

## 2021 Remote Communities Communicator

### "Remote Communities - Our Time is Now!"

Greetings to the members of the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference!! The theme for the 2021 Pre-Conference Remote Communities Meeting held before the 71st General Service Conference opens is "Remote Communities – Our Time Is Now!". For this year's meeting, the Co-Chairs were invited to chair this meeting in late January 2021 due to the 2020 meeting being canceled. A few themes were discussed, and with the world's current situation, we felt this theme was fitting as the rest of A.A. has been introduced to the virtual world of meetings for the past year. Requests for articles for this newsletter and the opportunity to be a presenter at the meeting were sent out in mid-February. We appreciate all of the responses we received.

We had three presenters give their experiences, strength, and hope regarding the following questions:

1. What are the challenges/solutions to carrying the A.A. message to a Cultural Community? Ed L. - Area 09 /Panel 70
2. What are the challenges/ solutions to carrying the A.A. messages to a Geographic Community? Trudy D. - Area 82 /Panel 71
3. What are the challenges/solutions to carrying the A.A. message to a Linguistic Community? Tom W. Area 15 /Panel 71

Thank you to all the areas which contributed to this year's Remote Communities Communicator Newsletter —02 Alaska (2); 03 Arizona, 05 Southern California, 09 Mid-Southern California, 17 Hawaii, 28 Maine (4), 34 Western Michigan, 36 Southern Minnesota, 42 Nevada, 72 Western Washington, 78 Alberta & The Northwest Territories, 79 British Columbia/Yukon, 83 Eastern Ontario, 91 Saskatchewan & Area 93 Central California. We want to thank Irene D. for her help and the staff at G.S.O. and the tech team for their assistance in organizing this year's meeting and newsletter. We also want to thank our three presenters at the meeting and to everyone who joined us for the 2021 Remote Communities Meeting on 4/17/2021.

It has been a genuine honor for both of us to prepare and serve as Co-Chairs for this wonderful event. We hope everyone who attended the meeting left feeling more informed about the Remote Communities and will learn even more by reading the articles found here. In Love and Service,

Co-Chairs,

Brad F. Delegate Area 78 Alberta & The Northwest Territories/Panel 70  
Linda B. Delegate Area 34 Western Michigan/Panel 70

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## **A Brief History of the Pre-Conference Remote Communities Meeting**

This is a brief re-cap of the history leading up to the start of the Pre-Conference Remote Communities meeting. 1970's: The need for the special attention to Remote Communities efforts was identified back in the 70's or perhaps maybe even before that.

**July 1993:** An informal meeting concerning remote communities was held in Toronto, during the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of A.A. in Canada. Not much happened other than the fact that the need was expressed that something had to be done and members were encouraged to do what they were already doing in their areas.

**February 1996:** At the Western Canada Regional Forum in Calgary, the then Trustee-at-Large Canada organized a breakfast meeting with delegates, trustees and the G.S.O. Manager to discuss creating a Canadian committee that would deal with some perceived remote communities' issues. Outcome of meeting: needed to create a committee, needed to get support to set up a luncheon at the upcoming General Service Conference and work towards holding a special conference geared toward establishing a working committee consisting of 14 Canadian Areas and Alaska.

**April 1996:** Met over lunch at the 46th General Service Conference with some delegates, some G.S.O. staff and Board members to discuss the movement and to move ahead. A staff member was assigned to help coordinate efforts.

**July 1996:** In Toronto, the first Remote Communities Conference was held with all 15 Delegates. Several areas reported on the history of remote communities' work. It was determined that a remote community was any community to which it was difficult to carry the message because of language, culture, or geography. It was also determined from that meeting that we needed to continue to meet, and the most effective time would be prior to the yearly General Service Conferences.

**1997:** The Remote Communities Committee met prior to the opening of the 47th General Service Conference. In attendance were the original 15 delegates a few invited delegates from the U.S. areas that experienced some of the same concerns, several trustees and G.S.O. staff members. The 'remote communities' definition was reviewed and recommitted to, as was the purpose of the committee. The only action taken at this meeting was to open up the membership to the whole conference. It was determined that after 1997 the committee should have 4 co-chairs, one each from Western and Eastern Canada and one each from each side of the Mississippi in the U.S. A newsletter was also to be developed to assist in reporting what was happening in this vital area of 12th step work.

**Present:** The Pre-Conference Remote Communities meeting continues with 2 Co-Chairs and a staff member who provides support and assistance to the chairs of this committee as well the newsletter (Remote Communities Communicator) continues to be produced.

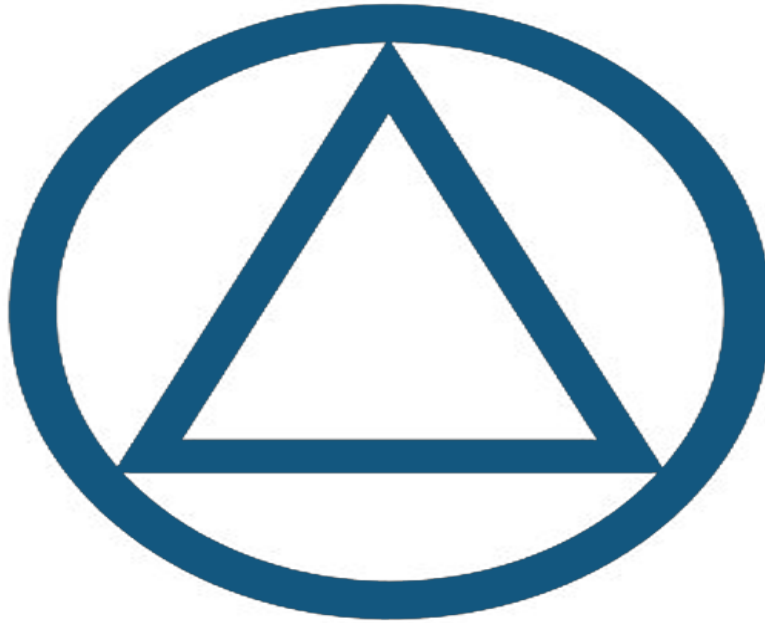
## Map of Delegate Areas:



\*\*\*\*This report is a confidential A.A. document for members only. This usage, to facilitate communication within the fellowship, was approved by the 1975 conference. Placement of this material in a location accessible to the public, including aspects of the internet, such as web sites available to the public, may breach confidentiality of the material and anonymity of members.\*\*\*\*

## Article Submissions:

<u>Delegate</u>	<u>Area/Panel</u>	<u>Author</u>
1) Cheri S. – Alaska	Area 02/Panel 70	Author: Sandra H.
2) Cheri S. – Alaska	Area 02/Panel 70	Author: Sarah S.
3) Kevin F. – Arizona	Area 03/Panel 70	Author: John N.
4) Lauren A. – Southern California	Area 05/Panel 71	Author: Brian P.
5) Ed L. – Mid Southern California	Area 09/Panel 70	Author: Ed L.
6) Kunane D. – Hawaii	Area 17/Panel 71	Author: Kunane D.
7) Nikki O.– Maine	Area 28/Panel 70	Author: Mary Lou QT
8) Nikki O. – Maine	Area 28/Panel 70	Author: Kathryn A.
9) Nikki O. – Maine	Area 28/Panel 70	Author: Peter B.
10) Nikki O. – Maine	Area 28/Panel 70	Author: Nikki O.
11) Linda B. – Western Michigan	Area 34/Panel 70	Author: Linda B.
12) Stacy M. – Southern Minnesota	Area 36/Panel 71	Author: Stacy M.
13) Julie C. – Nevada	Area 42/Panel 71	Author: NACYPAA
14) Geene D. – Western Washington	Area 72/Panel 71	Author: Bridget S.
15) Brad F. – Alberta/N.W. Territories	Area 78/Panel 70	Author: Anson C
16) Bob K. - BC/Yukon	Area 79/Panel 71	Author: Christina M.
17) Kimberley M. – Eastern Ontario	Area 83/Panel 71	Author: James O'D
18) Glenn N. – Saskatchewan	Area 91/Panel 71	Author: Lori R.
19) Karla Y.– Central California	Area 93/Panel 71	Author: Karla Y.



