

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICE MONTH

Happy Birthday		Happy Anniversary
Jan 18:	Raj Talasi	

UPCOMING SPEAKERS:

Jan 16:	Alex Pope Who's Who	Jan 23:		Jan 30:	
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LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Brenda Jenkins** presided.

Guests:

Kristina Eng - President Nominee Elect (2025 – 2026) of the Rotary Club of White Rock.

Terry and Carol Peel - chair of the Refugee Task Force of the Rotary Club of White Rock.

Malcolm Kennedy - president of the Coquitlam Sunrise Club.

Yvonna Michaels - wife of Leslie.

Vicki Wilton - guest of Leslie.

Brian Gray - guest of Leslie.

Sheldon Lal - guest and employee of Clint.

Wayne Morrison - acquaintance of Deb Hyslop. Wayne's granddaughter may be interested in a Rotary exchange.

Invocation by Matt DeBruyn

Towards the outside world, we Rotarians, by our humanitarian and ethical approach to life should be an example for the rest of the world.

We have been given some powerful tools to help us with that.

Firstly, we have our motto "Service above Self".

Secondly, we have "the Four Way Test", which reads:

We ask of all the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH?

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Rather than only talk about them, let us, sincerely and forcefully, use these tools to promote peace in the world.

Induction of new Rotary Member – Ahmed Yousef



President Brenda inducted **Ahmed Yousef** ("Yousef") as a new member of our Club. The following is a bio of Yousef:

Born in Shebin El Kom, El Monoufiia, Egypt. I've lived and worked in several countries, including the USA, Egypt, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Canada. My wife and I married in 2003 and moved to Maple Ridge in 2010. Since arriving in Maple Ridge in 2010 with our twin daughters, our son was born two years later.

I have been and continue to serve as an active volunteer in the community. Among the groups I have been affiliated with are Scout Canada, Hope for Freedom Mat Program and Operation Red Nose. I also serve on the boards KidSport, the Friends in Need

Food Bank, the Ridge Meadows Climate Hub, and the Ridge Meadows South Asian Cultural Society. Having earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master's degree in International Relations and worked in the field for a few governments, I have been fortunately voted in as the first Muslim City Councillor in British Columbia in 2018. Currently, I'm serving my second term as a City of Maple Ridge Councillor, my focus is on policies that affect everyday things like feeling safe on the streets, shopping locally, creating local employment, more recreational opportunities, while always respecting taxpayers' pocketbooks.

Program: Dr. Lauryn Oates -

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan ("CW4WA")



About Our speaker

Dr. Lauryn Oates is the Executive Director with *Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan*, a charity founded in 1996 that has helped make the human right to education real for Afghan women and girls through teacher training, village libraries, literacy classes, schools and

more. She has spent two decades working in Afghanistan to expand education rights for women and girls in conflict zones.

Lauryn earned a BA (at McGill University), an MA (at Royal Roads University in Victoria), and a PhD in language and literacy education (at UBC). Her doctoral research focused on northern Uganda where she worked with teachers there to create local language educational materials for their classrooms through digital technology. She is currently an Adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia and has also taught graduate students in the School of Humanitarian Studies at Royal Roads University in Victoria since 2014. Lauryn is the recipient of a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal awarded by the Province of BC.

Lauryn has worked throughout the developing world, but particularly in Afghanistan, advocating for the empowerment of women. It was in 1996, at the age of 14, Lauryn read about the Taliban, and their treatment of women and girls. She developed a petition demanding that the world respond to their institutionalised misogynist policies and prejudice against women. She has continued this work ever since, working in close partnership with a variety of Afghan women's organizations and international charities to make educational materials accessible to teachers in their own language through several translation projects, and the creation of the first online library for teachers in Afghanistan. These projects have ensured access to schooling for thousands of Afghan girls and women. Whether it is surviving a motorcycle crash in Uganda, malaria in Rwanda, listening to Russian techno music on bad roads in Tajikistan, or working to get classrooms opened in rural Afghanistan, Lauryn can often be found in the dicey spots of the world, stubbornly insisting that access to quality education is a basic human right for everyone, everywhere.

Lauryn's Presentation – brief summary



Periods of disruption can be both a danger and an opportunity. In February 2020 there were peace negotiations between the USA and the Taliban, resulting in a signed agreement. Unfortunately, the agreement excluded the Afghan government and the people of Afghanistan. The Taliban did not take the agreement seriously, resulting in a human rights crisis. The first worrisome sign was that the Taliban were already arresting and executing former government officials and human rights workers.

