others to help us? Self support is essential to our survival as a Fellowship.

“Yes, we AAs were once a burden on everybody. We were ‘takers’. Now that we are sober, and by the grace of God have become responsible citizens of the world, why shouldn’t we now about face and become ‘thankful givers’! Yes, it is high time we did!”

What is our obligation? AA Comes of Age: “We keenly realize that the practice of the Twelve Traditions is quite as vital to the life of AA as a whole as is the practice of the Twelve Steps to the life and sobriety of each member.” Tradition 7 is one of those essential traditions that we need to practice.

Through events such as WRAASA we discuss Self Support; Our Obligation and it assists us to become more aware, to get more informed, and in turn we take valuable information home with us and continue these discussions at our group, district – within the Fellowship. That’s why and how AA works. Self support is spiritual. Self support is participation. Self support is a way I show AA how grateful I am. And finally, to me, self support is our obligation but more importantly self support is our privilege.

Contributions – Fully Self-Supporting our Obligations

Presenter: Gordon F (DCM, District 20, Area 78)

1. Hi, I'm Gordie F, Alcoholic from Area 78, District 20, Irma Friday Group from Irma, Alberta, a small town of 450 people – 110 miles SE of Edmonton, 60 miles E of Camrose, 70 miles SW of Lloydminster. We have the best small group in western Canada! So much for the bull!
2. My topic is "Contributions – Fully Self-Supporting Our Obligation." This report has the help and blessings from Doug M, DCM District 19 and Dave B from Consort, AB (was Area 78 delegate), who many of you will likely know, so obviously I can't take all the credit.
3. Contributions to me also can mean donating time, making coffee, setting up, cleaning up, doing 12-step work, generally just spending time with fellow alcoholics, attending meetings, doing service work at whatever level a person is comfortable at.
4. Yes – it is our obligation to be Fully Self Supporting. To me this is mainly about Tradition Seven "Every A.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contribution." Our Traditions are set down on paper. But they were written first in our hearts. For each of us knows, instinctively I think, that A.A. is not ours to do with as we please. We are but caretakers to preserve the spiritual quality of our Fellowship; keep it whole for those who will come after us and have need of what has so generously been given to us."
5. To preserve the spiritual quality, it also takes money. Spirituality and money do mix. As each individual donates to the basket he or she can feel good that they are part of the whole big fellowship and helping to spread the message, to help pay for coffee, rent, literature, or spread the message world wide. The gratitude of giving is priceless. After being around the program for awhile and are partially recovered, it is time to quit taking and start giving back. It's surprising how much better we feel!
6. Our contributions support our districts or Central Office, our area committee, and our General Service office. Twelve Step work is essential – carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic. The fellowship would wither and die if it ceased. This vital contact between one alcoholic and another still involves investment of time and money. Tradition 7 states "Every A.A. Group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions." During the history of A.A. the temptations were there for large donations and facilities which diverted us from our primary goal, to help the alcoholic who still suffers." John D. Rockefeller Jr. stated "I am afraid that money will spoil the fellowship." Discussion and arguments about money certainly became a problem in the early days. In the early days Bill W and a small staff survived on a shoe-string while the groups were very stingy. They thought money just caused problems, and it did and does.

Eventually over time, the trustees declared that A.A. must always stay poor. The Foundation's financial policy would henceforth be: bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve. All large gifts would be declined. Then the principle of corporate poverty was firmly and finally embedded in A.A. Traditions. The integrity of Alcoholics Anonymous was established by making financial independence part of its tradition.

1. Every A.A. service is designed to make more and better 12-step work possible, be it a group meeting place, central or intergroup office, district meeting place, area expenses, or world service headquarters.
2. Each group should decide at their business meetings where to distribute their funds. It is usually suggested that they look after rent, coffee, A.A. literature, Grapevine, local meeting list, GSR travel expenses to attend service functions, and a 'prudent reserve' (depends on local expenses).

Suggestion of group contributions:

District	40%	or	10%
Area	30%		10%
GSO	30%		30%
(Intergroup – 50% or Central office)			

3. GSO has prudent reserve of 9-12 months to operate essential services and Grapevine.
 - Last year, 2016, there was a 13% increase in funds \$620,000 more partly due to 1250 more groups contributing (23, 394 groups) Approximately \$200 per group received.
 - Individual members and special contributions 12% increase.
 - Total revenue 2016 – 12,209,312 (contributions, literature, and interest)
 - Total expenses 2016 – 11,409,167
 - Operating profit 800,145
 - ? Individual can contribute maximum \$3000?/year
Bequest maximum only one time \$5000?

4. Area 78 – Income approx. \$80,291.26

Expenses approx.	<u>70,941.19</u>
Surplus	9,350.07

1. All levels of A.A. from groups, districts, central office, Areas and GSO are an open book on financial matters.

“Since we are sober the word ‘support’ has to do with sharing, people, self-respect, gratitude, and what we are privileged to give – not take – in material terms.”

2. “The paradox of A.A. is that financial independence and the support of our Fellowship by alcoholics and alcoholics alone not only enhances A.A.’s importance to each of us, but stimulates our engagement in our own recovery. A.A. is ‘our thing’ from our group’s treasury to the balance sheets at the General Service Office”

Thank you for the privilege of growing in the program

Gordie F DCM
District 20

Contributions – Fully Self-Supporting our Obligations

Presenter: Robin S (Past Treasurer, Area 80)

Early on in my recovery it was pointed out to me and others that our final step twelve chapter “A Vision for You” was not Bill’s vision for me, A Vision for You was Bills Vision of carrying the message worldwide.

7th tradition contributions are not only necessary but a vital part of keeping Bills Vision an Action and not just a dream.

Some Historical Background of Self-Support - F-19A4/96 1M

In September 1950, lack of voluntary contributions led Bill to issue to the fellowship a five page plea for support, including a request that the group secretaries call a special business meeting for the purpose of reading his (Bill’s) written plea. “Without A.A.’s Services we’d often fumble that new man or woman just coming in the door; without our Services, we’d certainly spoil the main chance of those millions who don’t know yet.”

In November 1957, Bill wrote a grapevine article entitled “Respecting Money,” in which he juxtaposed outside contributions and self-support: “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility – one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and our bills paid.”

Ten years later, as if in conclusion, Bill wrote in the A.A. Grapevine, “both these principles we understand: that A.A. wants no charity; that we support our own services. We understand – but sometimes we forget.”

So what do we mean when we claim to be fully self-supporting? This is a question that only our members can ask themselves. By the grace of god and the hands of AA I was given 14 years of sobriety Feb 2 of this year. And after being asked to make this presentation and saying yes a manageable amount of panic passed through me, where do I Start, What do I know about being fully self-supporting. Well what I do know is when the basket comes around I could do better. I feel safe in saying we all could, I learned a long time I’m not alone. I also feel safe in saying very few of us if any have dropped in the basket what we used to spend in the problem, How can I say that, How can I know that, well I have yet to hear from any of AA’s four arms of service we have too much money we better give t back. Now I am not

suggesting or meaning to imply we should all be dropping in the basket what we used to spend in the problem, recovery is not about that, recovery is about facing and dealing with our financial obligations both in our personal lives and the Fellowship that has made the lives we live today possible.

There is much information available online that can be downloaded and printed to help groups, districts, and areas become self-supporting. I once made the mistake of saying these materials were available for free, they are available as the result of members/group contributions. If we Value these services we cannot take for granted that they will always be there.

Questions from where money and spirituality mix

Q – Can a group have too much money? As stated in the long form of Tradition Seven, “we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.”

Q – My group doesn’t have a lot of money. Is it better not to send anything at all until we can make a sizeable contribution? In the spirit of participation, no contribution toward carrying the message can be too small. Bill W. spoke about our “collective obligation” to support A.A. services, and if everyone waited until they had a “sizeable amount”, it is more than likely that A.A.’s bills would go unpaid.

In closing let me say this;

We have a pledge that reads, when anyone anywhere reaches out for help we want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible.

We now have to ask ourselves, when it’s the hand of AA reaching out, am I responsible.

Thank you for letting me share,

Robin S- Area 80

SESSION: “Growth: Communication – Today and Tomorrow”

Presenters:

Rio D, PI Chair, Area 79

Mike K, CPC Chair, Area 91

Keith A, CPC Chair, Area 78

Growth: Communication – Today and Tomorrow

Presenter: Rio D. (PI Chair, Panel 67, Area 79, BC/Yukon)

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Rio and I am an alcoholic, grateful to be serving as the Area 79, Panel 67, Public Information Chair. I may be born and raised in beautiful BC but I am a daughter of prairie born and raised parents. So I love, honour and enjoy coming home. There is nothing like prairie hospitality so Thank you for the warm welcome here in Winnipeg. I am no longer shocked or caught off guard when a topic I think I have nothing to contribute to is selected for me either by another person or my Higher Power. I am shocked however to discover some personal truths about myself during this process.

I can't think about growth in communication and not think about our three sided triangle at the same time. Recovery, Service and Unity that's the order I want to talk about them today. When it comes to all three I can only share my experience, strength and hope, so here it goes.

This is how recovery started for me. First, recovery started for me through my family doctor who made the call to my local detox. I was then given a meeting card from a real person and that list provided me with the information I needed to get to more meetings. At my second or third meeting I was then given a big book from a long timer in which members signed with words of encouragement and underlined the information they thought important for me to read. Members gave me their phone numbers and others told me to get a sponsor. I was also given the same suggestions many of you were given like keep coming back, this too shall pass, easy does it, one day at a time, and most importantly to read the first 164 pages of the text Alcoholics Anonymous.

All of those things can and still do happen in many locations worldwide. It's a process of people speaking one on one to each other to gather information. I guess what I'm trying to say is that Alcoholics Anonymous found me, I didn't go searching for it.

So here is the question. What about those people looking for recovery? If our program doesn't find them by one on one conversation then how do they find us? There are obviously the tested and true ways that we are all aware of like PSA's, newspapers, telephone books, referrals from existing members or professionals and other means. But what was once the normal way of collecting information is changing. It's all at our fingertips now. We search the internet. We type our query and are flooded with information. Sometimes, we get more information than we can comprehend. And sometimes the information isn't even accurate.

Times are changing and in time we will change how we get our information out to the world. I trust our trusted servants, our service structure, and the process and believe that when we are ready we will move forward in how we deliver the right information to those who seek it. So if A.A. does find the still suffering alcoholic like it did for me that's wonderful, but when it doesn't we have to make it possible for alcoholics to find out about us and how to get to us by doing all we can to make it happen.

My truth is that there is still an old school part of me that is loyal to the communication of not so long ago. I have a very big part of my heart back there because I've seen it in action. I've received it and I've passed it on in the same way. I've seen it in action and I've seen it succeed. I've been able to answer the phone and guide others to meetings. I've been in the room when a newcomer comes in for the first time, scared and bewildered and talked to them. I've provided information to the newcomer, read the Big Book and other literature with them in a small group of 3-4, done the steps and celebrated in their first year, second year and more sobriety milestones.

I love the grassroots way of doing A.A. because that is where I come from and that's where I still live today. Small community living where we drive long distances to get to each other and stay connected. Go to the long timers and just talk, go get the housebound person out. Those one on one in person connections are still vital and honestly the communication of tomorrow isn't going to take that away. My hope is that it will get more new comers to us to have that person to person interaction and do what has worked in the past, one drunk talking to another to stay sober and work toward recovery.

So what about service? Well technology is helping us get more important information to many others willing to serve. I find it very convenient that I can just search aa.org and type whatever I'm curious about in the search bar. I like and refer people all the time to our wonderful Area 79 BC/Yukon website for meeting and event info as well as service references.

Today like most of you my communication in service is spread between meetings, emails, person to person, telephone and skype conversations along with lots of online reading. We have area, district and intergroup websites and email addresses individually or compiled into groups so we can save time with just one click of the mouse. We send agendas, presentations, reports and much more. Technology is fast, easy and allows us to complete our tasks quickly.

Here's what I love about service. At our January Quarterly I was chairing my first PI Committee meeting in a small breakout room holding about 20 people. When the discussion of how do we get the word out to the public was asked a young lady, new in sobriety, spoke clearly and adamantly on the subject of social media. Her concern was that we of A.A. are so out of touch. We aren't using social media and we should

because no one watches T.V., listens to the radio or reads the newspaper anymore. It's all about Google, Facebook, Netflix and YouTube. I was taken back somewhat because I thought her passion was over the top. I wanted and did caution about Anonymity and mentioned that A.A.W.S. is looking at approaching social media in a way that would safeguard our Traditions and our fellowship. She talked fast and my head was spinning about how private groups work on Facebook and all the privacy features available. It was all completely foreign to me.