## Articles:

### Area 02 Alaska - 1

From Sandra H.  
Hooper Bay, AK

Hi, my name is Sandra. I've lived in Hooper Bay for most of my life. I've also lived in Fairbanks and have attended college in Sitka for my formative adult years, after high school.

Alcohol is such a historical part of my life. It still plays a negative role, in that I have family and friends who are in active alcoholism, and many are marijuana users, of which I have chosen to recover from, too. It's not easy, anywhere, to choose recovery over active addiction and alcoholism, and more so, out here in the remote villages. It's like living in a fish bowl, everybody seems to know what everybody else is doing. Or assumes so. And seems, everywhere one goes, one sees or hears about drinking or smoking. So, often times, it's hard to get away from its influences.

I've had my share of attempting to quit over the years, including times of near death experiences, doing time in jail, ending up in the hospital because of a suicide attempt. It's grasp on me had a chokehold. I was in a lifestyle that was normal to me, drinking, fighting, abuses, manipulation, controlling, lying, cheating, stealing, and any negative effect that this powerful yet destructive disease has over a person and their family members. Out here, it seems to be multiplied by many due to the number of individuals within a family, many including infants. Whole families that know no other way but alcoholism. Many who don't realize they could have an easier, softer way. I did not know this either. I did not know I could be sober and that

dysfunction does not have to be a part of my life. When the group from Remote Communities came out here in April 2019, I jumped at the chance of a new life. I was so afraid, yet I knew it would be my saving Grace. They brought their experience, strength, and hope, and passed it on to me. And continue to do so, in the ways of meetings that are offered by phone connection. They also brought Al Anon, that, I was not expecting, but it has helped me to stay sane, which in turn helps me to stay sober. Without this, I am afraid of what my life would be like today.

I have an appreciation for life today. I have an appreciation for people today. I had always lived in isolation, knowing only fear, because that is how I grew up. People hurt me, my family hurt me, therefore, I trusted no one. I have gained trust in others through these meetings, and I sure hope that others trust me as well. I am still going through hardships, and I have a tendency to relapse to my doubtful thinking, but calling into these meetings, having people who have welcomed me with open arms, I am less fearful and have learned to live in faith. Most recently, in this cold spell, someone has been stealing my heating fuel for whatever reason, and I've struggled with negative thinking. Yet, I am now at a place in my life where I can appreciate this experience, too. They can steal my fuel, but they can't steal my peace of mind, they can't steal my sobriety. I've learned that it's a choice I can make today, rather than reacting as I'd always done, in anger and bitterness, I can pray and turn it over my Higher Power.

Thanks to Remote Communities and the people in the programs of Recovery, I have tasted the freedom from fearful living. I have felt the Serenity gained only through doing the Steps and having the safety net of Love and Acceptance that these people have given me. I hope that I, too, will pass on my experience, strength, and hope. Quayana Cakneq, Sandra H.

Photo courtesy of Area 02



## Area 02 Alaska – 2

### Remote Communities in Area 02 Alaska

Remote Communities Committee in Area 02 Alaska, like many, had to change our goals for 2020-2021. We normally plan a spring 12 Step trip to a remote village only reachable by plane of course, we were unable too. With Alaska's vaccination success, things are slowly opening up and we are hopeful of making a 12 Step trip this summer to a village on the road system or by boat. We are also looking for our spring 2022 trip to a Remote Community by plane again.

A portion of the funds we had secured for literature for the 2019 trip were utilized for printing 1000 Meeting In A Pocket pamphlets with the approval at our area Budget Assembly. The Meeting In A Pocket pamphlet is a single sheet that folds up to fit in a pocket and contains all the readings commonly used to hold a meeting along with topic ideas. It also includes our meeting information for our Statewide Phone Meeting. We sent some of the pamphlets to a treatment center that calls in on Mondays to our Statewide phone meeting so when clients leave they will have this valuable resource. Others in our committee have a supply to pass along to those they meet that are or know someone unable to attend regular face to face meetings. We also have sent some to a correctional facility in Louisiana that one of our Statewide Phone Meeting members who is incarcerated there has started a meeting.

Our Remote Community Committee is also making progress on a workbook for our area. We are excited to share this information with our districts and interested groups hoping to support them in reaching those in remote communities or situations that prevent them from attending face to face meetings.



One of our committee members faxed our Statewide Phone Meeting flyer to 130 remote village clinics and mailed them to another 70 clinics unable to reach by fax. We believe this has been a success since we have had more attending from the smaller villages. We also have continued to send out Big Books, 12 and 12s and other literature to contacts from our Statewide Phone Meeting with funds provided in our Area Budget.

Our Statewide Phone meeting has a solid foundation of group members with new commers who have found support and achieved sobriety during the pandemic. Our number of people who have stepped up to chair the three nights a week meeting is getting us closer to the goal of it being a once a month commitment. We also have a growing list of people to provide sober support and sponsorship. After our phone meeting we stay on the line in the "Parking Lot" where we have lively conversations on sobriety and answer questions. The phone meeting members follow the 7th Tradition by mailing contributions to us in care of the Anchorage

Intergroup. Sarah S. Area 02 Remote Communities Chair



Photo Courtesy Area 02

### **Area 03 Arizona**

Welcome to Arizona. Land-locked on all sides, Arizona remains a major destination for Senior Retirement and is home for Twenty-One First American Tribes. As such, a major portion of Arizona is comprised of Sovereign Nations. Most of Arizona's counties bear Indian names, have pockets of "reservations", and can be considered REMOTE though located just outside or in the middle of a metropolitan area ie: Tucson, AZ.

Covid-19 has blocked our ability to access the Sovereign Nations and in turn has prevented their residents from leaving their reservations. How unfortunate for all of us. However, we belong to a fellowship that is most creative and persistent. With the closure to and from the reservations, we have seized the opportunity to update our records. We have used email blast, snail-mail, zoom rooms, and our primary source of communication - carry the

message. It works!

With a beginning committee of 6 volunteers, our first task was to divide the state up for coverage. We have 2 committee members in the North, 2 in Central Arizona, and 1 in Southern Arizona. The 6<sup>th</sup> is the Coordinator, pulling this together with the committee and those who have an interest in Remote/ Underserved.

While the Sovereign Nations make up a good part of the underserved, there are others. A close neighbor with Mexico, we have a significant population of Spanish speaking residents who, in some areas, are considered remote. Arizona Area 03 has a Spanish Speaking District which represents the whole state. Our committee will be working with their D.C.M.G. and remote communities within their District.

We have communicated with the Area PI, C.P.C., and Corrections Coordinators. What the R.C.C. does not want to do is confuse the purpose of each committee. We do not want to go in and re-create the wheel.

As we focus our efforts on identifying the Remote Communities, we will continue to carry our message of INCLUSION - NOT EXCLUSION to the Remote Communities.

Your trusted servant, John N. - Remote Communities Coordinator Arizona – Area 03

## **Area 05 Southern California**

### **Reaching out to Chinese Speaking Alcoholics in Southern California.**

Our efforts to reach out to Chinese-speaking alcoholics in our community began in 2017, when a manager at the Los Angeles Central Office casually mentioned to me and my partner that they were receiving a call a week from someone looking for a meeting in Chinese but had nowhere to send them to. They had reached out to other central offices across Southern California and there were none anywhere.

