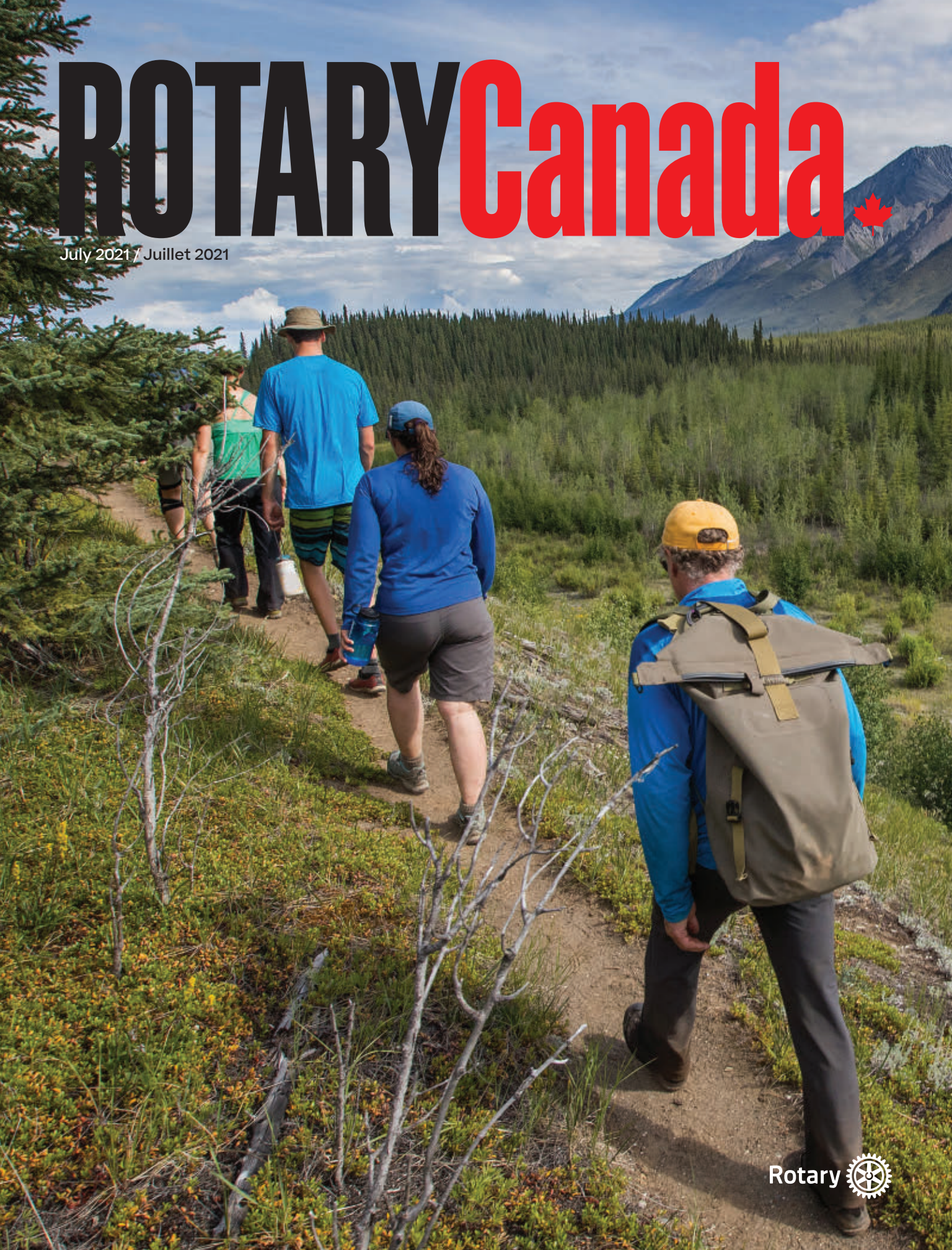


ROTARYCanada

July 2021 / Juillet 2021



The language of inclusion

AS I WRITE THIS COLUMN, I reflect on the fact that I just completed my 2021 census. I'm also aware that this issue of *Rotary Canada* will reach readers around Canada Day, 1 July.

