

FINAL REPORT

EASTERN CANADA REGIONAL FORUM

JULY 20~22, 2018

VICTORIAVILLE,
QUEBEC

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES
AND NON-ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Eastern Canada Regional Forum, which will take place in Ottawa, Ontario on the weekend of November 13-15, 2020 at the Ottawa Marriot Hotel.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2018 Eastern Canada Regional Forum was held in Victoriaville, Quebec. Registration for the Forum was **507**. This included **297** members attending their very first Forum—many were welcomed at the Forum Orientation on Friday evening. In addition, the Eastern Canada Regional Forum marked the **208th** Regional Forum since their inception in 1975.

DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS

Encouraging Service—Dale S., Delegate Panel 68, Area 86 Western Ontario

Hello everybody. I have the honor and privilege of serving Alcoholics Anonymous as the Area 86 Western Ontario Panel 68 delegate. I am a member of the Thursday Night group in Milton, Ontario. I am an alcoholic and my name is Dale S. It is great to be here today in Victoriaville. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this forum. I have been asked to present on the topic "Encouraging Service." Service can mean so much to us in A.A., whether it's by being a group member, sponsoring fellow members, greeting, making coffee, or serving as G.S.R.s, D.C.Ms., delegates, trustees and everything in between. So, how do we encourage participation?

I am asked all the time: How do we encourage members to get involved in service at the group, district or area level? How do we encourage new members to attend area assemblies? The only way I know is by being an example—by sharing my experience, my journey in Alcoholics Anonymous. How my sobriety is enhanced through service at all levels. What it meant to be given a key to the church when I was six months sober and asked to set up the meeting each week. How I felt when I was told that I had volunteered to be the G.S.R. of our group. When I showed up to my first assembly, my D.C.M made a big deal of the whole thing, making sure I knew the importance of my attendance and sitting with me to explain what was happening. (We were electing our area officers among other area business.)

We need to start at the beginning as group members and sponsors, getting newcomers involved in group activities, making sure they have a voice during discussions, setting up meetings, making coffee and greeting at the door. Not everyone will become a G.S.R. or D.C.M., but everyone can give back with gratitude—not because we must, but because we want to. Some of us are content to continue to serve at the group level and that's great; we have a spot for everyone somewhere in A.A. If they start at the group level, they will begin to feel a connection with the members of their group and soon with the fellowship in the community. Encourage all to attend business meetings; let them know what is happening at district meetings and area assemblies. If you see an interest spark in someone, take them to an area assembly. Bring them along to the Eastern Canada Regional Forum. Before you know it, if we don't push too hard, they will want more. Show them we can have some fun with members on committees, all the while making lifelong friends from all over.

Once you get these members to district meetings or assemblies, show them what's good about this kind of service. Show them the work that is done by dedicated people. We teach them by example.

It really comes down to unity, as it says in the First Tradition: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity." By serving together in unity we show those watching that the A.A. way can and does work.

A member once told me he did not like me when he first came to my home group, because I was always laughing and smiling as I shook hands greeting at the door and when I talked of service meetings or assemblies. He said this as he was sharing his experience, strength and hope at a meeting for his friend's one-year celebration. I completely understand this. I

experienced a similar situation. I am friends with this member today. The speaker now has more than five years of sobriety, and he is serving as the district committee member in his community.

The point is, we never know who is watching or listening. I often hear we may be the only Big Book someone gets to hear; I think it's more than that. If I want to encourage new members to service I need to have a complete program using the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. Experience has shown me that if I work the Steps of my program, if I support the spirit of the Traditions and if I practice the principles of our spiritual Concepts, both within and outside my A.A. life, I will be doing my part to foster unity and so help ensure the future of A.A. Simple. But not easy.

Again, thank you for the honor to serve and thank you for my sobriety.

A.A. Technology: Where Innovation Meets the Traditions —Lucien J., Delegate Panel 68, Area 87 Southwest Quebec

Eighty-three years have passed since the birth of one of the ten greatest events of the last century: Alcoholics Anonymous.

The beginnings of our Fellowship started slowly. Communications to the New York office were almost exclusively transmitted by mail. It took several days for an informational request to arrive at the office. Then the answer might have taken several more days before reaching the applicant.

There were some telephone communications, for sure. Replies to letters were typed on a typewriter. (For the younger crowd out there: The typewriter is the ancestor of word processing; when you typed you couldn't make any mistakes.)

As we saw with Jack Alexander's article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, newspapers were very important in making Alcoholics Anonymous known. Following the publication of this article, a large number of requests for help arrived at the New York office. There were a few commercials on the radio and just before the start of a movie in theaters. A few radio programs talked about A.A. There were small ads in the newspapers. The foundations for A.A.'s public information had been laid.

As technology evolved, the speed of communications gradually increased. The telex—the ancestor of the fax machine that is itself the ancestor of email—made its first appearance. Telephone communications became easier. The speed of postal services was also evolving. Television arrived in the 1950s.

For several years, these forms of communication remained the same. Mail, fax, radio, film, print. Our Traditions on anonymity were holding up.

Computers increased their speed with which communications were transmitted. The Internet showed up in the '90s. Then, in early 2000, there was the explosion with the Internet as we know it today. We are changing our ways of communicating. We have faster access to information. Non-A.A. websites that speak for A.A. are multiplying. Alcoholics Anonymous must adjust quickly. After the inauguration of the aa.org website, regional websites started

appearing. Information is being communicated to us more and more rapidly. Social networks are flourishing. Breaches of anonymity have begun.

Today, several questions arise: How can Alcoholics Anonymous reach people without affiliation or without breaking anonymity? How do we navigate in this sea of networks while respecting our Traditions?

Facebook is by far the most popular social-media site. One of the problems with Facebook comes from the fact that we have no control over who responds to our messages or the content of what they post.

When we post a message on any social network our message is visible to an entire community, not just A.A. members. From that moment on, our anonymity, or the anonymity of our contacts, can be broken at any time. Even using inside terminology or secret words, we are not immune from having our anonymity broken.

Take for example (and I have seen this often) a person who announces the celebration of their two-year anniversary on Facebook in these terms: "Tonight, I will celebrate my two years at (this place). I invite you all to come celebrate with me." Nothing in this message breaches our Traditions on anonymity. However, one of his non-A.A. friends, not familiar with our Traditions on anonymity, might very well answer with something like this: "Well done for your two years. I tell you you've come a long way since you've been in A.A." Yet the original message did not breach our Traditions. We are not in control of what others can answer quite candidly. So, let's pay attention to our public messages in all social networks.

On the other hand, we are at a point where technology is more present than ever in our daily lives. Our members are getting younger and younger. If we want our current and future members to stay informed, Alcoholics Anonymous must remain relevant and use the tools that today's generation is using.