Neither of us having any Chinese language skills, the first thing we needed to do was find and recruit Chinese-speaking AAs that could help us out. We put the word out at A.A. and area meetings, at P.R.A.A.S.A., and everywhere else we went. We met people in other areas who had tried to start Chinese meetings but were unable to get them to sustain. To our surprise, there were no active meetings to be found anywhere we asked, which included all the areas in the Pacific Region, Vancouver, and in New York City.

We realized that there must be cultural barriers that were keeping Chinese-speaking alcoholics from finding their way to us. After further research, we found out that Chinese-Americans were not only missing from our program but were notably missing from all kinds of self-help and peer-support groups and did not seek professional help either for many types of issues. In Chinese culture, it can be very shameful to share problems outside of the family network, and families often try to handle these issues themselves while hiding them from the rest of the world.

Still, we saw an opportunity because our local central office was receiving requests for Chinese meetings. We figured the courts must be sending Chinese-speaking alcoholics our way, and we wanted to create a place where they could go and hear the message. Our Area's Public Information Committee also took an interest and started to help us in our efforts.

On February 19th, 2020, we held our first meeting in Chinese and English in Arcadia, CA. Six of us were in attendance, including a woman who had 52 days. We were excited when we thought

of how she had not been sober for most of the time we were planning the meeting. This past December, we celebrated her first year of sobriety, and she has been an extremely valuable trusted servant for our group.

In March, like so many other A.A. groups, we moved our meeting onto Zoom and listed our group wherever we could - with central offices, the Online A.A. Intergroup, and on informal meeting lists and Facebook groups.

New members started to join from all over the world. Our meetings now usually have an attendance of around 30 members, with regular members from California, Arizona, Washington, Kansas, Vancouver, New York, Massachusetts, China, Taiwan, France, and Germany. About half are English-only speakers, with the rest being Chinese-only speakers and only a handful of bilingual speakers. The group has taken a life of its own, and through group conscience, we have expanded to two meetings a week, decided to remain a bilingual group (Mandarin and English), decided not to be listed in any Conference (though we plan to discuss this again after the 2021 U.S./Canada General Service Conference), and we held elections to rotate in a new group of trusted servants.

While we are very happy with what has become of our group, us founding members have held onto our original intentions of helping the Chinese-speaking alcoholics in our local area. If the group departs too much from being accessible to alcoholics in the Los Angeles area, we will spin off another group to stay focused on local needs. While A.A. members in China have many other options for meetings on platforms like WeChat and DingTalk, Chinese members in the U.S. and Canada using Zoom do not.

At this point, we have not had as many members come in on court cards from Southern California as we had expected. We know we will have to do more to let them know that we are here. Once hospitals are not completely consumed with COVID-19, we plan to start reaching out to the community through local hospitals.

We've continued to get the word out any way we can and have found amazing support from many throughout the Fellowship. Members from our group were featured at a 4-Area Unity Day in Southern California last year and also at this year's P.R.A.A.S.A. Each week when we meet, we express our gratitude for one another because we feel that we are doing something important, and we know we cannot do it alone.

Our meetings have volunteer interpreters and are open to all who speak English or Chinese. We invite you to join us any Wednesday or Saturday at 8pm Pacific on Zoom (289 612 772, no password), and we also ask your help with getting word of our meeting to any Chinese-speaking alcoholics who might need us. Thank you all for your service to us and to all of A.A. ~ Brian P., Area 05

## **Area 09 Mid-Southern California**

### **Do Conference Members Comprise a Remote Community?**

Having served as a G.S.R. in 2006-07 in my second year sober and now as a Panel 70 delegate in 2021, I've kept coming back and more has been revealed about the nature of General Servants. As a new G.S.R. actively participating in the Area, delegates and trustees seemed remote and inaccessible, and I never knew Non-trustee directors existed. Virtual meetings have definitely

made our General Servants more accessible, and I've seen trustees at District Zoom meetings with as few as 15 people. Hopefully, this accessibility will persist after the COVID apocalypse! I've often thought that our statement, "I am *responsible* when anyone, anywhere..." might better reflect A.A.'s culture and function if it read "I am *available* when anyone, anywhere..." Does our focus and self-identification as the "responsible ones" in A.A. make us less available (i.e., remote) to the still suffering alcoholic? Does our love for one another and compassionate support on the lowermost, and arguably most stressful rungs of the General Service ladder, lead to the perception of privilege and exclusion to new G.S.R.s who are on the upper rungs of the service ladder just beginning their descent?

As a G.S.R., I noted I was prohibited from delegates-only and past delegates-only luncheons at Regional Service Assemblies and Regional Forums. At Service Assembly round tables for delegates and alternate delegates, G.S.R.s and District members interested in those positions have been asked to leave for lack of those titles. Even when the assembled masses attended General Sharing Sessions and evening banquets, the "lower echelons" of service, our delegates and trustees, occupied tables at the front of the auditorium where seats and tables were effectively reserved.

Does having Conference members sitting at the front of the room, as often as not on elevated daises, promote attraction to the alcoholic too shaky to drink from a coffee cup? If your answer is, "Such a new person would never be at a Service Assembly," are you shocked by that answer? Is suiting up and showing up, where pearls are suggested for women and ties are required for the men, sending A.A.'s inherently compassionate message to the person who is still self-conscious about their poverty-induced inability to suit up? In those early years, I could not imagine any Conference members as gutter drunks, though I've both slept in and drank from gutters.

If you haven't read the book or seen the movie, "The Hunger Games" offers a cautionary metaphor of how Conference members could be perceived, but for compassion and availability to A.A. members just entering General Service and most importantly to the still-suffering alcoholic. In the metaphor, there is a minority class of polished people who oversee a majority class of impoverished people who are struggling just to stay alive. Among the upper echelon, Woody Harrelson plays the drunk who serves as the liaison, the hand of hope extended to several of the still-suffering masses who are forced to compete and even kill one another. He is my hero, serving in a niche that as a Conference member I hope I've occupied.

It would seem to me that in most A.A. meetings, General Service is considered an "outside issue," the "politics of A.A.," occupied by the "right type of person," where the word "delegate" has no meaning. Let us be sure that we are never perceived as a Remote Community, somehow elevated above the ranks of the still-rank alcoholic. I'm convinced that Compassion is the way to dispel perceived privilege and has transmitted to me the best A.A. has to offer. So, Responsible? Yes. Available? Hell yes! Ed L., Area 09 Delegate

### [Area 17 Hawaii](#)

Hawaii Area 17 is made up of six islands, 14 districts, 313 registered groups and about 5,500 members. We are an area that is both separated and connected by water. A.A. on Oah'u, Hawai'i Island, Maui and Kauai is flourishing. However, Moloka'i and Lana'i are, by definition, remote communities. For many, Alcoholics Anonymous is easily accessible, for some, it means a fellowship of 2.

