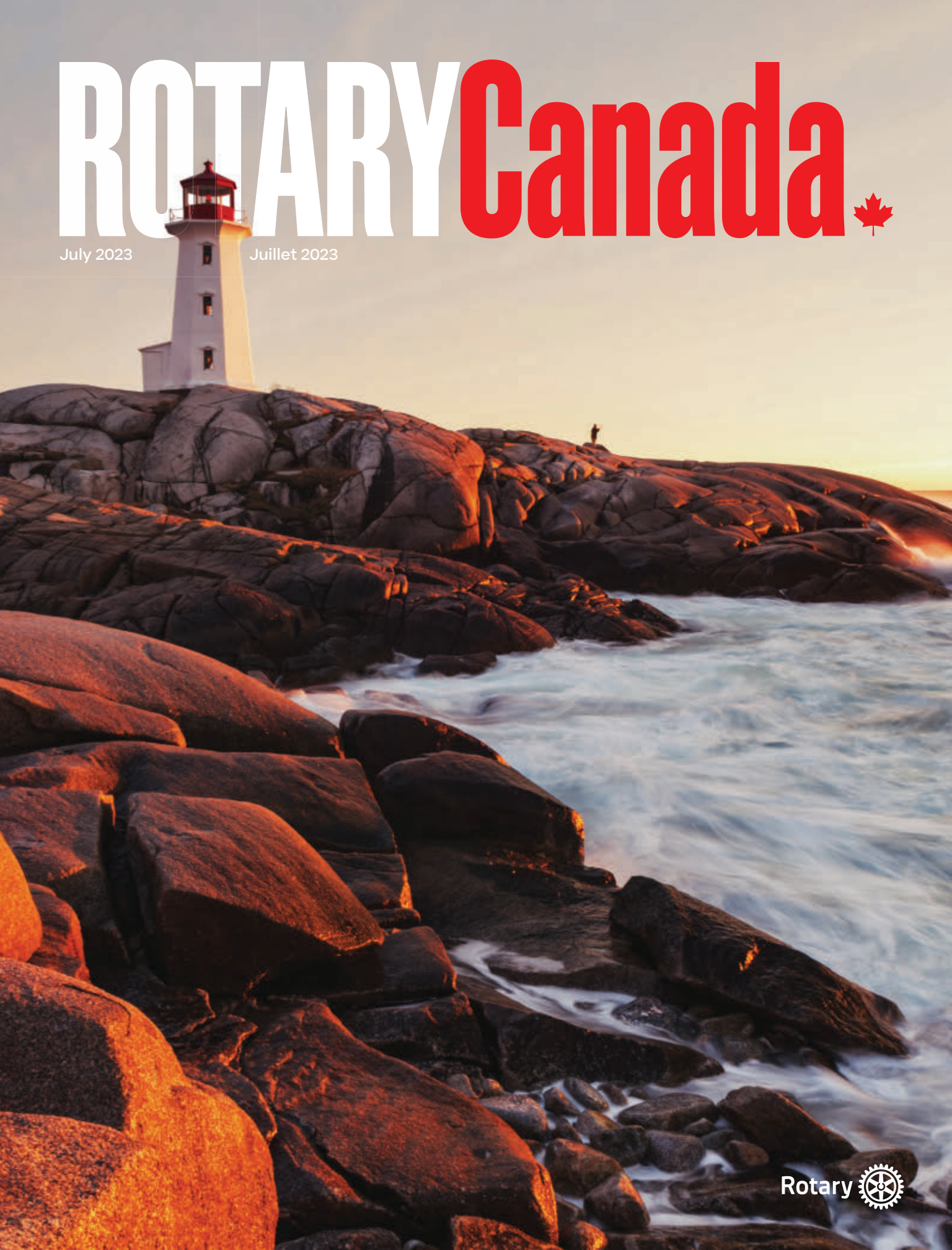


ROTARYCanada

July 2023

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VIEW FROM THE NORTH

Beneath two flags

In 1966, a year before Canada would celebrate its 100th birthday, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. commissioned a song to commemorate the centennial. It turned to a young songwriter, an Ontario native of Scottish descent named Gordon Lightfoot, who crafted “Canadian Railroad Trilogy,” a seven-minute ballad that begins — and ends — by conjuring a time when Canada’s “wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun ... [and] the green dark forest was too silent to be real.”

