

# **PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY**

## **Quebec City**

### **MAY 28, 2022**

#### **Theme: A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service**

People already started arriving at 8:00 am, There was excitement in the air, with lot of laughter and exclamations of joy. Handshakes and hugs after long separations, friends were happy to meet again. Registration went smoothly.

#### **Opening remarks by the Chairperson**

Hello. My name is Michel C. and I have the privilege of serving Area 89 as Chairperson, it is 9:00 a.m. and time to start the day. I welcome everyone and thank you for coming in such large numbers. He added that he wished to borrow the words of a Fiori-Séguin song to express how he felt: "It feels good to see each other, together in a place of hope.

We began with a Moment of Silence followed by the Serenity Prayer. Then Michel announced that the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts would be read by members from each of the 4 areas of Quebec. Traditions 1 to 6 were read by Daniel from area 87 and 7 to 12 by André from area 88. Concepts 1 to 6 were read by Ghislaine from area 89 and 7 to 12 by Benoit from area 90.

Afterwards, Michel said that the involvement of so many members shows us once again how the Alcoholics Anonymous movement is alive and well. He also emphasized the work done by his collaborators.

As you can see from your program, we have a very full day and I hope it will be stimulating for all of you.

Just a quick note... if you're looking for something to criticize on this day, you'll definitely find it. We tried to please everyone. The complaints department is on the 30th floor, there is no elevator...

I wish you an excellent day.

Anne S., a delegate from Area 89, gave a presentation on the origins of the Provincial Assembly.

Her presentation is followed by that of Normand P, Area 90 delegate, on: *How does A.A. do everything to recover, unite and serve?*

Lucien J., Chair of the Board of Directors of *La Vigne*, gave us a very nice presentation and reminded us of the importance of our magazine.

We were at 10:00 a.m. and Michel C. introduced us to the workshops that will focus on the 12th Concept's expected guarantees, specifying that the 12th Concept is the longest and most complex of all the Concepts. He added that if you don't understand this Concept well, it's not a big deal, but if you think you do, it's a much bigger one. He introduced the chairs who will be responsible for the workshops. In addition, he mentioned that the Archives committees were also meeting during this day.

The workshop themes have been chosen in relation to the Conference workshops or hot topics and each area has kindly agreed to prepare the workshop corresponding to the chosen theme. There will be a secretary in each of the workshops to allow us to share the discussions in the plenary session in the afternoon.

Theme	Area	Chair
1st and 2nd guarantee of the 12th Concept	87	André D.
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4th guarantee of the 12th Concept	88	Céline L.
5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> guarantee of the 12th Concept	90	Melanie C.
Recovery in times of a pandemic	89	Gisèle V.
Anonymity and social media	89	Carl S.

A short break was taken to allow people to get to the various locations and the workshops began at 10:00 am. As we walked through the halls, we could feel the excitement and enthusiasm of the members. The workshops provided opportunities for exchange, and no one wanted to miss anything, which gave us some very interesting results.

At 11:45 we took another break and had lunch. The host area leadership had ordered a box lunch, for \$18.

The workshops resumed at 1:15 p.m. with a return to the main room at 2:15 p.m. Once everyone was assembled, each workshop secretary came in to report on what had come out of their group.

Afterwards, we were fortunate to welcome our new Regional Trustee for Eastern Canada, Joyce S., who spoke with us about the relevance of involvement in AA and drew parallels with her own experience.

Claude G., delegate from Area 87 came to talk to us about diversity.

To conclude the work of the delegates, Mario L., delegate from Area 88, where the first provincial assembly on Zoom was held last year, showed us how to overcome fear.

As Chair of the host area Michel C. spoke, emphasizing the benefits of serving in AA. He ended his speech by sharing an idea he had retained from the old writings of C. Jung and B. Spinoza, which are still valid today, that is, that we must develop, individually and for ourselves, a form of spirituality, excluding any form of religion. He concluded by thanking all the participants for coming, all those who helped him in this task, all those who made the event possible and wishing them a safe journey home.

Attendance was estimated at nearly 175 members. He closed the day by reading the Statement of Responsibility and the Declaration of Unity.

## **HISTORY OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Anne S. - Delegate area 89**

Hello to all of you, my name is Anne S. delegate for Area 89. I take a few seconds to savor this moment.

It is a great pleasure to be your host area for this event.

It has been more than 2 years since we have had a face-to-face event with the 4 areas. We are very happy to welcome you. May you find here the AA spirit that is so pleasant to feel.

I will admit that this subject that was assigned to me was not easy to develop, I was offered help and I accepted. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the archivists of our areas who collaborated in finding the most accurate traces for this presentation. I want to say that it is certainly not perfect, but we all did our best.

First, what is a provincial assembly? A provincial assembly is a day of exchange of views and experience between members of the 4 areas of Quebec who fraternize among themselves and create exceptional bonds.

It is a privilege to realize that we all have different ways of serving our members in our areas, but that our love for Alcoholics Anonymous binds us together.

My favorite suggestion in approaching this kind of event is "Take a newcomer with you" they are very well attuned to all things new.

The day before (so yesterday), we met the 4 steering committees at what is called an "inter area" meeting. This is my eighth year attending. I am delighted every time. I must confess that along the way I have met some extraordinary servants.

I will try in all humility to give you a little history of the assembly. At the beginning, a member participating in a Regional forum had the idea to make the members of our 4 areas experience and multiply the energy of service that was present at the forum. Naturally, there were a few pitfalls.

The Provincial assembly as we know it today was not always fluid and the original formula was somewhat different.

Traces of this were discovered in 1993, when a Regional Trustee, Marc P., proposed to set up a day that would bring together all four areas.

His vision at the time was based on what he had experienced at a Regional forum, and he was convinced that this could transmit the desire to serve and live in unity.

It was also at that time that the inter-area committee that brought together the 4 steering committees was created and that the two activities ended up being joined.

I propose that we go back to the past, I have used an excerpt from an article published in the *Nord-Est* bulletin of February-March 1995 I believe, which reveals what happened. The article reads as follows:

*'For several years, some areas of Quebec (including the Northeast Area) had been questioning the Provincial Committee formula, which was established at a time when A.A. members in Quebec could not, as they do today, rely on either a French Publications Board or a La Vigne Board to oversee the smooth operation of these services to the entire province.*

*Some even went so far as to recommend the outright dissolution of the Provincial Committee. At the last meeting of the Provincial Committee, held on November 26, 1994, in Drummondville, the participating members made a decision that could have major repercussions on future provincial meetings. It was decided at this last meeting of the Provincial Committee to abolish the Provincial Committee "in its present form".*

*It was under the impetus of the North-East Quebec Area that this resolution was made, following a proposal by the then Chairperson, Noël D., in accordance with a decision made by the North-East area Steering Committee. Naturally, this did not happen without some bitter discussions. Some representatives of the Area opposed the proposal to the end, almost with the energy of despair. These members, who were said to be devoted, feared that they would be left with nothing at the provincial level, that they would lose the only activity that would bring all the provincial servants together at the same table.*

*Their fear was certainly not unfounded, but in the end, everyone had to be convinced that the current formula was going to be abolished and replaced by another one, more open, more encompassing, allowing for more servants from all areas and at all levels, in a true forum for sharing and the exchange of views.*

*The history of this debate already dates back several years. At all times, one or the other of the areas of Quebec had had reservations about the nature and operation of the Provincial Committee. Another area even passed a resolution to boycott the meetings of the Provincial Committee – but never did go through with it.*

*In the end, it was the argument of greater openness and sharing that was retained and it was the appointment of an ad hoc committee to study the issue in depth that allowed our area's proposal to move forward.*

*Now that the Provincial Committee in its present form was no more, it remained for this ad hoc committee to define a new formula or framework for our future Provincial assemblies.*

*The formula that seemed to come up most often, at that time, was the Provincial assembly, as it had already been done (in Victoriaville, in Quebec City last year, in the Laurentians next June).*

*Basically, it could be a matter of bringing together, say once a year, as many current and former area servants as possible, at all levels, to do something similar to a Regional forum, with workshops, debriefings, general exchange of views and questions, etc.*

*This is, of course, but one of the suggestions for redesigning the provincial meeting format, and the ad hoc committee will have a multitude of possibilities to consider in its deliberations. The composition of the ad hoc committee was left to the discretion of the areas. The only parameters agreed upon were the number of representatives per area (two) and the date by which the committee was to report back (June 10, 1995, in Area 90).*