The Taliban closed public schools to women after grade 7, prohibited women from working in most sectors of the economy, and imposed dress codes on women. By August 2021, the Taliban were carrying out house raids to find information about persons who worked for the government and other organizations. When food and other aid was sent into Afghanistan, the Taliban prevented it going to the people in need, and diverted it to their own forces.

The cost of denying education to women and girls created an education crisis. But the crisis goes beyond just the lack of education. They changed the curriculum to indoctrinate the students and train them to follow the Taliban doctrine and way of life. Women who had received or wanted an education were treated violently and even murdered. But the cost of denying education to women and girls goes beyond education and creates a humanitarian crisis. 90% of people in Afghanistan are unable to meet their calorie needs. One half of the population is in risk of starvation. Not only are women prevented from working to support the economy, but they are also not allowed to work for NGOs. The GDP of Afghanistan is dropping significantly, directly resulting from the fact that women can't work, get paid, and contribute to the economy.

Neighbouring countries will not let Afghanistan refugees into their country, and those who are in most need of getting help are the ones who find the most restrictions in leaving. Christina Lamb, a reporter for the Sunday Times, said, "In my 35 years as a reporter, never have I seen anything of Afghanistan's magnitude". Lauryn also referred to an article by Karima Bennouna who described what is happening in Afghanistan as "gender apartheid".

[THE INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION TO COUNTER GENDER APARTHEID IN AFGHANISTAN, by Karima Bennouna:

*Since they returned to power in August 2021, the Taliban are again imposing a regime of **gender apartheid** in Afghanistan in violation of international law, just as they did in the 1990s. Given that it is pervasively discriminatory, gender apartheid poses specific human rights problems requiring particular, heightened responses. A system of governance based on subordination of women institutionalizes sex discrimination across state political, legal, and cultural infrastructures. It necessitates different counter-strategies. This Article suggests conceptual architecture for analyzing and responding to this aspect of the current Afghan crisis. Specifically, the robust international legal framework that helped end racial apartheid should be urgently adapted to address gender apartheid and concert the responses of other states to it.]*

Women are the “canaries in a gold mine”. In countries where this happens to women, misogynistic treatment of women is a good indication that there are many other problems happening. We have heard the expression “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas”. But what happens in the Middle East, in Iran and in Afghanistan does not stay there, and other countries therefore have a vested interest in trying to stop the problems in Afghanistan. Lauryn strongly believes that the political reaction to the situation in Afghanistan is woefully unresponsive, and this applies to the USA and other countries.

One thing the Taliban can't do is to take away what women and girls have already learned through the education they have received. In 2021 Lauryn's organization started an online education program called Darakht-e Danesh (or DD for short). (Darakht-e Danesh means “knowledge tree” in Dari, one of the official languages of Afghanistan.) The DD Library provides free and open educational resources for teachers, students, and anyone with a curious mind who wants to learn more on a particular subject. (The library currently houses over 6000 resources in 130 subjects, in nine languages). It also provides online other virtual education tools called DD Courses and DD classrooms. DD Courses allow people to take full courses at their own pace on a variety of subjects from any location. And DD Classrooms provides a means of learning by enabling live video classes.

What can I do? In answer to this question, Lauryn said:

1. stay informed, and inform others
2. participate in advocacy campaigns
3. host a Breaking Bread** event to fund programs
4. sign up for the CW4WA newsletter
5. joined CW4WA or start a chapter of that organization
6. volunteer as a teacher
7. volunteer as a translator

(**Breaking Bread is a unique-to-CW4WA fundraiser where friends, family, or colleagues bring a donation and gather around a potluck meal in support of educational programs for Afghan women and girls.)

Note: There was no time for Happy and Sad today so we could give full time to our great speaker.

Other news:



Last Sunday morning Matt, Ineke and Laurie enjoyed some lovely weather and great views on our Sunday morning 9:00 am walk on the dyke north of 132 Avenue.

After today's meeting, our Club with the help of some outside volunteers resumed packing the food for the Starfish Program. 303 Packs were put together in less than an hour (in addition of course, to the many hours Ineke spends ordering the food, and the unpacking it and cleaning up after.)

CLUB CALENDAR:

Jan 27, 2024 - **Grants Management Seminar**
Rotary Fieldhouse, South Surrey

Mar 2, 2024 - **Grants Management Seminar**
Silver Reef Casino Resort

Apr 13, 2024 - **District Assembly** - Kwantlen Polytechnic
Langley Campus - new location!