The CBC first broadcast the song on 1 January 1967, but the centennial celebration reached its peak on 1 July: Dominion Day, or as it’s known today, Canada Day. The first day of July, as we all know, also marks the beginning of the new Rotary year.

As a native Canadian and professed vexillophile, I enjoyed arriving at One Rotary Center in Evanston, Illinois, over the past year and seeing the red-and-white Canadian flag with its 11-point maple leaf flying out front. On 1 July, as Jennifer Jones passes the presidential baton to Gordon McNally, the blue-and-white Scottish flag with the St. Andrew’s cross will take its place. That Rotary tradition signals not an end, but a beginning, a renewal. Gordon Lightfoot died in early May, but were he still with us, I imagine that the Canadian musician with Scottish roots whose centennial song chronicled the cycles of change would agree.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Executive editor, *Rotary Canada*

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Backdropped by Canada’s “wild majestic mountains,” The Canadian, a transcontinental passenger train, hurries on towards Jasper, Alberta.

On the cover:
The Peggys Point Lighthouse stands on Peggys Cove at the entrance to St. Margarets Bay in Nova Scotia.



FIELD NOTES

Stay tuned

A 67-year-old Rotary tradition brings music to Medicine Hat

As springtime approaches in Alberta, there's music in the air. That's because towns and cities throughout the province hold music and performing arts competitions, leading up to the annual Alberta Music Festival. Of the 36 local festivals in Alberta, seven are sponsored by Rotary clubs: Airdrie, Barrhead, Cardston, Fort McMurray Oil-sands, Medicine Hat, St. Albert, and Whitecourt.

Among the Rotary-supported festivals, the Medicine Hat Music Festival stands out as the oldest: Its current iteration dates to 1956, and the festival's roots can be traced to the 1930s. Donald Davis, who chairs the festival committee for the Rotary Club of Medicine Hat, says that the annual competition, held over two weeks, usually draws about 1,000 participants, most of them still in their teens. The musicians perform across a wide range of disciplines, including vocal, musical theatre, strings, brass, woodwinds, and piano. Some perform solo, others in small groups, as well as in choirs, bands, and orchestras. Performers compete for numerous awards and scholarships, and the festival typically sends 25 to 30 performers to compete at the provincial festival.

Competing in the chamber music category, Voicelliano Trio — from left, Laec Lorentzen (cello), Emma Lavigne (vocal), and Stirling Clark (piano) — were the winners of this year's Medicine Hat Music Festival.

Davis says that the primary benefit for the performers is the opportunity to receive instruction from the professional adjudicators who evaluate the performances. Typically, he says, there are a dozen adjudicators each year, and the major cost of funding the festival is their fees and travel and lodging expenses. The festival is the major community project of the Medicine Hat club, which sponsors one-third of the fest's nearly \$100,000 budget and raises money for another third.

Despite the festival's longevity and success, Davis says that funding has become increasingly challenging in recent years. That's due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily compelled the festival to stage virtual performances. The event was live this year, but its website includes a request for support: "Please help us keep the festival alive and thriving."

But the emphasis remains on the music — and the festival's mainly young performers. "Although the competitive aspect exists, our focus is more on the festive part," says Delynne Lorentzen, a club member who has served as executive director of the Medicine Hat festival since 2016. "We have children as young as 4 and adults as old as 78." The adults, she says, do not participate in the competitive segment of the festival, and, she adds, "all of our age 12 and under categories are completely noncompetitive, meaning the performers do not receive a grade, though they are still eligible for awards and recommendations."

"The spirit of sportsmanship is visible at our final event, which we call the Rose Bowl," Lorentzen adds. "The backstage area is full of laughter and friendship. Even though the performers are competing against each other, you wouldn't know it. This vibe has been created with the help of our volunteers, who I hand-pick and educate for this vibe. They're just fantastic at helping the kids relax and enjoy the evening."