The census data will give us a clearer picture of who lives in our communities: their ages, education levels, ethnicities, language preferences, and more. So the question is, does your Rotary club reflect the census data of your community?

I know mine does not. In Abbotsford, British Columbia, where I live, residents of South Asian heritage — primarily Indo-Canadian, I would guess — comprise about 25 per cent of the town's population. Yet there are only a few Indo-Canadians in our Rotary clubs here. They certainly don't make up 25 per cent of our membership.

On Canada Day, we will celebrate our nation from sea to sea as we always do, with the singing of "O Canada." At a recent club meeting we watched a video of people singing our national anthem in 11 languages, including two First Nations languages.

Watching that video prompted my question about diversity, equity, and inclusion. My experience in Rotary leads me to believe we are not doing a good job of welcoming people from all walks of life and backgrounds to our great movement.

So this Canada Day, let's begin to take action on bringing more diversity, in its myriad forms, to our Rotary clubs. I wager we will be the better for the effort and will show leadership throughout Rotary by our actions.

ROD THOMSON

*Chair, Rotary Canada Advisory Board
Rotary Club of Abbotsford, British Columbia*

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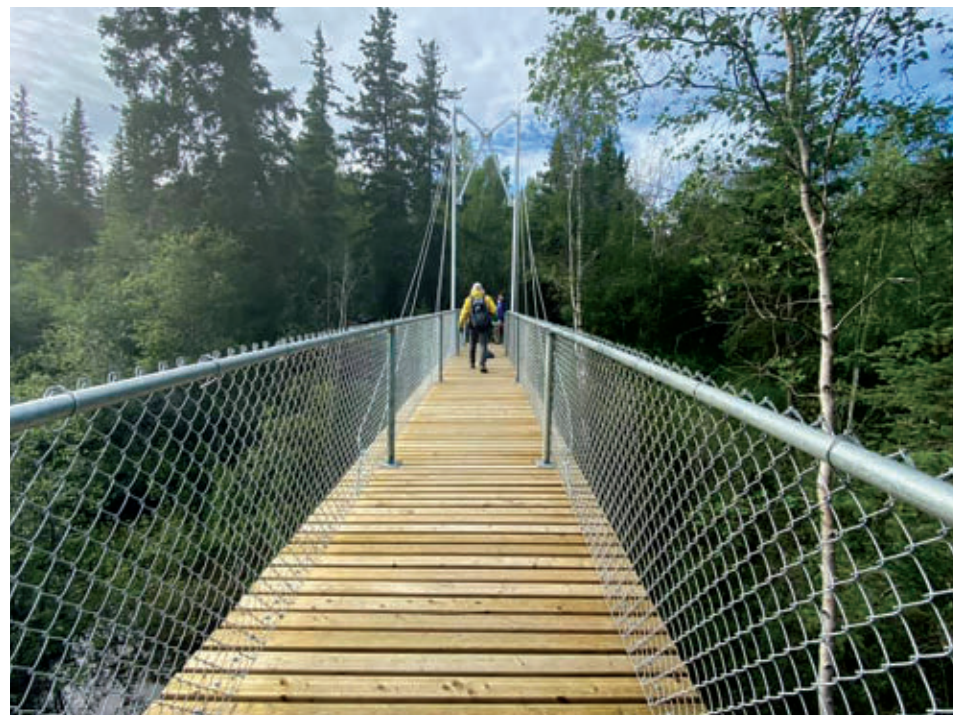


PHOTO OF THE MONTH

In the Northwest Territories, the Rotary Club of Yellowknife-True North built a new suspension bridge to a historic cemetery. Read more about the club's projects, which focus on its city's past, present, and future, on page 4.

FIELD NOTES

Food and fellowship in White Rock

When the pandemic hit a British Columbia town, the entire community turned out to help

The city of White Rock sits alongside a sandy beach in the southwest corner of British Columbia. It's a five-minute drive to the 100-year-old Peace Arch, a 21-metre, white concrete structure that straddles the border between Canada and the United States. Inscribed across the frieze on the U.S. side of the arch are the words "Children of a Common Mother"; on the Canadian side, the inscription reads "Brethren Dwelling Together in Unity." Within the arch, where iron gates are mounted on its east and west walls, another inscription appears: "May These Gates Never Be Closed."