Here's an example of this learning curve: We have a provincial Website Committee in Quebec. On this committee, which works on how to carry the message through our websites, most of the members are not specialists in technology, and they are doing their best with the knowledge they have. Apart from the use of email and a little programming, we are pretty limited. We now have a person on our committee with a degree in computers and we are learning more and more about new technologies every day.

We must stop being afraid of change. I'm not here to provide a solution. I am talking to you today about working together to build solutions that keep our members informed.

We need to work together to find smart solutions on the existing platforms presently being used by the "connected" generation. In this way, we can ensure that our Traditions of affiliation and anonymity are respected. We must take the lead before we are overwhelmed by tools that haven't been adapted to fulfill our Fellowship's needs.

We need to use the existing tools and make them our strength. We must capitalize on what exists so that we can succeed in continuing to carry our message to the new generations who are arriving in our rooms younger and younger.

We must stop keeping our heads in the sand and saying that A.A. has always worked this way and will continue this way. Technology is moving at extremely high speed.

In order to safeguard our Fellowship, let us make technology an ally instead of seeing it as an enemy of our Traditions.

Participation in A.A. as a Whole: Is My Triangle Balanced?—Eric P., Delegate Panel 68, Area 90 Northwest Quebec

Hello. My name is Eric and I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. My sobriety date is December 2, 1997, and my home group is Samedi de vivre. I have the privilege to serve as the delegate for Area 90 Northwest Quebec as part of Panel 68. And for that, I'm responsible.

First of all, I'd like to thank the committee coordinator of Area 89 Northeast Quebec, for your warm welcome and all the work that has been done this year in order to host the forum this weekend. Thank you for joining us to share your experience, strength and hope during the planned panels and workshops about different aspects of service and recovery. I would also like to thank the members of G.S.O. who've made the trip this weekend to stay in touch with the members and the trusted servants.

As for me, today I have the privilege to talk to you about one of the subjects presented at the 2018 General Service Conference: "Participation in All of A.A.: Is My Triangle Balanced?"

Of course, a topic such as this one is so wide and could lead to many discussions. Let me start my presentation with the first part of the theme: "Participation in All of A.A." If you look up the word "participation" in the dictionary, you'll find, "Taking part in something." Participation in A.A. as a whole started for most of us here today with a desperate phone call, a visit on one of the A.A. webpages, a doctor's recommendation, or a friend's, or our employer's or many other reasons! That's how we ended up at our first A.A. meeting. We didn't know what we were committing to; With our fears, our anxieties and all the emotions we feel as a newcomer and with the only requirement for membership being the desire to stop drinking. In this moment, we participate in our First Legacy: The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous; a set of spiritual principles that, followed as a lifestyle, can remove the obsession to drink and allow the sufferer a full, useful and happy life. It means that, when we came to the Fellowship for the first time, the members participating at our first A.A. meeting were using the Twelfth Step on us and, through the actions of the group, they were able to pass on to us the principles of recovery that started our journey. Because when an alcoholic applies the Twelve Steps of recovery to his daily life, they stop falling apart and start building back together.

A short time after I first came in, someone suggested I find a home group, like most A.A. members eventually do. As we can read on page 16 in the pamphlet "The A.A. Group...where it all begins": "[T]he concept of the home group still remained the strongest bond between the A.A. member and the Fellowship." Then I heard about the Traditions, and I had no idea that they applied to A.A. itself and that they listed the means in which the Fellowship maintains its unity, communicates with the world, functions and grows. That's when I started attending my home group's business meetings, taking commitments and, later, service positions. I slowly understood some of the Traditions' meanings through my own experiences! Let me remind you of a little history of the Traditions, found in the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions

Illustrated”: “Like the Steps, the Traditions were not figured out in advance, as courses of action against future problems. The action came first. Pioneer A.A. groups, with nothing to go on except the trial-and-error-and-try-again method, soon discovered: ‘Well, that way didn’t work. But the other one did. And this one works even better!’ Both successes and failures were reported in letters to A.A. headquarters (eventually to become the General Service Office). In went these shared experiences of A.A.’s first ten years, and out came the Twelve Traditions. In 1946, then in the ‘long form,’ they were published in the A.A. Grapevine. By 1950, they had been condensed to their present form and were adopted by A.A.’s First International Convention.”

A few years passed. I had several service positions in my group and in my district, and I ended up serving as D.C.M. From then on, I’ve realized how big the Fellowship is and how much the members participate in service at all levels. I heard a new language, the one of our third legacy: The Twelve Concepts for World Service. As Bill W. mentions on page S-1 in *The A.A. Service Manual*, “Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.”

Now, with the time I have left, I’ll try to answer the question: “Is My Triangle Balanced?” When I first came to A.A., I made many meetings—almost one a day! Then I started getting involved in service. As a result, my triangle was well balanced; I applied the Twelve Steps as much as I could, I learned about the Traditions and, without knowing it, I got familiar with the Twelve Concepts during the business meetings I was participating in! Until I got to be D.C.M., I managed to keep a good balance between my personal recovery and my service in A.A. Then, I got more and more involved with the area where I became co-chair, and today I’m in my first year as a delegate. At some point, I started wondering if I was too far from the root, or if I was putting my own recovery in danger. I couldn’t serve my group as well with all the hours devoted to my function! But my sponsor reassured me: “Don’t worry, you might not be as present with your group, but you serve it at a different level.” I was so relieved!

To finish, I would like to thank everyone for your support—my friends in A.A., my family, my son and my partner, who all support me in my participation in A.A.

On this, I thank you for your attention and I wish you a wonderful regional forum.

Group Conscience, the Guiding Force—Jean-Noël L., Delegate Panel 67, Area 88 Southeast Quebec

Unity is the goal of which the group conscience is the guiding force. How can we, who are all alike but not the same, come to experience this unity? Through the practice of the First Tradition: “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.”

In the pamphlet “The A.A. Group...where it all begins,” the importance of the home group is shared: “Traditionally, most A.A. members over the years have found that it was important to belong to a group...With membership comes the right to vote on issues that might affect the group and might also affect A.A. as a whole....Over the years, the very essence of A.A. strength has remained with our home group, which, for many members, becomes our

extended family. Once isolated by our drinking, we find in the home group a solid, continuing support system, friends and, very often, a sponsor. We also learn firsthand, through the group's workings, how to place 'principles before personalities' in the interest of carrying the A.A. message."

Our network of members is a powerful driving force. Even greater in our association as a spiritual force is the importance of the members and their implications, their knowledge and their lives through the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts. These principles provide stability and represent the guiding force of the association as a whole for A.A. members of all generations.