*Once again, despite well-founded fears, the various members responsible for the four areas of Quebec agreed to move forward and try to improve, if possible, the quality of services to members. For, as Bill W. said, "good is sometimes the enemy of better". End of the article*

*We recognize in this journey the same questions, the same doubts, the same fears, and the same enthusiasm that was reflected in the beginning of our Movement.*

***"Every birth has its share of pain and joy."***

*The first Provincial assembly was held in Area 88, chaired by Hugues S., former delegate, and founder of the Area 88 Archives Committee. It was held in Victoriaville. The Provincial Committee held a meeting during the workshops. It was a success.*

*The following year, it was the turn of Area 89 to organize it. It was a difficult experience; expectations were not fulfilled and there was very little participation.*

*However, these difficulties did not affect the following years and the desire to continue the activity, on the contrary, the 4 areas used them to avoid making the same mistakes.*

*Today we can say that the Assembly has become an expected activity for our members. In addition, it is organized on a rotating basis between the four areas.*

*What we're doing now is a lot like a Regional forum, with presentations and workshops, but the heart of it is definitely the heart-to-heart discussions by the coffee machine or in the hallways.*

*Over the years, a beautiful spirit of collaboration has developed between the 4 areas, and we are all partly responsible for this. There have been ups and downs, and we let the AA spirit guide us.*

***This year's assembly theme is the same as the Conference theme: A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: United in Love and Service.***

*It has been a tradition over the past few years to link the theme of the assembly with that of the Conference. What the future holds for us... that's another story...*

*My greatest wish for today: That this day may ignite the spark of service in many of us!*

## HOW DO AA MEMBERS ALL RECOVER, UNITE AND SERVE? Normand P. - Delegate Area 90

The theme of our General Service Conference this year, *A.A. Comes of Age 2.0, Unified in Love and Service*, is fitting for the change in the communications world that the Fellowship has experienced in recent years. As our basic text says, "if you have decided that you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it – then you are ready to take certain *steps*". Our members found multiple ways to communicate to meet the challenges of not being able to meet in person, whether it be for recovery, unity or service. We had begun to explore new technologies long before the pandemic physically isolated so many of us, and of course the pandemic has taken us forward in leaps and bounds.

As Bill said in 1960 (*Our Great Responsibility, A.A. in an Age of Change*), "*We are living in an age of change*". "Our 12 Steps will probably not change, nor will our Traditions, obviously. As for the way we communicate, the way we organize, the way we operate, the way we serve, we hope that will continue to change, always for the better." So, the ways of communicating have changed considerably and continue to change since Bill spoke those words in 1960.

Our first Tradition, in our book *The 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions*, reminds us of the importance of Unity: "No member can survive without carrying the A.A. message. As a result of this 12th Step work, once a group is formed, we come to another realization: most alcoholics cannot recover without the support of a group. Groups have adapted over the course of the pandemic, including meeting off-site or virtually, or in hybrid form, or the old-fashioned in-person method. It is amazing to see how our groups have adapted to the new normal and are adapting even as it continues to change. From in-person to virtual, from virtual to in-person the groups have undergone many changes. Some have adapted well and others are still in transition. Many virtual groups are here to stay, as there is what is called *AA magic*. Virtual technology has allowed us to adapt and continue to carry the message. Affected for 2 years, we thought our lives were reduced and diminished, yet during this time many new people have joined the movement. They are finding a new freedom and happiness through the virtual meetings.

Although most of us have remained active, both in recovery and in service, some people have isolated themselves and withdrawn from the whole A.A. service structure. In our future outreach, we must find ways to reach out to, or rather seek out, those members who have disappeared.

While all signs point to a final exit from this pandemic, it would be wise to retain the lessons learned. We would be wise to continue to progress in learning and applying the new technologies that have allowed us to meet and to deliver the message. We still have much to learn, both in terms of getting the message out effectively and in maintaining our Unity through our service meetings, developing a better understanding of the hybrid method.

Our flexibility has grown by leaps and bounds, and we hope to need no further urgency to continue to make progress in these areas. We need to remain relevant. We have to be ready as an association to do whatever it takes. I am ready. Are you ready? Are we ready?

## **LA VIGNE 2.0 A MAGAZINE IN EVOLUTION**

### **Lucien J. - Chair of the Board of Directors, *La Vigne***

I have 10 minutes to tell you about **La Vigne 2.0**. That we started printing La Vigne again in January 2022 that we had **a circulation of 5,000 copies** in January 2022 and already after 2 issues, we had to increase to 5,500 copies, because we were running out of La Vigne, lately. This is encouraging, and at this rate, we may be able to reach the 2019 circulation level of about 6,600 La Vigne **SOLD**. The fact that La Vigne was distributed in January 2022 is due to the hard work of the Publishing Committee members who worked hard every month from August 2021 through December so that we could successfully reprint La Vigne 2.0. This was not an easy task considering the whole issue of the rotation of members responsible for the La Vigne in the groups and districts. Some of the groups were closed.

I have 9 minutes left, to tell you about the Publishing Committee: in July 2021, **the Board of Directors** made the decision to split into 2 to create the Publishing Committee. This committee which meets monthly and brings together all the workers involved in La Vigne namely: The editor and her assistant, the distribution manager, the archivist, the webmaster, the Audiomix technician (for the audio part of the shares), the administrative assistant, the person in charge of the promotion committee, the 4 RLVRs (Area La Vigne Representative )of our 4 areas, the secretary, the treasurer and your humble servant, the Chair. Since we were meeting monthly, we decided to meet via Zoom, thus avoiding exorbitant costs. For its part, the Board of Directors continued to work on major policy and financial issues by meeting bi-monthly.

- I have 8 minutes left to explain the name change of La Vigne: as there was a break of a full year without La Vigne and when we started to publish it online, the format was changed (fewer pages and new columns). We discussed it at length and came to the conclusion that we should identify La Vigne differently to mark the break. We had to give another name to La Vigne, without losing its own identity. When we took over the printing of La Vigne, we decided to keep the name: "La Vigne 2.0" to mark the continuity of the year 2021, post-pandemic. With the change of name came new columns, new things to come and optimism about a promising future.

- I have 7 minutes left to tell you about the **distribution of La Vigne through the structure**. La Vigne has not had it easy since March 13, 2020. For La Vigne, time came to a standstill with the arrival of the pandemic. With groups, districts, committees and areas suspending all their activities, in order to comply with government guidelines, our beautiful magazine had its only means of distribution removed, that is **distribution of La Vigne through the districts and groups**. The weakness at that time - we realize it today - was the distribution network. What was our strength was actually an Achilles heel. There were thousands of members ready to receive La Vigne, but our distribution process was blocked by the groups closing down. Before March 20, 2020, no one had asked this organizational question. Should we revisit how La Vigne is distributed? The answer is "Yes. Distribution through the structure had served us superbly well, since 1965, it is true; until the wall, of March 13, 2020.

I have 6 minutes left to tell you that we needed to find a way to reach members who wanted to receive La Vigne at a reasonable price. In an ideal world, all La Vigne readers would have an individual subscription. Thus, the magazine would be sent, individually and directly, to each of the subscribers. Everyone would receive their copy at the same time.

No more problems with distribution in one district, in a neighboring area, before another district in that same area. But it's utopian to think like that. The groups must continue to buy La Vigne, for the newcomers, to do the 12th Step work, La Vigne being an indispensable tool at a preferential rate. You can now subscribe individually to receive your favorite magazine, directly at home and thus ensure that we do not live the dramatic situation of 2020.

Speaking of subscriptions, I only have 5 minutes left to explain the Board's decision to respect the **MONTHLY** digital subscriptions made in 2021, versus the **BIMESTERLY** printed La Vigne. It was not easy. At the Board, we had long discussions and several scenarios were put on the table. The one that made the most sense and was the fairest to everyone was to enforce monthly digital subscriptions with bi-monthly digital continuity. So, let's take the example of Richard who took out a 2-year (monthly) digital subscription in January 2021. He expects to view 24 digital editions of La Vigne, also known as 24 issues. His subscription should end in December 2022, i.e. 12 issues in 2021 and 12 issues in 2022. Since La Vigne has returned to bimonthly publication, his subscription will instead end in December 2023, 12 monthly digital issues in 2021 that he has already viewed, plus 12 bimonthly digital issues that will run from 2022 to 2023.

