



# The Fortarian

Jan 10, 2024  
Rotary Club of Thunder Bay (Fort William)

## 2022/2023 Board of Directors

President: Irene Sottile  
 Secretary: Stephen Margarit  
 Assistant Secretary: Cindy Levanto  
 Treasurer: Dawn Sebasta  
 President Elect: Glenn Craig  
 Past President: Fhara Pottinger  
 Meets: 3rd Tuesday of each month,  
 Zoom: 6.30pm

## Website [www.fwrotary.ca](http://www.fwrotary.ca)

Directors:  
 Therese Lim  
 Cindy Levanto  
 Joseph Osei Ababio  
 Dave Knutson  
 Stephen Margarit  
 Mary Ann Breton

## Allocations Committee

Chair: Bob Hookham  
 Meets: 2nd Tuesday of each month,  
 Zoom 12 noon.

## Rotary House Lottery Committee

Chair: Dave Knutson  
 Meets: 1st Tuesday of each month,  
 Zoom 12 noon.

## Semi-monthly Zoom Meetings

Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.  
 Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday

## Mailing Address

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## Newsletter Editors

Erle Wheatley & Brian Phillips

# THE FORTARIAN

## Jan 10, 2024

President Irene chaired the meeting, with no one attending online. President Shelley Crawford of the Port Arthur Rotary Club and Mark Breton (Honourary Rotarian) were also in attendance.

The assembled Rotarians sang the National anthem, led by Laura Craig, after which Glenn Craig proposed a toast to the King of Canada.

Mary Anne Breton acknowledged that the meeting was being conducted on the traditional lands of the Indigenous people of this region and recognizing the Metis people and their contributions in the history of the area.

### Presentation:

President Irene introduced the speaker for the evening, Jon Thompson, a local journalist who has worked for both the CBC and TVO.

Jon talked about the challenges associated with realizing the ideal goals of “equity, diversity and inclusion” with specific reference to building positive relationships with Indigenous people in our region. He reflected on an experience he had earlier in his career. In order to actually achieve the vision of “(Media) Ontario” as opposed to “(Media) GTA”, the organizations implemented plans to have personnel in the various regions of Ontario.

Jon was one of these regional reporters based in our city. While this is/was an admirable goal, the inherent hierarchal management structure (managing and editorial groups based in Toronto), result in an unintended consequence. Specifically, the resulting TV and print articles reflected an interpretation based on “life experience” gained in Toronto, a “centric vision/perspective”. This created stresses in the working relationships between the regional reporters and his/her “sources” and a loss of trust in Communities that didn’t believe the broadcast end result reflected the reality in their localities.

Jon went on to say that, despite the words and good intentions following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there seems to be limited political appetite to execute the recommendations. There is no Government agency overseeing the performance and achievements related to implementation. Some large Corporations indicate support of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, but are there outside monitoring to measure the outcomes?

In terms of relationships with the Indigenous communities, Jon suggested that how the relationship was viewed depended on one’s perspective and this is important because relationships and systems are how power reinforces itself. It is suggested that the Indigenous peoples who entered into treaties believed that the relationship (as detailed in the treaty agreement) was comparable to traveling in two canoes to the same destination, separate but together, with the shared desired

outcome of a better future. This would be contrary to the idea that “we are all in one boat”. The “two canoe” model suggests shared power, the “one boat” model suggests giving up power.

Mr. Thompson reflected on the matter of “systemic racism” in our city Police force. This is a complex issue, clouded by disinformation, a lack of understanding, resistance to gaining understanding and intentional ill will. He indicated that data suggests that, historically, fewer resources were deployed on crimes against Indigenous people versus non-indigenous crime victims and that raises questions in the mind of the public.

Ultimately, Mr. Thompson suggests that a key element in achieving successful relationships with Indigenous peoples revolves around equitable power sharing.

There were further discussion and questions from the Club members.

President Irene thanked Jon on behalf of the Club for sharing his ideas with us.

#### Announcements:

Shelley Crawford, President of the Port Arthur Rotary Club outlined an initiative of a Rotary organization named “HIP” (Honouring Indigenous People). They organize an event called the Y2Y (Youth to Youth) Conference. This conference consists of equal numbers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth delegates. It has a duration of one week and is intended to build relationships and understanding between individuals. It is led by Indigenous people and is similar in concept to RYLA. There is an opportunity for Thunder Bay to be considered as a destination for the 2026 event. It is intended to make this a matter for discussion at the Canada Club meeting.

Rotarian John Stephenson (Port Arthur) is working to revitalize interest in and support of the Rotary Youth Exchange program. Traditionally, with aging membership, finding volunteers for the home stays has been difficult and John is looking to determine the level of interest of non-Rotarian parents in this program. Part of that effort requires getting the word out to schools and that could be done through existing relationships with School personnel by all of the Clubs. Ideally, this exercise is envisioned to be expanded into a “Canada Club” effort. Is this something Fort William Rotary is interested in supporting?

Women’s Networking opportunity –On January 20, 2024, 2:00-3:30 there will be an event at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery to build connections between the “Tapestry Women’s Network”, Sisters for the Black Canadian Community and Women in Rotary.

Port Arthur Rotary is organizing the Rotary Anniversary Event. The event is envisioned to be a Cocktail style event in a nice venue with reduced cost over previous dinner events. Stay tuned for additional information.

Port Arthur Rotary has been granted “Charitable” status. This has facilitated an initiative with the United Way, with PA sponsoring 50% of an intern’s work with the United Way providing the other 50%.

Fort William Rotarian Solade Nicol continues to be the Chair of the Crime Stoppers organization here in the city.

Rotarian Stephen Margarit announced that the RFDA volunteers would meet January 15, 2024 at 6:30. He will e-mail a reminder to all.

The 2024 District Conference will be held April 11-13 in Fargo, North Dakota.

Reports:

Allocations: -No activity to report.

House Lottery Committee: The top priority for the House Lottery Committee is preparation and submission of the Lottery license application.

Lighterside: Cindy provided some risqué humour that brought laughter from her fellow Rotarians.



Jon Thompson is a 21-year veteran, award-winning journalist and author, who was born and raised in Thunder Bay. He wrote for newspapers in Kenora, Dryden, Red Lake, and Thunder Bay before being selected as the founding employee of TVO Hubs in 2017. Jon was nominated for the national “reconciliation” journalism award each of the three years he worked for TVO. He has since published work with CBC, APTN, and co-produced the smash podcast hit “Thunder Bay” for Canadaland. In 2023, his team released the four-part documentary series “Thunder Bay” on Crave.

**Editor Erle**

**Scribe Dave**

**Photo Irene**

*Theme 2023-2024*