The group conscience makes unity possible. Because we are responsible for the future of A.A., "This we owe to A.A.'s future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come." Just as with family members, exchanges and discussions through the group conscience allow us to establish very important links with other members of the group and ensure our sobriety and our rehabilitation in the big family that is Alcoholics Anonymous. In this way, we preserve not only our personal identity, but also the authenticity of the A.A. program in its entirety.

Tradition Five declares, "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." The Responsibility Statement that Bill W. conveyed to us as A.A. members is as follows: "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

Our First Tradition tells us that if we remain united, our survival and the survival of the future members is assured. What a beautiful way to guarantee that future within our home groups, our districts, our regions and the General Service Conference by an enlightened group conscience, the guiding force of "our whole association."

As stated in Concept I: "The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective consciousness of our whole Fellowship." This same group conscience that shows us the way and allows us to walk with serenity in our lives and ensures the same gift to the problem drinker who would like to join us.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

7-7:55 p.m.

Supporting Grapevine: From Your Story to Service—Moderator: Ami B., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor/Publisher / Reporter: Marie-Noelle L.

The workshop opened with an introduction by Grapevine Executive Editor/Publisher Ami B. In order to figure out the answer to “What do I write about?” if writing to the Grapevine, members proposed stories from the heart for an imaginary “Victoriaville Issue” of the Grapevine. People shared a wide variety of experiences and feelings. Among those were: Gratitude; the importance of welcoming newcomers and new attendees; the effort put into speaking a language other than your own (language of A.A. transcends languages); feeling of belonging and connection; giving back by sharing your story; inspiration to organize events in A.A. and to serve; writing the kind of story you want to read; changes of perspective, demystification of service; feeling loved, meaningful, helpful to others, and having a purpose to hold on to.

Group Conscience: The Guiding Force—Moderator: Ruth L. / Reporter: JoAnn P.

In a workshop covering the topic of group conscience, attendees were asked to consider a few questions and then share their experience. The initial questions that members considered — “What is a group conscience? What is an informed group conscience?” — elicited many responses, which included: A “common welfare, substantial unanimity, minority report.” Workshop members also shared helpful responses of the group to a group conscience, such as “accept group decision,” “communicate ideas to district (get people involved),” and “defer to members who have been in service.” In addition, members shared important elements that were important to an effective, thorough group conscience, such as “Give facts and be unbiased...” In addition, members noted that a decision is made with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority and an “informed group conscience includes knowledge of Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.”

A second question was posed during this workshop: “What is the group’s responsibility in choosing the right candidate?” A.A.s in the workshop referenced using The Service Manual — specifically Concept Nine — and leadership qualities. It was also noted that “service is good for everyone, but not right for everyone.” For example, “just filling a position with a person who may not be qualified or equipped” is often not an effective practice. Other members suggested “be aware and watch to see how people are committed to your group first before you nominate.” Another attendee suggested doing “God’s will and follow the Traditions. [This] takes it down to the basics.” Similarly, another said, “Go to the Traditions to fix problems. Trust the process.”

Leadership, an Essential Question for A.A.—Moderator: Mario L. / Reporter: Jérôme L.-C.
Workshop ran from 7-9 p.m.

In this workshop, attendees were asked to consider a few questions and then share their experience. The initial questions that members responded to was: “Can a leader influence me in doing service?” In response, members gave many answers, but what came up most often was the impact of calm and firmness in listening to models (leaders). Members agreed that “following positive people has a strong influence.” Furthermore, several women mentioned that the presence of other women in positions of great responsibility showed them that it was

possible. Finally, members shared that growth came through the impact of a “reverse model” (negative model), since it forces us to move in the right direction.

Workshop members were asked a second question: “Are we using the necessary means to elect appropriate servants or are we keeping it (too) simple?” In the ensuing responses, members shared that “people are often catapulted to positions, and this often leads to multiple changes.” Also, members shared that service sponsorship was very important, but, unfortunately, is often lacking. Furthermore, group consciences are often afraid to make difficult decisions. In addition, workshop members noted that there are no courses to serve A.A., so good examples are important. To address the problem, some suggested leaving a chair empty rather than fill it with a servant who lacks the necessary experience or willingness. Others suggested that A.A.s encourage potential candidates to find out about the positions they want to take.

The Literature—Moderator: Gaétan C. / Reporter: Denise G.

Workshop ran from 7-9 p.m.

A.A.s in this workshop shared about the importance of literature in their sobriety: “At first, reading literature kept me from drinking” and reading the literature “allowed me to go more in depth.” Also, reading Conference-approved literature “allows me not to be the victim of the one who has not read it” and it “gives me answers about recovery and service.” Workshop attendees shared that “digital literature is convenient for having several books that are easily accessible and easy to carry (on tablets or cell phones).”

Some members offered suggestions regarding how to better make use of it: Instead of sharing an anniversary cake, some A.A.s give literature. Others noted that literature representatives would do better to promote the literature by explaining its contents. Using pamphlets that are current is also important. One member pointed out that each book or brochure has an indication on it, such as 1.5M-5/18, that gives the circulation (number of copies) and the printing date (5/18 = May 2018).

Some noted issues that can be corrected: Members shared that there seem to be few literature representatives in groups and offering “literature that is not approved by the Conference is disturbing. Group conscience should decide whether or not the literature should be offered to the group.” Others noted that “many books are not approved by the Conference (i.e. Grapevine) and are sold in groups.”

Some useful suggestions regarding the use of literature included giving leaflets or pamphlets to the newcomer instead of books, since they are smaller, shorter, and less apt to discourage the new person. Finally, one member shared that “reading literature is endless; when I read it again, I understand it differently because I have changed.”

A.A. in Today’s World—Moderator: Diane P. / Reporter: Thomas G.

Workshop ran from 7-9 p.m.

In this workshop covering the topic of “A.A. in Today’s World,” attendees shared their experience, observations, and questions. Members noted that young people no longer have the same education as older members and “we must be tolerant and not exclude young people.” Members shared the efficacy of respecting A.A. values and welcoming newcomers

with compassion. In response to utilizing the best ways to welcome newcomers, members shared: “Let the newcomer become acclimatized; through reading literature, he [or she] will understand” and “the newcomer who wants to succeed, will.”

Others addressed how to welcome young people to A.A. Some members shared that young people “want results at high speed” or “instant results.” In response, members shared that “identification” was important, and “we must reach out to young people and those who suffer” and we must “return to our welcoming and after-meeting habits. Take the newcomer by the hand before, during, and after the meeting.” Though this was important, sometimes “welcome and sponsorship are lacking” in A.A. meetings. However, “finding the sense of spirituality that unites us,” keeping it “simple,” “explain[ing] the structure,” “demystifying the word “God,”” and “reaching out to those who suffer (in the street)” were offered as the shared experience of workshop group members.