Now, I only have 4 minutes left to talk to you about the cost of subscriptions. You may have noticed that the cost of a La Vigne **subscription** has decreased to \$24 for one year or \$42 for two years. This subscription gives you access to both the print and digital La Vigne, including archives and audio. As I mentioned exactly 4 minutes ago, having an agreement with Canada Post allows us to mail your La Vigne to your home for one-third the cost of 2019. And the more subscriptions we have, in fact, when we have over 1000 Vignes to mail individually, we will pay almost a quarter of what it cost us in 2019. The digital subscription remains the same price at \$20 for 6 issues and \$35 for 12 issues. Cheaper **packages**, but more diverse content.

I have 3 minutes left to tell you about the online payment platform. Many of you sometimes have difficulty purchasing your subscription online with the well-known PayPal platform. We have worked with the business division of the Caisse Desjardins to establish an agreement with Global Payment, in order to change the platform from PayPal to Global Payment. What this will change for regular users: NOTHING. The payment is done as usual, but the platform will be different. What will change for users who are inexperienced on the Internet and all this platform gobbledygook, accounts, etc.? **A lot**: the treasurer or administrative assistant will have a VIRTUAL TERMINAL that can take over and complete the transaction for you as long as you pay by credit card. This will be similar to what happens when you book a hotel room or make a purchase over the phone and you have to provide your credit card number. We are trying to improve our service offering to make it easier for you. The Global Payment Platform will be up and running as soon as we have completed the training.

I only have 2 minutes left to tell you about the move. We had to physically move our business office. We are now located in Longueuil, at 1079 Chemin Chambly, suite 205. Don't try to write down the address you will find it on the back of the advertising card you received this morning. If you don't have it yet, try to get at least one for your group. On the front, you will be able to see the evolution of our La Vigne from 1965 to today, sorted by decade. As for the back of this card, it contains a wealth of useful information to help you in your work to promote our La Vigne. On this card, you will find all the information you need to subscribe or change your address, by mail, phone, fax or email. Also, you will find all the information to send a share or for a convention announcement. Each of the 4 areas has at least 1,000 of these cards. Just ask your delegate or RLVR (Area La Vigne Rep).

I have only one minute left to thank and congratulate all the artisans of La Vigne, all those I named earlier (8 minutes ago). You probably know one of them. Do not hesitate to congratulate them for their work, over the last year. Because without them, we would not have **new columns** like: Behind the walls, My lifestyle during the pandemic, The opinion of a professional, Readers' corner. **The ad hoc "promotion and concept" committee** is currently working on innovative ideas that will be shared with you in the coming months. Also, we thank you, as our editor has received **many shares** for future issues. We are also working on lowering our operating costs to provide you with less expensive **packages**, but more diverse content. As you can see, all the volunteers have been hard at work since the reprinting of La Vigne 2.0. We rely on your subscriptions to give you more and more. **Let's work together to keep our La Vigne 2.0 evolving!**

### **TWELFTH CONCEPT The Basic Safeguards of the Conference:**

In all its deliberations, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

This Concept is Article 12 of the Conference Charter, and there is good reason to place it in this context. Taken as a whole, our Conference By-Laws are the essence of a non-legal agreement between A.A. groups and their trustees made in 1955. They are the agreed-upon basis for the operation of the General Service Conference. In detail, they appear to be a flexible document, with the first eleven articles easily amended at any time by the Conference itself. Article 12 of the Charter, however, is in a class of its own. Any amendment or repeal of any of its six Vital Guarantees could not be made without the written consent of three-fourths of all A.A. groups listed in the directory, who would actually have to vote on any such proposal, after no less than six months of careful consideration. While amendments to Concept 12 have been made difficult in this way, they have not been made impossible. It is obvious that all these guarantees are of enormous and continuing importance to the general welfare of A.A. That is why we believe that changes should be permitted only if it becomes quite clear that they are defective, and then only with the agreement of the A.A. groups themselves. We have therefore placed them among A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, based on the intuition that they are to A.A. world Service what the Traditions are to A.A. as a whole. The Guarantees of Article 12 of the Charter constitute a solemn pledge by the General Service Conference that it will abide by the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous; that it can never become a place of considerable wealth or power; that its financial policy will always be prudent; that it will never be an absolute authority; that it will observe the principle of substantial unanimity; that it will never take punitive action; that it will never incite public controversy; that it will never be anything but a servant of A.A.; that it will always remain democratic in spirit. These Guarantees show the qualities of prudence and spirituality that our General Service Conference should always have. Barring unforeseen flaws, they are the permanent link that firmly binds the Conference to the association it serves. There are some important aspects of these Guarantees that deserve attention. For example, they are all about prudence - in matters of money, in our personal relationships and in our dealings with the world around us. For us, prudence is a practical middle ground, a channel for safely navigating between fear on the one hand and recklessness on the other. The habit of prudence creates a definite climate, the only climate where harmony, efficiency and steady spiritual progress

are possible. The Guarantees express the wisdom of planning for the future from the lessons of the past. They are all our protection against unnecessary error and against our very natural attraction to wealth, prestige, power and other such temptations. Concept 12 begins with this general statement: "In all its deliberations, the General Service Conference shall conform to the spirit of the A.A. Tradition..." Of all the groups and entities in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Conference should be the one that feels most bound by the A.A. Tradition. In fact, the Conference is called "the custodian of the A.A. Tradition. The Traditions themselves delineate what should be the best way to conduct our services. They express the principles and attitudes of prudence which ensure harmony. Therefore, the Twelve Traditions of A.A. are the model of unity and operation upon which our General Service Conference should take the greatest example.

Area

87

First Guarantee - "The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power.

Second Guarantee - "The Conference shall, as a matter of sound administration, have sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle."

Third Guarantee - "None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others."

Area

88

Fourth Guarantee - "The Conference will make all its important decisions after discussion and voting, seeking the greatest possible unanimity whenever possible."

Fifth Guarantee - "The Conference will never take personal punitive action or take any action which may cause public controversy."

Area

90

Sixth Guarantee - "The Conference will never act as a government, although it serves Alcoholics Anonymous, and will always, like the association it serves, remain democratic in action and thought."

### **Workshop on the First and Second Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept**

***Chair: André D., Alternate Delegate, Area 87***

***30 participants***

The workshops at the Provincial assembly 2022 addressed the 6 Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept, which itself is Article 12 of the Conference Charter.

It was proposed to Area 87 that the workshop topic be the First and Second Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept.

What are the Twelfth Concept Guarantees? The 6 Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept are to World Services what the Twelve Traditions are to the whole of A.A.

Definition : The guarantees of Article 12 of the Charter constitute a solemn pledge by the General Service Conference that it will abide by the Twelve Traditions of A.A.; that it can never become a place of considerable wealth or power; that its financial policy will always be prudent; that it will never be an absolute authority; that it will observe the principle of substantial unanimity; that it will never take punitive action; that it will never incite public controversy; that it will never be anything but a service to A.A.; that it will always remain democratic in spirit. These assurances show the qualities of prudence and spirituality that our General Service Conference should always have. Barring unforeseen flaws, they are the permanent link that firmly binds the Conference to the association it serves. These Guarantees are all advice for

prudence - in matters of money, in our personal relationships, and in our relationships with the world around us.