Yet when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, it curtailed travel between the two countries. The impact on White Rock and nearby South Surrey was immediate, as local restaurants and small businesses suffered major setbacks and employees lost their jobs. "Food banks reported vastly increased numbers of families seeking help," says George Garrett, a former radio broadcaster and a member of the Rotary Club of White Rock. "Residents here were not accustomed to seeing people line up for food."

A nearby church, the Peace Portal Alliance, began offering free lunches on Wednesdays. Overwhelmed, it turned to the 50-plus members of the White Rock club for help. On 21 May 2020, in a parking lot next door to the local playhouse, club members distributed 18 brown-bag chicken dinners. It was the beginning of a club program now known as Feed My City, which currently provides hot meals to about 50 people, seven days a week. The club estimates that it served 12,000 meals in the program's first 10 months, at a cost of about \$5,000 a month.

"People who come for the free hot meals are grateful not only for the food but also for the opportunity to get out of the house and have someone to talk to," Garrett says. A regular visitor — a woman named Cynthia

"Food banks reported vastly increased numbers of families seeking help."

— George Garrett



The Rotary Club of White Rock hosted a Christmas celebration at the Feed My City hut.

who gets by on a disability pension — chimed in: "You see people and you feel more a part of the community. Everybody really appreciates Rotary."

But it's not just Rotarians who have rallied around Feed My City. The city of White Rock stepped in to help, as did Peninsula United Church, and the Peace Portal Alliance continues to anchor the program on Wednesdays. Several restaurants — Bamboo, Red Rose, and White Rock Indian Flavours, as well as Seriously Good Catering, which has served the club's lunches for years — prepared the meals and provided them at cost, a significant savings for the program. To give volunteers some shelter as they distribute food, Premium Fence and Poco Building Supplies donated materials for a sturdy and roomy hut, which Premium volunteers custom-built on site over two days, complete with a Rotary wheel.

Club members — including White Rock Mayor Darryl Walker and Srinivasan "Raj" Rajagopal, who will serve as the 2022-23 governor of District 5050 — turn out regularly to staff the hut and distribute food, as do non-Rotarian volunteers. People have contributed financially as well. "Donations ranged from a few dollars donated by passersby to \$20,000 from a generous local citizen," Garrett says. As of the end of March 2021, club members had donated more than \$50,000.

All that bodes well for the program's longevity, perhaps even beyond the pandemic. "We can take the approach that all good things must come to an end," says Gordy Sangha, the club's 2021-22 president. "Or we can be determined to continue with Feed My City until we've helped the last person in need. I believe in the latter course." May that gate never be closed.



FEATURE

True North projects span space and time

A new bridge is the latest example of one club's focus on Yellowknife's past, present, and future

IN THE NORTHWEST Territories, above an inlet of Great Slave Lake, a secluded graveyard sits at the end of a long, winding trail. Only about 35 bodies are known to be buried there, and the last one was interred in 1946. Yet for some residents of Yellowknife, the cemetery remains a vital repository of the city's past. "This place is full of Yellowknife's history," says Michael Kalnay. "It's where the first pioneers were buried — and there is plenty of history here yet to be discovered."

Kalnay is a member of the Rotary Club of Yellowknife-True North, which has maintained Back Bay Cemetery since 2011: cutting the grass, trimming the trees, painting the picket fence and wooden grave markers. And last fall, after six years of planning, fundraising,

and labor, the club completed its largest project ever: construction of a 20-metre-long steel suspension bridge to the cemetery.

According to Kalnay, it was no easy task. "While it's a long hike to the cemetery, it's an even longer road to build a bridge down there."

But the club isn't interested only in Yellowknife's yesterdays. Its focus, in fact, is threefold: the past (what Kalnay and other club members refer to as "our heritage"), the present ("our seniors and local charities"), and the future ("our youth").