What happened after that Quarterly was interesting. I started asking questions and researching some information about A.A. and social media. I found out about the comprehensive media plan already in place and looked at the advisory actions for public information seeing the recommendations for proposals to implement a Google-for Non-Profits and a Twitter account. So much to my relief I was able to quickly gather information but much to my chagrin I also quickly realized that I have a lot more research to do to gain a better understanding of how it all works. But what is so great is that it's all available to me to learn.

I experimented with my own not often used Facebook account. I'm not a very good or knowledgeable face booker, I don't have a twitter or Instagram account. But if I want to be, all I have to do is sit down with my laptop and try to figure it out. Reading what I found and sending other more experienced trusted servants emails, asking more questions. Doing what I could to better acquaint myself with the subject of communication.

I believe in our process, the process of service, of trusting our trusted servants, and in the service structure. It will happen if we will reach out to more suffering alcoholics and to the public, it's just a matter of time. The truth? This experience would not have happened for me if the discussion didn't happen. I hope to see that passionate newcomer so I can thank her for her enthusiasm and for getting me to look a little closer into the new to me world of social media.

Last but not least, let's talk about unity. I really believe the glue that holds us all together is the focus and belief in our primary purpose. Without that we wouldn't be here today. It is a we program and if we can get our accurate, consistent message of sobriety out to more suffering alcoholics then we the fellowship and the program of A.A. will have a stronger future.

Our General Service Representatives are a vital link in the chain of communication between our members and the Conference. But without members, we don't have groups and without groups we don't have GSR's, DCM's, District Committee Chairs, Area Delegate's, A.A. World Services Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine. We will need to cautiously and carefully move forward in our communication and as we have

in the past, we will meet each challenge with gratitude for the opportunity for improvement that each change provides. Change in communication may be the new constant, more will be revealed.

So back to that personal truth I mentioned. I'm scared. It's fear. Fear that makes me hesitant to the new ways. I learned in the big book that there are only two types of fear. One I will lose something I already have, a program that keeps me sober one day at a time. Or two, I won't get something I want, to do things the way they have been done, the way I know and am more comfortable with.

So here is what I learned in A.A. about change again. Change in how we communicate our message of hope is likely going to be constant so I'm ready to embrace the communication of tomorrow because I want to carry the message to those still suffer today and in the future. I would like the opportunity to see what the communication of tomorrow will bring. My hope is that it brings more accurate, informative, and current information.

I guess what I have learned is that the message is still going to be the same. It's the delivery of that message that will be different. We still have to carry the message to the alcoholic that still suffers and we know that recovery works very well by one drunk talking to another but if we can't get them to the program to talk then we aren't really carrying the message to as many as we could.

Another truth, I do spend more time in front of a screen than I do in front of a person these days. I know that most of that is due to my new journey in service and I also know how service keeps me in middle of the boat.

But what if the new-comer searching out there doesn't even know the boat exists for him or her? Then I guess we do have to move forward with technology being a tool in communication. Without it a message of recovery might not reach the alcoholic that still suffers.

Thank you for this opportunity to learn, grow and love in the comfort of Alcoholics Anonymous.

GROWTH: COMMUNICATION – TODAY and TOMORROW

Presenter: Mike K (CPC Chair, Area 91)

Hello everyone, my name is Mike K, I am an alcoholic and I am privileged to be serving as the CPC Chair for Area 91. When I first saw that my topic for discussion was on communication my thought was, “Communication? That’s a pretty broad topic. Why couldn’t it be on something solid like a Tradition or one of the Steps?” This was quickly squashed with the realisation that effective communication is one of the cornerstones of Alcoholics Anonymous. In maybe it’s most physical form it is in A.A.’s publications, most notably The Big Book and the Grapevine. A GSR communicates between their home group, the District and the Area. A group may use the power of the purse to let their displeasure be known to one of the Service bodies. And volunteers carry the message to those in hospitals correctional facilities and schools. So a very broad subject but when it comes to Alcoholics Anonymous, the most basic, most important communication is when one alcoholic carries the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic. Reaching the suffering alcoholic must inform and instruct the why and how of everything we do.

I attended my first Western Canada Regional Forum in 2002 and although I remember really nothing that was said I do remember that the Chair of the Forum, would a couple of times during the weekend, get up to the mike and remind everyone that the main reason we were there was that there may be in that very hotel a suffering alcoholic who didn’t know that Alcoholics Anonymous even existed. As any one has ever attended one, a lot was said but that was one thing that was communicated.

For those who know me I love studying the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. I often say that if one has trouble believing in a Higher Power all they have to do is look at it and realise that if it was just left up to us alcoholics A.A. would never have gotten out of the gate so Something or Someone must be watching over us. Before I look at how communication is important if not necessary for A.A.’s growth I want to look at how it played a role in our past. Ebby, sitting at Bill’s kitchen table, planted the seed when he shared that recovery was possible. When Bill couldn’t understand why no one was getting sober when he preached to them about God Dr. Silkworth told him that he needed to change how he was delivering the message by hitting the alcoholics with the hard,cold facts. After six more months when Bill was despondent that no one was staying sober, his wife, Lois, told him that he was. Bill finally was able to carry the message successfully to Dr. Bob and the two of them set off working with others but after a few years, when the two of them took stock of how far the message had travelled, they realised that only a few handfuls had stayed sober and many of those who had, had their own version of how to recover. Imagine that, sober alcoholics who thought they know better! Bill and Bob knew that they needed a book both to

show people precisely how they recovered and to reach the far flung suffering alcoholic who they would probably never meet. Later, many members of A.A. were worried because they were not having the white-light experience that Bill had, so the appendix, “Spiritual Experience” was added to the Big Book. These are just a few examples of how in the past even though the basic message of recovery remained the same Alcoholics Anonymous changed the way it communicated the message to suffering alcoholics and its members as their needs changed. It should be noted that none of the above were solo efforts. They all involved two or more people facing a challenge and finding a solution.

Moving on to the present and the future, the so called Information Age has brought in many new advantages and challenges in communication. There are some great things that technology allows such as meetings to be carried to remote communities by video conferencing. Another example is that when I recently became CPC Chair I could reach out to fellow CPC Chairs from various Areas. I’ve sat in meetings where there wasn’t a Big Book but someone had it on their smart phone. Alcoholics without access to a meeting do have access to literature and speakers online. But there are also distractions. Cell phones and tablets are everywhere including being used in meetings. Websites criticising and condemning A.A. are easily accessible. Social media is rich soil for anonymity breaks. But are these really new? All of this outside stuff existed long before the first silicon chip was invented. The only difference is that it is now coming at us faster and in greater quantities than it once did.

To illustrate, early in my sobriety instead of reading the Big Book I decided to read up on A.A. to see if it was right for me so I got some books out of the library. I came running into my meeting the next day, sat where I always sat and turned to the fellow beside me saying, “John, John, I just read a book and it says that A.A. is a cult!” Before I could continue John interrupted me and asked, “Have you drank today?” No “Are you thinking about drinking today” No “You still working” Yes “How you doing physically” Great, sleeping well. Eating. He then said, “So, if A.A. is a cult, and its not, then so what. Your life is still better than it was.” I’m also quite sure that if I had whipped out a paperback novel, instead of a cell phone, during a meeting my sponsor would have grabbed it from me and gave me that look that meant “We’ll talk after the meeting.” The message behind the Steps and Traditions was strongly communicated to me not only by my sponsor but by other members of my group. And that was because they were unified in what that group’s message and the message of A.A. was. As that strong Unity has seen Alcoholics Anonymous and its members through past challenges I have Faith that it will continue to do so. But that is assuming that we are unified.

Tradition Five states that each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose-that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. In the chapter “There is a

Solution” it says that we, the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, have a way out on which we can absolutely agree. But do we actually agree? Does each group know what its message is and even if they do, is that the one that is heard and seen at meetings? Some meetings I’ve sat in seem to have been more about therapy than recovery. There are still plenty of people coming into A.A., some alcoholics and some not, but very few are staying. And why may that be? I need to make a side comment here. We hear, as we have this weekend, that the membership is stagnant. I prefer the term levelled out. Stagnant carries the picture of a foetid, murky pond that smells of decay. It is a negatively charged word and forces us to think negatively. Words have power and that is a major consideration in how and what we communicate. Now, back to maybe a couple of ideas why newcomers aren’t staying. Do they hear a strong message of hope when they come in or just a bunch of war stories? Are they embraced by the group or ignored? How do we react when someone mentions another addiction? It has been said that if a person isn’t ready then there is nothing we can say to keep them coming back but if they are ready there may be some things that we say that may drive them away. Do some of the old boys sit around before the meeting telling off coloured jokes? Are some opinions on outside issues made during the meeting that may offend a new comer? I was raised that the new comer is the most important person in the room and I must be aware of my every word and action so as to be inclusive never exclusive.

Furthermore, some groups in my city believe that Intergroup is the same as General Service and so only contribute to Intergroup as the money all goes into the same pot. There are the ones who seem to know only one-half of Tradition Four and that is that they, in their own words, “can do whatever they want”. And there are always those who don’t know or don’t care or don’t understand what General Service is.

And so just as it was in our early history and just as it was (and is) with my sponsor and group it is now incumbent upon me to communicate what I can about our Three Legacies and maybe it may be only to keep the message alive. There is a group in the District for which I was DCM that had a strong record of service. Their GSR left the group about halfway through their term and wasn’t replaced. They carried out elections after several months and I asked one of the members if they had selected a GSR. They said no and one of the reasons, she believed, was that since no District reports had been given for quite some time the District dropped off of the group’s radar. A case of out of sight out of mind.

How I communicate has changed over time. I have been known as a Big Book Thumper (still am) and a Tradition Lawyer. Both aspects have mellowed and that is really only due to communicating with others. One of the things that I love about WRAASAs, Forums, Assemblies, Districts and other Service bodies is hearing the experience of others on how situations in their area were handled. We saw it this morning with a discussion around Tradition 7. I also remember when someone stood up and asked for help because

their group was going to stop children coming to the meetings and several people came to the mike to offer their experiences and solutions. As a further example, one message that I took away from the last Western Canada Regional Forum in Kamloops was that there is some give, some sway in the Traditions. They are not so rigid that change in A.A. is impossible or that our doors won't remain open to all and that was because our two Trustees-at-Large were there to communicate their experiences. So not only do I believe that I need to change and grow in how I communicate but so must the rest of Alcoholics Anonymous. As an example, Regina is comprised of three Districts and once a year, as with most Districts everywhere, they have the Delegate come and present a report on the General Service Conference. In the past this was a potluck dinner with the Delegate giving their presentation. The turn out of members usually ran about two dozen people. In an attempt to get more people out the Districts decided to scrap the potluck, provide a buffet and make more of an event out of it with an A.A. Jeopardy game thrown in. Turn out increased to around eighty people and the feedback on the presentation was all positive.

Communication as I have learnt is a two way street. Listening is an important if not the most important aspect. In a discussion I had with a member who is involved in work with Remote Communities she mentioned that before bursting in with literature and ideas it was important to ask them what they needed. This is the same with the General Service Office. They want the Fellowship to let them know what the members want.

Communication is also a collaborative action between all parties involved. Being unified in our message doesn't mean that we just agree on it but that we work together to carry it out and even though there will be many different ideas on the exactly how to carry it out the Fellowship needs to work together to find the best approach. It has been said that if only Bill W. founded A.A. then he would have franchised it out within a couple of years and if Dr. Bob founded it we would all have to still go to Akron to get it but between them both they found the best way. Even today there are "Dr. Bob's" and "Bill W.s" in Alcoholics Anonymous but if we work together instead of separately our Higher Power will surely guide us.

Before I close, I want to add what for me maybe is the most important form of communication and that is experience itself. At the opening of "Working with Others" there is a paragraph that says:

"Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends--this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives."

When I first read that the first several times I thought, “Nice, if not a little over blown.” It only became real for me when I began to experience it. This promise may have been communicated to me in writing but the true communication didn’t happen until I experienced it. The same can be said for my first Forum. I had been told about service but was still cynical and it wasn’t until I was physically there that things changed. It was great to see that at the last Forum in Kamloops out of an attendance of 280, 168 were first time attendees.

The problems that present themselves haven’t changed over eighty years but neither has the solution. The growth of Alcoholics Anonymous is safe as long as we communicate a strong, unified message, work together, keep listening to others, remain open-minded and willing to change and be active in all of our affairs.

Yours in Love and Service,

Mike K

Growth: Communication – Today and Tomorrow

Presenter: Keith A (CPC Chair, Area 78)

My name is Keith A and I am an alcoholic.

I would like to thank the WRAASA committee and Larry M, our Area delegate for putting my name forward to participate here today. I have never done anything like this before and so it has been quite a personal journey for me.