**First Guarantee** - "The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power."

**1. *One way to prevent a concentration of wealth and power is to practice rotation and thus join the principle of sharing A.A. experience. It is also a way to practice service sponsorship. How is this principle practiced in your areas, committees, districts and groups?***

- Would like more service sponsorship, participation in the provincial assembly. is one way to do this
- Good enough, time to go. It's good, but cruel, we know too much: control. It is a privilege to be accompanied in one's task, to give back to the next, to call before resigning.
- Guidelines to support the succession, the succession is ideal, but it is necessary to do with the availability of each one
- Learning on the job, with no supervision, free the space rather than poorly filled task, lack of servants forces the same people to perform the same task beyond the rotation, vicious circle, AA would be better if the rotation was respected.
- Complete a term, more rotation=better being of the group when you become indispensable, it's time to leave, serving one on one is more effective for a GSR.
- Several hats in different groups are questionable
- Rotation is essential, help from others is essential instead of working in silos

**2. *We must use some money and we must have some authority to serve. But to what extent? Where are the limits and how to draw them?***

- Years of sobriety required to hold a position, a baby boom with little face-to-face experience, dynamic, challenging
- Group owners vs. members used to rotation
- The topic of money in a business meeting is revealing
- What do we do with the big money? informed about the money
- Humility, the reaction of members to money as a source of acrimony, if we always come back to the principles, we will always be able to meet our needs
- Fear, financial insecurity, bad choices, treasurer, stockpiling, etc.
- Rotation prevents control
- More and more difficulties to structure our groups

**3. *How do we guard against becoming a "seat of perilous wealth or power"? Do we tend to act as a government in our deliberations and decisions?***

- Many old members act as a government and prevent conversation
- The world is changing and so are we

- Group conscience, common welfare group inventories, it is the role of all of us to prevent the concentration of power.
- Why we govern, nature is afraid of the vacuum, lack of succession, result of a vicious circle and the government settles, the goal of the group is the newcomer, to be a welcoming group for newcomers.
- The vote, a group owner has only one vote, there is a difference between governance and leadership, the difference is humility
- The pandemic has greatly affected the service structure of our groups, where is the line between the need and the principle of rotation

**4. *Are we afraid to spend too much of our contribution money? In fact, are we stingy?***

- In Montreal, the cost of venues is a real issue.

**5. *In an ideal world, how much does each group have to contribute in 2022 to fund all of our global service activities?***

- One month to the district, one month to NY
- Member for NY ideal
- Large groups more than small ones
- Abstinence anniversary to NY
- 7.43 Ideal

**Guarantee Two** - "The Conference shall, as a matter of sound administration, be prudent in securing sufficient operating funds and reserve."

**1. *How do we practice prudent use of our Seventh Tradition contributions and literature revenue?***

- The role of the group conscience, we pay our expenses and send our surplus
- Never needed, when we lack \$\$\$ we put our hands in our pockets
- Prudent reserve can be a source of dissension and problems.
- Never seen a group closed for lack of \$\$\$
- Covid has made a difference
- During the pandemic, the entire association supported our World Services
- If we are short of money, we should not hesitate to ask our members to keep our doors open
- The group does not make a profit with publications, areas yes; inform our members
- The costs are hidden, and it looks like it's free.

**2. *Do we lack faith when we insist on solvency?***

- The prudent reserve issue is not so important
- Our world runs on \$\$\$; the pandemic the prudent reserve has allowed to survive in hard times, the prudent reserve must be prudent

- Lack of faith is when a group accumulates in case
- AA's reputation is based in part on its solvency.

**3. *How do we avoid becoming a "seat of perilous wealth or power"? Do we tend to act as a government in our deliberations and decisions?***

- We should have this kind of workshop more often
- Between what is said and written, we often do not act. We should stop talking about the rain and the sun and take care of our world, sponsorship in action.

**4. *Does the reserve fund in our areas discourage groups from sending their own contributions?***

- Member information on what we do with the \$\$\$, communication
- Do not tarnish A.A.'s name by not being solvent
- If a group conscience is well informed, the group will know what to do with the \$\$\$
- Prudent reserve varies from area to area
- We used to be spendthrifts and now we try to be careful
- There are unnecessary expenses, the money could be better spent
- Money talks, we must explain our own situation and avoid generalities; beyond the figures, there is a reality that is very different for some and others

**5. *Should we sell our publications at a loss?***

- In an ideal world, yes
- Profit on publications used to balance the budget
- Give out the brochures
- NO
- All money matters in A.A.; are designed to reach the suffering alcoholic
- The fact that there is a price gives value to an object in our world
- Free access could have the opposite effect
- Our publications are very affordable, why sell them at a loss

**6. *Should we give money to members in need?***

- No, if you want to help an alcoholic, don't give him money
- As an individual you can help someone,
- Members can be helped to take responsibility for their money
- Let's give him love and attention, that's rewarding
- We are not a counter; we welcome the newcomer with love, and we are there to give him hope
- *I wouldn't want to be treasurer in an area that would lend to its members.*

## **Workshop on the Third and Fourth Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept**

**Chairs: Céline L and Guy D.**

**Secretary: Mario L.**

**30 participants**

**Third Guarantee** - *No member of the Conference shall ever be in a position of authority over another. We spoke of this principle earlier in the Fourth Concept, but "it is so important that we have made it the subject of this Guarantee," where we take "a strong stand against the creation of undue authority at any point in the structure of our Conference.*

### **1. How do you define this notion of authority in A.A.?**

#### **CHAIR'S REMARKS - INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC**

This concept is presented in different ways in our literature: The second Tradition speaks of a trusted servant who does not govern. In the first concept, it is about ultimate authority (the group consciences), in the third concept, it is about a delegation of authority from the group consciences to the General Service Conference. In the fourth concept, with the right to vote, this authority is relativized. In the tenth concept, the link between authority and responsibility is made by determining ways of establishing levels of authority. In the eleventh concept, the General Service Board Trustees are asked to give full latitude to the directors of the various service committees, which are considered autonomous groups with rights to act, plan, carry out and report.

#### **ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS**

When we talk about authority, we are talking about the decision-making rights of servants in A.A.: members of a group conscience, G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, delegates. These servants may, even after consulting with others, have to make a decision on the spot, given new information they have received elsewhere.

Authority is intimately linked to responsibility: one should not hide information when one is responsible and rather try to bring as much as possible to enlighten consciences.

Authority may come from the fact that a servant has undeniable experience, which somehow sets him apart.

The ultimate authority, however, it must be remembered, is a Higher Power that acts through group consciences, while leaders are merely trusted servants.

The ultimate authority is the collective conscience that must preserve unity.

It is important to remember that we alcoholics are allergic to authority for the most part. We must always make decisions according to the majority, allying ourselves with the majority, even if it goes against the grain.

This is contrary to our original belief. We must adhere to the decisions made by the respective consciences of the GSR, DCM, group chair and others.

## ***2. What do you think the difference is between authority, responsibility and leadership?***

### CHAIR'S REMARKS - INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

The tenth concept speaks to us of the links to be made between authority, to which responsibilities are associated. The ninth concept suggests the proper selection of servants: No matter how carefully we establish the principles and relationships in our service structure, no matter how well we distribute authority and responsibility, the functioning of that structure cannot be better than the personal performance of those who must ensure its permanence and functioning. This introduces the notion of leadership.

### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

For some, a good leader in A.A. must be able to build trust with other servants.

Leadership is about having the ability to bring people together, to be inspiring to others.

One cannot dissociate the fact that a leader must know his or her file, have experience in order to bring people to the right place.

A leader in A.A. starts out as a member who is involved at any level of the A.A. structure. He or she must be able to create excitement about the service and have a ripple effect among the members.

The leader has a desire to develop skills, be open-minded and listen to the needs of members and servants.

The leader takes care of A.A., always with great love, welcome and respect. A leader must be attractive, especially to the group.

Even if you have been working in AA for a long time, at different levels, you must question your own leadership and examine yourself on this point.

We will want to follow a person who has good leadership.

The leader must have a sense of compromise. He/she is willing to listen to others and is not afraid of change.

When members designate a member to be responsible in any way, that person can be said to be demonstrating leadership.

**3. Do you have examples of abuse of authority by members in groups, districts, areas?**

**CHAIR'S REMARKS - INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC**

By undue authority, we mean taking up too much space, overstepping the boundaries established in any way in every service offered and to be offered to A.A. members. It is also a matter of preserving unity at all costs and respecting the Second Tradition as best as possible.

**ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS**

One person may have the upper hand over members and cause them to make decisions too quickly, simply out of ego trip.

A person may take advantage of the fact that he or she holds a position in A.A. to try to hide information from the membership and to feel good about himself/herself.

In one district, a DCM resigned in the middle of a district meeting out of pure resentment.

Members of a group conscience calling each other and agreeing to change the way their group does things, without waiting for the next business committee.

Beware of the hard cores of the groups, those servants who have been in the group for a good number of years, and who out of good will unduly guide the decisions to be made by the group conscience. This can lead to newcomers not joining, since everything seems to be decided in advance.

There are also those members who leave their group conscience out of resentment, thinking that this will cause the other members to change their minds.

Beware of group owners, says one participant. They can make the notion of group conscience illusory.

When a GSR in a group assigns tasks to members directly, he or she is demonstrating undue authority.

The principle of rotation is very helpful in getting rid of overbearing servants.

Guidelines are also good tools for removing any undue authority from members, as they establish the ways the group, the district, the area operate and function.