For the 2 A.A. members on Lana'i, "remote" takes on a whole new meaning and comes with challenges. First, 2 A.A. members make the fellowship extremely small and limited on Lana'i. Secondly, Lana'i is 39 miles away from Maui, 83 miles from Kona and 116 miles from O'ahu where A.A. is alive and well. And although this does not sound too bad, remember, that it is 39, 83 and 116 miles of Pacific Ocean. Getting in your car to drive to a meeting, to see your sponsor or to gather with another member in the fellowship is just impossible. Lana'i, currently has 2 A.A. members. One, a woman of the gracious age of 83 with long-term sobriety and the other young man recently returning to the rooms with less than a year. And although they have become very good friends, he knew, to fully experience the promises of this program, he would need to find a sponsor and work the steps. The challenge here was how to find a sponsor on Lana'i. Pre-COVID, Lanai had one meeting a week. The Tri-Island District on Maui which includes Lana'i would coordinate "The Crossing", a weekend event of recovery, meetings, and fellowship. Members of the fellowship would boat or fly to Lana'i or Moloka'i to carry the message to these "remote communities." This event linked the fellowship on Lana'i and Moloka'i with others in Hawai'i. This is where we experience the "COVID" blessing or should we say, the solution. COVID shut down the face-to-face meetings across the island and forced the fellowship to move to an online platform of recovery. When he returned to the rooms of A.A., there were no rooms to return to. Our newcomer had to seek out meetings online. He was able to connect with the fellowship beyond the shores of Lana'i. He logged in to meetings across the state. He started to attend a daily meeting that was attended by men with a solid foundation and strong recovery. He felt at home. He found a sponsor. He is working the steps. He likes to say... "the pandemic saved my life." For many years, he struggled on Lana'i unable to find a sponsor and the necessary connection for him to stay sober. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, he will celebrate his first year of sobriety. Virtual meetings have increased access to meetings, access to sponsorship and service opportunities for this member on Lana'i. This has also allowed him to be of service to A.A. #2 on Lana'i by assisting her with the "tech" piece of recovery so that she also can attend meetings. He is in service at his virtual homegroup as secretary. This homegroup wrapped the love of Alcoholics Anonymous around him as if he were physically sitting in the basement of a church or in a circle on the beach. I am assured, that the hand of A.A. is always there and can stretch island to island. The phrase "it only takes two people to have a meeting" is a reality on Lana'i right now. These two members have built a friendship based on a common solution. They continue to grow in recovery because of virtual meetings and a virtual fellowship one day at a time.

Remote Communities Hawaii Area 17 Kunane D.

## [Area 28 Maine - 1](#)

## Remote Communities in Alcoholics Anonymous

Area 28, Maine, has some good solid sobriety. Sponsees here know their sponsorship lineage like it is a rite of passage. It is super great A.A. here for sure. After getting sober in District 1, Portland Maine, I headed north in District 7. I was just three months sober in March of 2015. Gone was the availability of five plus meetings a day. If I wanted just one meeting a day, I would sometimes travel an hour one way. In the winter it wasn't always safe to be out at night on the icy roads. The other thing was that all the women seemed to be at the "women's" meeting and men were at all the other meetings, making this newcomer feel uncomfortable at times.

These guys were announcing about a district meeting coming up and if you wanted to get involved show up. So, I showed up and I stayed. For the next few years, I was involved with service and the District was becoming more involved at Area. A.C.M.s were getting attended. Yessir my enthusiasm was breathing life into this remote district. But it wasn't recovery, and I drank again after four years.

Coming back to Alcoholics Anonymous after being out for four months, I got a sponsor who had that great lineage and did my steps for real this time. She put my hand into God's hand. We still meet on a regular basis through Messenger so we can see each other. After a year of living with my daughter downstate, I came back home to Aroostook County again. I was a bit fearful of a repeat and by now we were in the middle of a pandemic and meetings were scarce. I had been attending A.A. meetings virtually and was grateful for the contact and choice. Where else can you go from Nebraska to Nepal in a day and be in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous?

What I did next was reach out to our Delegate and ask for help to find service work. She assigned me to the Guidelines committee. I told her I wanted to know more about the Concepts. She had been thinking of a Concepts Workshop and she would get back to me. Area 28 put together a Concepts workshop, a Christmas and a New Year's Alcathon, and a Service Manual Workshop which was a collaboration of several Areas and attended virtually by 300 plus A.A.'s. I asked our Delegate, and she came through for me, our Area and countless others. Some folks just don't know what they are missing in this new A.A. on virtual platforms. She could have turned in the towel on her panel; some did. She met her time as Delegate and made things happen. A true inspiration.

As of writing this, I am 21 months sober. I am past the fear. I have found my tribe up here again and attend A.A. meetings virtually. My A.A. friend and I had coffee the other day in town and we agreed that the virtual platform is our way to A.A. for as long as needed. Whatever happens in the future, I know that Alcoholics Anonymous adapted to the pandemic as beautifully as ice forms and then melts. I am so grateful that others have been able to adapt and change so I could stay sober and of service.

Kathryn A. Guidelines Comm.

## Area 28 Maine - 2

## **The Challenges/Solutions to carrying the A.A. message to geographically remote communities.**

My name is Mary Lou, Area 28 Maine, past delegate. I am honored and grateful to be of service. In the presentation of the challenges and solutions to carrying the A.A. message to geographically remote communities I ask you to suspend many assumptions you may have on the subject. Remote is to be relatively far away in space, and distant in time, both present challenges to carrying our message. Those of us in remote communities deal the realities that there are not meetings within walking distance and there is no public transportation. You can't call or text for a taxi. In remote communities it is nothing to travel sixty miles one way to a meeting, but we make the best of it by carpooling and making it a fun outing. You can get three meetings that way. Please keep in mind 'remote' can be a relative term.

There is also the challenge of a small and spread-out population. We have many 'dead zones' where there is no electronic reception. Here, the internet is a limited resource. This is where some of our assumptions need to be cast aside.

Is it only in the past that drunks, as a last resort, came to the halls of A.A. to sober up with only a sack of dirty clothes and no place to call home? Not knowing where their next meal was coming from or how they would get anywhere, they wandered into a meeting, or some professional gave them information about A.A. In rural areas you don't just wander into a meeting. Are we going to assume that these people we are trying to reach have smart phones, live streaming, and apps they can tap for a meeting or a ride?

The solution: **One-On-One**. The personal touch of one drunk talking with another, and recovering alcoholics practicing the principles of the program in all their affairs, especially when conversing with doctors, clergy, or social services people, has been most efficient. It is how our program was founded and nothing has improved on that, but we can build on it. You take a person where they are, you share your experience, strength, and hope with them. If you have a good foundation, you will have a lot to share.

The best way to carry the message of A.A. to those in remote communities is for each of us to learn more about our program, really live it, and pass it on. Remember, you may be the only Big Book a suffering alcoholic ever sees. You can't give away something you don't have. Becoming more familiar with all the resources available through A.A.W.S., and Grapevine, Inc, investing in having those resources on hand, are important steps in reaching out and bringing the A.A. message to remote communities. These resources add depth to experiences we can share, whether at small meetings or one-on-one. We each need to go to any lengths using our time, talents and treasure, to bring our message to those in need. We can only give away what we have. Build on what you have and give it away. The rewards to your sobriety will be indescribable!

*Thank you, Mary Lou Q.T., Maine*

### **Area 28 Maine - 3**

What if Virtual Repels?

Area 28 is comprised of the state of Maine, which is rated by the Census Bureau as the most rural state in the nation—because people here, on average, lived the furthest away from each other. District 21 lies on the Downeast coast, along the rocky shores of Penobscot and Jericho Bays. We mostly met before Covid in church basements, schools, and town halls. Public health restrictions ended all that. Through the summer, people met in parking lots, sitting on lawn chairs, leaning out of pick-up truck windows. Then it got too cold.

A number of meetings were virtual by then and of course we all had access to meetings around the state, across the world. How easy it is to write, "we all had access"! It seemed so. The online meetings have been successful. But there exists a separate community of alcoholics, many with long-time sobriety, many who were loyal group members, making coffee, setting up chairs, a community that was left behind. This is the remotest of remote communities, even for Maine, a state steeped in isolation.