The club takes a particular approach to making an impact in those three areas. Rather than focusing exclusively on fundraising, Kalnay explains, "we focus on giving our time to engage directly in the community. We do this through hands-on projects: Once a month we abandon our regular meeting

space" — the Dancing Moose Café — "and do something directly to help the community."

Those activities include helping to prepare special meals at a residential community centre for seniors and facilitating Tuesday bingo to ensure that the city's older residents have opportunities to socialize. Club members built a fire circle for the Yellowknife Scouts at the Folk on the Rocks festival site on Long Lake and garden boxes at Mildred Hall School so that students could learn how to grow their own food.

In March, following local health rules and recommendations, the club held its annual soup kitchen event, which offered two choices of gourmet soup as well as an opportunity to break down barriers between residents and the city's homeless. And in April, club members were at the NWT SPCA pet shelter, walking dogs and washing windows and floors. "We've done all this with our time and very little money," Kalnay says.

Building a new bridge to Back Bay Cemetery, however, required a great deal of both commodities. "The need for a new bridge was identified in 2011 when True North made its first trip to the cemetery for a hands-on service project to cut the grass there," says Kalnay. "The old bridge was about 7 metres long, but changes to permafrost conditions meant that it had heaved up a metre at one end and was under water at the other for much of the summer, making it impassable and unsafe."

Work on designing a new bridge began in 2014. "Our first thought was to replace the old bridge, just a bit higher upstream to get it out of the water, but we ran into a coyote den at one end," Kalnay recalls. "We moved it further upstream, but the stream started to get too wide to build a bridge without intermediate supports." Final plans called for a 20-metre suspension bridge with a steel superstructure that spanned a ravine filled with groundwater, seepage from Jackfish Lake, and runoff



Chief shepherd
At the opening ceremony for the bridge, Michael Kalnay, who led the Rotary Club of Yellowknife-True North project, unveils a marker with information about people buried at the cemetery.



from Yellowknife's famous ice caves.

At the same time, club members began collecting stories, from old newspapers and family descendants, about burials at the cemetery. The deceased included Métis, geologists, and prospectors, and the research into their lives uncovered tales of the mining accidents, explosions, fires, drownings, and illnesses that afflicted them and their families.

The first known burial — of a prospector named Art McIntyre, who reportedly died by suicide because he was afraid of working underground — occurred in September 1938, only four years after the city of Yellowknife was founded. While only about 35 known burials have been identified at the cemetery, there were likely more, with some of the gravesites now lost to erosion.

“Almost half of the graves at the site were burials of infants who died before their first birthday,” according to a 2015 report by the CBC, which cited research done by an amateur Yellowknife historian. “Many burials were of young men in their late teens and early 20s. Only six of the people buried there reached their 50th birthday.” The club installed interpretive and historical signage at the cemetery to bring these stories to life, and the bridge will allow more residents and tourists to visit the historic site while also protecting the fragile environment that surrounds the graveyard.

Local businesses, the city of Yellowknife, and city residents — including members of the Rotary Club of Yellowknife — pitched in to construct the new bridge. In

the end, they donated \$130,000 in cash, goods, or services (with \$15,000 of that coming from the True North club) and 1,200 hours of volunteer labour. For instance, the Acasta HeliFlight company airlifted beams and seven tons of riprap rocks to the remote site, while Kalnay credits Wayne Guy of Guy Architects and Engineers with making the club's vision a reality. “Volunteer effort turned the rock, the wood, and the steel into a thing of beauty,” Kalnay says.

Construction on the new bridge began in 2019. Due to the timing of the work's start date and Yellowknife's climate, much of the work was done during freezing temperatures of -15°C to -30°C . Rotarians and other volunteers spent almost a year lifting riprap into place, cutting and nailing in the wooden planks to create the bridge's walkway, and installing chain-link fencing along the bridge's edges.