The best antidote to undue authority is in the literature. Everything is described in them. It is necessary to use this means to bring back to order the one who has the desire to dominate.

We are responsible for putting an end to any undue authority by discussing this topic in business meetings.

**Fourth Guarantee** - The Conference will make all its important decisions after *discussion and voting*, seeking *the greatest possible unanimity whenever possible*. This Guarantee, on the one hand, constitutes "a safeguard against any haste or arrogance on the part of a simple majority, and, on the other hand, takes into account the rights and frequent wisdom of the minority, however small. This principle ensures that all important matters, time permitting, will be widely debated until a substantial majority supports each crucial decision.

***1. Is this notion of taking time to discuss important issues properly understood and applied in your groups, your districts, your area?***

**CHAIR'S REMARKS - INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC**

The facilitator discusses the twelfth concept, which, unlike the other eleven concepts, cannot be changed unless 75% of the group conscience agrees, after having discussed it more than six months before.

Who has not attended meetings where some people do everything to shorten the meeting, in order to end it as quickly as possible, and this, by avoiding going to seek everyone's point of view. This guarantee talks about the importance of listening to all members, of not being afraid of controversy, because discussion is not the same as raising a controversy, but rather of seeking the greatest possible consensus.

There is a right of appeal, a right of petition and a right of grievance vested in all members that allow all members to express their disagreement and to ensure that consciences are more widely enlightened. This is what this guarantee is all about.

**ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS**

For some, our emotional side can make us reluctant to discuss, avoiding to listen properly, especially when they disagree with others' ideas.

It is important to make an effort to always go around the table to encourage participants to speak, thus ensuring that the point being discussed is well understood by all.

Some people will want to schedule meetings at inappropriate times, knowing that this way some people will not be able to participate in the discussion. This sounds like undue authority.

The moral is to do everything possible to bring as many members as possible into the discussion.

It is often necessary to ask oneself, when the debate is a bit heated, if it is not necessary to postpone the discussion, in order to lower tensions and obtain more arguments, more information.

In an A.A. area in Quebec, during the area committee meetings, there are no floor proposals (proposal submitted and adopted the same day), mainly when it comes to making changes to the structure of the area. The subject to be discussed must be submitted to the consciences of the districts and groups and be dealt with at the general meetings.

It is important that the DCM understand this guarantee so that it can be applied at district and area meetings.

It is important to ensure that everyone has equal time to speak, as undue authority may take the floor at the expense of the other participants. Everyone must speak before they are allowed to speak again.

In our regular meetings, it is possible to ask for members' opinions, via a question or suggestion box, on such hot topics as removing the Lord's Prayer at the end of the meetings.

Remember that the expression of resentment is also a form of opinion. It is important to listen to the minority who may bring additional insight to the issue at hand.

***2 It talks about the wisdom of listening to the minority, which is called the right of appeal (right to petition). Is this concept properly applied in your group, district, and area meetings? Give examples of the benefits of applying this right.***

#### CHAIR'S REMARKS - INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

The right to appeal is a concept that is fairly well known and understood by the members. The right to petition, however, is less well known. In the book ***Our Great Responsibility, page 150***, an actual fact about the right to petition is reported. It is recalled that when the notion of a conference was brought up, several older members were not keen on the idea of creating a Conference. So, they signed a petition that was sent to all groups. This way of doing things did not have the desired effect and instead embittered the members.

There is also the right to grievance: An employee at the G.S.O. can file a grievance if he/she feels aggrieved, just as in organizations other than AA.

## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Most participants said they were not aware of the right to petition and grievance.

Some participants questioned what are called floor actions that can be announced, discussed and agreed upon the same day. They relate this to the previous question about the importance of debating issues before making hasty decisions.

The two delegates present (Guy and Mario) defined the way decisions are made at the Conference, that they are postponed as long as the members of the Conference do not feel comfortable with the topics under consideration. The example given is that of the change made to the preamble text, while no longer speaking.

### ***3. At the conference, proposals are adopted by a two-thirds vote of the participants. Is there a connection with the notion of ultimate authority?***

#### CHAIR'S REMARKS: INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

The chairperson spoke about the ultimate authority according to the first concept, that is, the whole of the group consciences which, together with the district and area consciences and the Conference, form the collective conscience of the movement. At the Conference, there are 93 delegates, 24 administrators and other representatives of the G.S.O. who have the right to vote (right of participation). It can be deduced that the groups, through their delegates, have a majority representation and that they retain decision-making power on the subjects dealt with at the conference.

## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

The discussion did not take place due to lack of time.

### ***Other comments***

Participants expressed their appreciation for the workshop. Many are considering attending workshops on the topic.

Many have no idea of the scope of the concepts. They are in the process of better understanding and integrating the Traditions into the functioning of their group consciousness.

## **Workshop on the Fifth and Sixth Guarantees of the Twelfth Concept**

**Chair: Mélanie C**

**Secretary: Joanne I.**

**28 participants**

### **1. *Why does AA deem it unnecessary to impose personal punishment on those who violate their beliefs, principles or rules?***

- We have only one condition, the desire to stop drinking,
- Discussion on the 13th step that led to the exclusion of a member, is it a punishment or a treasurer who pays with the collection, can we exclude him? Yes, probably, but never forget to talk to them.
- If punishment is imposed, the member may relapse. We were often punished as children. Being welcomed with love can be a better way to help the suffering alcoholic, it's a more winning solution.
- This is the image of forgiveness. It is also thinking about the common welfare, the group conscience has the authority to ask a member to leave a meeting, on the other hand we have a duty to accompany him, because he is suffering. We are a society that does not impose punishments. The possible solution will be chosen by the member himself, i.e. relapse.
- Who are we to judge? Our guilt is strong enough, but we know we did wrong.
- If the person commits an error, our duty is to inform him, the statement of responsibility teaches us.
- GOOGLE definition: A punishment is an act or behavior that brings dishonor. We are entitled to say when there is a breach, but we deprive, and not rant behind the back of the wrongdoer.
- The importance of choosing our servants.

### **2. *How does A.A. live in peace with the world?***

- We can live in peace with the world if we do not get involved in controversies
- Living or letting live allows us to remain at peace. We do not endorse any cause, so life with the world remains at peace.
- The importance of concentrating on our steps helps to live in peace with oneself. Therefore, living in peace with the world, I am part of this world. If I project peace, people will never feel it. Everything starts from you. If you are well, others will be better off.

- If something bothers you in the other person, go and see inside yourself what it is. You will learn from this person. You will come to be at peace with yourself by entrusting the person to God and by praying.
- I found my peace in service, I was constantly in controversy, it allowed me to shut up and listen. And to change what I can change because when there is no more fighting, the war stops.
- If the other one disturbs you and you can defend him, you are impeding public information, it is harmful to the movement.
- Let go and become more ZEN

### **3. *So, what is our best defense?***

- Our best defense is the Serenity prayer. Our code of love and tolerance, let go and stop fighting.
- Welcome the person who attacks you. If you give him love, you have disarmed him...
- Do not retaliate. We don't have to defend ourselves, we have enough to do with those who want to change.
- Conflict often comes from uninformed people. Informed decisions if the others feel understood in their opinion, cannot develop conflicts.
- Be proactive if you see shortcomings by informing +++ Explain with love, it helps ensure the foundation is solid
- The importance of following the Steps, Traditions and Concepts
- If you get blasted, in public, surround yourself with good friends, talk, cry, vent. attacker You can't change the attacker, he will probably die like that. A given opinion is not unanimity. So, stay, don't leave. Talk to your sponsor
- Keep an open mind, honesty, 11th step, the spirituality of the program.

### **4. *What is our best protection tool?***

- Not speaking on my behalf makes me feel protected. I am a messenger.
- Talking to my sponsor before rather than after a business meeting and then you still talk to him after.
- Don't take myself seriously. I'm just a human being. Don't think that I have it.
- With the steps and the traditions, it is not me who speaks but the pages.
- My only protection is God. If I let him have the place, I am happy.
- I had unpleasant experiences because I did things my way. I was very afraid to come back. I was informed about the principles, in private, afterwards I read them in writing. Only the leadership I did my introspection I saw that I had things to change. From friends I kept my memories, but the 36 principles and humility.