Many of the young musicians who have participated in the Medicine Hat event have gone on to successful and in some cases very high-profile music careers, says Lorentzen. They include soprano Sydney Baedke, who in 2021 was named one of Canada's top classical musicians under age 30 by CBC Music, and violinist Kumiko Sakamoto, who is a member of the heralded Thalea String Quartet. Lorentzen estimates that over the past several years, about 70 percent of youths in the senior level of the festival have attended performing arts schools. "We celebrate all of our participants," she says, "and hope that they leave feeling encouraged to go out and keep making music."

— PAUL ENGLEMAN





PROFILE

‘My own learning journey’

A champion of inclusion turns his attention to Indigenous issues

While working as a constable for the Calgary Police Service 20 years ago, Cam Stewart attended an Aboriginal justice camp hosted by Reg and Rose Crowshoe, highly respected elders of the Piikani Nation, which is a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy. All these years later, the cold facts Stewart confronted then remain indelibly etched on his consciousness.

“I realized that I had many misconceptions of Indigenous people and knew nothing about their history, culture, or current realities,” he says. “I made a commitment to myself that I would start my own learning journey and do what I could to help others understand [Indigenous issues], to change their perceptions and support system change.”

That resolve, along with the work he has been doing since his epiphany, led to Stewart, a member of the Rotary Club of

Calgary East, being honoured this spring as one of Rotary International’s People of Action: Champions of Inclusion. The six honourees were recognized for their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion at an April event in Cape Town, South Africa, hosted by Rotary and the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation.

“One thing I realized was that I needed to immerse myself in projects driven by the Indigenous community,” Stewart recalls. “I participated in many circles, gatherings, and events, and I used my position to support and promote them. I also attended ceremonial sweats, sun dances, and vision quests. This provided me with an in-depth appreciation of the Indigenous worldview, versus my Western, colonized perspective.”

Two years ago, Stewart was asked to serve as the founding chair of the Indig-

enous relations committee for District 5360 (parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan). Comprising both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, the 12-person committee provides Indigenous perspectives and advice to Rotary clubs and their members across the district. It does that by supporting Indigenous training and learning opportunities; making district programs and services more accessible and relevant to Indigenous people; and strengthening and expanding Rotary’s relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations. To facilitate involvement by Rotary members, the committee offers a comprehensive resource guide to Indigenous culture and issues. The committee’s strategic plan was consecrated in a traditional pipe ceremony led by Elder Casey Eagle Speaker of Mohkinstsis (Calgary).



In Cape Town, Cam Stewart (holding his People of Action: Champions of Inclusion award) celebrates with (from right) Steven Leavitt, the 2022-23 governor of District 5360; Leavitt's wife, Patricia Leavitt; Stewart's wife, Marina Stewart, and his mother, Delia Stewart; and Leavitt's granddaughter, Isabella Nehring.

"We're providing opportunities for our members to find a space to ask questions and learn about things," Stewart says, explaining that the work of the committee is twofold. "As a means of reconciliation, we are educating and building self-awareness among Rotarians to understand the truth about our Indigenous neighbors. At the same time, we are providing opportunities for Indigenous people and their leaders to learn about Rotary."

Initially, that was easier said than done. "After meeting with Rotary members and Indigenous leaders, we realized that there were some common barriers that prevented open dialogue and trust," says Stewart. "As much as Rotarians didn't know about Indigenous issues, First Nations people didn't know about Rotarians. They may have seen Rotarians involved in projects, but they also may view Rotary as another settler-based colonist organization that they've had problems with before. We want them to see that that's not what Rotary is about."

The committee "is all about building relationships," Stewart adds, a topic that he addressed in his remarks at the People of Action ceremony in Cape Town, where he repeated an adage borrowed from Casey Eagle Speaker: "Relationships are built at the speed of trust."