I was asked to keep the talk to about 10-15 minutes and the title of the talk that was assigned to me was

Growth: Communication – Today and Tomorrow

Communication is defined as the imparting or exchanging of information or news. We usually talk about communication as both verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is the spoken conveying of a message. Nonverbal communication describes the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. Some examples of nonverbal communication include gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye contact and even how one dresses. Nonverbal communication also relates to the intent of a message. Examples of intent are voluntary, intentional movements like shaking a hand or winking, as well as involuntary, such as sweating. Speech also contains nonverbal elements known as paralanguage, e.g.'s rhythm, intonation, tempo, and stress. There may even be a pheromone component. Research has shown that up to 55% of human communication may occur through non-verbal facial expressions, and a further 38% through para-language. So, 93% of what we communicate is non-verbal, Wow! It seems then that we need to be present in the communication to fully deliver the message.

Today, we often communicate through the internet with E-Mails or on-line social media such as Facebook, Twitter, et cetera. Personally, I find it amusing that these social media services will often tell you how many friends that you have. Occasionally, I have heard my daughters brag about how many friends they have on Facebook. If research is telling us that 93% of communication is nonverbal and that is obviously missing with the current social media or e-mail communication is it any wonder that so much miscommunication occurs today using these communication services? Have you ever misunderstood an e-mail or had one of your e-mails misunderstood? Do we really understand that when we are in the comfort of our home sitting behind the computer screen composing an e-mail how handicapped that we truly are? I know that I didn't until I researched this topic. If it's an e-mail of a personal nature or maybe I sense that misunderstanding is occurring, maybe using my phone is a better

idea.

When we look at Growth: Today and Tomorrow I can't help but see that growth will occur in communication on the technical side, but the interpersonal may not. Actually, it may become more problematic: the right message may not be communicated without the presence of both parties. By Tomorrow I mean the foreseeable future which is about 5 years. Perhaps, beyond that the experts can iron out these problematic issues with respect to the absence of the non-verbal communication element.

I do want to be careful with the word Growth! I cannot predict the future of an amazing fellowship centered in the spiritual. I have found and experienced that there is a God, it's not me and he loves each of us; wants us sober and is closer to us than our breath. Growth may be a secular word falling outside the realm of the spiritual.

When I hear that our numbers have flatlined or are down, only 40% of the groups contribute to GSO, et cetera I see something else: I see that over 2 million people are sober, I can buy a Big Book for less than \$20 which has 164 pages of instruction that will save an alcoholic. Over lunch yesterday I listened to Scott H, our Canada Trustee at Larger talking about going to Peru next month to participate in an A.A. function. As he described this exciting service work I was thinking – they have AA in Peru? I didn't know. Today, as a recovered alcoholic my glass is half full. I turn my life each day over to my Higher Power and it is good hands – very good hands. Why wouldn't the entire fellowship be the same – in very good hands!

I wonder if we should remember that our fellowship, when boiled down to its' essence is about one alcoholic talking with another (n.b. not “to”). Wow, pretty simple and I have found nothing that suggests that this primary communication has changed since 1935 or will in the future. This is the area that I would like to focus my talk on today. When we talk “with” as opposed to “to” there is a listening component. There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is one of our natural senses. Listening requires focus and attention.

I am not sure if you have had the opportunity to work with a drunk in pre- recovery or early recovery. In my experience, usually they want to do most of the talking and have all the answers – unless they have bottomed out and even then maybe not.

Two quotes come to mind for me when I reflect on this experience: First, is from the French Philosopher Voltair (1694-1778 AD) who said:

“When I listen I have the power, when I talk I give it away.”

Second is from Publius a Syrian slave living at Rome (85-43 BC) who said:

“I have often regretted my speech, never my silence.”

What, to me, is really being said here is about the use of active listening.

So, what is active listening? The dictionary describes active listening as the practice of paying close attention to a speaker and asking questions to ensure full comprehension. It has also been said that active listening encourages someone to express themselves verbally without influencing them with my own preconceived notions or opinions. This can be a challenge for me as a recovered alcoholic if I think that my recovery has anything to do with me and I want my opinions or notions to influence a newcomer or sponsee (that is other than making a decision of wanting recovery). Active listening is an important skill that takes both time and practice to acquire. I believe that it is a skill that moves a person from hearing to listening and it is an essential component of productive discussions because it allows for the respectful exchange of ideas. I need to communicate to the other person that I am here for them, put away all distractions such as a cell phone, what I call head stuff (i.e. the stuff I am thinking about in my thought life), make eye contact, watch my body language (i.e. are my arms folded, am I looking “over there”) and paraphrase beginning with something like; “What I understand you are saying is ...” followed by “So, what you really mean is...” if I got it wrong the first time.

In short, what the techniques for active listening are:

- **Listen** in order to fully understand what is being said to you.
- **Rephrase** what you heard the person say so you can be sure you heard correctly.
- **Ask questions** that help you get more information. For example, “What did you mean when you said...?”
- **Offer encouragement and support.** Newcomers are so beaten up when they come through the doors of A.A. that this action is an act of kindness. Those who work regularly on their character defects may recognize that kindness is a virtue which is one of seven antidotes to our character defects.
- Ask how the person feels. Be careful not to assume that you know how the person feels.

This is important.

So, in our fellowship where does active listening benefit us? What comes to mind is *working with others* – especially on a twelfth step call or sponsorship.

Active listening is a skill which may serve a sponsor well. Probably, we should take a minute to talk about sponsorship here. I have come to believe that a sponsor is primarily a guide to helping a still suffering alcoholic (i.e. sponsee) make a connection with THEIR Higher Power who will give them a daily reprieve from alcohol based on fit spiritual condition. This is done by guiding them through the twelve steps until they have a spiritual awakening or a psychic change. As a sponsor, I am not to give medical advice, religious advice, I am not a counsellor – simply to share my experience, strength and hope and perhaps in an active listening way. It is a unique gift that God has given to the alcoholic: to talk with another alcoholic sharing their experience, strength and hope to lead them into recovery. He did not give it to doctors, counsellors or even to pastors. Pensez-y!

Working with others may also include such activities as service work and working on committees – anywhere there is a human interaction.

I think that the future growth of communication within A.A. depends on:

- 1) keeping it simple: “*one alcoholic talking with another*”.
- 2) Improved communication with the still suffering alcoholic based on an active listening approach.
- 3) Perhaps putting on workshops throughout the Area’s to help A.A. members understand and practice these techniques of active listening; or perhaps incorporate them into already existing or planned Sponsorship workshops.

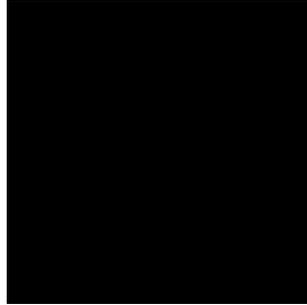
I invite you to imagine a world in Alcoholic Anonymous where active listening is highly valued, where we take the time to be with and actively listen to those we care about; the still suffering alcoholic; our partners, our family, our friends and especially those we are in conflict with.

I have printed a number of copies of “Techniques for Active Listening” for you to take with you. Please take one if you are interested in what we discussed here.

Maybe I can take a minute to point out the table on the printout with the columns “Communication Blockers” and “Communication Enhancers”. Communication Blockers are where we live in the problem

and Communication Enhancers are where we live in the solution.

THANK YOU



Keith A. Area 78

WRAASA, Winnipeg: February, 2017

TECHNIQUES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is an important skill that takes both time and practice to acquire. It is an essential component of productive discussions because it allows for the respectful exchange of ideas. This handout will help you to understand and practice the skill.

- **Listen** in order to fully understand what is being said to you.
- **Rephrase** what you heard the person say so you can be sure you heard correctly.
- **Ask questions** that help you get more information. For example, “What did you mean when you said...?”
- **Offer encouragement and support.**
- **Ask how the person feels.** Be careful not to assume that you know how the person feels.

COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION
Blaming and attacking.	Asking for more information and problem solving together.
Being distracted or using other body language that is not-attentive.	Making eye contact, leaning toward the other person, giving full attention.
Dismissing or making light of someone’s problem.	Showing empathy, validating the other person’s feelings.
Interrupting.	Staying silent until the person is finished speaking.
Lecturing/moralizing.	Withholding judgment.
“Yes...but” statements.	“Yes...and” statements.

WRAASA, Winnipeg February/2017
 Growth: Communication – Today and Tomorrow
 Keith A.

SESSION: “Participation: Fellowship versus Membership”

Presenters:

Denise D, Secretary, Panel 66, Area 80

Scott G, DCM, District 11, Area 90

Doug M, DCM, District 19, Area 79

Lesley W, Secretary, Panel 67, Area 91

Participation: Fellowship versus Membership
Presenter: Denise D (Secretary, Panel 66, Area 80)

Hello,

My name is Denise and I am an alcoholic. I a member of the Cavalier group in District 3. Here in Winnipeg and I know you have heard of my football team.

I am also the secretary of Manitoba General Service Area 80.

I have been asked to give a 5 – 7 minute talk on membership or fellowship. Or was it a 10 – 15 minute talk? No, I am pretty sure it was 2 – 3 minute talk. I kid, it was a privilege to be asked (although that was not my first reaction – obviously not my first reaction I thought I will say NO and then Oh, you don't say NO in AA, and then it was more like what did I do to Alice? I told Alice – eventually I will get to the sentence – Absolutely I will do it and it will be an honor. And, here I am. Thank you for asking

So, at lunch today, I order the clubhouse – and I wasn't even a member. And, the waitress brought it for me. Doesn't she know that I am not a member? Apparently clubhouse sandwiches are for everyone – not just members - membership doesn't mean that much to the Viscount Gort – but it certainly means something to us.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a voluntary, worldwide fellowship of men and women from all walks of life who meet together to attain and maintain sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. AA membership - simply the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership – although I am sure we all realize that we have paid our dues (in many absurd ways, destructive ways and often painful ways – I know I paid mine).

No dues no fees - And, in fact the amount that may be contributed by any individual member is limited to \$3,000 a year. Interesting factoid.

And, from the latest data A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature AA at a Glance from October 2016 the current membership is estimated over 117,700 (one hundred seventeen thousand and seven hundred) groups and over 2 million members in approximately 180 countries.

Members simply stay away from one drink, the first drink and we do that one day at a time.

Sobriety is maintained through sharing experiences, strength and hope at group meetings and through the

suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism.

Also very important - Anonymity in the public media is assurance to all A.A.s, especially to newcomers, that their A.A. membership will not be disclosed. AA will always strive to make known our program of recovery, not individuals who participate in the program, after all Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of A.A.

Now - Do you have to know all that to be a member - No - you just have to have a desire to stop drinking. And, you are a member if you say you are a member.

I was one of those people when I began - that thought the group meeting was centered around me – I mean the rest of the world was! Or at least should have been - I went at 8:00 and I left at 9:00 – because AA had one hour – what took me over 20 years to create AA had 60 minutes to fix - because after all my time was valuable? Because, because I was sick. And, as I got a more and more days of sobriety I realized some of these people must have known me – they can identify with what I am saying (I didn't – it was so garbled –) but they understood my gibberish – and many of them did what I had done, and drank like I had drank and some even had the nerve to tell bits and pieces of my experiences. Not only did they understand gibberish but they spoke it too! I was in the right place – although it took some time before I could admit that – but I did realize I was understood in AA.

A Membership requirement is not to be understanding but to have a desire to stop drinking. Membership doesn't require that you are able to speak gibberish – just have a desire to stop drinking. In fact that is the only requirement for membership – to have a desire to stop drinking. So, then I noticed I was staying after the meeting to talk to the people that I thought knew me – and then I found myself coming earlier to a meeting to catch the people I wanted to speak with – then one day I realized It was going there to listen to these people.

One day after a meeting that my sponsor chaired - out came the Membership card – I remember when my Sponsor said here - sign this – you are going to be a member of this group! Ooo – sure this is it! Next Saturday, I will be selling flowers at the airport – OMG – what does signing this card really mean. Why do I have to sign this – OMG everyone will know my name – I am a somebody no one can know who I am – My sponsor said many things after my rant about that card – but the two things I remember were: You will get a cake on your sobriety birthday – and you will belong. I signed the card – **I would like you to know that I took my own cake to my sobriety birthdays for five years. The first year – I was so afraid they would give me a spice cake (blah) and I didn't quit drinking for a piece of spice cake! So I took a chocolate cake – Second year I took a two layer chocolate cake and the third year I took a triple

layer chocolate cake. Fourth year was a chocolate cheesecake and the fifth year was a chocolate turtle cake. IF indeed being a member was only to get a cake, so in theory I didn't need to sign that card – not until year six. But, I signed that card because I do belong – I was an alcoholic – I am one of those 2 million people. I was an alcoholic then and today I am an alcoholic. Actually, today I have been a member for 23 years 9 months 1 week and 1 day - today - February 11th.