Sharing Your Freedom: Writing a Letter to an Inmate—Moderator/Reporter Diana L., G.S.O Staff, Corrections Assignment

Though workshop attendees displayed a little hesitation about starting a letter to an inmate, a review of the suggestions for an introduction to an A.A. inmate eased the process and helped members in the exercise. Sharing began after switching letters, and was modeled as if group members were insiders receiving letters for outsiders. Members shared their experience and thoughts regarding the exercise. Some found that it was an “amazing experience” to be able to relate. Another shared that through 26 years of sobriety, they had never thought of a way to express a part of their drinking, except for now — because of the letter from the “outsider.”

Other members shared: “This is an “untypical” A.A. meeting but the sharing is still the same” and “I did not feel alone reading this. I imagine this will be tremendous to someone inside.” More than a few agreed: “I have no criminal history, but can see this sharing is really about sobriety” and “Hope, unity... this was really good to know our connection goes past any walls or fences.”

8:05-9 p.m.

Supporting Grapevine: From Your Story to Service—Moderator: Ami B., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor/Publisher / Reporter: Pamela S.

Three topics were posed at this workshop. They were: “*Rotation of service*,” “*What it means to be a Grapevine Rep.*,” and “*Our Meeting in Print and Other Media*.”

In discussing “rotation of service,” one member gave input and shared experience in becoming a non-trustee director and, in her rotation, experienced “big time” growth. Another member brought up the absence of rotation and what happens when a person continues and doesn’t rotate after the term. There were questions and “concerns about attachment, power, control, and ego if I hold on for too long.” Other members shared about instances where they did not rotate or move on: one A.A. in the workshop said that he committed for another two years and now thinks it is too much and that he should “move on.” Another attendee shared the experience of how he stood for service “over and over.” His ego took over and, after a while, he felt sick.

The second topic discussed was “*What it means to be a Grapevine Representative*.” The shared experience offered included a workshop member sharing experience about how being

a GVR enriched him “spiritually” and another member, a past Grapevine chair, related how he “gained knowledge” and now believes that “not enough people are getting involved and that “there is not enough information to attract members.” One workshop attendee, a past delegate, discussed the split between Grapevine and La Viña. He said, “it feels like there is competition between the two.” In reference to taking the position of Grapevine rep, one member thought that we “often assume members know — but could be intimidated by accepting the position. But there is lots of support.”

Lastly, members discussed how “our meeting in print” has been changed to “our meeting in print and other media.” A member suggested that this exposed people differently to our message. It was also noted that every issue of the Grapevine is recorded from cover to cover. In addition, the Grapevine can capture any member’s audio story and it can be emailed in to the Grapevine. There is a continuous diversification of the Grapevine’s media to convey A.A.’s message — the Grapevine now has a YouTube page that is anonymity protected under Google not-for-profit. Grapevine does not have a Facebook page and is considering adding an “explainer video” on the YouTube page. Audio Project is a “big interest to the Conference.”

“A.A. in the Military” is a new book from the Grapevine for veterans and those still serving in the military. In other news, there is an anthology to be released for atheist and agnostic members and “Emotional Sobriety” has been approved for translation into French.

Group Conscience: The Guiding Force—Moderator: Ruth L. / Reporter: JoAnn P.

In a workshop covering the topic of group conscience, attendees were asked to consider a question: “How is the group conscience linked with the General Service Conference?”

- At assemblies/workshops A.A.s ask and answer questions that could come up at the General Service Conference; and
- There would be no Conference if there were no group conscience.
- Group conscience is tolerant, inclusive, timely. Group conscience is also based on principles and a message to help the newcomer. It is an expression and who we are. There is a singleness of purpose.

Attendees were also asked to consider a second question: “How is common welfare/unity linked to the General Service Conference?” In response, members shared:

- Opens channels of communication;
- Asked for workshops at area — first at your group, then district, and went to area. Seeing part of how this works is related to the General Service Conference;
- People are not reading the Service Manual so that they are informed;
- Group conscience could be different between 2 areas;
- People look to experienced voices in order to start and moderate discussions — encourage people to voice their opinion;
- There is a small, committed group of people who try to make decisions;
- If you want a say, take a seat;
- Women are welcome to take a seat;
- The A.A. group has a right that cannot be revoked. G.S.O. has no authority over a group. Conflict in A.A. comes from comparing a group or wanting a group to do something different;
- There is a balance between “what is our message?” and “what is our responsibility?”

- There exist regional differences — and those involved attempt to find the best way in which to balance the difference, such as between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking populations.
- They are both part of an organization that is not organized. Group conscience needs a minimum of organization -- there is a right of decision and a right of participation. Fact and group conscience will always outweigh personal opinion.
- Groups decided what works for them. Natural evolution. Celebrate differences.
- In both there are bleeding deacons vs. elder statesmen;
- Both create unity -- Listening to the minority opinion is a must.
- Keep meetings on message;
- We all have the right to make a mistake;
- Say what you think -- groups change. Gossip is a group killer.
- In both cases, A.A.s remember the first time attending business meeting -- encourage others to attend.

A.A. Around the World—Moderator: Newton P. / Reporter: Roy R.

In a workshop covering the topic of A.A. Around the World, attendees were presented with an International A.A. Data Map, an online application that displays the existence and distribution of Alcoholics Anonymous by country — worldwide. The app is in the development stage, has only been shown once previously to the Fellowship (at the recent Western Canada Forum). The purpose of the workshop was to elicit comments and opinions with respect to its usefulness and functionality.

The first pageview in the app is a world map depicting the 107 plus countries where there is an A.A. presence. “Presence” can range from a full G.S.O. structure all the way down to a single loner or ex-pat whom the General Service Office is aware of. From the first view, the user may drill down by clicking on any country, resulting in pop-up panels yielding detail data. Also analyzed is the relation between Big Book translations and each country’s official language(s). The presenter stressed that the accuracy of the data is only as good as the information held by G.S.O. There are disclaimers throughout the app to this effect. It was also noted that the app is not intended as a world-wide meeting finder. It provides a picture of both how far we have come and how far we have to go. The workshop was opened to the floor. Comments and questions were:

1. It was not clear in the app that on screens where actual groups were listed that on some English-only speaking groups were shown. Other screens, however, brought up ALL known groups.
2. The frequency of updates was questioned. The plan is to update it periodically. This is not a “real time” app. The presenter closed the meeting by reminding all that if we, as individuals, are traveling to “off-beat” locations, such as vacation spots, to contact the G.S.O. International desk for local contacts and to possibly courier some literature into that country.