This is a community of invisible citizens. We can jump onto virtual meetings and never see them, but one has reached out to me, and I'll try to describe how the world looks to him. I'll call him the Brookliner, because he resides in Brooklin, a tiny coastal town that builds a lot of boats. Remember how we were all told, as newcomers, "If you can't find a higher power, just make the group your higher power"? For the Brookliner, this is fundamental. He does possess a well-developed spiritual sense, but in recovery the divine presence is experienced when the group gathers in a communion of suffering and hope. This is a physical presence for him, a palpable manifestation of spirit that graces a physical gathering of flesh-and-blood people. And for him this is not available on a virtual platform. He is an observant Christian, and for him the group meeting is a vessel for the Word made flesh. . . . and, as he put it, "God cannot be electrified." The Brookliner states that he speaks for a significant segments of A. A.s: "a remote community created by mass flight from in-person encounters." This creates the "added danger of being a divisive separation of part of the population; those most in need are outlying misanthropes repelled by online meetings, and even masks." He misses the "live, intimate social connection, without an alcoholic demon—to learn how to do it. This is what sobriety is all about." I do not think the Brookliner is an isolated case in Area 28. In fact, entire districts have dropped out of the service structure here. This is troubling, because now the service structure from the Area level down is composed of only people who could manage to make virtual A. A. work. The Brookliner is "worried for a bifurcation of the population between those who can play the game, and those who are psychologically unable." Peter B.

#### Area 28 Maine - 4

Does remote only mean great distance from, or aside from the population hub? Not necessarily. I have personal experience living in a remote community- a town with 2 stop lights, traveling 30 miles one way, on a 30mph dark road. However, like all things in Alcoholics Anonymous there is more meaning than



simply what I may think. Merriam Webster provides an excellent definition of remote and is in alignment with most of our thoughts. I have a different type of remote to share. The remote, or aloof, distant, removed either physically or emotionally, sense of self.

Imagine living in that 2 light town 30 miles from the closest meeting in a power wheelchair, as a quadriplegic, after a tragic car accident. Reliance on a Higher Power being a key component in conjunction with the kindness of 30 other recovering alcoholics living in a 2500-mile radius. Sound unbelievable? These 2 ingredients were the answer to a recovering alcoholic living in just that situation. I have complained about walking to my mailbox and here is a guy who got to meetings in spite of his disability, in order to hear the message- A message as strong as any big city meeting. Examples of recovery showing up with each cup of coffee, each holding of the Daily Reflections for him to read. It wasn't perfect- nor was it his plan, but it worked. In step 12, we are commanded to carry the message to another alcoholic and to practice these principles in all our affairs. All warm, fuzzy, wonderful, feel good stuff, right? Yes, until it isn't. Things changed and people moved. Things, as they sometimes do, became difficult. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity returned. Alone, scared and with the desire to change the way he felt, a drink started to feel like a solution. I bet we can all identify with the feeling of hopelessness in our recovery- we feel remote, distant. I can think of a million times I have felt sorry for myself and am snapped back to how blessed I am to have been provided skills to get myself on track with the help of my Higher Power, my sponsor and A.A. friends. With a belief that I am never alone, even if I feel that way, I can be shown differently when I am open-minded. Sometimes I think, that is easy to say when I have all of my physical abilities. I have thought of the above individual multiple times throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. He had a great sense of humor, a sharp brain (and tongue sometimes) and I bet he would have done well with the virtual platforms offered "these days" to continue through to a path of continuous sobriety. What about the time that passed before these virtual platforms were as well known and used? A telephone call, regardless of whether or not the person reached out first, dropping by to see how someone is doing, taking a chance and asking, "how are you?", then listening to the answer, may be a solution to someone's version of remote. Aren't we each worth not feeling alone? I would dare say, our 12 steps are a path to being available to others seeking recovery from alcoholism- and I believe alcoholism is simply said, more than drinking- it's about getting down to causes and conditions of our alcoholism (according to page 64 of the Big Book), and those causes, and conditions can crop up long after our last drink, maybe that is when we may feel the most "remote". Nikki O. Area 28 (Maine)

### **Area 34 Western Michigan/Eastern Upper Peninsula**

Hi, my name is Linda B., and I am an alcoholic who lives in Western Michigan. I was honored and grateful to have been asked to Co-Chair this year's Remote Communities Meeting at the 71<sup>st</sup> G.S.C. My initial thought was that I have no actual personal experience on this topic and I definitely could not contribute an article on this subject. Then I sat and thought about it for a while. I have been active in service work within the Corrections and Accessibilities Communities and they both have their own remote issues. I have carried the message into jails, prisons, hospitals, and homes of those who could not get to meetings on the outside. I have even had meetings brought to me following surgeries when I was laid up. I then thought of the past year and how most of us were thrown into our own personal remote space at home thanks to the pandemic. All of a sudden everything around us was being closed and/or canceled. Meeting in person was no longer an option for most. What were we to do? We were to come up with solutions as that is what we try to focus on. In no time at all online meetings and the virtual world opened up to us in ways we had never imagined. The life and normalcy of the already established Remote Communities was

coming to the rest of us A.A. members. Even the General Service Conference became remote as each of us participated from the solitude of our own homes, as we all came together on the small screen to continue the annual tradition of doing the work for A.A. I learned then that it does not matter where or how we do the work of A.A.; it just matters that we do it. I always say that getting involved in service work has greatly enhanced my sobriety and has definitely increased the size of my A.A. family. I can now say the same is true for this new age of virtual meetings and events as I have attended meetings I never would have known about before and have met people I may not have had the chance to meet if I had only attended my meetings in person. Thanks to being asked to Co-Chair this meeting has opened my eyes and made me more aware of the issues that many members face and deal with on a daily basis. I am also learning more about the tools and options that are already in place and looking to see what may still be needed to carry the message to all alcoholics in every corner of the world. We all need to take that step out of our comfort zone occasionally to see where our services can help others who may need it and to make sure that A.A. is available for everyone everywhere. Thank you all for the opportunity to be of service and thank you to this pandemic for reminding me to remain open and teachable to new ways of carrying our message. Linda B., Area 34 Delegate/Panel 70



Photo Linda B.

### **Area 36 – Southern Minnesota**

#### Area 36 Southern Minnesota Remote Communities/Accessibilities Report

Area 36 established a Remote Communities Committee in 2002. The committee focus included "*Any community where it is difficult to carry the A.A. message because of culture, geography, language, or life condition.*" That is still part of the committee's description today although it has grown and expanded in many ways. There are three primary areas our committee work focused on over the years – facilitating access to A.A. for deaf and hard of hearing members, increasing access to meetings and literature for

members whose primary language is other than English, and improving access to our message for members who have physical barriers to access caused by their life condition. Work with remote communities began in Southern Minnesota decades before the committee was formed. In 1979, a local hospital sent an inquiry to the General Service Office (G.S.O.) requesting information about A.A. meetings for the hearing-impaired alcoholics in their facility. G.S.O. contacted the delegate who contacted the local district which resulted in the start of a hearing-impaired group called Silent A.A. By the early 1990s, members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community were able to access sign language interpreters through a service funded by the State of Minnesota. This allowed deaf members to branch out to other meetings around the metropolitan area. By the late 90s this funding changed and A.A. groups who were used to having sign-language interpreters became self-supporting to continue to provide that service to their members. As of the start of the pandemic there were six meetings with sign language interpretation provided. A.A. members in Area 36 speak several other languages. We have a significant Spanish-speaking population both in the city and in our rural areas. Several years ago, a Spanish linguistic district was formed to help meet the needs of Spanish-speaking people looking for help from Alcoholics Anonymous in Southern Minnesota. They provide interpreters for non-Spanish speaking meeting attenders and host meetings all over Southern Minnesota. In November 2017, the Spanish speaking community held their first Spanish Speaking A.A. Conference. There are other growing populations whose primary language is not English that we strive to provide more service to. These include those speaking Hmong, Vietnamese, Lithuanian, and Russian. We want the voice of their groups and members included with the rest of A.A.