I am currently taking a step class using the Big Book and the 12 and 12 and during this course we are also listening to the tapes of Joe and Charlie – and in there somewhere it says something like No one ever jumps up and down after their first drunk at 13/14 years of age thinking someday I will get to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I certainly didn't jump up and down – although I am pretty sure even then ... I knew the day would come

And for your information - I have never sold flowers at the airport – I have answered telephones, I have sat in many conferences, I have worked at the door – last night I was in the hospitality room, I held many positions in my home group, I put my hand up when I am asked, I used to help others clean ashtrays, I typed many step class telephone lists, I put chairs away, I set those chairs up. I have sat in an empty group room in case someone comes in on a stormy snowy night – I sit in my writer's garret and type up minutes from assemblies and send emails and posters to the membership – and I stand up here imagining that you all in your underwear to talk about membership/fellowship - but I have never once sold flowers at the airport.

So if membership is just simply belonging because you have a desire to quit drinking – then what is fellowship.

Good Question! I asked many people in many different rooms “What is Fellowship.” I got lots of different words and descriptions – but none of them really answered that good question or did they?

Involvement	Understanding	Being understood
Safe	Being on Holy Ground (in their group)	
Belonging – but I thought that was under membership		
Laughing and having fun	Being able to relate	
No judgment	No crisis is too small to share	

You need members - they grow into the fellowship - If a group doesn't have fellowship then they are a group of members.

Those are some of the words and sentiments shared with me.

Bill said We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness and an understanding which is indescribably... Wonderful.

My husband thought – that people who normally would not mix meant we all drank it straight!

Fellowship is the spiritual glue - in AA -members experience the miracle of sobriety and have a life based on humility and gratitude.

I think Fellowship requires mercy, I think fellowship is fragile and something that has great power and something we have to protect. I also believe Good Fellowship is governed by AA principles and not personalities. (I could be wrong).

No matter if it is membership or fellowship - we have to remember - The fact is the primary purpose of A.A. is to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic.

Do you have to know and understand all that before you experience Fellowship? I do not think so.

What if the fellowship of AA is a support group – nothing more, nothing less? The real Power of recovery is a Higher Power & the 12 Steps. ‘The fellowship of AA can never take the place of physically working through the 12 Steps yourself.’

My step class facilitator told us -

- I like to think of it as a hospital & an operation. The fellowship is the ‘hospital, the sterile environment’, where I go to have the ‘operation’ (work the 12 Steps & as a result, have the spiritual awakening). If all I ever do is remain in the sterile environment (go to meetings only) & never have the operation (work the 12 Steps), then I will never get better – will never have the spiritual awakening.

And he writes - Denise - Concerning the hospital & the operation analogy, it's important to make clear that the hospital is the fellowship, the meetings and the operation is the program, the 12 Steps.

I have experienced Fellowship – at my group, other people’s groups, in assemblies – even here - I had fellowship with the people that I ate my Clubhouse with at lunch.

Sometimes there is too much fellowship and not enough work on recovery or do you say there was too much personality and not enough AA principles. I don’t know. Without fellowship – can AA work? I don’t know? I don’t know?

Bill told us that we needed to have a Spiritual Experience of some kind that would allow us to be able to

change our thinking, and we had to change our thinking to accept the ideas of the program. Bill also told us that we would need the fellowship to maintain our sobriety.

(Let's trust Bill, Let's believe Bill knows what he is talking about – considering Bill didn't steer 2 million people wrong – let's believe him when he says we need fellowship to maintain our sobriety We need fellowship to find our way to continue to understand that we do not need to take that first drink. One day at a time.

So, Where do you find this Fellowship we need – well it is in the Membership. In God's Love
Denise D

Note: This is an honest program. So at lunch today, I had the buffet not the clubhouse. However saying I order the buffet – and I wasn't even a member - it loses something!

Participation: Fellowship versus Membership

Presenter: Scott G (DCM, District 11, Area 90)

My name is Scott G and I am an Alcoholic. I am also a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have been given the gift of fellowship all through my life, and today it helps keep me sober. You help keep me sober, this today also helps keep me sober. For me you are the fellowship in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, reminding me that all this, my life today is only possible through the program and fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

My topic, Participation – Fellowship vs Membership was very hard for me. Not so much in the subject of the topic, but standing still long enough to put my thoughts down on paper. I think this is draft #22. 12 trees have given up their existence for this presentation.

Fellowship and membership are two separate terms, but in my life have always been tied together. Fellowship – a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim. Fellowship is a relationship or bond shared with others. When I think of the bond I remind myself that it is honesty and trust that fellowship is built on. I am reminded that fellowship is togetherness, not oneness. I had fellowship until Alcohol took over my life, and then I was left alone. My disease made me believe that I had no one, nothing. Who would have thought being alone could be so loud? Who would have thought that in my home, with my wife and 4 sons, I would be so alone? Who would have thought that with my wife being pregnant with our 5th child, she would feel so alone? At my end surrounded by so many, there was no bond, no companionship, friendship or support. No more fellowship. When Alcohol took that from me, it then turned its back on me.

Membership is a belonging or being a part of a group or organization. It is a singular state of being, or a part of. I have been a member of many different groups/organizations or teams all my life. My membership usually included fellowship; however membership was also used by me for personal, selfish gain. Membership many times carried with it much conflict, especially when my will was not being done, my ideas were not being used, or I no longer agreed with those around me. Also when the commitment of membership began to conflict with my growing bond with Alcohol. Our preamble, which is read at the opening of each of my home group meetings, tells me this.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect,

denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Two terms, two separate meanings; however both paragraphs of the above Preamble end on the same thought. Find the solution, work the solution and share the solution with others.

For me though, fellowship and membership must include balance.

As I said earlier, my wife and I have five boys. Now that's not the reason for me being in AA, but ill be honest...the meetings do help. My wife works her own program in AL Anon twice a week, I sometimes attend up to four meeting a week and yes the rest of our time is spent in the hockey rink. A lot going on: but with the fellowship we experience today, I always know that there is someone to help if I or we ask. I am no longer alone. With newfound honesty, and the rebuilding of trust, I can and do ask for help today. The bond I have with those around me continues to grow. I am no longer just a member of but I have once again become a part of. I have to remember though to put myself out there. The more I relate, I began to understand why my disease of alcoholism had such a control of my life. The more I understand and begin to learn from the first 164 pages of the Big Book, the more I want the fellowship, and the more the fellowship wants me. You see, I have to give in order to receive... you taught me that.

But the fellowship alone won't keep me sober. Just because I say I am an alcoholic, doesn't mean I am a member of AA. Just because I have shared at a meeting, chaired a meeting, opened the door or made coffee or even worse, given someone advice, doesn't mean I am a member of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I may be able to deceive my way into the fellowship, but until I truly admit I have a desire to stop drinking; that is when I will become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Tradition 3 tells me that. The Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous, the copy you gave me, tells me that. Everything I need to know is in the first 164 pages of the Big Book. If I am truly to become a member, a member living a sober life, I must work, learn and put into practice those 164 pages. I can be a member of AA and not have the true benefit of membership. I must do the work. Membership requires a commitment; it carries rewards and sometimes conflicts. The good news is that there is a guide. As a member of the program of AA, I am given the time, the text, and guidance if I ask.

Membership is not a shared entity. I can be a member of by simple association, but simple association does not make me a part of the fellowship. I can be a member of my family, group, work or any organization. I can physically stand side by side, hand in hand with those around me and be emotionally detached. Be alone in my thoughts, not wanting what they have, detached from feeling of belonging. To

be a part of the fellowship, any fellowship, I have to not only be physically present but emotionally in touch with them. Good or bad, I must be a part of the bond. I can't fake my way through true fellowship, not if I am honest with you and myself. Today the bond I feel is real. It can't be put into words, it is just... Alcoholics Anonymous. Membership in the program will show me a better, more productive both physical and emotional way of life. The Big Book teaches me how to live a sober life, not just be sober. But I have to do the work.

I believe I was saved and chosen by my higher power to serve and be a member of the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous. This was not my doing. When Alcohol turned its back on me, I was left alone. There were just dark thoughts, confusion. I had to be at my worst in order to be gifted with the overwhelming desire to live... to stop drinking. Threw my disease, I lost not only the fellowship in my past but myself. Admitting I have a disease gave me a chance for fellowship. Today my Higher Power, you the fellowship of AA, have given me the strength and courage. Membership has given me the tools to work through my defects.

My Task was show the difference between fellowship and membership. But I truly believe they are one in the same. I can't have one without the other in my program of AA, I need both to be a part of rather than a part from. I stand here today not because of myself but because of the path my Higher Power has put before me. It is the Program of AA and the fellowship you have included me into.

I can choose to participate, I do choose to participate and that will give me the opportunity to get through today sober, and tomorrow when I wake, I will choose once again.

Thank you for my sobriety

Participation: Fellowship Versus Membership

Presenter: Doug M (DCM, District 19, Area 79)

My name is Doug and I'm an Alcoholic. DCM, District 19, Area 78.

Membership to me is this: after I had attended numerous AA meetings in the basement of my church, I finally accepted that I was an Alcoholic. It was then that I decided to join the group and registered as a member of that group and a member of the AA program. It was a commitment to follow through with - completing the Steps and working the program. It was also the time I asked for sponsorship, seeking guidance through the steps, not taking the "Easier softer way". It was the 1st Legacy.

It is my belief Membership allowed me to grow in the program and to experience the fellowship in the AA program which in turn gave me the strength and hope to participate in events such as WRASSA. I learn so much from you folks. We have a sense of pride in our AA family where we look after others in the program and the new comer.

Membership is one of the first steps to opening the doors of opportunity for growth in the AA program and the very important ingredient required to keep the program strong. To me, AA Membership is making a commitment and supporting the program as a whole.

- We follow the steps and traditions and study them as a group.
- The members are active in fellowship and the program.

Fellowship to me is this: as a newcomer I was fortunate to have a long-standing member of the program step up and sponsor me. This was my first experience with the fellowship within the AA program.

Through my sponsor's time and dedication to ensuring I was working the steps properly, a relationship began to grow. Then through dialog, discussion and a few disagreements, a friendship evolved. As a member, I feel it as important for me (like my sponsor) to make newcomers feel comfortable in what could be a very uncomfortable environment. Welcome each visitor with open arms. AA Fellowship is about building relationships or connections with fellow members or Newcomers and sharing each other's experience, strength and hope. This would help strengthen our membership, and the program as a whole.

- We host events such as workshops, presentations, speaker meetings and campouts/round ups.
- We are not a Glum lot
-

I believe without fellowship in our program, membership and the program suffers.

Early in the program I had this fear that if I joined a group and became a member, I would have to attend every meeting, I was very non-committal as I was taking the Easier, softer way again. Further on in the program (with my sponsor in the driver's seat) it was strongly suggested I get involved with group activities and events. This required that I rub shoulders with other members of the group and actually communicate with members inside and outside of my safe place: the four walls of the Church.

Again I was taken out of my comfort zone. As I said the Serenity Prayer and worked through more fears, I discovered many in the fellowship had the same thing to say when I didn't do something quite right, "Keep coming back". Fellowship plays a huge part in why and what keeps me in the program.

However, it has been my experience; groups that have not participated in active membership or the fellowship of AA suffer and sometimes close their doors from inactivity.

Writing this presentation has got me thinking. Maybe I should have been hanging around longer after we have cleaned up after our meetings or start going for coffee with some of the members, newcomers and visitors.

To wrap this up;

To me in this program, **Membership** brings us together in one place to read the AA literature and practice these steps and traditions, helping us reach our primary purpose and that is to "to help the still suffering alcoholic" (me).

Membership is signing up and showing up for setup, making coffee, sharing your experience strength and hope, what it was like before, what changed and what it is like now and continuing to work the program of Alcoholics Anonymous with your sponsor. Birthday meeting are not for one or two members but for all. This is a "we program not an I program"

The **Fellowship** is what occurs anywhere we meet and helps us achieve this goal every time we meet by sharing our "experience, strength and hope" with people we eventually look to for guidance, advice, direction and importantly trust. Both are very important choices for us to commit to and actively support individually and as a whole, in order for me to maintain my sobriety in the AA program

Fellowship, true fellowship is becoming a member, and then you immersing yourself in the 3 legacies of the AA program. Recovery, Unity and Service.

At this point in time these are my thoughts on Membership versus Fellowship and as I live, learn and grow in this program along with you folks I will adjust and grow to become a stronger member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

If there's hesitation to join a group and become a member I strongly suggested you do, if you are hesitant to participate in the fellowship I strongly suggest you do. What I have experience so far in my recovery is that I have thoroughly enjoyed being a **member** of this **fellowship**. **It** has been nothing but positive.

And for that I am very grateful.