As the committee began its work, Stewart remembers, "we had a solid foundation for what we were doing and how we were going to advance the district goals." A key to the committee's early success was the strong support it received from the district's governors, beginning with Christine Rendell, the 2019-20 governor and a founding member of the Indigenous relations committee. "If it wasn't for strong leadership, we wouldn't have gotten as far as we have," Stewart says. Already about a third of the

district's clubs have made a commitment to advance Indigenous causes, he says, and six of those clubs are "true leaders in this area and are mentoring others during their journey."

And, as he announced in his Cape Town speech, "a 'community of practice' group has now emerged that includes more than 100 Rotary members interested in being leaders of Indigenous inclusion in their clubs" — and, he said, "a youth-focused Interact club has formed on one of the reserve schools."

Stewart is hopeful that even more members of Rotary will engage with the committee, especially since some members who have already chosen to participate seem to have taken a renewed interest in Rotary. "I've had people tell me they were thinking about leaving Rotary but had decided to stay because of the direction we're going," he says. Furthermore, "there is an opportunity to leverage our lessons and collaborate to make things better for all the Indigenous people in Canada."

Outside of Rotary, Stewart shares his expertise with the Alberta Human Rights Commission; he began working there after retiring, in 2005, from the Calgary Police Service, where he'd spent 25 years. He leads the commission's engagement efforts with Indigenous people, people with disabilities, members of faith organizations and municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and police departments.

Stewart says that he was "excited and honoured to receive the People of Action award, because it provides a platform and amplifies the work we are doing in District 5360, Treaty 7 area with our Indigenous partners." Just as important was the honour of receiving his Blackfoot name, Mikostahpinukum, or Red Morning, from Herman Yellow Old Woman of Siksika Nation, Alberta, and an eagle feather from Elder Doreen Spence of Mohkinstsis.

"Being gifted the feather and Blackfoot name was a humbling, surreal, and life-changing experience," Stewart says. "These are gifts linked to land, ceremony, and the creator. Presented by elders, they are honours that very few non-Indigenous people receive. Accepting them has been a personal calling to continue and amplify my work to advance Indigenous inclusion and participation in our society."

— PAUL ENGLEMAN



4-PART HARMONY

An uncanny emblem captures the unseen

In retrospect, it's uncanny how the logo for the District 5360 Indigenous relations committee so perfectly represents the committee's focus on cross-cultural collaboration. Designed by the young Blackfoot artist Ina Fairbanks-Oldshoes, the logo depicts two hands shaking on a mutual level, signifying a dedication to building trust and friendship. That handshake occurs within a traditional medicine wheel, which represents the committee's efforts to work through an Indigenous lens.

In his April speech at the People of Action ceremony in Cape Town, Cam Stewart explained some of the unseen elements spread across the symbol's four quadrants. "In my teachings," he said, "we start by facing the east, toward sunrise and new beginnings. Its totem animal is the keen-eyed eagle, which seeks the truth."

Stewart then made his way around the wheel: to the south and the red, full warmth of the sun. "Its totem animal is a mouse," he said, "who knows intuitively what is both fair and right." To the west, a blue place of spiritual striving, is a bear, which uses introspection and its senses to build relationships and goodwill. ("Think of a warm bear hug," said Stewart.) To the north, where the colour white symbolizes snow and the wisdom of the elders, a buffalo surrenders all its possessions to benefit the entire community.

But there was something more. "After being gifted this medicine wheel image with its four directions," Stewart explained, "our district committee realized there was a connection with Rotary: its guiding principles of The Four-Way Test."



NOTES DE TERRAIN

Des relations construites à la vitesse de la confiance

Les réflexions d'un Champion de l'Inclusion

En avril, lors d'un événement au Cap, en Afrique du Sud, organisé par le Rotary International et la Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, le Rotary a présenté ses six Personnes d'Action : Champions de l'Inclusion. Parmi eux se trouvait Cam Stewart, membre du Rotary Club de Calgary Est, en Alberta. Des extraits du discours de Stewart prononcé lors de l'événement se trouve ici, traduit en français.

En tant que canadien et personne qui réside sur nos territoires traditionnels du Traité 7, c'est un honneur d'être ici ce soir sur cette scène et sur ces terres qui ont été entretenues et foulées pendant des générations par de nombreux peuples autochtones, y compris le peuple Khoisan.