This committee also reaches out to members who have physical barriers to accessing meetings due to their life situation. We facilitate taking meetings into long-term care facilities, have attended workshops and health fairs to provide information to professionals who work with these demographics, and have provided literature to various facilities. Large print materials have been placed in libraries with transitional rehabilitation care facilities, community based mental health services locations, and long-term care facilities. The need for this work continues to expand. Our committee's job description also suggests that our work should include parents with small children. Many groups in Southern Minnesota provide childcare or are "child-friendly." The pandemic "shelter-in-place" orders closed the doors to most groups this past year. Some closed temporarily and have not yet reopened. Many meetings turned to technology to replace their face-to-face venue with a virtual venue. The area did the same with our meetings. We faced accessibility issues and walked through them and continue to do so. Our area and its districts continue to report progress on reaching out to remote communities despite these changes. At a recent committee meeting, one district reported that they delivered A.S.L. and Braille Big Books to Alano clubs in the area. That district also connected with the State Services for the Blind. There is an Arabic-speaking meeting in that district too. Another district provided large print copies of the Big Book, Daily Reflections, and other literature to all Senior Center libraries in their district. Accessibilities/Remote Communities work is alive and well in Area 36! – Stacy M. Delegate/Panel 71

### **Area 42 – N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.**

**What are the challenges/solutions to carrying the A.A. message to young people** Nevada Area Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (N.A.C.Y.P.A.A) was presented to Nevada Area 42 in the Fall of 2018 by a collective of Y.P.A.A. members from around the area. Existing Y.P.A.A. committees had been approached over the years by outlying, smaller

communities about starting Y.P.A.A. meetings and/or committees. A need had been established by a few, and Area 42 agreed - young people in the area, specifically rural communities, are reaching out for help - and we want the hand of A.A. always to be there, and for that, N.A.C.Y.P.A.A. is responsible.

From members of N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.'s advisory council

### **Why was Nevada Area Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.) formed?**

- Created with the sole mission of promoting participation, enthusiasm, unity and excitement about the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and to support the sobriety of young people in Area 42 through an annual Area conference.
- To help carry the message to more remote communities where young people are struggling to find and stay in A.A.
- Creating an opportunity for more Young People's groups and committees to be formed through the process of bidding for, hosting, serving, and attending an Area Y.P.A.A. conference – more young people in the area will hear the message that you CAN achieve a lasting and comfortable sobriety, at ANY age.
- Young People's Groups in Alcoholics Anonymous have existed since the earliest days of our fellowship and Young People's conferences started in 1958, and now N.A.C.Y.P.A.A. has joined in the responsibility of reaching out the hand of A.A. The 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and 12 Concepts for world service are the cornerstone of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, and therefore the keystone for N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.

### **What are the cultural challenges/solutions to carrying the A.A. message to young people?**

- In my experience, one challenge we face, like people in general, A.A.s are not culturally competent. While I do believe *young people* is more open to diversity, and learning how to be more aware, I also think that people can weaponize our Traditions – calling cultural differences "outside issues". Which can make it even more difficult for a struggling alcoholic to hear the true message of A.A.
  - Having more panels not only at the Y.P.A.A. level, but at area assemblies, regional conferences, etc.
  - Panels on things like "how to carry the message in a culturally diverse world" or "what an outside issue really is".
- We are told that experimentation (abuse alcohol) is "totally normal", a "rite of passage", especially in college and high school, because "that is just what kids do".
  - Alcoholism does not discriminate based on age.
  - Young recovered alcoholics are relatable to other young alcoholics that are just starting their recovery journey. Relatability is one of the most powerful ways to reach any alcoholic, whatever their age may be.

### **What are the geographical challenges/solutions to carrying the A.A. message to young people?**

- Lack of active members, one person can go to all the remote communities, but especially with Y.P.A.A. it is a lot more attractive to have a "group" of Y.P.A.A. than it is to have one.
  - Getting people in the car just doing it.
- Understanding and conveying what each specific geographical area needs from the Y.P.A.A.'s.
  - Y.P.A.A. committee/chair at an area level, I saw great success with these in other areas, which also consisted of Y.P.A.A. liaisons at each district, which would help with all of the above challenges.
- The challenges in Nevada are easy to see. In our remote communities, meetings can be scarce. There are inactive Districts. Young people may have so few to relate to.
  - I feel like a solution to that problem is getting a fellowship of young people that covers more of Nevada's large geographical area. Making it easy for young people to have a fellowship that makes them feel "a part of". I believe that can be done in part with the existing Y.P.A.A.'s and getting more Y.P.A.A.'s to bloom. N.A.C.Y.P.A.A. could help existing Y.P.A.A.'s grow and connect more of Nevada's young people.

**Why are you involved in N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.?**

- I saw a need and wanted to be part of the solution .
  - To bring about the fellowship I have been able to experience in other States.
  - I am involved with N.A.C.Y.P.A.A. because I want to help young people love sobriety as soon as they reach out for help. I knew I was an alcoholic at 17 years old and it took me 14 more years to start my recovery journey. I often think about that when I see the young people in the rooms, how beautiful of a life they can have, starting so young. I also think about the ripple effect that one person can have becoming a recovered alcoholic. It changes all the lives around them, including the children that they are yet to have.
- Julie C, Panel 71, Area 42 Nevada



Photo courtesy of N.A.C.Y.P.A.A.

## Area 72 Western Washington

Western Washington Area 72 (WWA72) –

### Our time is now!

A very fitting theme for this year as Area 72 - Western Washington created an ad hoc committee that has been actively researching and maybe even building a Remote Communities Committee, and our time is definitely now! Area 72 is bordered on 2 sides by more than 160 miles of the Pacific Ocean, Puget Sound, and to the south, the Columbia River. Our entire Eastern border is more than 275 miles of the Cascade Mountain Range and their foothills, and to the north, Canada.

Within those boundaries lies more than 400 islands of the San Juan archipelago, 50 of which are populated, and nearly all are non-bridged, 5500+ sq. miles of the Olympic Mountain Range and Hoh Rainforest. Numerous small, outlying communities, many of which have minimal access to technology, and a few even lack phone and electricity services. Making Area 72 one of the most beautifully rugged places to live and be sober. In addition to our numerous geographically remote communities, WWA72 has one of the largest "non-English" populations in the world, with a minimum of 12 predominant languages. We are blessed to have 2 Linguistic Districts dedicated to serving our Spanish speaking members, and a Language Steering Committee available as the need is increasing. All of our Area events are translated simultaneously to Spanish, and A.S.L. as well when the need arises. We are incredibly blessed to be a cultural epi-center. With more than 25 major Native American Tribes, a young people's population of around 4 million under age 30, and an elder population of more than 2 million over the age of 60, a multitude of LGBTQ+, Persons of Color, and numerous other diverse cultures and populations. WWA72 additionally, serves at least 30 military installations, remote by Geography, culture, and language as well. Within the Greater Seattle/Tacoma metro areas, we have a very large Asian population, and many Russian, Ukrainian, and East Indians to the north. Throughout our Area, we see our homeless and transient populations growing at an alarming rate, and our area is active in reaching to them, as well as jails and prisons with the assistance of our Corrections Standing Committee.

With the support of the Area Body, we hope to continue our outreach work. Currently, we are researching an area wide dedicated Remote Communities Phone number, a brochure, to be printed in a few different languages with access information. Our area website is available in 2 languages thus far, with more on the horizon. We're excited about further outreach to our Native American populations and looking for easier ways for our non-technology populations to reach the lifesaving message of hope in Alcoholics Anonymous. We'll likely be starting a "Dial-In Meeting", as we are finding the accessibility to technology is not always easy, and sometimes, Wi-Fi can be "sketchy" in our more outlying islands and communities. We look forward to the continued growth in Area 72 as we move toward a fully active Remote Communities Committee. Bridget S.

