

WEEKLY MEETING January 13, 2021 – (Zoom 32)

Zooming today: Annie Holtby, Heather Scott, Ann Harrison, Lance Wiebe, Paul Snack, Angela Carter, Mike Taylor, David Schulz, Don Thorpe, John Cappa, Keith McConkey, Brian Kon, Bob Eamer, Mel Groom, Frank Adamson, Carolyn Mullin, Hugh Graham.

1. Open meeting: – welcome everyone - introduce guests
Opening remarks – Brian Kon – Tradition calls for an Opening to the Land Acknowledgment if there is an Indigenous person present at the meeting. It's a call to the Creator whose biggest gift is Mother Earth. Brian listed many things in Nature from the sun and moon and their blessings to the forests and rivers, rocks and animals: everything has a spirit. Brian explained that some Openings can go on for hours. It depends on the person but each Opening starts things in a grateful, positive vein.
2. Land Acknowledgement: Ann
We begin this gathering by acknowledging the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.
3. Toast: Annie
To the Queen and Canada, To the Office of the President of United States, and To the President of Rotary International
4. 4-WAY TEST: Paul S.
Of the things we think say or do
Is it the truth?
Is it fair to all concerned?
Will it build good will and better friendships?
Will it be beneficial to all concerned?
5. Invocation: Angela
In this time of COVID-19, we pray:
When we aren't sure, God, help us be calm;
When information comes from all sides, correct and not, help us to discern;
When fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety is the order of the day, slow us down, God;
Help us to reach out with our hearts, when we can't touch with our hands;
Help us to be socially connected, when we have to be socially distant;
Help us to love as perfectly as we can, "knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear."
For the essential workers, we pray for their safety, for health, for wholeness.
Help us, O God, that we might help each other.
6. President's Report/Correspondence/Announcements:

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- Hugh – Board meeting update
 - Funding requests – N-O-T-L request from last week for help with a water project in Malawi. Possible request from RC Buffalo Sunrise for a Solar Lights project next week. We'd like the club members to consider whether we deal with requests for funding as they arise as in the above two for example or do we go back to our old practice of twice yearly adjudication of the requests that have come in.
 - The Great Lakes Watershed Cleanup has evolved into a 22 District involvement and into including the watershed for both Lakes Ontario and Erie. You can read more about it in the attachment. Rotary Club of Fonthill will be doing a cleanup in Port Colborne where there is no Rotary Club at present. We need a champion to lead our efforts. John Cappa put up his hand!
 - Blood Donor Clinics. Frank is trying to involve as many clubs in donating blood as possible. There are now American clubs as well as Canadian clubs donating. There are two clinics coming up – February 11th 5-5:40 for Rotarians with 5 minute intervals in Welland and February 12th in Fonthill. Perhaps both clubs could work together. The Welland President is interested.
 - Community Grant Proposal. We have funds to do this again. I CANTER received a horse drawn lawn mower for last Rotary year. Please think about what cause is out there, where the need is, to support this year's \$2500. We'll get that sum back from the District and it will be seed money for next year. Mel noted that it has to be tangible, physical. It could include shelter – it's for capital, not operation.
 - Fundraising Seminar Online. An online seminar on Fundraising has been advertised by Pene Hutton. It's on January 26th. One member has already signed up.
 - Paul – Pay It Forward - We're trying to connect with our community and say thank you to neighbours in a KIS fashion. It could go from our meeting on February 10th to Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14th. GO through Tim Horton's and pay for the people behind. Just a small gesture courtesy of the Rotary Club of Fonthill. We decided last week that we were in favour of the idea.
7. Speaker: Brian Kon – Land Acknowledgment from an Indigenous Perspective
Introduction: Annie Thanks: Hugh
- Brian Kon is a leader within the Metis Nation and within the local Indigenous Community. He is the Chair of Niagara Region Métis Council and sits on the Niagara Indigenous Community Advisory Board focused on reducing homelessness of Indigenous people. He is an ambassador for the Celebration of Nations, an annual Indigenous cultural celebration held in St Catharines. Brian was on the organizing committee for the Landscape of Nations – a tribute to the role Indigenous people played in the War of 1812. As a member of Landscape of Nations, Brian now is working with a dedicated team of educators, historians and community members who are re-writing the history of the War of 1812 through an Indigenous lens that will become part of school curriculum across the country. Brian's interest in Indigenous education includes his participation in advisory committees for the Indigenous Partnership Council for the 2022 Canada Summer Games, Indigenous Education Management Circle (Niagara College), Aboriginal Education Council (Brock University) and he is employed as the Indigenous Lead for Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- Until taking the position with Niagara Catholic, most of Brian's career had been focused on

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advancing the lives of people with disabilities in Canada and the United States. He has his own consulting company (Sterling Frazer Associates) where he also hosts the accessible travel website, Accessible Niagara. Brian helped write the Customer Service Standard for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. He is internationally recognized as an industry expert on issues relating to people with disabilities, the environment in which they live and work, as well as the technologies they use. He is a regular reviewer for a number of different US federal agencies as they transfer technologies from their initial use to benefiting people with disabilities.