- Protect the newcomers by sponsoring them, by making them read so that they are informed, this will reduce the attacks of the people who take pleasure in verbally demolishing the people who serve.
- Don't be condescending. The newcomer will feel like garbage, be careful how we give our information
- Talk less and act more, people are not blind they feel who you are.

**5. *What does it mean to "remain democratic in spirit and action"?***

- Tolerant, respectful, fair
- Ensuring freedom for everyone
- Practice the Serenity prayer
- Respect the principle of rotation
- Make room for others to serve AA
- I was told something very unpleasant, I managed to accept by reciting the Serenity prayer
- Collaborate with others
- I am responsible for the transmission of spiritual principles. I have to enlighten, but if the person wants to remain in the dark that's okay too.
- The information to enlighten and not to pass on my idea
- Two things alcoholics hate: one, change, and two, that things stay the same
- To rally does not mean that I agree. I'm saying that for mine to be common I won't go behind anyone's back. I respect different opinions
- I have the right to disagree, but that can lead to exclusion from a group, so I can feel sorry for myself or use it to grow. Minority can be a vehicle for change.

**6. *How do we ensure that we do not diminish the great freedom of A.A. before God?***

- AA will always respect your choice.
- I found God in the members in the beginning.
- The notion of "as I see it" is super important. I have my whole life with it, but the freedom to choose is what is liberating.
- I have the right not to find, I have the right to be on my power.
- AA is the place. I am agnostic or atheist.
- Freedom is AA's greatest gift. I am accepted as I am.
- God, is to have faith even if it is small, it will grow.

- The 36 principles guarantee us the freedom and choice to decide and the right to believe or not.
- It has served my life.
- Each of us is a part of God. Freedom to make mistakes to correct ourselves.
- We are not always in our program, we remain human.
- Try to readjust.
- If I don't share my spiritual life, I will lose it.

### ***How to clarify the term Guardian of the Traditions?***

- We are all guardians of the traditions; we will arrive with democracy. Is God present in the decision that doesn't suit me? Spiritual growth, yes God is present because I have experienced a change in my personality.
- An alcoholic who is equal with different experiences
- Guardian: people have worked hard for the principles. I have to respect the sense of principle. The proofs are in the pudding. I prefer to change what is wrong with me. Simpler.

## **Workshop 4 on Pandemic Recovery**

**Chair: Gisèle V.**

**Secretary: Claire D.**

**35 participants**

### **1. *When the pandemic confinement measures were announced, how did you feel about the closing of the Alcoholics Anonymous meeting rooms?***

- With the isolation measures, the meeting rooms were closed, but AA is a great organisation, and we registered for virtual meetings on the zoom platform.
- Reopening of some of the rooms have helped to ensure a more solid sobriety. On the other hand, on zoom it helps to save lives. The groups that have formed have helped prevent many relapses.
- The immediate reaction of the groups was to follow the strict health guidelines and was able to work with newcomers as well as old members in finding solutions.
- The assemblies remained virtual even at the opening of several groups.

### **2. *What did we refer to in order to keep hope alive and stay in touch with members so that we could be visible to the one who needs help?***

- References from public health were updated in order to try to keep in touch with members to maintain as much visibility as possible. The groups that have had meetings have had great difficulty surviving.
- The groups that had meetings in the prisons saw all contact cut off. They don't have access inside the walls and there are not even online meetings, so no help is given to them. In person meetings have not yet started.
- According to Anne, delegate from Area 89, in the United States, on a tablet, they have a lot of difficulty accessing the zoom platform. We are keeping the doors open to improve this service to make the information more accessible.
- The platform is subject to certain rules. We register respecting the traditions, but the human warmth is missing. Old or young, we tend to choose what corresponds to our needs. Covid has isolated us, but the zoom has made its way. The web site of the districts was well organized from the beginning about virtual groups, in order to widen the involvement and meetings. At that time there were more virtual meetings than in-person ones. It has evolved a lot ... And do not forget the basis of AA either, because human relations are impossible with zoom.
- The newcomers who are on this platform are called "The Zoom Babies". They have started to get involved. This new way of meeting gives us the opportunity to connect with other areas. One member connected with a member from France and when the restrictions ended, she came to Quebec to visit and she attended a meeting in person and even shared. AA is great!

- Emotions also transmitted when attending virtual meetings... and some groups work together on understanding our literature.
- Some suffer from the lack of contact and feel like they are in a box...so prefer real in-person encounters with other members.

**3. *Were your area's and G.S.O.'s websites visited more often and did you yourself pick up any information that might have helped you get into solution mode?***

**4. *If you are listed as a 12<sup>th</sup> Step respondent, have you responded to more requests for information about our movement and calls for help?***

- Claire is a 12<sup>th</sup> Step responder and she responded to a few requests for help...but no more, people needed to talk.
- We have to be careful not to create a competition between the virtual and the present... to each his choice. All these tools lead us to transmit the message.
- The involvement has given me a better way to do the 12th Step.

**5. *Did your area take care to inform you that it had found solutions to connect virtually on platforms to present online meetings?***

- The first wave brought a lot of confusion. After several consultations with government and health resources, our areas complied and helped us connect to the virtual world.
- Yes, the members from the area, from the districts, they all cooperated to make sure that we could access information about the G.S.O. and public health information. They gave information on how to work on the platform that was accessible for the groups. Zoom made it possible to get together and continue helping alcoholics.

**6. *In terms of the 11th tradition for anonymity, did we feel confident that it could be met through online meetings and did you feel comfortable attending while waiting for permission for the gatherings?***

- We have discussed this in previous questions.

**7. *What did we learn from this experience? Were we able to find something positive despite the lack of contact and welcome?***

- An excerpt from the literature in the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions on page 42:
- Bill tells us that in so many wars (which is similar to our virus war) they were very afraid that those who were in the fight would relapse, but that those who believed in a HIGHER POWER came out much stronger.

## **Workshop 5 on Anonymity and Social Media**

**Chair: Carl S.**

**Secretary: Pierre B.**

**38 participants**

### **1. *Twitter, Facebook, etc. Is it possible to keep information "private" on social media, phone.***

- Roger (88-15) doesn't have FaceBook, he has a business account and is in high demand. The internet is a nice tool, but maybe not so good. He doesn't like the relevant information texts in the new La Vigne.
- Marcel (89-06) yes and no, the information is useful, but a lot of solicitations.
- Gaetan (89-21) anonymity does not exist on FB, I work in data analysis and there is a reason for each post. We have to ask ourselves, what is the intention. Let's not block the door to technology...companies are investigating.
- Stephanie (89-11), no, someone is willing to help by posting on FB.
- Laurie (89-04), no do not post if you want to remain anonymous. We are proud to announce our abstinence sometimes.
- Pierre (90- ) web-assistant, the pandemic has brought people on social networks. No members have the possibility to create and publish their content without respecting the traditions.

### **2. *Are members aware that by identifying themselves and often even putting a picture of themselves on social media, they are violating the spirit of the 11th Tradition?***

- Linda ex-delegate 90, the area was forced to read the FB contract and decided to get out of FB because it is private. You have to be aware of what you are putting out there. There is a policy in AA regarding the internet and social media.
- Martin (89-06) he finds that the 11th tradition is not respected, sharing poetry only.
- Maxime (87-10), anonymity is not respected.
- Nicole (87-24) is not on FB, because she prefers books, paper, phone... she learns.
- Marie-Noelle (90-20), our phones betray us as a member...I am learning a lot.

**3. What do you think about online meetings (Each group has one overriding goal; to get their message out to the still suffering alcoholic)?**

- Patrick (89-24) web-assistant the meeting zoom is not worse than in person, that will reach members who can no longer attend in person. It brings in new members and there are more women.
- Richard (90-03) finds it very effective, because in 2 years of pandemic learned more than the 18 years before. In addition, many young people arrive through the online meetings.
- Marie-Ève (90-03) is still a member thanks to these meetings.
- Marie-Andrée (87-26) thinks it is very effective, as a newcomer found a zoom meeting through Google and now attends in-person meetings and is a member and does not believe in anonymity.
- Lucie (90-22) RDRA we are responsible for our anonymity, believe that it is extraordinary for people with disabilities.
- Carl zoom does not have the same level of privacy as FB.
- Gaetan 89-21 the data on zoom is now very secure.
- Linda ex-delegate 90 virtual groups are now recognized at G.S.O. A virtual group can choose its district. Before these groups were considered international.
- Eric IP (89-05) finds it very effective. At first, he shunned these online meetings and is now grateful to have access to them and has grown by talking to people from France, Nunavut...
- Yvon (90-03) finds that the anonymity in zoom is not worse than in person.