Yours in Service

Doug M DCM District 19, Area 78

Participation: Fellowship versus Membership

Presenter: Lesley W (Secretary, Panel 67, Area 91)

Good afternoon, my name is Lesley W and I am an alcoholic and currently serving as Secretary for Area 91. I would like to thank WRAASA committee for this opportunity to share with you my perspective of the subject “Participation: Fellowship versus Membership”.

Over the past weeks, I pondered the topic and brought it up at coffee with friends asking for their thoughts and wondered if there is a difference. The one thing I have come to learn in my recovery is not to ask another alcoholic, “what are your thoughts?” they will certainly tell you what they think.

Reminiscing my first time in Alcoholics Anonymous - picture it, Regina, 1996, here was a shy 20-year-old girl whose life was forced to change due to decisions that she made under the influence of king alcohol. Fresh out of treatment, I went to my first meeting in an old fire hall, where there was about six people in the room. Everyone was older and talking about their lost marriages, lost houses, lost things that I did not ever possess. These material things were already placing me separate from the herd, being that the only thing I lost was everything I ever owned and no one said they lost “everything”. Continuing my journey, I started to attend a meeting that was only one block away from where I lived. It was a different group as there were only a few group members and others were just there. They met every day, which is what I liked because then I can go a meeting every day. Once again, at this meeting everyone was older than me – it was a challenge walking into the rooms where they look at you and call you “kid”. Keep coming back “kid”. Ugh, I hated the word “kid”. My sponsor told me to keep coming now that I am a “member” of this group; not a member of AA, member of Area 91 or District 18, but a member of the Night Lite group and now I have a responsibility.

Keeping this in mind, I continued with my tasks that were assigned from my sponsor – this included opening the meeting, making coffee, cleaning the meeting room, etc. Being the good group member, I did not argue and was even privileged of being the secretary for the group and took notes at the business meetings. It must have been a sign. I stayed close to this group, had small number friends knowing only the people there and I started to become isolated. If you asked me the question of participation then, I would have looked at you and made up some lie to make myself look good – saying “yeah, I participate, I am a member, a member of the Night Lite group!” with no idea of what it means. Being isolated and restrictive, I did not change in my recovery at that time and would eventually relapse two and half years later.

Now, let’s look at the words of “membership” and “fellowship”. The definition of “membership” by Merriam Webster states: 1. The state or status of being a member; 2. The body of members; or 3. The relation between an element of a set or class. So, membership is the state or status of being a member. In

the chapter Tradition 3 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions it states: “You are an A.A. member if you say so. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out. No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out. We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had. So you're an A.A. member the minute you declare yourself.” (Twelve & Twelve, pg. 133) Therefore, only you can decide if you want to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and remain a member of so long as you say so. Your membership guarantees you one thing, that there is a chair in any Alcoholics Anonymous meeting throughout the world.

The word “fellowship” defined by Merriam Webster states: 1. Companionship, company; 2. Community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience; 3. A company of equals or friends; or 4. The quality or state of being comradely. The concept of fellowship is mentioned in Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous in the chapter “A Vision for You”, it states: “Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you. “How is that to come about?” you ask. “Where am I to find these people?” You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” The fellowship is the group of people, albeit: a meeting, coffee, social gatherings, conferences, etc., that band together with one common interest to keep others sober and in turn keep themselves sober.

Picture it, Regina, 1999, a shy 22-year-old walked back into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. At my first meeting, I can recall seeing this beautiful lady who had an amazing sparkle in her eyes, glow in her smile, and she looked at peace. I knew at that moment that is was what I wanted; I wanted to know what it like to be to be myself in a room full of strangers. Little did I know that I was not in a room of strangers but more in a room of fellows. The question was simple, what was I willing to do to get what she had?

My new sponsor introduced me into a new world of AA – she insisted that I participate and learn to make friends. What a concept? How do I participate? What will these friends do? How do I meet these friends? Do they have to be girls or can they be boys also? (She gave me that pursed look when I asked that

question.) She told me to read the preamble of the twelve traditions in the big book, and one line that stood out “Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone.” (Big Book, pg. 556) She asked me why I went back drinking, what happened, and what didn’t work. It came down to one thing, I was alone – being a loner I was used to being alone. I drank and became someone else at night, but during the day I did not want to associate with anyone. She introduced me the concept of “round ups”, conferences, workshops, and recommended to find a home group that supported a concept of “fellowship”. Of course, I responded with the famous sponsee question “Why??” Having no idea what she was talking about I joined the group where I could attend the meetings regularly, go for coffee after the meetings, and try to help out and talk to “others”. I wasn’t that great with subtle conversation – still very much like that – and tried to understand and learn how to relate to others. One fortunate thing about my new home group is that there were people there similar in age; however, there was a difference. Being 22 in AA was challenge as I was also a single parent to a toddler, where the other younger folks were single, no children, and able to wander freely. I could go for coffee for an hour after the meeting and then had to go home – because of my relapse, the trust in my family became strained. I had to learn time management early in recovery with having to go to work, manage my family, attend meetings, and maintain some friendships – it was not easy.

Then it happened – the promises identified earlier started to occur, I began to make friends, establish a feeling of belonging and a sense of “fellowship”. It was having that feeling of “knowing someone” that changed things for me. No longer was I just relying on my sponsor, I was now open to talking to the friends that I have grown a relationship with. What my sponsor didn’t tell me was that I would be going through a litany of friends over the period in sobriety. I had to learn that as I grow in recovery, the friends that I have made would make an impact on me at that point in time.

It was the Fellowship carried me through some of the most tragic times in my recovery, the loss of my father, the loss of a job, my son getting sick, and most importantly the discovery of one self. In turn, I had to learn some lessons on becoming a fellow – what does something like that entail? For me, being a fellow meant that I needed to become non-judgemental in rooms. If the only requirement for membership is a ‘desire’ to stop drinking, then what was my part in carrying that message – how am I able to become the “lady” that inspired me to stay sober? This meant that I had to learn how to participate and practice the principles of AA in ALL my affairs - not only in the rooms, but at home, at work, and most importantly with my fellows.

In the Forward of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions it states “A.A.’s Twelve Traditions apply to the life of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows.” (Twelve & Twelve, pg. 15) It had taken me some time to

learn about the Traditions in AA, it was service that opened the doors and provided additional tools to use in the playground, with the understanding that the Traditions are there to protect our fellowship as a group and as a whole. So, in looking back to the early part of my recovery, when my first sponsor told me that I am a member of the Night Lite Group, I was really saying that am now a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. By attending meetings, sharing my experience, cleaning ashtrays and cups, and making coffee, I was participating in the fellowship and doing my part to ensure that the rooms stay open for the struggling alcoholic walking in. Today, the fellowship is key in my recovery – I need you in my recovery just as much as you need me and I would not have the fellowship if I was not a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I will leave you with a thought that I ask each of my sponsees – Are you in AA or around AA? What are you doing today that makes you in and what are you willing to do to maintain being in? For me, my participation keeps me in Alcoholics Anonymous, it offers me the gift of fellowship and to continue with my membership.

Thank you,

Yours in love and service,

Lesley W

SESSION: “Contributions: Apathy & Power of the Purse”

Presenters:

John C, Chair, Panel 66, Area 80

Bob K, Chair, Panel 67, Area 79

Jan M, Chair, Panel 66, Area 78

Glenn N, Chair, Panel 67, Area 91

Contributions: Apathy & Power of the Purse

Presenter: John C (Chair, Panel 66, Area 80)

When I was still in the problem I relied on others to support me not really caring as long as I had money to support my alcoholism.

When I joined A. A. my sponsor told me that as I had stopped drinking that I had responsibilities which I should meet. I was also told that there are no dues or fees for membership. We are self supporting through our contributions. I was also told that I held the power of the purse over any part of A.A. and donate or withhold my donations as I saw fit.

I was informed (during my early sobriety) that A.A. has suggested guidelines in the form of the 12 steps, the 12 traditions and the 12 concepts of world service That it would be appreciated if when the 7th tradition was passed at the group that I contribute to this basket to assist in carrying the message.

My contributions in the basket supported the four arms of service.

An early suggestion is that we donate 60% to central office, 30% to the area and 10% to G.S.O. but that was entirely up to the group to set its own level of contributions. That formula left out the district which is an integral part of our organization.

Recently G.S.O. has suggested that we donate \$10 (Canadian) to make us self sufficient. We were recently informed that only 40% of the groups in north America donate to G.S.O. In 2015, 77,235 contributions totaled \$7,154,146, to finance their operation which was forecast to cost \$9,626,499 leaving a short fall of \$2,475,310 to be made up from literature sales.

If you want to see the 2015 financial report, ask G.S.O. for the publication "Around The Picnic Table".

Ok the history lesson is over let me get to the meat of the discussion.

Yes, we have responsibilities to our family, our home if we still have one, our work and our creditors To me the responsibility declaration reaches out to us to meet our obligations to help the still suffering alcoholic and to provide a reasonable financial support to our origination. After all it saved our lives.

In the problem I was a, \$200 drunk. In the fellowship I hope that, I do not become two bit alcoholic.

I am not asking that we place our organization in a state of perilous wealth but to keep us in a position to be self supporting.

In 1934 a dime in the basket did support our fledging organization.

Today a quarter does not cut it.

Yes, I do realise that the newcomer may not have the resources to donate so where does that leave us.

Possibly the older member can help that way by putting a little more in the basket.

In 2015 there were 65,741 groups registered with G.S.O. and only 26,292 contributed

My thoughts on this would be if we fully support G.S.O. the cost of literature would go down.

The individual Groups and the members are the keystone to the support of our fellowship.

So what is the problem? Are we properly informed as to what the financial requirements are for our group, Central office, the district, the Area and G.S.O. or do we not care?

There is life outside the group and the need for us to support the different aspects of each level of our fellowship are poorly met. Have we investigated the costs associated with keeping the doors of our home group open? Do you know how much it costs to keep the doors of your group open

The support for carrying the message to G.S.O., Treatment: Corrections, Public Information Remote communities, Publishing the grapevine and the work done by AAWS needs our support. So why do we not do it to the extent it is required.

In 1939 the cost of a cup of coffee was about a nickel. Today we can spend up to \$4 for a cup and take it to a meeting and possibly forget the basket.

Support for all of A.A. needs starts at the group and the individual. Ask yourself the question "What is my sobriety worth to me today"?

Why are we not fully self supporting? Is it because we do not know the range of the help and support given by all those involved in carrying the message or do we not care.?

If we who are here have not taken the time to fully inform the membership as a whole how their dollars are used to carry the message, then we need to do a better job and inform the membership how their 7th tradition at the group level is paramount to help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Looking at the other side of the picture and those groups who do not contribute. I feel that they are isolated from our family by ignorance as to what the needs of the many are. The fellowship supports you. Can we not make it a two way street There are many reasons that a group or individual does not contribute to the financial well being of our society as a whole. Someone in the group may have a resentment towards other groups or individuals and comment that they will be ok without the support and assistance of the fellowship as a whole. I think that these groups are going to suffer, close their doors and not be available to the person looking for help.

In our fellowship we have 36 principles to follow. The 12 steps, the 12 traditions and the 12 concepts of world service.

To use only some of the 12 of the principles dooms the individual to a life of mediocre recovery and questionable sobriety if any. This to me is like putting \$12 worth of gas in your vehicle when you need \$36 too complete the journey.

Yes, I realise if any level of our fellowship upsets a number of people by not doing their job or does not follow the wishes of the many then the can withhold their support either physically or monetary.

On the other hand, I must look at what is good for the fellowship as a whole.

Do I contribute to the group and expect them to meet the requirements of paying the normal operating expenses and with what is left over to contribute to the District: Central Office: The Area and G.S.O. or do I supplement them with my private donation

In 1939 a dollar went a long way but does not cut it today.

I am asking you to help the newcomer and donate a little more to the basket until they are able to take up their responsibility to add to the 7th tradition

I am reminded of part of Tradition 12 which states principles before personalities. Just because things do not go the way we want does that give us the right to deny the fellowship that gave us a chance at a new life. Again what is good for the whole.

To paraphrase a saying, “we can please some of the people some of the time but we cannot please all of the people all of the time”.

As it is said we cannot tell anyone in A.A or a group what to do but if we can put forth a reasonable cause for all of us to step up to the plate and deliver the necessary funds to make us self supporting. If this is so then we will have done our job and taken the apathy out of the equation and restored the power of the purse and have a fellowship intact for those out there who are in the problem and continue a legacy for those not born yet.

Yours in service

John C

Chair Area 80

Contributions: Apathy & Power of the Purse

Presenter: Bob K (Chair, Panel 67, Area 79)

Hello my name is Bob and I am an Alcoholic, I am privileged to be of service as the B.C. Yukon Area 79 Panel 67 Chair

I would like to take this time to thank Area 80 and all the volunteers that worked so hard to make this weekend a success.