## Area 78 Alberta/Northwest Territories

**From North Pole to Southern Plains – Staying Connected in Service and Recovery.** By: Anson C., Area 78 Remote Communities Committee Chair [Remote.70@area78.org](mailto:Remote.70@area78.org) It's almost impossible to fathom how large our Area is, its physical dimensions. The literal North Pole of planet Earth is our northernmost point. Between the pole and the Area's southern border (the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, the Canada/United States border) are some of the largest, deepest lakes in the world, great plains, foothills, and the Eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains. Coursing throughout the Area is a spirit of fellowship and hope of recovery, wide and strong like the Deh Cho (the Mackenzie River), Canada's longest river.

Staying connected to carry the message of recovery and keeping those in the Fellowship in touch with the service structure that ensures A.A.'s longevity and vibrance, has been a challenge for Area 78 since its inception. I got sober in a community of 600 people with no all-season road access. I white-knuckled it and read *Alcoholics Anonymous* for six weeks before I moved to the Territory's capital city. I did not know it at the time, but there was a man in my small town who had been a sober member of A.A. for many years. I didn't know him, and barely knew about A.A. I wonder how my early weeks of sobriety might have been different had I known there was another person like me, trying to stay away from that first drink and live a spiritual life. Once in the capital, I attended meetings regularly. My sponsor encouraged me to get involved in service, and after a few years I found myself as Alternate District Committee Member. This meant that it was time to attend Assembly and see what that was all about. The only problem: it was being held in a location "central" in our Area...1600km away by road. Our District voted to commit over 50% of our funds to ensure both myself and our D.C.M. could attend and learn from the experience of others. This was a life-changing experience for both of us. Our first D.C.M. meeting we realized we were not alone, that dozens of Districts were having the same challenges as we were. We learned and grew every time we connected with another D.C.M. and felt the love and support from our Table Officers.

Over the past 25 years, the Area had voted to commit funds in increasing amounts to a Travel Assistance Program to help people like my D.C.M. and I attend service events. Without these funds we would not have been able to attend, and I would not be in the service position I am now. In years past, road trips were organized from all points of the compass to drive to these events, with some members even paying for their own fuel. This meant that service was available to those with a car, and the funds to keep that car on the road. The current analog to this is people who wish to participate in virtual service events, but do not have the technology, bandwidth, or computer knowledge required to connect.

In the 1990's, our Area had groups in the "south" that were linked to remote groups by telephone. Long distance charges applied, and some members were faced with hefty telephone bills as the cost of staying connected. One such group was based in Taber, Alberta. On the other



end of their telephone line were a group of people in Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories, just below the Arctic Circle. After a few months of meetings, it came to pass that a member from Fort Good Hope was to travel south for an appointment and would be in one of Alberta's largest cities. The members from Taber loaded up the car and drove to Calgary to meet this man in person for the first time. Upon meeting and going to coffee (of course), the man produced a stack of Polaroids; photos of the sub-Arctic group members!

One of the challenges faced in smaller communities is the lack of anonymity. There was a reason that, in a town of 600 people, I didn't know about the other sober A.A. member. Even in larger centres anonymity can be a problem. Our rooms welcome everyone: lawyers, judges, pilots, young offenders, corrections officers, and members of the radio and television media. I encourage members who are concerned about who might see them in a meeting to remember that everyone is in that room for the same reason, to stay sober and to help others to recover from alcoholism.

Our Area's committee is committed to helping those who are remote not only in terms of geography, but also in language and culture. Members from remote regions travel to larger centres for medical appointments. While there, in-person A.A. meetings are accessible, and the message of recovery is heard. Returning home, filled with hope, a member can find it a lonely experience when they realize that they might be the only A.A. member in their community. How to start a group? How to stay anonymous? How long the wait seems to get literature delivered. These are some of the challenges being faced every day. We can provide literature, guidance, and online meetings; can point members to material translated into different languages. Area 78 worked with translators to create posters showing A.A. slogans in Inuktitut. Other translations will indeed be needed in the future: The Northwest Territories, which comprises over half of the physical size of the Area, has eleven official languages!

As always, the hand of A.A. is there... it's holding a mouse. Our Area hosts the Spirit of the North online meeting and has done so since 2013. I invite anyone reading to please stop by. Details can be found at [www.area78aa.org](http://www.area78aa.org).

## **Area 79 British Columbia/Yukon**

### **BC/Yukon Remote Connections**

Area 79, B.C./Yukon is geographically quite spread out. The southernmost tip of British Columbia to the northernmost tip of the Yukon Territory is a staggering 2,540km/1,587 mi. B.C./Yukon also has an extremely diverse culture, with multiple language and ethnic challenges. As such, the requests we receive are often from communities with very small populations, remote locations and have an assortment of economic and cultural barriers to overcome. The committee work that was performed before my term has proven extremely effective in reaching these communities. I have already received 2 emails this year from community leaders in **New Aiyansh, BC and Atlin, BC** with the nearest meetings being over 3 hours drive away. Both community leaders were concerned about availability to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and access to

literature. I sent both persons information about starting up in person meetings, how to access/attend online meetings and offered to send literature to get them started.

In BC/Yukon we also have many "work camp" jobs that have people away from their homes for weeks at a time, thus feeling removed from Alcoholics Anonymous. I received a request from a Human Recourse's worker in **Dease Lake, BC** requesting information on how they might start an in-person meeting for these workers. The H.R. representative was surprised by the amount of people requesting a meeting and felt they should host multiple meetings a week to accommodate them. The represented also expressed their gratitude for this life saving program, noting that "the workers often have a lot of money and a lot time to make bad decisions."

October 2020 Voting Assembly (Area 79) a motion was presented to change our Committee name from "Remote Communities" to "Remote Connections." The motion included the explanation that *the name Remote Communities does not reflect the diverse population this committee has the potential to connect and therefore may prevent an alcoholic finding the connection they need.* The Area 79 membership agreed, and the motion was passed with substantial unanimity. The Remote Connections Committee promptly formed an Adhoc Committee to review the bcyukonaa.org website, literature and the current mission statement for accuracy and relevancy. The pandemic has forced our membership online and really opened up the Remote Connections committee to a whole new avenue to reach the Alcoholic who is suffering in Remote situations. We are looking at examples of Remote Service and/or Remote Sponsorship literature for those in Remote situations.

Area 79 Remote Communities/Connections first formed a standing committee in 2003 with an appointed Area Committee Chair. The previous committee's laid the well-established foundation with boots to ground work.

Here are a few tasks the committees completed:

1. *Teleconference & video meetings* <https://bcyukonaa.org/find-a-meeting/remote-communities/>
2. *District suggestion* [https://a79.designcode.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/RC\\_DistrictCommitteeChair\\_20200711.pdf](https://a79.designcode.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/RC_DistrictCommitteeChair_20200711.pdf)
3. *R.C. workbook* [https://a79.designcode.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/RC\\_Workbook\\_20200711.pdf](https://a79.designcode.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/RC_Workbook_20200711.pdf)
4. *RC Kit* [https://a79.designcode.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RC\\_Kit\\_20200711.pdf](https://a79.designcode.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RC_Kit_20200711.pdf)

The silver lining of the pandemic has been the steam line use of online platforms. The Remote Connections Committee has begun to meet monthly. Imagine, we could only share ideas 4 times a year at the Area meetings and now we can spur ideas monthly. Our agenda is to invite past servants with Remote Connections/Communities to share for 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each meeting. This allows for the D.C.M.s and District Committee Chairs to gather ideas and have conversations how to help carry the message to the not easily accessible/remote alcoholic in their districts.