FULL FORUM

PRESENTATION/WORKSHOP

Today's Alcoholic: Inclusion Not Exclusion—Tim M., Delegate Panel 67, Area 82 Nova Scotia/Newfoundland and Labrador

Greetings. It is indeed a privilege to be here with you all at the Eastern Canadian Regional Forum. My name is Tim M., Panel 67 delegate for Area 82 Nova Scotia/Newfoundland and Labrador. Thanks to G.S.O for the loving invitation to share a few humble thoughts on the topic "Today's Alcoholic: Inclusion Not Exclusion."

A difficult definition to find would be the definition of "today's alcoholic." How does today's alcoholic differ from yesterday's alcoholic? Is there a difference, or is it our perception of today's issues versus yesterday's issues? Tomorrow's issues will be different yet again. The following questions posed in my presentation will hopefully help to improve our ability to continue to include more alcoholics, because "Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is." (*The A.A. Service Manual*, page S-20)

Exclusion by Geographic Location

Last December I traveled north to Labrador City, a remote community in our area. It was there I witnessed exclusion by geographic location. When I did a presentation on the A.A. general service structure and offered my report, they were amazed. They were left wanting more. I am sure our area, and many others, will face numerous challenges when carrying the message to today's alcoholics in remote communities. To include members of inactive districts (inactive by location, not by choice) in our service structure, inclusion through the use of technology may be vital to our Fellowship.

Exclusion by Dual Addiction

How well are we dealing with the alcoholic who is dual addicted? Do we still get that uncomfortable feeling that we might have gotten when someone introduced themselves as an alcoholic *and* an addict? Do we thank our Higher Power that we weren't afflicted with another addiction on top of alcoholism? Do we share love and compassion with that person, which are the principles of our program and the foundation of our primary purpose? Do we shout, "That's an outside issue" when they share inappropriately? Are our home groups equipped with information on where they may get help with their other addictions?

Exclusion by Race, Creed or Social Position

Do we sometimes look down at those less fortunate, or are we grateful for what we have today? Do we sometimes form cliques in our groups and not allow others to hang out with us? If we remember that alcoholics are masters of isolation, how can we then decide who gets turned away? How well do we accept those who do not share the same religious views as us? How welcoming are we to those of other races?

Exclusion by Mental Illness

How well do we deal with members who have mental illness? Do we even consider how members with mental illness cope? It tells us in our literature that we might need to seek outside help in our personal recovery. Is it possible that we might need to seek professional guidance to help us help others?

Exclusion by Age

For those of us who are, let's say, "average age," do we look upon the long-timer as someone who has served their purpose? Do we recognize the wealth of experience and knowledge that they possess? Do we call on them often for guidance on issues that might still baffle us? What about that young person who walks around with eyes fixed on a mobile device, who's covered with tattoos and piercings? Do we judge them, even though we know that judging them might affect their recovery?

In Conclusion

I know that I have asked a lot of uncomfortable questions in the last few minutes. I feel that a lot of these questions must be addressed for the spiritual health of our Fellowship. Our Responsibility Statement goes a long way toward ensuring that exclusion does not hinder anyone's recovery. I am sure our co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob would frown knowing that someone's recovery could be compromised by an individual member's ego. Moving forward, let us always be mindful of our words so that our language, actions and deeds are never exclusive. We need to educate ourselves as much as possible in order to better understand our fellow travelers on the Road of Happy Destiny. We should not forget the powerful tool of technology that lays at our feet, which, if used properly, can further unite us all in carrying out our primary purpose. May God bless you in your service to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Today's Alcoholic: Inclusion, Not Exclusion—Presenter: Tim M. / Moderator: Jan L. / Reporter: Gerry W.

In this Full Forum Workshop, the presenter began by querying all, "Are we excluding today's alcoholic?" Discussion topics included remote communities, dual addiction, age, race, and appearance, as well as ensuring that meetings are accessible for handicapped members. Forum attendees gave input on topics such as dual addiction ("Keep an open mind") and raised questions such as, "Should the Lord's Prayer be removed?" Other attendees shared their own experience in making sure members are not excluded, such as bringing meetings to long time A.A.s who were dying, in homes for the elderly or in senior citizen complexes. One single mother shared her experience using telephone meetings.

Technology was mentioned a few times — though technology increases accessibility to A.A. and A.A. members, in some cases it can act as a barrier: "Will technology actually exclude those who can't afford it?" One question was posed, "What if a person can't afford the internet technology necessary to serve?" In response, one member shared that in a similar case, other A.A.s with internet have helped. In addition, libraries offer internet service at no charge.

A G.S.R. from Ontario promoted "more open meetings, less anonymity, and less emphasis on the label "alcoholic." Finally, one member expressed a specific concern about not excluding indigenous groups: "Will we have interpreters for an area assembly's teleconference?"

PAST TRUSTEES SHARING

Robert P., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, 2002-2006

Hello, my name is Robert and I'm an alcoholic. Sober by the grace of God and the help of the Alcoholics Anonymous Fraternity. My home group is the Sharing the Service Manual on Friday evening in St-Jérôme. Two months ago, I celebrated 35 years of abstinence in A.A.

Because of a health problem I had when I was a baby, I felt like I was left a little bit alone as a child. I had to be careful, I could not play, I could not do this, I could not do that. So, I isolated myself. I have spent a good part of my life in solitude.

And then I tasted my first little glass of wine that one of my brothers was making in our house. I was about 13 years old. And the ordeal began until I stopped at 47. I did what all alcoholics do. All kinds of things that didn't make sense. I thought I knew everything. And then I started changing jobs, because I wanted to be able to say that I had never been kicked out. And at one point, I was with my girlfriend, one of the girlfriends I had through my youth, and then I was driving like a madman on Main Street in Ottawa. I got arrested. I spent a week at the Ontario government's expense. Some people call it a prison. I was supposed to be working that night. But I was in prison. They gave me the right to one call. I called our house, I said to my mother: "Call that number, tell them I'm not feeling well and I'll stay with a friend." I woke up in the middle of the night. I realized where I was, and I started to get scared: the boss, he was going to know where I was. One of the examples.

Several years later, (because I only have 10 minutes to talk to you), I turned 27. I got married. At the time, I was in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Montreal. I had a brother who was on the force too. He had said to me: "Don't you want to stop fooling around? Get married and start a family like the rest of the family. I found a wife to get married, then we had children. But I didn't stay still. And then the history of alcohol just got worse, worse and worse.