After the sponsor signs were hung, the grass was mowed, and the finishing touches were made, a grand opening ceremony for the bridge was held on 17 September 2020 — almost 83 years to the day since the first recorded burial at the cemetery. And in December, during a surprise outdoor ceremony broadcast live on Facebook, club members — having made a donation to The Rotary Foundation in Kalnay's name — presented Kalnay with Paul Harris Fellow recognition, honoring him as the “ringleader, chief shepherd, and master planner” for the bridge project.

Though they do not have another big service project planned for the cemetery, the True North club will continue to do its part to improve the present, plan for the future, and preserve one of Yellowknife's most important heritage sites. “True North is all about building bridges,” Kalnay says. “Some are literal, like the one to the cemetery, and some are figurative, such as cooking meals and organizing events to bring together different groups” — and different times. — ALICE TWA

Time's pastors
The new bridge leads to Back Bay Cemetery, where club members have been cutting the grass, painting the fences and wooden grave markers, and performing other maintenance chores since 2011.





PROFILE

A youth leader for the ages

TAMARA LARSON GREW up in Edmonton in the 1970s. She recalls how whenever she saw an injustice — bullying on the school playground, for instance, or images of refugees fleeing a war-torn country — she would protest to her father that it didn't seem fair. His reply: "Life's not fair."

But that was never the end of the conversation, only its beginning. Her mother, a teacher, and her father, a Rotarian and the owner of a commercial excavation business, taught her that she had the power to change things. "The word 'can't' was not in our vocabulary," Larson says. "We were taught that you can do whatever you want, if you put your mind to it. If there's no door there, build one."

Larson went on to earn a bachelor's degree in music and French from the University of Alberta and a master's in curriculum and instruction from St. Xavier University in Chicago — and music remains one of her passions. "Music is a universal language," she says. "Music can tell

stories and express things that words alone cannot."

While working as an education consultant, Larson focused on curriculum development and youth leadership training. In 2001, looking for more opportunities to explore her interest in youth engagement and human rights, she became a charter member of the Rotary Club of Northern Lights in Edmonton. Her husband's career then took them away from and finally back to Edmonton; today Larson is a member of the Rotary Club of Edmonton Whyte Avenue. "I joined Rotary because I wanted to make a difference," she says. "I stayed because I am."

Larson served as Whyte Avenue's president for two terms; during her tenure, the club's membership nearly doubled. "We are far from your traditional club," she says. "Membership has always been close to 50 per cent female, and we have a young, diverse, and inclusive demographic. We were truly trailblazers in the world of Rotary."

Larson also built on a strategic

plan initiated by Jackie Hobal, the 2010-11 governor of District 5370, for increasing youth participation in Rotary. At one time, the district had a single Rotaract club and 11 Interact clubs. Today it has 10 Rotaract and 35 Interact clubs, and Larson estimates that 1,500 young leaders have participated in Rotary programs.

When Laura Morie became the district's governor in 2016, she asked Larson to join her board as youth chair; Larson later served for more than three years as the district's youth services chair. "The key to our benchmark programs is the premise of youth leading youth," says Larson. "We developed a district mentorship program where Interactors are mentored by Rotaractors, and Rotaractors are mentored by Rotarians." The district's Rotary Youth Leadership Experience focuses on interpersonal leadership skills; as the district's website explains, the high school students who participate "learn how to be active citizens who strive to make a positive impact in the world."

Larson is also pursuing her interest in human rights, collaborating with Rotarian peace advocates in District 5550, which encompasses Manitoba and parts of Ontario and Saskatchewan. In partnership with the University of Winnipeg, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and Rotary District 5550 World Peace Partners, she chairs a program called Emerging Issues in Human Rights at the university. She is also the program director for an annual weeklong summer youth program at the museum, also located in Winnipeg, called Rotary Adventures in Human Rights.

In recognition of her efforts, Larson was honoured as District 5370's Rotarian of the Year in June 2018; in 2020 she was appointed to Rotary International's Leadership Development and Training Committee. "As Rotarians, when we work together, we embrace our differences, learn from each other, and create an environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive," she says. "Our job is to open doors, remove barriers, and give young people the opportunity to learn, grow, and have an impact. Young leaders are truly invested in creating change that is happening now and will create a better world tomorrow." — PAUL ENGLEMAN

"We were taught that you can do whatever you want, if you put your mind to it," says Tamara Larson, recalling her childhood in Edmonton. "If there's no door there, build one."