What a Great Theme Supporting our Future

It is an honor to share with you this morning on the topic: Apathy and the Power of the purse. I have found while doing some research on this topic that it tends to make some members uncomfortable to chat about.

So I first looked up the definition of Apathy and the meaning which is 1/- absence or suppression of passion, emotion or excitement and 2/- lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern.

So this morning I will focus on a few things first “Apathy” which may or may not fit with what is really happening with our fellowship, second that we are a very self-centered society and soon forget how important our contributions are to the power of the purse and the lack of possible services never seeing the light and or the possibilities of current services being less effective and possibly discontinued.

It has been my experience that when we the fellowship is reminded that our contributions are needed, most often we come through. So it is important that we are constantly reminded somehow.

A few examples: I was at a meeting in my home District, that at half time shared with the group that they were unable to meet the rent requirements that month and so the hat was passed around for the second time and this time paper bills were placed in the hat, I think many of us have heard the same story in our own communities. This past November a letter of thanks was addressed to the fellowship from Terry Bedient our Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee & Chairman of the General Service Board and he attached the Seventh Tradition Fact Sheet for information about those services funded by your “dollars in the basket.” I believe this is key for the fellowship to be made constantly aware of what it takes to pass the message of hope in an effective manner. In 1950, a lack of voluntary contributions led Bill w to issue to the fellowship a five page plea for support, including a request that the group secretaries call a special meeting for the purpose of reading Bill’s pleas Quote “without A.A.’s service we’d often fumble that the new man/ women just coming in the door without our services, we’d certainly spoil the main chance of those millions who don’t yet know” end quote. We want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

So how do we remind the fellowship in a loving & spiritual way of the importance of a strong purse and how it can affect our life saving program.

So the **power** of the purse or lack of, so first what is it that we need to achieve and that is stated in Step 12 & Tradition 5 to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. A.A. is not able to do that without the fellowships contributions – of time, money, and service which allows all the AA Groups and service entities such as Districts, Intergroup, Areas, General Service Board and the General Service Office to provide a wide range of services both for alcoholics who are still suffering and those who are trying to reach them with our message of hope and recovery.

Our self-support pamphlet says Quote:” we cannot skimp and with the realization that AA must stay clear of outside contributions in order to maintain its autonomy and independence came the understanding that the money necessary would have to come from the individual aa members and groups” end quote This is a responsibility that we must pay strong attention to if we want to see this program continue to reach the suffering alcoholics in our own communities and beyond just our home groups and to the future alcoholics that will require the same opportunity we were so freely given.

I have reached out and asked members from our fellowship what are other means of encouraging members to contribute to our life saving program and I will chat briefly on a few.

ONE: To read the green card at each meeting and not to just go through the motion of reading it but to read it with enthusiasm – **Read the green card** It came to me while I was preparing this that when we pass the hat at our Area 79 Quarterlies and Assemblies that we do not read the green card to the attending fellowship and I believe it imparts a powerful message that we need to start sharing.

TWO: To encourage the 7th tradition as a topic at meetings or workshops, sharing sessions etc. and at all areas of service from the groups to the General Service Conference, members just don't want to talk about it and we need to talk about it.

We come into Alcoholics Anonymous as mere shadows of what God had planned for us to be, unable to function on life's terms; we were depressed full of shame, irresponsible, we left a wake of destruction. Not knowing what the next right decision should be for ourselves. So the next way to pass on the spiritual aspect of self-support surely needs to come in the form of:

THREE: Sponsorship. It has been my recent experience at meetings in my home community that when asked at meetings are there any persons willing and available to be sponsors, you may see a few hands go

up but not many and well with so little participation from members interested in taking on the role of sponsor, how can we expect the new comer to see it as an important part of our recovery. It surely would help the newcomer at their first meetings if a newcomer's package was given to them that included the AA pamphlet -Questions and Answers on Sponsorship. The message needs to come from somewhere and I can speak for myself that I surely was unaware of the importance of self-support until long after I was guided through the 12 steps and 12 traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous by my sponsor by working with the literature that is available. It was my sponsor who told me that I belong to this fellowship and when I contribute by putting cash into the hat that I am participating in this program and sustaining a freedom that I never knew existed for others as well as myself. So Sponsorship is valuable at informing the sponsee about the spiritual aspect of Self Support along with so much more.

FOUR: Well the next topic is surely going to bring some controversy and that is to acknowledging and the accepting of a cashless society. A short story from my past. In 1973 I was told by my cousins boyfriend a high paying and established salesman back in the day that we would be a cashless society in the future and he showed us the bar codes that none of us had paid any attention to which were on most everything we had in the car (beer bottles, liquor bottles, cigarettes and bags of junk food etc.) and no one took him serious) end of story.

And well here we are in 2017, we have been witnessing the birth of a cashless society over the last few decades and the many changes to how we deal with our financial needs in our busy life's and how that applies to A.A.

Like most today I use cards for this and cards for that but I still do deal with cash but not so much but I do plan when I go to a meeting to always bring cash for the 7th and until recently I had not paid much attention to the term cashless society. I just recently sat in on a finance meeting at our January quarterly and was surprised to hear that many members thought that we should be able to contribute to the 7th using the sq. card, or e-transfers. Some shared that they prefer not to carry cash and once a month stop at the bank on the way to their home group to pick up some cash and make a monthly contribution, they prefer not to contribute at every meeting. I spoke with a past Area 79 treasurer and she said `that e-transfers or the sq.card are fully acceptable and it's time for the members of A.A. to accept the inevitable (cashless society)as its closing in on us fast.

So for this Alcoholic I will move forward with an open mind but in the meantime I will follow traditional ways and place my contributions in the hat at the meetings I attend and send cheques off to the other service entities and the occasional e-transfer. So back to the topic: Apathy and the Power of the purse, Do

we Alcoholics really have a lack of interest in our God given program, are we no longer showing enthusiasm for this new design of living. I think for many of us the answer is No and it is up to us all to do what's needed to help sustain the program of A.A, for our children and others in need.

Let us all support our Future.

We look forward to seeing you all at WRAASA in Area 79 in 2019

In Love and Service Bob K

Contributions: Apathy & Power of the Purse

Presenter: Jan M (Chair, Panel 66, Area 78)

When I told a fellow member that I would be doing a presentation at WRAASA this February on the topic: “Contributions: Apathy and Power of the Purse”, he reminded me of a common joke heard in AA about two old-timers at a service function talking about different issues in AA. One guy says, *“I think the main problems in AA are IGNORANCE and APATHY. What do you think?”* 2nd guy says – *“I DON’T KNOW and I DON’T GIVE A SHITE”!*

So, to start off I would like to give a big thanks to Area 80 for hosting this WRAASA and for taking such good care of us. Thank you this has been awesome all around. And Winnipeg is dear to my heart for family reasons so it is good to be here. I also want to thank all others who have presented and shared over this weekend. It has been superb.

I will begin with a brief description of how I decided to write this talk. I first went to my computer and started gathering some information to read and reflect on to decide what I really wanted to say. I decided not to worry about quoting literature but wasn’t quite sure if I should get too much into talking about my experiences in recovery and service. Anyway, I just let that all go to put something together that was what came to me upon reflection of the topic and something did come easier for me then. [I will just say, starting from Friday night I was grateful to hear others rely on imparting their ideas through personal stories]. So, that is where I will start:

Upon coming into AA, I quickly went from despair to awe and to being VERY grateful for the program and fellowship. I also wanted all others that needed AA to get what I found. Because I was in Vancouver (where there were about 750 meetings per week in the Lower Mainland), I attended on average of 7 meetings a week for at least the first several years and due to that same level of gratitude I contributed money to the ‘hat’ by contributing at all the meetings I attended, not just my Home Group. I heeded some of what Bill W. wrote in 1957 (quote) - “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But that leaves us with a responsibility – one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and AA as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and our bills paid (That article is in Language of the Heart, p221 from “Respecting Money” Grapevine November 1957).

For the same gratitude reason, I also did a lot of Service - mainly making sure the Home Group meetings were setup, a lot of 12th step work through being on the phone list at central office, I volunteered and

monitored phones at central office in Vancouver and did some CPC and Hospital committee work. I was sure that I (as Bill wrote in the same article that I quoted above that I “keenly realize[d] that the practice of the Twelve Traditions is quite as vital to the life of AA as a whole as is the practice of the Twelve Steps to the life and sobriety of each member (ibid. p. 218). And if you had asked me, I would have said that I was an informed and a hardworking AA and/or service member. But was I, really? I may have been contributing in different ways but was I informed.

I was never a treasurer. I didn't pay much attention to how my group handled the 7th tradition money collected, what expenses the group incurred, or how splits were made. I also never considered if all the groups I attended and contributed 7th tradition funds to had regular business meetings or what they were doing with all the money I was leaving in their hands. I naively thought or it appears, didn't care if the money was used to contribute to my District or Area, was used properly for Home Group expenses, went to our General Service Office in New York, or even was kept in a proper bank account for the group. Aside from those odd times where you heard a treasurer absconded with the dough, I just merrily went along expecting others to insure all that kind of stuff was taken care of because I was pretty busy doing my bit in other areas. By extension, I never aspired or considered to be a GSR, didn't go see what my District was doing and certainly didn't see what the Area was doing. I relinquished any responsibility I might have to deal with any group money to others and also any responsibility I might have to hold the same accountable. And upon consideration of this – most, if not all of the many people I hung out with over those 10 or so years, never discussed these sorts of things and were just as “*well informed*” as I was.

My rude awakening was when I moved to Alberta and an old drinking buddy from the early 80s turned up who was now sober in AA for about 8 years. He had grown up in AA attending District and Area Service meetings. He joined the group I was a member of since I had moved to Alberta a couple years before. Very shortly after he joined he came to me in disgust. Apparently, my friend found out, ‘our’ group had \$7000 in a bank account (possibly in the treasurer's name) AND has been controlled by that same treasurer for the last 10 years (or longer). They have been the only one counting it and depositing it in that account. The treasurer's job appeared to basically consist of making sure the rent was paid, the coffee supplies bought but was not expected to report to the group on the funds with any detail or frequency. He also found out that they weren't having very regular business meetings (I hadn't really been paying attention), that the group didn't give any money to District, Area or GSO (ditto for my attention on that as well) and it appeared the only outside service body the group may have contributed to every once in a while was Intergroup.

Well, I AM embarrassed to say, I thought my long lost friend still hadn't done much Step work yet to deal with his obstreperous nature when he confided all this to me while basically BLOW-ING a gasket. Long

story short, is I got pushed to become that meeting's 1st GSR, my friend kind of used me as a human shield and helped me, the group became a registered group and I "got a new pair of glasses" (unlike what Chuck C. was referring to in his Recovery book). It was an incredible learning experience to tip toe around landmines when uncovering things like monies being spent on things such as \$150 for party balloons and bleeding deacons were objecting to the traditions being read at the group's main meeting and the same deacons objecting to business meeting, etc. I won't go into all of it. The main thing I do want to say was that I learned something about planting seeds and letting God do the rest. About the power of the purse and how the message gets across when people won't be bullied. After I left that group along with my obstreperous friend, there were new members that I didn't realize were paying attention and they made sure that group had business meetings, had a GSR and money was going to GSO, Area, District and intergroup. That group had 3 meetings a week and collected a lot of money from members and non-members and it was good to see that money being spread around.

However, I want to say that I believe that my beginnings are pretty common unfortunately. I have belonged to several groups in both B.C. and Alberta and my experience is that at least half of the groups I have belonged to are not that different from or some variation of the group described above. Many other AA members I have befriended over the years have shared similar experiences. Also, I was able to find a few Grapevine articles where contributors wrote about similar things as well, for example:

- In a letter to Box 1980 in the Grapevine, titled "*Responsibility*" the writer found themselves in a group where the treasurer refused to give financial reports. So the writer said he let the group know he wouldn't be contributing again until that changed, which eventually led to the resignation of the treasurer after which the group found money had been misappropriated, rent had not been paid and contributions to district and GSO were not being made (Grapevine 1992 Vol. 48 No. 8 "*Responsibility*").
- In a Grapevine article in Vol. 51 No.11 - "*Are we supporting our support system?*", a member writes about investigating why local groups were not giving to their local intergroup and found out it was for reasons such as one group allowed their secretary to decide they were not going to give a contribution because they needed the money for the group's social activities. Also, he reported more dishearteningly that there were groups (plural) that admitted they didn't know how and where to give contributions to different service bodies (Grapevine 1995 Vol 51 No 11 "*Are we supporting our support system?*").
- Another article called "*Flying Blind*" described a litany of things discovered by a guy who had just moved to a new area and attended a meeting located in a "club". He asked, "Where does the

money from your basket go?” to which he found out that “most of the people there were new, and they didn't know or seem to care where the money went.” (Grapevine 1997 Vol. 54 No. 1 “*Flying Blind*”).