Another major incident: a few years later, I was working for a multinational company. I am very lucky because I had decided that school was not for me, since I already knew everything. I was in the United States on business. I was so drunk, and I got arrested by the NYPD. That's a little less funny in my head. I get out, he asks me where I come from, then he asks for my license papers; obviously it was a company car. And then he turns around and says, "Where are you going?" With one eye closed, I could see the hotel where I was going. Then he says, "Get back in your car, I'll follow you. When I arrive in the parking lot, I park my car, he gets out and then comes next to the car; I'm sitting in it, and he says to me: "Sir, please get out of your car, go to bed, because I'm sure there's someone waiting for you who loves you." No ticket, no warning. I was sure I'd lose my job if it ever was known.

It proves there's a good God for drunks. My wife died in 1982. She had a stroke at home. It was my son who found her on the floor, and for the first time in my life, I realized that I had responsibilities and I didn't know what I was supposed to do. But I took my bottle, I started drinking, and everything was fine, everything was beautiful.

It took a few more months. Eight months later, I was still on the binge. I was alone at home one Sunday evening, my children were not there. I was crying because I was drinking, trying

to get drunk, but I couldn't do it anymore. I remember looking through the window and saying something like: "Help me, I can't anymore".

I called Alcoholics Anonymous the next day, by the grace of God at the time. It was the 16th of May 1983. I've never had to have my first drink since then.

Being sober and not drinking is one thing. Being abstinent, not drinking, and feeling good about yourself, being able to get by in society, that's another story. I like a little thought that we often hear, in English: are you in the program? Are you in the program? And in my opinion, our founders, they didn't just leave me the 12 steps, they left me the 12 steps for my recovery, they left me the traditions for the unity of Alcoholics Anonymous, then they left me the 12 Concepts, for, as Dr. Bob said: "Give freely what I received freely". Otherwise, I risk losing what I received.

One of my first jobs, I was maybe a year, 15 months old in A.A., in a large group in Montreal - and I had a very important job where I worked - but in the group, I was a "mopologist". I was the one who took the mop to wipe up the spilled coffee. Two people were around a spilled coffee, talking. I came up next to them, looked at them, then with a smile, I said to them: "Would you please move so I could wipe the floor?" They looked at me and said: thank you. Thank you. Five letters (in French). Something I had been waiting for a long time - to have two faces like these say thank you. And that's when I caught the passion for Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I was asked to be alternate G.S.R., I said, "We'll wait a minute. I want to know what you're asking me to do. I don't like to do something when I don't know in advance what the function is. "At the time, there were sessions on Traditions and Concepts, given by the delegate. I went to attend this on Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. I had understood a lot of things. I said, "I'm ready."

And this is my beautiful journey, which is not yet finished today: GSR, DCM, Delegate, Panel 46 ('96-'97), and Regional Trustee of Alcoholics Anonymous for Eastern Canada from 2002 to 2006. Experiences that could be talked about at length to illustrate what is happening in Alcoholics Anonymous.

I can assure you one thing: we are in very good hands. That's for sure. We hear all kinds of things in the services, all kinds of things that are happening. But there is one thing that is certain: the calm we heard here, there...

When I arrived at my first conference in 1996, I entered the conference room. I was alone when entered, I had arrived the day before. I saw the banner marked: *46th Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous*. I cried. Because I saw myself 13 years before, in what condition I was, and 13 years later, I was in a room ready to vote on the future of A.A. How could I not be grateful for what AA has given me?

Today, I share all this experience in the group we have on Friday evening. It's a group where we share on the Service Manual. It's not complicated: you read a paragraph, you ask a participant to read one paragraph at a time, then you stop. Any questions? Any comments?

Usually, there is another delegate there, so very often we are able to answer questions to demystify what we are supposed to do.

I'll just finish by saying thank you, thank you very much for your participation here, because as long as the rest of you are here, I know I'll be here. Thank you and have a safe trip back.

Donald C., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee 2010-2014

Hello my AA friends. My name is Donald, I'm an alcoholic. Delegate, Panel 54 (so in 2004-2005 I served the area as a delegate), Canada's Eastern Region from 2010 to 2014. I spent four years serving you as a class B trustee. The 14 alcoholics on the General Service Board is something, huh, the General Service Board!

I'm going to identify myself. I come from an alcoholic family. Both father and mother were alcoholics. My father died at the age of 53. He was hit by a car, drunk. My mother died at the age of 64, drunk. That's it, that's it. I come from the lower part of the city in Montreal. It was rough. I was raised in the alleys of Montreal, and so on. Life wasn't... it wasn't easy, my youth wasn't easy, then I brought it back into my life later. I kept the pattern, as they say. What you experienced when you were young, you bring it back later, that's what I experienced.

I started drinking when I was 16 years old. I started late because I was afraid of alcohol. I had seen so much of what it was like at home that I didn't want to drink, you know. I didn't want to be like my father. But it caught up with me anyway. Then as soon as I started drinking, I felt liberated. I liked it. I was on my way to glory, you know. Then at that moment, I said to God: "Look, all my life I needed you, you haven't been there, then there, now, I don't need you, I can go alone." As long as I'm going to hell, I'm going to go alone. Then God in his great wisdom said to me, "Go ahead." So, my hell started at the age of 16.

My drinking lasted 25 years. Until I was 41. My family life has suffered as a result. It's in the Big Book. In the stories of family life. Because the children are traumatized. I've been through this, I recognize myself quite easily in family life. It wasn't easy for my family, even though I was trying to be a good father, it wasn't always the case. My father, I had often condemned him. I realized, through the steps, that there were things I did that were worse than his. So, who am I to judge? Then with you, I also succeeded to understand the program, to put it into practice. I live soberly, and today I have a very healthy family. I have an extraordinary wife who is still with me.

When I arrived with you people at 41, my trash bags were at the door. She could stand no more. Of course, for 25 years, I manipulated everyone to go and drink. We always find ways to go and drink.

So, I arrived with you people at 41 and I didn't give in right away. I've been in groups. At one point, I went to a group, the Groupe des Moulins in Terrebonne, which has been my home group for 25 years. I'm pretty loyal in my group. I've always been in the same home group. I was GSR, alternate GSR. I had accepted the task of alternate G.S.R., but then I was drinking again. It's not... the rigorous honesty; I had a lot of trouble with that. It seemed to me that the world didn't know that. Everyone knew it, but no one ever said anything. They never judged me. It eventually struck me when I completely abdicated after two years in Alcoholics Anonymous.

After two years in Alcoholics Anonymous, I was in a room like yours. I was sitting there, and then, at some point, in my head, I thought to myself, "What am I doing here? It's not working." I was about to leave, to drop it, because it didn't work, I had been there for two years but it didn't work. At one point a little inner voice told me: "Look, Donald, you've been coming here for two years, we've been listening to you for two years, you've been talking crazy for two years, you've been smiling for two years, you've been shaking hands, why don't you give yourself a chance? Why wouldn't you let yourself be loved?" That's when I gave in. For me it was a spiritual awakening, that's how I started my adventure with you people.