C'est mon engagement et celui de nombreux autres membres du Rotary de faire progresser l'inclusion des autochtones en tant qu'actes de réconciliation. Les relations se construisent à la vitesse de la confiance.

Bon nombre d'entre vous ont entendu parler de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada. Inspirée par l'expérience de l'Afrique du Sud, l'objectif de la commission, qui s'est déroulée de 2008 à 2015, était de documenter l'histoire et les impacts durables du système des pensionnats indiens canadiens.

Dans ma jeunesse, on ne nous a pas parlé des premiers peuples du Canada. Cependant, vers la fin de ma carrière d'agent de police à Calgary, en Alberta, j'ai travaillé avec diverses communautés et j'ai entendu une fois une citation d'un dirigeant musulman : « Apprendre — Gagner — Rendre ». Cela a résonné en moi comme « École — Travail — Volontariat ».

En suivant cette voie, j'ai assisté aux

événements de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada pour écouter les peuples autochtones et les aînés. C'est là que j'ai découvert l'histoire des pensionnats, de la colonisation, de la discrimination systémique et des impacts continus que ceux-ci ont eu sur les jeunes, les familles et les communautés autochtones.

Ce fut une révélation et j'ai dû repenser mon parcours pour apprendre des vérités, désapprendre les leçons enseignées dans ma jeunesse, gagner le respect et la confiance et redonner ces enseignements aux autres et agir.

Tout au long de ma carrière, j'ai reçu divers prix pour mon travail, mais ce n'est que lorsque j'ai reçu une plume d'aigle, puis que j'ai reçu le nom Pied-Noir de Mikostahpinukum (Matin Rouge), que j'ai su que ma vocation était de faire progresser l'inclusion autochtone au Canada. Je garde ces articles près de mon cœur et les utilise quotidiennement.

Je partageais ces idées et conseillais le gouvernement et les entreprises lorsque le gouverneur de mon district m'a demandé de soutenir la sensibilisation à nos communautés autochtones locales. Notre commission des relations autochtones de district est une commission autonome et unique au Rotary car elle est composée de représentants de dirigeants autochtones non rotariens. Son plan stratégique a été consacré lors d'une cérémonie traditionnelle du calumet. Il facilite la formation des clubs et des membres et aide le Rotary et les communautés autochtones à co-crée des opportunités d'engagement.

Un groupe de communauté de pratique a maintenant émergé qui comprend plus de 100 membres du Rotary intéressés à être des leaders de l'inclusion autochtone pour leurs clubs. Au fur et à mesure que nos efforts progressaient, c'est un de nos aînés locaux qui nous a appris que « les relations se construisent à la vitesse de la confiance ».

Le comité a offert aux rotariens et aux dirigeants autochtones des occasions de se rencontrer à la fois dans les réserves

et dans les zones urbaines, pour en apprendre davantage sur les rêves de chacun et établir des relations de confiance. Une jeune artiste Pied-Noir a créé un logo pour promouvoir notre travail commun. Elle a dépeint deux mains se serrant mutuellement, signifiant l'établissement de la confiance et de l'amitié, au sein d'une roue de médecine traditionnelle, représentant notre engagement à voir notre travail à travers une lentille autochtone.

Dans mes enseignements, on commence en faisant face à l'est vers le lever du soleil et les nouveaux départs, son animal totem est l'aigle aux yeux perçants, qui cherche la vérité. C'est un symbole puissant dans la communauté.

Le sud est la direction de la pleine chaleur du soleil. L'animal totem est une souris, qui sait intuitivement ce qui est à la fois juste et équitable. C'est l'endroit où bâtir des relations saines au sein des familles et des communautés.

La section bleue est l'ouest, un lieu d'efforts spirituels. L'animal totem est l'ours, qui utilise l'introspection et ses sens pour construire des relations et de la bienveillance. Pensez à un chaud câlin d'ours.

La couleur du nord, le blanc, symbolise la neige et la sagesse des anciens. L'animal totem, le buffle, fournit tous ses biens au profit de toute la communauté. Ce sont des animaux sages et collectifs qui s'occupent de leurs troupeaux. Dans la mort, chaque partie a un objectif pour la tribu.