Forever inclusive never exclusive,

Christina M. Remote Connections Chair Panel 71, Area 79

## **Area 83 Eastern Ontario**

Remote Communities in Area 83:

Area 83 spans southeastern Ontario from Ottawa in the east to just west of Toronto with one of our districts in upper state New York. When it comes to remote communities, we are not faced with some of the more awesome challenges of vast distances that some areas face. We have,

however, found that we had not been reaching out to some of the communities hiding in plain sight.

In response to this and the ever-increasing importance of making Alcoholics Anonymous accessible to all, Area 83 decided with great unanimity to create an Accessibility sub committee. Instead of addressing the many issues piecemeal, we have decided to bring all of these challenges and common solutions under this one umbrella.

At the Fall 2007 Assembly a motion was passed that our Alternate Delegate "be the single point of contact and be responsible for all matters relating to Remote Communities initiatives across Area 83, including serving as liaison with other Delegate Areas as required". For the last several years we have been hosting an Inter Area Remote Communities Working Group which is a monthly session where members share what has been working in their respective areas and has been the birthplace of many great initiatives.

Our current direction for Remote Communities has been a reaching out to our neighbouring areas offering assistance in whatever way we can help. One of the simplest and yet fundamental ideas that was brought forth recently has been remote sponsoring. The last year has taught us that using technology to carry the message of A.A. is only a click away. Our old beliefs and limitations had to be shattered so that we could extend the hand of A.A. to the farthest corners of the world. Who knew that out of such tragedy would rise such an amazing openness to new ways of reaching out.

James O'D, Remote Communities Liaison Panel 71 Alternate Delegate Area 83 Eastern Ontario

### **Area 91 - Saskatchewan**

Area 91 is in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. We are spread out over 652,000 square kilometers and have a population of 1.18 million people; we have 18 active districts; with two districts that cover the top half of the province.

Area 91 has a very diverse population. With our Indigenous people and the increase of new people to Canada, we are finding that we need become more accessible to the people across our province no matter where they live or what language they speak. There are many Indigenous communities with different dialects of languages, such as: Cree, Woodland Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibwa, Lakota, Dakota, Dene, and Mischief. There have been attempts at translating A.A. literature into these languages, but the nuances in dialects make it difficult.

One of our major challenges within remote communities is the lack of access to Alcoholics Anonymous due to geography, language, and technology. There is also the stark fact that in some of our remote communities, alcohol is much easier to access than Alcoholics Anonymous. The stigma of Alcoholism is alive and well in Saskatchewan. This is why we need to work hard to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

In Area 91, the Remote Communities Committee has access to a District Development Fund which provides special funding to facilitate Service functions within a remote community, ability to send a service member to an assembly where funding is required and increase our "tools" of accessibility to help carry the message. We are now tasked to find new ways of using this funding as Covid has changed our ability to meet in person.

The Area 91 Remote Communities Committee consists of the Alternate Delegate as Chair, three District Committee Members selected by the hat at the Area Committee Meeting, and the

remaining of the committee are selected randomly through registration for the first spring Area assembly of the service term. This committee will have the same members during the full two-year term.

During the Remote Communities Committee meeting at Spring Assembly 2021, we had discussions around what our goals were for the next two years. We are looking forward to growing our virtual Remote Communities meeting which is held every Sunday night. We will also be looking at different ways to engage our other Area 91 Committees in carrying the message to our communities that need help with Alcoholism in this time of Covid 19. We are in a time of huge change and we have so much to offer. These are exciting times in Alcoholics Anonymous. Grateful to be in Service,

Lori R., Area 91 Alternate Delegate & Remote Communities Committee Chair

### **Area 93 Central California**

My name is Karla and I'm an alcoholic, my home group is "Solo Por Hoy" in Arleta Ca. I'm currently serving as the Panel 71 Delegate of Area 93.

Area 93 began exploring Remote Communities as an ad-Hoc Committee in Panel 67, the area initially began with a vision to make participation at Area Assemblies, Area Committee Meetings, and Area Events more accessible to members who wanted to participate but had either mobility, physical or financial barriers that made attendance at these Events very difficult or impossible. The Area began figuring out what could be done by exploring remote attendance utilizing technology.

During Panel 69 the area continued to explore solutions to make A.A. more accessible. After P.R.A.A.S.A. there was a wealth of information on various virtual platforms that were being utilized by neighboring areas.

And then the COVID 19 pandemic catapulted us into the 21st Century, the Area delegate and the remote communities chair began attending various zoom meetings and then introduced us to Zoom. The area bought a business account in August as it became clear that Zoom was here to stay. And that the Area had to continue doing business throughout the pandemic.

Area 93 has been utilizing zoom for more than a year now but through this process we have lost a lot of participation from our 8 linguistic districts. Our linguistic districts and groups have turned into a remote community due to COVID 19.

Last panel as the Area Chairman I made in person visits to most the linguistic districts to provide them information on how to download and use zoom this was a huge success. Our Area Elections had many Spanish members participate but as we have begun a new panel it seems that our work is far from done. As a delegate I have tried various ways to do outreach. I have incorporated sending text messages as well as emails with zoom information. My alternate has incorporated using What's Up to stay in communication.

Area 93 hosted the First Virtual Hispanic Women's Workshop the event had over a 100 attendees it was a phenomenal event. We have seen increased participation from Hispanic Women in General Service from G.S.R.'s, D.C.M.'s D.C.M.C.'s and Area Committee Chairs all the way to Area Officers. I'm one of the many Hispanic Women that found courage and support and finally decided to make myself available to be of service in any capacity God saw fit.

If we as a fellowship want to continue to make strides and be inclusive, we need to incorporate innovative solutions and ideas to increase participation. We need to begin by identifying our barriers, as a member from a Spanish group I know that technology is a barrier for a lot of members.

I'd love to incorporate putting on technology workshop to teach members the very basics for example how to use search engines, creating emails, sending, emails receiving emails saving passwords and user login information in easy to access places.

### **Exciting announcement regarding a couple of upcoming events for Remote Communities:**

There are extraordinary sharing opportunities approaching – the North/South Connections – and we hope you will join with us as we stretch the hand of A.A. from Canada and the United States to the furthest reaches of South America. The first North/South Connection will be held on May 15, 2021. Hosted by the General Service Board of Argentina, this Regional Forum will specifically target and provide a virtual sharing platform for remote members in Argentina's Region 6, which includes Patagonia. With the experience that the U.S./Canada members have, both in terms of living in remote communities, and of trying to make sure the hand of A.A. is always there to assist members and potential members in those communities, the two service structures and four countries (Argentina, Canada, Chile, and the United States) will join together for this event. The main objective is to bring members from the far north and the far south together for direct sharing of experience, strength, and hope. We are now actively seeking members in the U.S./Canada who are in geographically remote communities in the North who would be willing to participate on panels at the event. Each of the three panels during the day will have members from all of the participating countries. There will also be a Q & A session after each panel. Interpretation and technical considerations have been factored into the planning. While attendance at the Argentine event on May 15 will be limited, a Special Forum on Remote Communities, involving Argentina and Chile as well, will be held and hosted by the U.S./Canada in late 2021, and that event will be able to have broad attendance. Participation from northern members at the May 15 event will be coordinated through the Remote Communities Assignment – Irene D.,: NorthSouthConnection@aa.org. Phone 212-870-3344.

The use of virtual technology is allowing us an unprecedented opportunity to share with our fellow members in a new and truly exciting way. We look forward to joining with you in extending the hand of A.A. up and down the shared degree of latitude between the north and the south.