The next week, I went to make my amends and then, according to group ethics, it took a while to be a G.S.R., alternate G.S.R., but the group conscience decided to leave me in the position of alternate G.S.R. The little pat on the back I needed, you gave it to me at that time. I didn't think there was so much love in Alcoholics Anonymous. After two years of deceiving people, you gave me a chance. It knocked me out, it gave me the chance to continue with you. And since that day, I have never stopped serving Alcoholics Anonymous.

My sponsor was telling me: "Donald, you put your name down and then it's not you who will decide, it's going to be God and it's going to be the members who decide." That's how it works. He said, "Look, you put your name down.

I became a G.S.R., I didn't know what I was getting into. I was afraid, I didn't know much and I made mistakes. I had my experiences. My group conscience has often put me back on track. I resented, I wanted to give up, but my sponsors were telling me: "No, you stay here, you stay here, you know, and accept what you are being told." I learned with you people, gradually. Gradually, one step at a time, you know, sometimes it's five minutes at a time, that's how it works in the services.

Then after that, I went to introduce myself as an alternate D.C.M. and then I was an alternate D.C.M., pulled from the hat, by the grace of God again. If I hadn't been taken out of the hat at that time, I wouldn't have been a delegate, I might not have been a trustee. My path was traced somewhere in the services.

Then I was a D.C.M. We still had about 20 groups in my district. Later I was asked, when my D.C.M. term was over, if I wanted to run for area chair. I went to see my wife, I told her about it because she had a lot of it on her sparrow's helmet, with these D.C.M. functions... I was never at home. She was always telling me: "When do you finish your shift? When do you finish your shift? I'm telling you this because when I went to see her I said, "I was asked to be chairman - well, you know I wouldn't be elected, it's just my name on the list. What do you think of that?

I thought she'd say to me: "Stop it. You've done enough. You're never home" and all that. I always said, "You have a better quality of time today than before, you know." Today, without the alcohol, the quality of time was not the same. She said to me, "If you think it is good for you, go ahead." I fell on my butt; I was telling myself to myself: let's see. It's still a grace from God, I never expected that. I ran for office, I was elected. I didn't think I would be elected; in my head, it seemed to me that I wasn't good enough for that. Area chairman! I didn't know anything about the task. I didn't know anything. I had been a D.C.M., but before that, I didn't know how it worked. Then I got help.

After that I ran for the position of area delegate. They elected me. They trusted me. I didn't trust myself, but you people trusted me. I had to do my best even if I didn't know what I was getting into. We still have fears. But we have to give our name, take a chance to get elected, and grow up with it. I grew up in services. It takes a lot of humility to serve. We are often criticized. Those who know, there are many of them here, it's part of the job, part of our recovery.

After that, it was my term as a delegate. An extraordinary term. I remember the first day, at the conference, we were all sitting for the presentations, and they named each person, each delegate. It was necessary to say "present". Then I got up and said - 14 years ago - "present". It was something!

I didn't think, but emotions are always rising. It's a great experience, it comes from the heart. The people who are there are extraordinary. At the Conference, there are four of us from Quebec. There are 93 regions. 89 where everyone speaks English, the English people from Ontario, from all over Canada and then the United States. And in Quebec we are French... But we are welcomed there, it's extraordinary. We are being listened to. The little three minutes to talk... what Lucien was saying... it was I who... at one point I told them: "It seems to me that in two minutes, Quebecers have problems and so do Spanish speaking people. " It didn't give them much time. So, I was happy that at some point we had three minutes to talk. I'm proud of that.

I finished my term, and the position of Regional Trustee for Eastern Canada was opened. I submitted my name. In my head, I never thought I would be elected, because there had already been Robert P., and also Denis V., who unfortunately passed away. Two Quebecers from 87, 90. I thought, they're probably going to take someone from Ontario. I think so too. The rotation will be someone from Ontario or Nova Scotia, or New Brunswick. But no, that's not how it works. You submit your name and then you don't know. I was elected. I was surprised.

Richard called me and said: "Donald, you have been elected." It's something else again, emotions. I lived four extraordinary years, I went everywhere, among our friends in Ontario. I am very grateful for these people who came to see us today in Victoriaville. There are not many people who speak English here. They come here with headphones, spend three days listening. When they go home at night, they will be happy to speak English.

Thank you for being here. Without you people, the Forum could not take place. When we say, "being someone for someone", that's it. Today there is no language or religious barrier. Thank you very much.

Richard B., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee 2014-2018

Good morning, everyone, my name is Richard B. I'm an alcoholic. My sobriety date is March 5, 1989 and my home group is the Service Manual Study Group. This is an English-speaking group where the Service Manual is reviewed. We're trying to know more, to understand more.

This is my first Forum since I recently retired. I am a free agent, without restrictions, unrestricted free agent. It was wonderful to see my friends from the GSO, my friends from the General Service Board, with whom I served four years, from 2014 to 2018. It's really a special feeling, to see my friends from Eastern Canada again. It's something that together we made

a connection, we made friends with each other, we made some good moves, and then we missed, but it's part of Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I first came to A.A., it was certainly not for the sake of having a title. When I first joined A.A., my goal was not to be a delegate, to be an area chair. The only goal I had was to save my life. Because I didn't want to live anymore, but I didn't want to die. Two events happened. I was fine in my group, cleaning the floor, cleaning the ashtrays. It was fun. I was gaining assurance, I was gaining confidence and alleluia, everything was fine.

Then a combination of circumstances caused me to serve as a G.S.R. at one point. Then I served as D.C.M. in another district. And then I arrived at the area committee meetings. I saw six people sitting in front with the delegate. I knew they didn't have a monopoly on the truth, but these people had something in their eyes. There was something I didn't have, there was a spark, there was... I went to get it.

In my journey, there were two major events that caused me to raise my hand the day the position of Trustee for Eastern Canada became open. I'm going to take two minutes to tell you about it. In 2006, I went out of the country. I needed help and the General Service Office helped me. I was far away, I was overseas. I was isolated, I was alone, there were no Anglophones to whom I could turn. I had lost the connection, the security you have when you talk to another alcoholic: you are surrounded, you are solid. But when you're alone, isolated, you become fragile. And that's exactly what I was experiencing outside the country.

The General Service Office had received a request to help me. In my head, I thought to myself: "These people receive thousands of emails, letters, never will they ever take the time to do anything for me." But in 24-48 hours, I received help. The General Service Office sent me an email with a list of names of English-speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous living in the country where I was. I took the list and started making phone calls, and I came across an English-speaking A.A. member with whom I was able to talk. He gave me another phone number, and that allowed me - that member picked me up at my hotel - and that allowed me to have my first meetings in an Alcoholics Anonymous room outside the country, with the help of the General Service Office. I'll never forget that.