NOTES DE TERRAIN

Au Québec, célébrant un centenaire et une vie

par Jean-Guy St-Arnaud, Club Rotary de Hull

LE 15 SEPTEMBRE 2021, le Club Rotary de Hull a tenu sa première réunion non officielle. Il a reçu sa charte deux mois plus tard; le parrain du club a été le Club Rotary d'Ottawa, et son premier président était George Doyon, un dirigeant d'assurance. Le club a célébré avec un banquet de charte le 22 Février 1922.

En 2021, le Club Rotary de Hull, Québec, célèbre une fois de plus — et pas seulement son centenaire. L'année dernière, notre ami Edmond Lanthier a fêté ses 50 ans en tant que membre du club. C'est tout un exploit qui mérite d'être souligné.

Edmond Lanthier est né à Ottawa en 1934. Il a fait ses études supérieures à Hull. Par la suite, il a fréquenté le Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean et l'Université d'Ottawa où il obtient un baccalauréat en commerce en 1959. Il se voit décerner le titre de comptable agréé en 1962. En 1982, il poursuit des cours en pédagogie et en administration des affaires (MBA) de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Professeur et homme d'affaires, Edmond a enseigné divers sujets reliés à la gestion et à la comptabilité à plusieurs niveaux scolaire — secondaire, technique, collégial et universitaire. Il a pratiqué l'expertise comptable en cabinet et individuellement durant 14 ans. Il a aussi été concessionnaire en titre de deux concessions d'automobiles pendant une dizaine d'années.

Engagé dans la communauté, Edmond a servi avec dévotion dans plusieurs organismes caritative et économique. Mais parmi ces organismes, le cœur d'Edmond avait ses préférés : le Rotary et la Ligue des cadets de l'Air du Canada (Québec et Vallée de l'Outaouais).

« Engagé dans la communauté, Edmond a servi avec dévotion dans plusieurs organismes caritatives. »

Edmond Lanthier est membre du Club Rotary de Hull, vieux de 100 ans, depuis 51 ans.

Edmond s'est joint au Club Rotary de Hull en 1970. Dès lors, ses collègues rotariens ont vite réalisé que cette nouvelle recrue démontrait une grande motivation pour les activités du club. Il gagne la confiance de ses compères; il est choisi pour servir comme trésorier. À plusieurs reprises, il occupe la chaise du président. Il donne de son temps sans compter pour toutes les activités du club, tant au niveau social qu'au niveau caritatif.

Non seulement Edmond se veut un précieux actif pour le club de Hull, il s'intéresse et s'implique au niveau du district. Il s'engage activement comme représentant du gouverneur auprès des autres clubs. Il participe à plusieurs comités du district — bourse ambassadoriale, échanges de groupes d'études, Rotaract, finances, législation, mentor à la fondation, Polio Plus — tout en apportant son support à d'autres clubs.

C'est donc sans surprise qu'on le retrouve à deux reprises (1995-1996 et 2007-2008) Gouverneur du District 7040. Il a aussi servi le District 7040 comme chef d'une mission d'échange de groupes d'études en France en 1993. Il a représenté le district au Conseil de législation à Chicago en 2004 et en 2007.

Je ne peux mentionner dans ce texte toutes les actions posées par notre ami Edmond pour faire avancer le Rotary et ses œuvres au cours des 50 dernières années. Veuillez me croire, il y en a eu plusieurs.

En 1962, Edmond a pris pour épouse Suzie Bourcier. Au cours de sa carrière de 26 ans, elle a enseigné à des enfants atteints de déficience mentale. Suzie et Edmond n'ont pas eu d'enfants, mais ils ont consacré leur vie à l'amélioration de la condition de vie des personnes infortunées et défavorisées.

Servir d'abord, la devise du Rotary, résume bien le parcours d'Edmond et de Suzie. Edmond a été et est toujours un fier et valeureux Rotarien.



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