Après avoir reçu cette image de la roue médicinale, avec ses quatre directions, notre comité de district a réalisé qu'il y avait un lien avec le Rotary — ses principes directeurs du critère des quatre questions : Est-ce la vérité ? Est-ce juste pour toutes les personnes concernées ? Construire-t-il la bonne volonté et les amitiés ? Sera-t-il bénéfique pour tous ?

En établissant des relations avec nos voisins autochtones, nos clubs créent une culture plus accueillante et inclusive. En effet, les relations se construisent à la vitesse de la confiance. ■

Ce fut une révélation et j'ai dû repenser mon parcours pour apprendre des vérités [et] désapprendre les leçons enseignées dans ma jeunesse.

INTERACT

The play's the thing

An Interact club reaps the incredible rewards of service

The first thing Alberta's Ava Semeniuk noticed when she arrived in March at the San Jose Palmar school in Orange Walk, Belize, was the drab concrete slab wedged between two buildings that functioned as the recreation area for students at the elementary school. That was the moment when Semeniuk, the president of the Interact Club of Vegreville, realized just how meaningful and beneficial the project that she and nine fellow Interactors were there to complete was going to be.

This year's expedition marked the fifth occasion when Interactors from Vegreville, a small town about 100 kilometres east of Edmonton, travelled to schools in Belize, where, in addition to building playgrounds, they conduct literacy activities and provide supplies to schoolchildren. Deanne Nichol, the 2023-24 president of the Rotary Club of Vegreville, explains that the Interact club first developed the service project in 2016, in partnership with the Emmanuel Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Edmonton that serves communities in developing countries by, among other things, refurbishing decommissioned playgrounds and shipping them where they're most needed around the world.

Nichol, whose daughter Madyson is an Interactor, chaperoned the recent trip, along with Greg and Kendal Senko, the husband and daughter of Vegreville Rotarian Renee Senko, who advises the Interact club. Greg is a member of the Vegreville club too, and Kendal is a former Interactor who was unable to take part in the Orange

Walk project when it was cancelled for three years during the pandemic.

To raise funds for this year's trip, the Interactors sold chocolates and organized several events, including a spaghetti dinner. These activities were in addition to the Interact club's ongoing biweekly volunteer programs: assisting at a food bank and conducting bingo games at a home for older people. "It is through small acts of volunteerism like those that we really have an impact on our community," says Semeniuk.

As it happened, the pieces of the playground had arrived in Belize long before the Interactors; they had been delivered in 2020 and were watched over by Francis Woods, a Rotarian in Belize City who serves as local coordinator for the playground projects. For the Orange Walk installation, the Interactors, who ranged in age from 15 to 18, served as assistants to the adult volunteers. These included local members of the military and a representative from the Emmanuel Foundation, who supervised the construction. But after the playground was completed and they turned their attention to the classroom for the literacy portion of their project, the Interactors took charge, coordinating their activities with the school's teachers and principal.

Semeniuk says that the biggest challenge during the trip was coping with the blistering heat. "We were working seven-hour days, and for most of the day the temperature reached the high 30s, with the UV index hitting 13" — an extremely high reading.

The opening of the playground was carried out with considerable



In Belize, members of the Interact Club of Vegreville, Alberta, complete work on a school playground, the latest installment of a multiyear project.

fanfare, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by local dignitaries, Rotarians, and Interactors from a recently formed club in Orange Walk. A group of students performed a traditional bottle dance, and preschool children read poems that they had written. "After the ribbon-cutting, our group passed out soccer items — a ball, a jersey, or a pair of cleats — to each child," Semeniuk says. "Then they stormed the playground with the biggest grins on their faces, which made the experience incredibly rewarding for us."

Semeniuk, who plans to attend the University of British Columbia and pursue a degree in health science, views her time in Interact as a first step through the Rotary door. "I would love to further my involvement with Rotary in the future," she says. "I will definitely be looking into the different clubs when I get to British Columbia."

— PAUL ENGLEMAN



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