As a visual artist, Brian's art pays homage to his Cree/Métis ancestors through his paintings, which have been on display across Canada, including a current piece on extended display in Ontario's legislature. Proud of what his art represents, Brian provides workshops in schools and throughout community as a way of telling the story of Métis people, but also to draw attention to important issues that face Indigenous people – Indian Residential Schools, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, and Two Spirited people.

Brian is a past President of the Rotary Club of Niagara Falls – Sunrise. He is a two time Paul Harris Recipient. He was named an AODA Champion (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) by the province of Ontario; Patrick Cummings Award of Excellence from the City of Niagara Falls; and, recently named one of the 50 Faces of Lincoln for their 50th town anniversary. We're hoping to meet with Brian in May for an outdoor session. In the meantime, please welcome Brian Kon, today.

Presentation: Land Acknowledgment from an Indigenous Perspective. Brian shared that in the Traditional Opening, it's always given by an Indigenous person in his or her traditional language. He introduced himself in Cree but the rest of the opening was in English so we'd understand. His family started in Moose Factory. As a Metis, Brian's background is not French as most assume but English.

Everything has a spirit and is acknowledged in the Opening. It brings everyone to a common place, to be grateful, to start things in a positive vein. Brian is a father, brother, husband.....fire keeper.....the latter quite an honour, tending ceremonial fires, very emotional. There are also eagle staff carriers who are always elders. There are also pipe carriers and Brian has hopes and dreams of becoming that. It's not a choice; it's bestowed on you. Being a lead with Niagara Catholic School Board is usually a role for a teacher but NC went to the community to fill this position.

Going next into Indigenous history is a NO BLAME ZONE Brian assured us. Christopher Columbus, who was sent out to explore, was told if you find people who aren't Christian, they are not human and the land is ours for the taking. There were millions living on Turtle Island (North America). Explorers, leaving land highly industrial, found pristine land here. The Indigenous were caretakers. Hundreds of millions lived on North and South Americas. Indigenous is the preferred term today. Within the Constitution, they're referred to as Aboriginals – Indian, Inuit, and Metis. Inuit were added in 1939, Metis in 1982.

Education happens during the wintertime. Elders would tell stories – oral history is more accurate. In the long story of Indian Residential Schools, the last one was closed in 1996. Up to 1950, Indigenous people were not allowed to hire lawyers. The Hieroglyphics of the Egyptians go back 3000 years; the etchings in Canada go back 10,000 years. Beaver, extinct in Europe, was plentiful here and brought more Europeans here.

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The Land Acknowledgment we use each week is accepted by the Indigenous Community. In the Niagara area, there was such movement that no one nation is attributed as traditional caretaker. The Land Acknowledgment we use is used by 12 municipalities. The Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee were the dominant indigenous people here. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada/Land Surrender treaties. From a Settler perspective, the land was now theirs. For the Indigenous people, as caretakers, they never gave it up. The Dish and One Spoon wampum belt symbolized eating off the same plate. Using a spoon was peaceful, no knife to bring harm to the table. It was their responsibility to take care of the land. It was a beautiful agreement and done within the Indigenous community. The Anishinaabe don't believe in it. Indigenous community *agrees* to it being used but not all believe in it. On the wampum belt, there are two stripes representing two waterways, one for the settlers and one for the Indigenous people. They won't interfere with each other but will travel side by side. Created in 1610. Up to 1736 there were 5 nations, then the 6th nation joined but the flag with the initial 5 remained the same. Legal contracts including First Nations, Metis and Inuit, appreciate that others are here. The Landscape of Nations at Queenston Heights (opened September 2016) identifies the role of the Indigenous in the War of 1812. Once created, the Celebration of All Nations started the next year, 2017

The Orange Shirt Day on September 30th ties back to a Residential Schools student. On that day in 2020, Niagara Falls was lit up as ORANGE for 15 minutes. Brian said it was powerful. 150,000 went through Residential Schools so that was 10,000 students per minute. Phyllis Webstap was that student and has written a book that's been adapted for Grade 5 children. Phyllis will be here for the 2021 Orange Day in September. Brian mentioned that this February in the week of February 8th, there will be a daily noon hour presentation from Residential School survivors. You need to hear the emotion of survivors for full understanding.

Hugh thanked Brian for his remarkable and insightful presentation. He told him we recognize our speakers with a donation to the Pelham Library to honour our commitment to Literacy.

8. Birthdays: Janet (Jan 2); Hugh (Jan 28)
Rotary Anniversaries: Mel (Jan 6/16); Andrew (Jan 21/09); John (Jan 22/20); Dave (Jan 23/19)
9. Rotary Moment/Happy Loonies: Paul S. **We didn't have time for loonies today. For happy loonies next week, in light of these difficult times, we should think positively and ask each of us to talk about something we are thankful for.**
10. Action items: Consider whether to grant requests as they arise or to return to twice a year adjudication and let us know by next meeting. **ACTION: All of us.**