

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

President: Eric Mollema
Secretary: Debbie MacRae
Editor: Peter Boekhorst

Phone: 778-242-2288
Phone: 604-649-8962
Phone: 604-476-0010

[E-mail the President](#)
[E-mail the Secretary](#)
[E-mail the Editor](#)

**CREATE
LASTING
IMPACT**

NOVEMBER IS ROTARY FOUNDATION MONTH

Happy Birthday

Nov 10 Brenda Jenkins

Happy Anniversary

Upcoming Speakers:

Nov 3 Gordy Robson
Who's Who - Part 2

Nov 10 Veteran - Matt Williams
Veterans Meeting at the Legion

Nov 17 Michelle Taschereau
Atlas Brain Health

LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Eric Mollema** presided.

Invocation was given by Mike:

"If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help someone else."

Cheque Presentation

The club presented a cheque for \$500 to **Mo Korchinski**, the Executive Director of **Unlocking the Gates Services Society**, which supports people transitioning from incarceration to freedom.



The donation will assist with the ongoing operation of the Community Resource Hub, particularly the purchase of propane for heaters as colder weather approaches. The Hub is a low-barrier, multi-agency drop-in centre designed to support vulnerable adults, specifically those experiencing homelessness or at risk of it; and acts as a daylight shelter providing basic essential needs like hot meals, clothing donations, hot showers, washrooms, and hygiene supplies. It also connects individuals to emergency housing, healthcare, addiction support, tax clinics, and indigenous cultural support.

Rotary Foundation Recognition

Past-President **Alex Pope** was invited forward to receive recognition as a Paul Harris Fellow +3. The recognition acknowledges contributions to The Rotary Foundation, with each additional level representing cumulative giving of another US\$1,000. It was noted how regular contributions to The Rotary Foundation can accumulate over time. For example, contributing approximately \$25 per month over an extended period can make a significant difference without placing a substantial burden on an individual's finances.

Program – Brenda Jenkins - From Guangdong to Vancouver:

A Remarkable Family Legacy

Brenda delivered an entertaining and informative presentation about her family's history in Canada, tracing her ancestry through six and seven generations. Rather than presenting a traditional Rotary classification talk about herself, Brenda chose to tell the story of her great-grandfather and the family legacy that followed.

Early Beginnings in China

The story began in 1845 in Guangdong Province, China, where Brenda's great-grandfather, Yip Sang, was born into a family of modest means. His father died when he was young, leaving his mother to raise three children. Tragedy struck again during his teenage years when bandits attacked the village, killing his mother and kidnapping his sister, who was never seen again. He and his brother survived by pretending to be dead. Other villagers subsequently took the orphaned children into their homes, providing food, clothing, shelter, and support. Despite these difficult beginnings, Brenda's great-grandfather was determined to seek a better life.



Brenda's great-grandfather, Yip Sang Picture taken in 1920

Journey to the Golden Mountain

During the California Gold Rush, stories of great wealth reached China. California became known among Chinese immigrants as Gum San, or Golden Mountain. Her great-grandfather sold his few possessions and embarked on a three-month sea voyage to San Francisco. Upon arrival, he discovered that the promised opportunities were not as plentiful as expected. He survived by undertaking various jobs, including selling coal, rolling cigars, and performing other manual labour. Eventually, he learned of new opportunities farther north, particularly in the Yukon. He joined a group of prospectors travelling north, reportedly using a combination of walking, horses, donkeys, and wagons. However, he never reached the Yukon. Instead, he stopped in Vancouver, where an unexpected meeting changed the course of his life.

Working on the Canadian Pacific Railway

In Vancouver, he met a Chinese gentleman who worked as a foreman for a major railway contractor. Through this connection, her great-grandfather learned English, demonstrated considerable mathematical ability, and eventually became a paymaster for the railway. His responsibilities included transporting money and gold (on horseback, carrying a firearm for protection) to pay railway workers, and the recruitment and transportation of Chinese railway workers.

An Entrepreneurial Spirit

Recognizing opportunities beyond his railway employment, he began developing international trading relationships. When travelling to China, he transported salted fish from British Columbia, and on the return voyages, he brought goods such as rice and silk to Vancouver. He eventually owned a cannery and a small fleet of vessels involved in the salted fish trade. His business activities also extended into shipping, railway services, importing, and exporting.

Building a Family and a Chinatown Landmark

Brenda's great-grandfather established an exceptionally large family. He had one wife in China and three wives in Canada, with approximately 23 children. As his businesses prospered, he constructed a substantial brick building in Vancouver's Chinatown in the late 1880s (at a time when most buildings were constructed of wood). The building combined commercial space on the ground floor with residential accommodation above.



An additional six-storey annex was subsequently constructed to accommodate the growing family. Each of the three wives in Canada had two floors for herself, her children, and eventually her grandchildren. The building remained an important centre of family life for generations.