**4. *Would you share information that identifies you as an A.A. member on your Facebook page or other social media?***

- Patrick web aa-Quebec broke his anonymity on FB
- Mario (90-15) by mistake is possible especially for new members.
- Roger would not post as an alcoholic on social media.
- Yvon (90-03) would trust Messenger more than FB.

## **5. What opportunities can social networks present to the movement?**

- Louis (89-14) must think first of those who suffer and believe that texting is not bad chat, but there are problems of interpretation.
- Jacques (90-26) chats in companies are prepared answers.
- Danielle (90-03) it's not bad it could be interesting, but there are problems of interpretations.
- Richard 88 - the 12th Step could be a button to talk to someone.
- Mario invites the gang to a meeting!
- Claude (90-25) RDR If you are too diversified, you get lost. We must take the time not to go too fast. Let 's unite and take the time.
- Benoit (90-14) since the pandemic they use call forwarding, but this causes other problems.

## **6. What are your thoughts on new text-based communication tools in a 12th Step?**

- Marie-Ève (90-03) it brings opportunities, but does not promote face-to-face.
- Jacques (90-26) RDR texting should be an additional gateway and not replace the current way. Young people use their own language, we need to move forward.
- Michèle, we can't each use our own tool.
- Bertrand (90-08) no longer has a phone and needs human contact.
- Yvon (90-03) made tests of interpretation of a text message and the maximum score obtained was 57%.

## **7. What did we learn from this experience? Were we able to find something positive despite the lack of contact and welcome?**

### **Dangers and Opportunities of Social Medias for the Movement**

#### **Hazards:**

##### **Danger of breaking anonymity (11th tradition)**

- Public content of social networks on the Internet, many informations are public by default e.g.: your friends lists on Facebook
- Information from your publications is carefully reviewed

- Public content can be used by anyone, private content can be used by the platform administrator
- The algorithms are designed to identify your needs. They can be used to delineate social groups. E.g.: When I first started in the movement, I was offered a lot of friendships from AA members on Facebook.
- Members who voluntarily break their anonymity may affect you indirectly.

### **Your information is important to us**

- It is becoming increasingly common to investigate the information available on the Web. This can range from a simple consultation using a search tool to a complete analysis of the available information. This information can be useful during a recruitment process, for insurance decisions, to determine your purchasing profile... It should be noted that these tools can be used on a large scale which quickly justifies their initial development cost. Consequently, these information aggregation tools are more widely used than one might think.

**Note: Any computer system poses a risk of breaking anonymity.** For example, a compromised e-mail account may contain a significant amount of information that could be useful to a hacker.

### **Opportunities:**

- Social networks have become a preferred mode of communication for a large part of the population, especially young people. The traditional communication methods used in the movement are not keeping up with this trend (e.g. newspaper advertisements, phone lines, even websites are less relevant).
- New technologies allow virtual meetings. It is surprising how many new people come in through virtual groups. Many of them say they would not have come to a face-to-face meeting.
- Text-based modes of communication are widely used by youth. They offer the most pronounced form of anonymity of all media (no physical contact, the person can feel completely free to ask questions without further commitment). Many social media offer an anonymous mode of communication. e.g. Facebook page where you can chat with a manager.
- Many tools simplify access to the movement, e.g. Meeting Guide.

## **Introducing Joyce S. - Eastern Canada Regional Trustee**

*Hello, everyone. I am an alcoholic and currently serve the fellowship as your Eastern Canada Regional Trustee. My name is Joyce.*

*I would like to thank the committee of the 4 Areas for inviting me here this weekend. I have enjoyed every minute of being here. Although I do not speak French, I have had wonderful translation and understand most of what is going on. The 4 areas are well represented and are very enthusiastic. I enjoyed attending the Guarantees workshops. Such great participation and enthusiastic discussions.*

*The committee asked me to speak for 5 to 10 minutes on service. Service has been a huge part of my journey in Alcoholics Anonymous. Our program has three legacies - Recovery, Unity and Service. It is important for me to practice all of them in my everyday life to keep my triangle balance.*

*How many of you here today are General Service Representatives? There is possibly a future Delegate or Trustee in this very room.*

*My first service position was two weeks after I was released from the psychiatric hospital where I was being treated for my disease. The members of my home group thought it would be a good idea if I became the group Secretary. For the previous year and a half, I tried staying sober and just could not get it. Thanks to the loving, patient tolerant members of my home group for putting up with me. I was ready and willing to surrender and start working the program.*

*When I was about 2 years sober, (my sobriety date is October 12, 1986) I noticed the current General Service Representative seemed to be changing since he became the new representative. When I asked him about it, he told me that service had changed him. When I told him, I wanted what he had he told me he needed an alternate and I was going to be it. I wasn't voted in, just told I was going to do it, which I did. At that time, I did not have any self confidence, self-esteem, or feelings of worth. I did complete the 2 years as the GSR and after that I did not continue with service at the General Service level. I just kept doing service at the home group and did service by going into the corrections facilities for women. I did this for 5 years every Friday night.*

*Then in the year 2000 the home group I was at needed a GSR, so I volunteered. I recall being at our assembly and seeing all those nicely dressed members at the head table who seemed to be filled with all kinds of confidence. This was something which I still did not have. I remember saying there was no way you would ever catch me up there in front of all those people. It scared me to even think about it. While there the current Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, Marni H., was speaking. She was so beautiful and elegantly dressed. I just loved the way she spoke. She did say that she had her name presented 3 times before she was elected Trustee. I never forgot that. The message I received was to never give up and to follow what is God's will for me. I thought because I only had a grade 9 education that I would not be eligible to become a Trustee. At that time, it never crossed my mind that I would ever become one. It has only been a few weeks and I am still in shock but know that I will have all the help I will need to fulfill the commitment. Being in service is not a job - it is a*

*commitment. Being in service is not being a person in power, it is being a humble member of A.A., I do it to give back what has been so freely given to me.*

*A few years later I became the District Committee Member for our district and at the time it seemed it was the worst thing I could have ever been. However, looking back on it, I had changed and grown. When my term as DCM was up, I told myself that my service journey was over. I was not going to stand for anything else. God knows what is best for me, so when we had the elections for sub-committee members my service sponsor told me to let my name stand for Public Information chair. I did not want to but for some reason my hand went up and I was elected. This has happened to me ever since then; my hand just automatically just went up. When I left that meeting as Public Information chair with the display in the trunk of my car I thought "What just happened?" From there I've had several service positions. Being in service has enhanced my sobriety and given me so much confidence and the ability to do things I never thought I could or would be able to. I have met so many wonderful, dedicated members, like you, who have the best interests in keeping the doors open for the still suffering alcoholic. This has allowed me to travel to places I never thought of going to.*

*As members of A.A. it is important to keep the doors open. We do this by being of service. General Service is not for everyone; however, service comes in many forms. Being active in my home group is being of service. I will be going to my home group next Wednesday for the meeting and business meeting. I will be there as a sober member of the group, not as the Eastern Canada Regional Trustee. I doubt that most member of the group will even know I am Trustee and if they do, it won't matter to them. I am just another alcoholic trying to be humble and grateful. Service positions need to be filled and your opinions and votes on matters are what counts.*

*My message to you, is doesn't sell yourself short. If I can do this, then you can too. Don't give up, do the best you can and follow the direction you are being sent to. Keep raising your hand and I can assure you that your sobriety will be enhanced, like mine. You are worthy. When my term as trustee is up and most likely during it, I will still be of service to my home group.*

*I look forward to spending time with you again. You have made me feel so welcome and it is so heartwarming. I may not speak French but the A.A. program is a program of the Language of the Heart, and my heart is full.*

*Thank you again for the invitation to be here and especially to Claude for translating for me.*

## **DIVERSITY: BECOMING A PLACE WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME**

**Claude G. - Delegate Area 87**

I was asked to make a presentation and I chose the theme of diversity. Why this theme rather than any other? Well you see, I realize that our society is becoming much more diverse than ever before. You only have to walk down the streets of our cities to see all kinds of nations walking around. This phenomenon is also beginning to manifest itself in our countryside. What used to be seen as a curiosity is now become commonplace. All this has happened in less than 30 years. This paradigm shift confronts us.