The other event that happened to me was in 2009. I went on a holiday to Thailand. I am in Thailand, on holiday, drinking fruit juice and eating grapefruit, and at one point, I find myself sitting at a table with a Thai man who is talking to me about his alcohol problem. And then we started sharing. And I asked him for his address. And I had a token in my pockets that I gave him, I asked him for his address, and then I said, "Back home in Canada," I said, "I know there is a Big Book in Thai that exists, I'll send it to you."

And when I came back to Canada I asked a friend of mine to help me. They wrote to the General Service Office and shortly after, G.S.O. sent me a Big Book in Thai, which I was able to send to Thailand, and I know that in Thailand, the person received it.

I thought to myself: this is a big machine. We are talking about helping at one end of the planet. And G.S.O. was there to support us, was there to help us. These two events caused me to raise my hand, scared to death, when the position of Eastern Canada Trustee came about. Imagine, trustee! It didn't make sense. And one thing leading to

another, there was an election in 64th, and so, like for Donald, my delegate called me, and that was the only position I was elected to in Alcoholics Anonymous from which I wanted to resign immediately.

As soon as I was told, "Richard, you were elected," I wanted to quit. When I was 18 years old, I was lying on a park bench in Laurier Park in Montreal, it was alcohol that controlled my life. And here I am on the General Service Board, one of 21 members representing Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, to make decisions. I heard this earlier, and I will tell you: we have never been in such good hands, and I speak from experience, since our Executive Director, Greg T., has been in position.

Greg changed the culture in the office. He brought ideas. He has done an extraordinary job, and today it is unthinkable to think that we are in a bad situation. The trustees who serve the General Service Board, I never thought in my active life in Alcoholics Anonymous that one day I would be able to serve with such dedicated, passionate people, and especially with our Class A trustees.

I personally know David Morris' story, and why he agreed to give his time to Alcoholics Anonymous. Go and ask him before he leaves: "Tell me your story." He will be pleased. It's amazing what our non-alcoholic friends do. Many of us, if we loved Alcoholics Anonymous as much as our Class A friends love Alcoholics Anonymous, it would be incredible.

I have had an extraordinary experience in the last four years. I will be honest, I don't miss being bored everywhere with hours of waiting in airports; I don't miss emails, I don't miss phone calls. However, I miss my friends in Eastern Canada, I miss the people I served with. It was an extraordinary experience and I am filled with gratitude and thank you very much.

CLOSING REMARKS

Michele Grinberg, Class A (nonalcoholic) General Service Board chairperson

Bon jour, mes ami. Je m'appelle Michele Grinberg. I am Michele Grinberg, just another class A amateur who loves A.A. and what A.A. can do for the alcoholic. I want you to know that I love and practice — to the best of my ability — the principles of A.A. in all my affairs.

I've had a wonderful time this weekend, and I hope that you are having a wonderful time, as well. I see my job at regional forums as being a good listener. You've seen me typing away on my iPad — that's me taking notes. You can see that I also use it to speak from. I don't know how I would do my job without this toy.

I know you have wonderful trusted servants in this area and I hope that you ask them your questions and share with them your concerns because they have lots of wisdom to give you. I am sorry to have to leave early, but c'est la vie. So, thank you for inviting us, the A.A. General Service Office, the A.A. World Services Board, and the Grapevine Board, as well as the General Service Office staff and Grapevine staff to be here with you at this regional forum. And, to all of my old and new friends at this wonderful region of Eastern Canada: You make it such a pleasure to serve you. Thank you to all the volunteers of this host area.

So, when I attend a regional forum, I am always listening for what is the unofficial theme of the weekend. For me, at this weekend, at this truly bilingual event, I found that we have one basic language. We all know what it is: "langue du coeur." The language of the heart. I felt it everywhere and in everything I did this weekend.

Because, of course, this what A.A. is really communicating. This is my opinion — what I think. That the still suffering alcoholic and you all share a language of the heart. Here are just a few of the many things that I want to share; things I heard from the wonderful presentations and the sharings from the floor and from the workshops that, for me, express, in different ways, the language of the heart that I felt and heard here. From the excellent delegate presentations, a delegate recognizing the reality we face in seeking to communicate our message in the digital world, while maintaining anonymity, and the principle behind anonymity — of getting ourselves right-sized. From the workshop of the whole on A.A. inclusion, not exclusion, I heard both being sensitive to older members, to people who need rides to get to meetings, to taking meetings in to residences where folks live that cannot drive anymore. I also heard, "be welcoming to the younger members." I love the line, I won't quote it exactly, but it's this beautiful idea of making anonymity attractive and not shaming the young. Wow. Exactly. I heard lots of kindness expressed from the floor about people who are dual-addicted; who self-identify as dual-addicted. This is an issue for us when we talk about singleness of purpose, but the approach I heard was really loving. It was the language of the heart. Let's find a way to remember to keep our hearts open to people who say they are alcoholics, whatever else is going on.

And to Ami, our executive editor/publisher who shared her experience with the language of the heart when she attended a meeting that was in French, but she knew she was in the right place. Newton, of course, shared about service around the world in various languages. But again, with all those languages, we share the one language. Greg told you how we are

combining the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve in Punjabi in Canada, because we were at a regional forum in Vancouver and you told us “we need materials in Punjabi for our immigrant population here.” So, of course, we want to help. You all do the work, quite frankly, but we can provide the materials that you need, as long as you put your dollar in that basket — the Seventh Tradition. For then we can provide the Punjabi books. That's how it works.

I heard how hard you are working to reach your inmates here in Canada. I loved the presentation — I don't know how many of you were in Diana's workshop last night, but I found it very moving, and Robert's presentation addresses a big issue, how do we reach those folks in prison so that they can find a better life — whether they will ever get out or not. So, on processing all that and many more ideas that I took notes on, I come away with one question that I will leave you with, a question I think is important to figure out. And that is, what more can we do to make our service structure reflect our inclusiveness? Please think about it, talk about it, and share ideas. As Bill W. wrote (and you know we all love to quote Bill — I do, too.): “Honesty with ourselves and others gets us sober, but it is tolerance that keeps us that way.”

Listening to you, I know that A.A. in Canada — and A.A. wherever I've been — is full of passionate, smart, and kind people who will work hard, do service, and keep the hand of A.A. out there. I look forward to your solutions on ensuring that the hand of A.A. is extended to anyone, anywhere, reaching towards you — and that you will work to ensure inclusion in our service structure. Merci beaucoup! I look forward to seeing many of you again on the road of happy destiny.