Education and Family Values

Despite his wealth, Brenda's great-grandfather maintained strict expectations for his children. He emphasized three important principles:

1. **Preserve their Chinese heritage:** Every child was expected to speak, read, and write Cantonese.
2. **Obtain an education:** Education was equally important for sons and daughters.
3. **Understand business:** Become financially independent.

Teachers were brought from China and Hong Kong to educate the children in Chinese language and culture. Many descendants subsequently attended prestigious educational institutions, including Columbia, Cornell, and Osgoode Hall. Family members became doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, merchants, and business owners. Although the children enjoyed considerable financial privilege, they were also subject to strict household rules. One particularly memorable rule was a 10:00 p.m. curfew. Anyone arriving after curfew risked being locked out.

The Family Numbering System

With such a large family, keeping track of descendants presented a considerable challenge, and her great-grandfather developed an ingenious numbering system. Each child was assigned a number based on birth order. Subsequent generations added additional digits to identify their family lineage. Brenda used her own family as an example:

- Her grandfather was Number 5.
- Her mother was Number 8 in that family branch.
- Brenda, the eldest child, became Number 581.
- Her son became Number 5811.
- Subsequent generations continued adding numbers.

This system allowed family members to identify their ancestry and relationships within the extended family. Brenda displayed an extensive family tree demonstrating how the system continues to be used.

The Canadian Pacific Railway and Silk Trade

Brenda also described her great-grandfather's involvement in the Canadian Pacific Railway's international transportation network, including the transportation of valuable shipments of silk from

Vancouver across Canada to eastern markets; and connecting Asian producers with North American and European commercial interests. Her family's history also included involvement in the historical opium trade, when opium was widely traded during the nineteenth century, before later restrictions and prohibitions. She discussed the difficult conditions experienced by Chinese immigrants and railway workers, including dangerous working environments, discrimination, and limited access to medical care. The presentation provided an opportunity to reflect on both the entrepreneurial accomplishments of early immigrants and the challenging social conditions of the period.

Family Reunions and Traditions

Brenda said that the family continues to maintain strong connections through reunions and traditional celebrations, and that Chinese New Year remains an important occasion, with large family dinners supported by the family trust. Brenda shared a photograph of a major family reunion held in 2023.



Family Reunion held in 2023

Question: Where's Wald..., rather, Where's Brenda?)

Brenda concluded by reflecting on the extraordinary journey from a young orphan in China to the establishment of one of Vancouver's prominent early Chinese families. She explained that one side of her family has now lived in Canada for seven generations, while the other has been here for six. Her great-grandfather's determination, entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to education, and emphasis on family helped establish a legacy that continues today. The presentation provided a fascinating perspective on the contributions of Chinese immigrants to British Columbia and the remarkable legacy of one family.

Club Cookbook Project and Fundraiser

The objective is to collect favourite recipes from members and develop a cookbook that can be shared with the community. Each member is responsible for submitting three recipes by the end of November. Selected recipes will be prepared and demonstrated by members, with the demonstrations recorded on video. The first cooking demonstration had already been recorded, featuring Sharon, who was enthusiastically recognized for helping launch the project. Members were encouraged to submit a variety of recipes, including family favourites and dishes with interesting personal stories.

Attendance Report

Attendance at today's meeting was **56%**. It was anticipated that attendance would increase to more than 70% once members' makeup meetings were included. **Members are urged to report make-ups to Lynda Lawrence.** Members are reminded of the importance of maintaining good attendance and participating in club activities.

Club Announcements and Upcoming Events

November 6, club fundraiser at the Legion to support the club's international initiatives. See Ineke for tickets (that include a burger and a beer).

At the time of the meeting, slightly more than 40 tickets had been sold, compared with a target attendance of approximately 75. Members were strongly encouraged to purchase tickets and invite friends and family. Silent auction donations are also required. Advance notification was more important than immediately delivering the items, as they needed to prepare the auction arrangements.

MeadowRidge Rotary Presents:
ROTARY PUB HUB
Everyone's welcome!

Friday, Nov. 6, 2026
5:00pm – 8:00pm
Legion 88, 12101 224th Street, MR

Tickets \$35
Incl. burger & fries + a beer!

Proceeds to support:
MeadowRidge Rotary International Service Projects

November 10, Tuesday's Rotary meeting - to be held at the Legion for Veteran's Day

November 20 - Wine and Charcuterie Tasting at Mark Foster's

November 25, Salvation Army Dignity Breakfast - South Bonson Community Centre. **Time:** 7:30 a.m. Two spaces remained available. Members interested in attending were asked to contact Ineke by email so the final attendance list could be submitted.

December 9 - Annual General Meeting of our Rotary Club

December 12 – Club's Christmas Party (location TBD)

December 22 - Christmas Gift Exchange (Members participating are asked to bring a wrapped gift valued at approximately \$20). [President Eric encouraged members to put some thought into their gifts rather than making a last-minute purchase on the way to the meeting.]

President's Closing Quote

If at first you don't succeed,
try, try again.
Then quit.
There's no use in being
a damn
fool about it.
W.C. Fields

Submitted by Laurie Anderson