



Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon, Bella Vita Restaurant

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JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICE MONTH

Happy Birthday	Happy Anniversary
Jan 27: Sharon Kyle	
Jan 28: Mike Davies	

UPCOMING SPEAKERS:

Jan 26: Franz Gehriger New Era Project in Maple Ridge	Feb 02: Scott Payne Club History Report	Feb 09:
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OUR CLUB LAST WEEK'S MEETING:

President **Clint Callison** presided.

Program: Raghwa Gopal - Innovate BC

About **Raghwa** [a very impressive man!]

- introduced by **Roger Powley**



"For many years Raghwa has been my friend and fellow Rotarian in the Kelowna Rotary club, where Raghwa was a past president, and helped out in many Rotary projects, even internationally. He is president and CEO of Innovate BC, that connects innovators to funds and resources, and encourages start-ups of companies which are innovators. In 1978 Raghwa started his own company that was supporting software solutions to the

various public-service environments throughout BC and Canada. He grew that to become Accelerate Okanagan, and was cofounder and eventually the CEO of that organization. At that time the Okanagan area was known as a tourist location and a place to retire; but today, thanks to Raghwa and his initiatives with the high-tech industry in the Okanagan Valley, this area has grown many small companies into larger companies that help grow the community. Today, it is about a \$1.6 billion business just in the Okanagan. But Raghwa has been a person of service to education, the Province, the community, and the environment. He currently sits on a number of different boards including, among others, the board of governors of UBC, member of the Committee on Diversity with the Vancouver Board of Trade, member of the Surrey RCMP Committee on Diversity, on the board of the India-Canada Innovation Council, and support for many other different agencies and organizations as a volunteer."

Raghwa's presentation:

Raghwa stated that one of his greatest Rotary experiences was to tour India with a number of Rotarians from the Okanagan region. They visited India for about two weeks and saw a number of projects that their Rotary club had supported, and saw the impact that it had, and how the lives of so many people had been changed "on so little that we did from here".

Raghwa came from Fiji to Kelowna when he was 20 years old, at which time there was only about 32,000 people in the town. In 1979 he established his first local business which eventually grew into the largest software company in Canada. He sold that business at the age of 40. "This gave me the opportunity to do other things, including helping young people in establishing and growing their businesses", he said. One of the things that he was involved in and helped to conceive and get established with other local entrepreneurs and community leaders, was the Innovation Centre in Kelowna, with the vision of helping advance the growth of the region's innovation ecosystem in a tangible way. The initial meeting took place in January 2013, construction began in April 2015, and the Innovation Centre opened its doors in April 2017. The long-term goal of this initiative is to establish the Okanagan as the best place in Canada for entrepreneurs to start and grow innovative, creative technology companies.

Raghwa joined the Innovate BC in 2018 as its president and CEO with the mandate to take it province-wide. It provided funding and support of technology start-ups through programs, sponsorship and competitions that facilitate technology commercialization. Raghwa advised us that Innovate BC has four pillars or priorities:



1. Cluster development (for example, the Innovation Centre in Kelowna).
2. Diversity and inclusion - through all parts of the province, including racial diversity.
3. Scaling companies - finding innovative companies and growing them.
4. Building talent - through education and training.

As stated on its [website](#) (and expounded by Raghwa):

Innovate BC is the province's primary agency supporting company growth, resulting in jobs, increased revenue and economic development through technology and innovation. Innovate BC was first formed in 2004. Innovate BC helps innovators in B.C. access funding, launch their ideas, and connect with the experts they need to build great companies. It connects innovators — large and small — with provincial government funding, tools, resources and support. They are in business to serve and celebrate innovation in B.C., helping industries grow, while ensuring people throughout the province benefit from our thriving tech sector.

Their scope of responsibility is to:

- Deliver programs to help technology start-ups grow and create jobs in B.C.
- Offer a spectrum of business development and partnership opportunities responsive to industry needs
- Support B.C. entrepreneurs and companies at all stages of growth, offering tools, resources and expert guidance
- Build the capacity of B.C. companies to access global markets and attract new investment
- Curate and facilitate strong relationships between industry and B.C. public post-secondary institutions
- Provide policy and program advice to government to foster innovation and commercialization of B.C. technologies
- Work with regional partners to ensure the benefits of technology and innovation are felt around the province

Along with the provincial government, Innovate BC hosts the [#BCTECHSummit](#) – an annual event to promote the best and brightest innovators developing emerging technologies in British Columbia and beyond.

Responsibility for Innovate BC lies within the [Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness](#). The ministry manages government services that help support and maintain the strong and diverse economy that British Columbians need for long-term prosperity. It's the ministry's mandate to grow B.C.'s technology sector, champion innovation, nurture small businesses, support economic development throughout the province, and promote B.C. internationally as a preferred place to invest and do business. Innovate BC's work supports the ministry in achieving its mandate.

During question period, Raghwa was asked whether Innovate BC deals only with tech companies. He answered that tech companies have been its focus, but "tech" has been broadened beyond writing software programs. Innovate BC now helps mainstream businesses who want to get into the digital economy. For example, a pizza shop or hair salon that wishes to advertise or expand its business through the Internet can be helped through mentoring and sometimes through money grants.

Happy and Sad:

Libby and Brenda: the Duck Race Committee have finalized the arrangements for the Race.

Walter: the application to the gaming commission for the duck race license has now been submitted.

Finemaster: Today's questions:

On what date each year does the "Rotary Year" commence? The answer: July 1.

What is Rotary's theme for the month of January 2021? The answer: January 2021 is Vocational Service Month.

Announcements:

Roger has agreed to chair the Membership Committee, and **Ken Holland and Debbie MacRae** have agreed to be on the Committee. If anyone else is willing to join, please advise Roger.

Adrienne: Mark on our calendars February 14, 2021 for a virtual fireside meeting.

Duck Race tickets: It was also noted that Duck Race tickets cannot be purchased by members of the club's executive, and also should not be purchased by members of the Duck Race to Committee (although there is no rule which prevents family members of these Rotarians from doing so – and it is encouraged).

Today's COVID-19 Quote:



Submitted by Laurie Anderson