In addition to all this, there is something that I have observed since my “rude awakening”, which is that very often when concerns about contribution levels are discussed in regular meetings, business meetings or at Service functions (or meetings) the focus of those discussions seems invariably to settle into ‘how to get AA members to take individual responsibility and contribute more to the 7th’. And then the discussion culminates with that Sponsorship is the key.

I agree with both but something has been kind of bugging me. I have sometimes wondered over all those years that I was ‘hanging out with Golum in the dark’ busily dumping lots into my so-called “spiritual bank account” – i.e. the 7th basket in my Home Group and every other meeting I attended HOW MUCH MONEY (that I naively thought was fulfilling what Bill had envisioned when he wrote that piece in 1957) did I squander by not paying attention! Kind of like having buyer’s remorse. I wondered, since it was a good number of years going to a good number of meetings. I suspected there was a lot of money that I ‘deposited’ that likely did not go to where I naively assumed it would. So that was rattling around when I wrote this presentation.

But then Suzanne reminded us on Friday night – that GSO reported that only approximately 40% of registered groups contribute to GSO (for lack of a better term I’ll call those 40% of groups “Contributors” and the 60% “non-contributors”). And I also remembered the results of a recent workshop we did in our Area, which gave me an idea of the average percentage of 7th funds that may get used for group expenses and an average percentage that gets split and sent to GSO, Area and Districts. So, I decided to do some approximations and to insert into this talk some figures that reflect the impact on my contribution levels because I was relying on others to be responsible.

I went back to remembering the years I was naively contributing to the 7th tradition baskets of any meeting or group I attended. I figured out the average number of groups I attended a week. To that I used the 60% figure to signify the percentage of groups I gave money to that were potentially “non-contributors”. And I recalled about how much money on average I gave each group equally. This gave me a weekly total for the amount of money I was dropping in the basket of “non-contributor groups”. I WAS really conservative in these estimates because it was a while ago. I then I took 30% of that figure because that was what was not getting contributed to service bodies after group expenses were paid. And was not given to groups that contributed to our support systems to insure AA’s message is carried. So, what I figured was the amount that was lost to go to GSO was \$36.93/yr. But I am only one member. If you take

that number and multiple it by a couple hundred thousand people that might have been like me, you get 7.4 million annually NOT going to GSO not to mention what is not going to other service bodies and if, as in my case it goes on for years, what kinds of dollars are lost then?

We learn in Concept 1 that “the final authority and ultimate responsibility’ rests with the groups. The power to guide and direct is through contributions – “*the power of the purse*”. A sure way to get the attention of a group that lacks understanding of the traditions is to stop contributing and preserving them. Rather than focusing too much on encouraging members to contribute, I believe the message is to encourage members to consider where one is contributing. I encourage new members or sponsees to find out if a group has regular business meetings and ask how they spend their 7th tradition funds before contributing beyond covering a coffee. Also, a home group is usually where you participate in meetings and have a say about how contributions are spent. So usually one either gives to your Home Group mainly or just to your Home Group to insure your contributions support our support structures and carry the message. Also, even when I have disagreed with a group conscience on spending funds, I can choose to contribute directly to the service bodies I want while still making sure I pay my portion of group expenses. We can all encourage others to consider that they can more easily that ever give to GSO or other service bodies directly if they want to. There can be a misperception that we make contributions to the hat in spite of the fact that we have very easy way to be more directive on an individual basis if we want to.

My hope is that we acknowledge that a substantial amount of contributions can be lost if we rest too heavily on ‘Live and Let Live’ as this can sometimes be apathy in disguise. That we plant seeds where we can and nurture more than just a responsibility to put money in the hat but also to be accountable to how it is used.

Jan M.

Area 78 Chair Panel 66

Contributions – Apathy & Power of the Purse

Presenter: Glenn N (Chair, Panel 67, Area 91)

Good morning. My name is Glenn N and I am an alcoholic, currently serving as Chair for Area 91 Saskatchewan. I am also a past active alcoholic in Areas 78, 79, 80 and 91. My home group in Alcoholics Anonymous is in Esterhazy Saskatchewan and we meet once per week on Wednesday nights.

When Irma and I got back from visiting our son and his wife in England last weekend and I found in my backlog of emails a loving invitation from Alice to do a presentation this weekend on the topic “Apathy and the Power of the Purse”, I of course agreed that I would. Not much after that I thought “I wish I had known about this earlier”, but when I mentioned that to a fellow member it was quickly pointed out to me that it was probably a good thing I didn’t know, or I might well not have enjoyed the trip as much. Likely so.

Anyway, to start off I’m going to do what some other presenters have done this weekend, and that is quickly review the definitions of some of the words in the title of the topic:

Apathy: lack of interest or concern, indifference

Power: the ability to influence the course of events.

Purse: money that an organization has available for use

So, basically how I interpret the topic is simply this:

Expressed mathematically, the power of the purse is directly related to contributions and is inversely related to apathy.

or

The money that AA has available to provide the ability to influence the future course of events for alcoholics who are still suffering today is directly related to the contributions AA receives and inversely related to the degree of apathy displayed by members in the Fellowship toward making those contributions.

or

Even more simply, the higher the degree of the apathy is, the lower the contributions are and therefore the lower the power of the purse is.

One of our old-timers when I came into this fellowship used to say “When alcoholics sober up, they tighten up.” To a large degree, I agree with that assessment. I doubt that many or any members contribute anywhere near as much to AA as they did to bars, liquor board stores, provincial judicial coffers, etc., nor

do I believe that they should. But I do think there are a lot of us that do not contribute as much as we could considering how much being a member of this life-saving Fellowship has given to us.

Why is that?

I think the answer lies mainly in a few things that have been discussed in presentations a number of times already this weekend: **communication, participation, responsibility.**

I think there is lack of communication regarding the knowledge of what the contributions are used for. I have been at a number of group meetings over the years where someone has said something like “the District needs more money, or the Area needs more money, or GSO needs more money” and then just let it go at that. In my opinion that approach is not sufficient to overcome apathy.

So whose responsibility is it to overcome the issue of lack of knowledge?

In my opinion, our Declaration of Responsibility is pretty clear on that:

“I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that, I am Responsible.”

It does not say when anyone in my group, or my town, or my district, or my area, or my province, or my region, or my country reaches out for help. It says when anyone, **anywhere** reaches out for help I want the hand of AA always to be there.

It’s important that I do what I can to ensure that members who have never been to a district meeting or an assembly or any AA function other than their home group can understand the importance of their contributions to helping to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic **wherever they are.**

I have heard many members in recent years say that they haven’t had the opportunity to do a 12th step call or do any 12th step work for months or perhaps even years.

My question to them is: “When the basket is passed at each meeting that you go to, what do you think that the money you’re putting in that basket is being used for?”

Most members can understand why there’s a need to make a contribution for the group’s expenses such as rent, coffee, supplies, literature, etc. Perhaps some of those members may also understand why their group should have a GSR and then why there’s a need to cover the cost of that person going to such service events as Area Assemblies.

But how many members understand why there’s a need for the group to make contributions to district, area and GSO? I would suggest the answer to that question is “only a small minority of our total membership”.

Why is that the case? Well, let's think about that for a bit.

How many of us belong to a group where we have a writeup readily available to indicate how the contributions we make to our District are used to help carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers?

How many of us belong to a group where there is a writeup readily available to indicate how the contributions we make to our Area are used to help carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers?

How many of us belong to a group where there is a writeup readily available to indicate how the contributions we make to our General Service Office are used to help carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers?

For the last one, the work has already been done. All of our groups, at least the ones registered with GSO, should at least have this information available for how GSO allocates the contributions that it receives.

For one thing, it was in the Fall 2015 edition of Box 459 (hold up) and I have seen stand-alone copies at various meetings and events.

Also, on the aa.org website, anyone can download a copy of Service Material SM F-176 (hold up), which describes in more detail the Services provided by G.S.O./A.A.W.S.

If I belong to a group that doesn't have this information readily available, then who is responsible to follow up for each level and either have one prepared or find the one that has been prepared already? I am responsible.

How can I expect any member or my group to contribute to something if they have no idea what that "something" is? How can a member or my group make an informed decision if they have no information on which to make their decision?

Certainly the examples from GSO can be used as templates to develop information for how our districts and areas use the contributions made to them to help carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In an article in a Box 459, an A.A. member who had visited a meeting in another country and talked to an oldtimer there, said

"Stressing to me how vital the availability of A.A. literature in their language was to the growth of A.A., he described the tears members had in their eyes after receiving the first shipment of Big Books in their native language. He shared with me that while it might not seem that important to others, for those dying of alcoholism, it was like the hungry getting a supply of food and water."

He went on to say "Translating A.A. literature is one of the life-saving actions – an action made possible by your contribution to the General Service Office."

There are so many ways that my group can contribute, and some suggestions were touched on by our first panel yesterday morning. I'll add just a couple of others that I ran across this week.

One group in our region was distributing all the money collected at its birthday meetings to its district, area and GSO.

In another case, an article in Box 459 (Winter 2012) said that a member from BC shared in the Grapevine "It was decided that all monies collected from the first two meetings in November would be sent to the General Service Office."

And how many of us were aware before yesterday of the Contributions Online feature which is on our aa.org website? How many of us have used it? I know from listening to some of the presenters this weekend that some have for sure.

How many of us were aware of the Recurring Contribution feature before yesterday?

Now this might come as a surprise to some of you, but I recently started buying a bottle of vodka a month.....well, sort of.

What I actually did was went to our aa.org website, found the Contribution Online area, then went to the Recurring Contribution section and am now automatically contributing the equivalent of the cost of a bottle of vodka per month to GSO. When I consider that I drank the equivalent alcohol content of a bottle of vodka **each day**, paying the equivalent of that once **each month** to help carry the message to another alcoholic who still suffers, **wherever she or he might be**, is a very small price to pay for my sobriety. And it is so simple to do.

I must point out that although I am unsure where I would be had I continued drinking as I was, I am pretty sure I would not be in Alcoholics Anonymous had I only been consuming the equivalent of one bottle of vodka a month.

Yesterday afternoon in the session on Communication – Today and Tomorrow, I heard Keith mention difficulties that can arise by using electronic means of communicating versus talking face to face with another alcoholic, and paying attention to the body language and voice tone used at the time.

I was reminded of the story of an alcoholic couple that had just started making use of this technology as a means of communication. Let's just call this couple Cindy and Dan.

One afternoon after Cindy had got her credit card back, she decided to go out shopping with a couple of friends. After listening to some of the difficulties one of her friends was experiencing with her home life, she felt overwhelmed by how fortunate she was to be married to Dan.

So Cindy sends the following text off to Dan:

“If you are sleeping, send me your dreams.

If you are laughing, send me your smile.

If you are eating, send me a bite.

If you are drinking, send me a sip.

If you are crying, send me your tears.

I love you.”

A couple of minutes go by, and she gets the following text back from Dan:

“I’m on the toilet. Please advise.”

How well do we carry the message?

In an article in a recent Box 459 (Fall 2016) a past delegate from Oklahoma stated “carrying the message means contributing money – something we dislike talking about, perhaps because we have difficulty connecting money to spirituality.”

He goes on to say “even though Bill W. has made it perfectly clear that ‘there was a place in A.A. where spirituality and money would mix, and that was in the hat’ (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 163).

And that raises a very relevant point in my mind. Lesley touched on this in her presentation yesterday afternoon when she discussed the importance of the Traditions.

How much time do we spend at our group level discussing Tradition 7?

Or is there a certain amount of apathy toward Tradition 7?

Is there a general apathy toward all Traditions?

I am still amazed at the number of times I hear in workshops or from visitors to our group that so many groups either seldom or never hold meetings on Traditions or use even use them as discussion topics.

Why is that?

Is it apathy?

I don’t know. It might be fear, or it might be a number of other things that I would like to talk about, but I don’t have the time today to get into discussing why I feel the Traditions are so important but so underused.

What I do have time to do is give you what I believe is a good example of the opposite of apathy, even though it doesn’t relate directly to contributions.

At the last meeting of Past Delegates held in Toronto last summer, Murray M., Past Delegate Area 85, shared that when he was serving our Fellowship as Trustee-at-Large for Canada, he visited a country in the former Soviet Union - I cannot remember which one – where it was required by the government that the alcoholics who were attempting to set up in their country what would be the equivalent of a General Service Office had to sign a document whereby they would assume responsibility for the actions of any of its members. And they did. Would you? Would I?

Now that to me is so far away from apathy I can't even come up with a word or a sentence to adequately describe it.