Each of the nations that have come to our shores brings a richness of culture, a spiritual side, and a way of life that is different from what we were used to. In truth, we are all immigrants,

from the First Nations to those who are joining us now. Is A.A. still relevant? Are we all joining the alcoholics who are still suffering? I have some doubts when I look at the composition of the membership in the groups. The diversity is not there. So, what do we do with our Fellowship now? Where do we go from here? What adaptations do we need to make to accommodate the still-suffering alcoholic? How do we stay relevant?

If Christianity used to be the norm, we have to admit that it is not the same anymore. Not only because of immigration, but also because the younger generations are much less religious than what was the norm before. This does not mean that they are agnostic or atheist, but their spirituality does not necessarily come from any religion.

This year I was assigned to the CPC committee for the conference. I would like to bring you a piece of information that was revealed to us in preparation for the 2022 conference. At the 2021 conference, the CPC committee requested that the Trustees CPC committee look into the development of a brochure for mental health professionals. The trustees decided, first, to conduct a focus group of former Class A trustees and mental health professionals to determine what these mental health professionals need when talking to an active alcoholic. The first finding of the consultation was: *there is often confusion between spiritual and religious organization. When you look at the literature, it is heavily laden with religious texts.* This is a disturbing observation.

With this comment from professionals, one might be tempted to infer that we need to change our literature. I don't like the term "change" because it has a fork in the road meaning to me, which is far from what I believe is necessary to keep Alcoholics Anonymous relevant. No, I think we need to adapt our literature to keep our message relevant.

I know, I know, it's not popular to say that. I remind you that all institutions, all languages, all societies that have stopped adapting have declined and disappeared. On the contrary, those that have adapted have progressed and maintained a vitality. Let's take the example of Latin: it never adapted and became a dead language.

I also want to remind you that I am not talking about A.A. principles. These principles, equally unchanging, should not be touched. This is not to say that the words that describe them cannot be modernized to make them understandable and acceptable to any alcoholic who still suffers. For all of us recovered alcoholics, this should not be a barrier to maintaining our sobriety. But how much might it help the still-suffering alcoholic.

That's all well and good, but what can you do? I'd like to challenge you. Let's hold focus groups in our groups, districts and areas with a mandate to see how we can adapt A.A. language to make it most accessible to all suffering alcoholics. This exercise would not change our main principles. Let us see how we can make this exercise a civilized and informative dialogue that will result in literature that is accessible to every alcoholic.

I know, I know, I may sound disruptive, but rest assured, I have great love and respect for A.A.; I also have a sense of responsibility to all the alcoholics who do not know us and who are still suffering. I also have confidence that we will rise to the challenge of keeping A.A. relevant. This is not a cheap Fellowship that I want to leave to the younger generations, but a spiritual Fellowship that looks to the future and is equally respectful of old and new members. Are we ready for this challenge?

## **QUESTIONS**

1-Do we believe that we are at a turning point?

2-What are our fears?

3-How can we deal with it?

4-How do we define spirituality?

## **OVERCOMING FEAR** **Mario L. - Delegate area 88**

We all know about fear! At the Eastern Canada Regional Forum held in Charlottetown, my sister Trudy, delegate for Area 82, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador, revealed that this word is cited 113 times in our Big Book... Fear can be defined as follows: An emotion generally felt in the presence or prospect of danger or threat. It is a consequence of the analysis of the danger and it allows the subject to flee or fight it.

For most of us, the prospect of danger is a good example of why we have to live one day at a time. In our drinking days, guilt about the past and fears about the future were commonplace and we thought that alcohol would give us a break, but it was all over again the next day. And when it came to run or fighting, I myself had become a champion in all categories...

Over the past two years, all the changes related to the pandemic have brought out old demons for many of us. The fear caused by the disruption of our lives has broken friendships. Many meetings are still not reopened, others have ceased their activity. The insecurity of change and the resistance to it have brought out the best and the worst.

In the face of fear, some respond with courage while others literally crumble. From the Big Book P76: This little word affects almost every aspect of our lives in some way. Fear was like a bad and rotten thread, the fabric on which our lives were woven. It created situations that caused us misfortunes we didn't think we deserved...

For those of you who have had the chance to take a fourth step, you can see that fear was omnipresent in all aspects of your life and that it often resurfaces when we react to each other. Believing we are reliving the past or becoming worried about the future, we recreate patterns that too often poison our relationships!

To support my statement, I will give you an example of my own situation: In my student days, I was plagued by a great shyness and lack of confidence. Some professors took great pleasure in putting me on the spot in front of the class knowing this. And, unable to react, I blushed and felt humiliated with the result that when I spoke in my young adult life, I fainted. Even today, I still have stage fright when I speak in public, but our way of life has completely transformed this aspect of my life... I have finally realized that the events of the past are behind me and that each situation is actually a new situation and not a return to the past!

So how do we get past these fears and begin to live fully in the present moment? In an article in the Grapevine published in January 1962, Bill W wrote: "So, there are two things to do about the problem of fear. We must try to free ourselves from as many fears as possible. Then we must seek the courage and grace to deal constructively with those that remain. Seeking to understand our fears and the fears of others is only the first step. The big question is what to do next..."

Personally, it is faith that has freed me from fear; a faith that leads me to believe that, in spite of all the contrary appearances in this world, I live in a universe that makes sense... Before I had this faith, I lived as a stranger in a world that too often seemed cruel and hostile. I could not find any inner security...

As our faith grows, so does our inner security. Our great fear of emptiness begins to dissipate. We realize that the most important antidote to fear is spiritual awakening...

And finally: Complete freedom from fear is a lifelong endeavor, a work we can never do perfectly...

This reminds me of an event that happened about fifteen years ago: I skydived on a beautiful summer day. You will say yes, of course in tandem! Exactly... I had to face the fear of flying, a real cuckoo. Also, I had to trust the instructor: who knows, maybe he was incompetent? When I put the two.

As I stood on the railing outside, a thought came to my mind: God, I entrust my life to you... The fear vanished at that moment, and we jumped! This remains one of my most memorable spiritual experiences!

To give us courage, we also need leaders in our service structure. These leaders, by their attitude in the face of adversity, can have a ripple effect on those who lack confidence. At the last conference, one small sentence was enough to calm my fears and my apprehensions about the work to be done: Trust the process... It's amazing how nothing can confuse me and how nothing can rekindle hope!

All of you who are in this room have the opportunity to serve your group, district, area and even the Conference. Many years ago, when I was a DCM in the big family of Area 90, Richard B, then delegate of the Area, often said while looking at me: you, you have the seed of a delegate! By repeating it to myself, I came to believe it and I tried my luck. Looking back, these simple words gave me confidence in myself and for the past two years, I have lived, without a doubt, the most beautiful years of my life in the company of the members of the Conference. So, it is my turn to tell you, do not hesitate, raise your hand when a position becomes available. Experienced servants are there to support you and to help you in your endeavors. You will develop skills and who knows, you will find yourself in a service situation that you doubted you could do...

We, the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, are fortunate to have meeting rooms where we can express ourselves: express our fears, our joys and our sorrows... We free ourselves from a burden that few people in our society can do. This is often the beginning of the disappearance of fear...

Finally, let me read you a poem by an unknown author:

Enjoy this day,  
Because it is life. The very  
essence of life.  
In its short duration rest, all  
The realities and truths of existence,

The bliss of growth,  
The splendor of action,  
The glory of power, -  
For yesterday is only a dream,  
And tomorrow is only a vision,  
But today, if it is well lived,  
Make every yesterday a dream of happiness  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope

## Closing remarks by the Chairperson

Thank you all for your participation. Alone, I would have had a less animated day. I also want to thank all the members of the organizing committee. They worked like titans and made my job much easier.

Attendance was estimated at nearly 300 people.

I'm going to play priest... go spread the word... seriously, tell those who didn't come about this day, share your experience. Be attractive and inspiring.

Thank you for your involvement and your gratitude.

I had a great day and it paid off for all the hard work that was put into preparing for it. Thanks to all of you.

If you don't mind, we will end with the declaration of responsibility and the declaration of unity.

### The Responsibility Statement

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere

Reaches out for help,

I want the hand of AA always to be there.

And of that: I am responsible.

### Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future:

To place our common welfare first;

To keep our fellowship united.

For on A.A. Unity depends our lives,

And the lives of those to come.

Safe home. Be careful and see you next year in Area 90.