I'd like to thank Alice for the invitation to speak today, because whether or not anything I said today will be of benefit to any of you, it has certainly been of benefit to me to put it together.

I recall when our past GSO General Manager Phyllis H. said in a Box 459 (Holiday Issue 2008) "The future of our Fellowship is right here in front of us", and the challenge is to help those who are new to AA to become more informed, more involved.

There it is again. Responsibility. Communication. Participation.

And who is responsible for that? Is it someone else? Is it you? No it's me. I am responsible.

And I am so grateful that there was one alcoholic in my little town on the prairies who didn't suffer from apathy, and who kept the doors of AA open there long enough for this suffering alcoholic to pass through, and then took the time to communicate to me the importance of and the reasons for me to participate in and to contribute as much as I could to this life-saving Fellowship.

That member passed away years ago. Now it's my turn – my turn to be responsible.

As I often say at meetings I attend around home, I may not be grateful that I am an alcoholic, but as an alcoholic I am very grateful that I was not able to quit drinking on my own. I would never have been able to find the degree of serenity and sanity and usefulness to the people around me that I have by becoming and staying as an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I'll close by leaving you with a thought:

Just imagine how great it would be if each of us could wake up each day and think:

"I am Responsible. So, what one thing can I do for AA today?"

Thank you.

In love and service,

Glenn N, Chair, Area 91 Saskatchewan

CLOSING SESSION: Past/Present Trustees – Western Canada Region

Presenters:

Scott H (Trustee at Large, Canada)

Tom K (Past Western Canada Regional Trustee)

Vic P (Past Western Canada Regional Trustee)

Note: providing a copy of the presentation was optional for this session.

THE 3 LEGACIES - COMMITMENT IN ACTION

Presenter: Tom K (Past Western Regional Trustee)

Good morning everyone, my name is Tom and I am an alcoholic. I would like to begin by thanking the host committee for the opportunity share some thoughts with you this morning. I would also like to say what an honor and privilege it is to share a panel with this fine group of people that I am so fortunate to call friends. I would also like to thank everyone who took the time to be present here this weekend, and help make this weekend the informative and inspiring one it was for me. You turned your commitment into action be coming and taking part in whatever way you could.

My first WRAASA that I attended was here in Winnipeg in 1990. I came with a member of my Home Group, and though I don't remember much of anything that was said, I do remember the spirit in the room, and the sense of belonging to something quite profound. I was especially inspired by the Sunday morning panel of past and current trustees of the General Service Board who shared with us that morning. I remember one in particular who spoke with such passion and humor. The credibility and integrity of A.A. that they demonstrated that morning motivated me to stay on this road of General Service that I was now travelling on.

Now, as I sit in the audience and listen and watch those of you who participate in the panels, I am even more inspired than I was then listening to those trustees. You see, I now have the benefit of my experience, and I know what awaits you all as you continue on your own paths of service. Your recovery will be enhanced and you will grow beyond your wildest dreams. Because, these 3 Legacies are all part of one thing. Recovery is not over there, Service is over here or somewhere else, and Unity back there. No, they together constitute the "way of life" that is Alcoholics Anonymous. In order to recover, I need to serve and develop an attitude of service in my daily living. And since "we" can do so much more to serve and carry our message together than I ever could individually, it becomes imperative that we remain united and can devote our entire energies to the life giving task at hand. It is of the essence that we practice the unifying principles outlined in our Traditions and Concepts, all based on our early experiences as a Fellowship. And as I practice working together in unity with others in serving A.A. and those unreached alcoholics, my recovery changes and is enhanced. And I discover that all these principles, all 36 of them, working together in my life, provide a new experience in living that I never dreamed possible.

You see, when I came to you in November, 1983, my only hope was that you were going to somehow show me how "not to drink." I did not know then that alcohol was just a symptom of a much bigger

problem, a "living problem." I didn't know then that you were going to teach me how to live, and that it was to be a lifetime project.

It is no accident that any of us are here this weekend. We all have responded to a tap on the shoulder, administered by a power greater than ourselves, working through someone or something else. We turn this commitment into action, and it is in the action that all the difference is made. For ourselves, each other, and probably most importantly, that person out there, living in the darkness we once knew.

I apologize for not being able to remain until my fellow panelists have finished their sharing, as I must be on the road by 11:30. You see I have a date with a 13 month old young man and his mom and dad in Virden at 2:30. We will then get this lad home to White City and his normal bed time.

So, thanks again to you all for all the wonderful and inspiring talks and sharing's, for the many conversations with old friends and new, for the opportunity to participate, for everything that you do to keep the hand of A.A. there for all those who may need it, especially me!

WORKSHOP REPORTS

Workshop: Is Your Voice Heard?

Facilitator and Recorder: Jainna C

Great points were made by all in our workshop but we did get a little of topic a few times. First we need to let go of the fear that what you have to say is not as important as another member. Secondly, after bravely using our voice, it is important to let it go. An example of this is at a group business meeting or service committee meeting or even at the area assembly.

There is no shortage of trusted servants that are willing to bring your voice forward from the group level all the way to GSO. Members with concerns are gently directed to put their points on paper or email in order to be brought forward in consideration as a potential action item to New York. General questions and inquiries are always welcomed at the General service office, a few members gratefully recalled at their initial surprise when a call was made to New York and the phone was not only answered it was pleasantly received and not rushed, although no actual direction is ever given. But if one of our members wants to be heard or learn more about our beautiful fellowship calling New York is a good option. Older wiser members advised the group to not be afraid to rock the boat and encourage others to use their voice as well, because our voice will not only be heard, it can be validated. Our voice will be validated even if the group conscience does not agree, as we say “thank – you for sharing” and lovingly encourage each other to come back.

Workshop attendees acknowledged that we can all do better to carry the group voice, district voice, and area voice and the best way to is lead by example.

The wonderful trusted servants in attendance at our “*Is your voice heard*” workshop all agreed that, YES! Our voice is heard. We had great conversations all around and ensured that all that were present had an opportunity to share and be heard.

Workshop: Spirituality and Money

Facilitator: Stuart S

Recorder: Robin S

Topics:

Pamphlet – Money & Spirituality

Intergroup – Deficit budget

Balancing our Expenses

Discussion:

- Financial needs come from groups and members – sponsorship. Announcements – provide information; carrying the message.
- Are we afraid to explain the financial needs to group members/newcomers?
- Lead by example – explain costs involved and responsibilities of being a member of AA
- Informed group conscience decisions
- Presentations at Intergroup
- Fully self-supporting – Intergroup literature sales
- Sacrifice – instead of buying a new fish can I contribute a little more?
- We do have an obligation to contribute – make sure I've got cash in my pocket
- Put judgement aside
- Cashless society – there are costs involved with making that possible
- Budget
- Willing to go to any length
- Reach out to inactive members

Workshop: Safety – An Important Consideration

Facilitator: Gord S

Recorder: Susie W

- If our groups can provide a safe meeting environment, the group can then fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic.
- We can emphasize to newcomers what AA is about and what AA is not about. We are here for our sobriety. We are here to mentor people not mess with people's lives. We are not a dating service.
- Predatory and manipulative behaviour is not gender-specific. Physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, financial, and using people for rides or cigarettes were examples identified with misconduct.
- Newcomers are commonly high risk targets because of their vulnerability and instability. The risk of threat increases for females. It also includes elderly member, divorcees or those going through a personal crisis.
- Group responsibility is primary in creating a safe meeting environment. Each group should be autonomous regarding safety concerns and precautions.
- Greeters can be situated outside and inside meeting rooms to provide a welcome sense of security.
- Beginning every meeting along with the preamble, each group can read out a statement encouraging individuals to speak to someone they trust if they are experiencing a threat, manipulation, bullying or any form of unsolicited unacceptable behaviour. If confided to the member of trust or the group conscience, be it resolved within 24 hours.
- Newcomers are to be informed of the unwritten rule: women sponsor women, men sponsor men. Each group can print their own gender-specific contact information for handout.
- We must be more mindful using the phrase "can't say no" or "don't say no". Explain its reference is strictly about service in the program and it is imperative to include the choice and the option to say no to service us just as respected and acceptable as the choice to say yes.
- Post meeting – offer to walk/assist members to their vehicles.
- The group and older members must take watchful protective care of our newcomers. If we notice something, we must say something.
- We must take responsibility to address concerns directly to newcomers.
- We may talk to someone of trust who can approach the predator or offender. It is imperative to make clear the onus is on the predator or perpetrator.
- We are never to go on 12th step calls alone. It is highly unsafe and dangerous.

- Regarding online meetings – we are accessing them within our personal homes and space and time. Personal safety is solely the responsibility of the individual using that medium. Common sense is our recommendation.
- Ultimately we are responsible for our own conduct, but if we can prevent predation to provide a safe of safety we can achieve our goal of helping alcoholics achieve sobriety successfully.

**WESTERN REGIONAL ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
SERVICE ASSEMBLY**

“Supporting Our Future”

February 10, 11, 12, 2017

Viscount Gort Hotel
1670 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB

Friday, Feb 10

2:00 – 10:00 p.m. Registration

7:00-10:00 p.m. “Opening Session”

Chair: Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee

7:00 – 7:20 p.m. **Welcome and Introductory Remarks by Cate W**

7:20-8:40 p.m. **Western Canada Region Delegates Presentations:**

“Growth-Leadership: I am Responsible...”

- Randy C Alt. Del Panel 67 -Area 91,
- Larry M Delegate Panel 66 - Area 78,
- Ian R Delegate Panel 66 - Area 80,
- Jade F.-H. Delegate Panel 67 - Area 79

8:40-9:00 p.m. Coffee Break

9:00-10:00 p.m. **Presentation and Discussion by Members**

“Growth- Diversity: Outreach and Attraction”

- Gail P Alt. Delegate/ Lit Chair - Area 79
- Susanne C. Welechenko Kipling GSR Dist 6 Sec/Treas-Area 91
- Stuart S Past Chair Area 80
- Noni M Alt Delegate Area 80

Saturday, Feb 11

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

9:00 -10:00 a.m.

Saturday Morning Session:

Chair: Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee

Presentations and Discussion:

“Contributions- Fully Self-Supporting Our Obligations”

- Brenda M Treasurer - Area 79

- Cyndi V Trt/Acc & Grassroots Chair - Area 79

- Gordon F DCM Dist 20 - Area 78

- Robin S Past Treasurer Area 80

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

What’s On Your Mind? (sharing session/ask-it-basket)

10:30 - 10:45 a.m.

Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:00 noon

Workshops: “Supporting Our Future”

“Is your voice Heard?”

Facilitator: Jainna C

Room: Royal A

“Spirituality and Money”

Facilitator: Stuart S

Room: Royal A

“Safety-An Important Consideration”

Facilitator: _____

Room: Governors’ Room

“Sponsorship and Obedience: The Repercussions”

Facilitator: Richard M

Room: Hanover Room

“Anonymity! What it means to You ”

Facilitator: Pamela V

Room: Kensington

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch on your own

1:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday Afternoon Session:

Chair: Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Presentations and Discussion:

“Growth: Communication- Today and Tomorrow”

- Steve L PI/CPC Chair Area 80
- Rio D PI Chair Area 79
- Mike K CPC Chair Area 91
- Keith A CPC Chair Area 78

2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

“What’s On Your Mind” (general sharing\ask-it-basket)

3:15 - 3:30 p.m.

Coffee Break

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Presentations and Discussion:

“Participation: Fellowship versus Membership”

- Denise D Secretary Panel 66 -Area 80
- Scott G DCM Dist 11 -Area 90
- Doug M DCM Dist 19 -Area 79
- Lesley W Secretary Panel 67 -Area 91

4:30 – 5:00 p.m.

What’s On Your Mind? (general sharing/ask-it-basket)

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Dinner (on your own)

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday Evening Session:

Chair: Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee

7:15 – 8:45 p.m.

AA Meeting
AA Trivia Night

Sunday, Feb 12

8:00 – 9:00 am

WRAASA Business Meeting
Chair: Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee
Secretary: Chantelle S

Other Items of Concern

9:00 – 12:00 am

Opening – **Cate W: Western Canada Region Trustee**

9:00 – 10:00 am

Presentations and Discussion:

“Contributions: Apathy & Power of the Purse”

-John C Chair Panel 66	-Area 80
-Bob K Chair Panel 67	-Area 79
-Jan M Chair Panel 66	-Area 78
-Glenn N Chair Panel 67	-Area 91

10:00 -10:30 a.m.

Workshop Reports:

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:00 noon

Closing Session:

10:45 – 11:15 a.m.

Past/Present Trustees – Western Canada Region
“The 3 Legacies, Commitment in Action”
Scott H, Tom K, Vic P

11:15 – 12:00 noon

What’s On Your Mind? (sharing session)
Ask-it-Basket/ **Closing Remarks**