THE REMOTE COMMUNITIES
Communicator
LINKED THROUGH TECHNOLOGY LINGUISTICS AND DIALECT CHALLENGES CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS
www.aa.org | Spring 2026

2026 Remote Communities Communicator: One Voice, One Message, Many Communities

Greetings to the members of the 76th General Service Conference!

This non-Conference event is an opportunity to learn how A.A. members across the U.S. and Canada transcend the barriers of geography, language, culture and life conditions to carry our message to all who seek it. *Each area determines how to apply this definition to its specific circumstances.* Remote communities can be found in most, if not all, areas in North America.

We encouraged each Area to submit an article of 500–600 words with the broad theme of "One Voice, One Message, Many Communities." Articles can include anything that can help those involved with remote communities and might address such topics as the history of an area's remote communities efforts, the types of perils areas face, solutions that have proven effective, literature that has been used to carry the message, and plans for future evolvement.

Thank you to all the areas which contributed to this year's Remote Communities *Communicator* newsletter: Area 79, BC/Yukon; Area 78, Northern Canada, Alberta and the Northwest Territories; Area 27, Louisiana; Area 69, Utah; Area 91, Saskatchewan; Area 89, Northeastern Quebec; and Area 05, Southern California.

CONTENTS:

1 A Brief History of the Pre-Conference Remote Communities Meeting
2 Map of Delegate Areas
3 List of Article Submissions by Area, Delegate and Author
4 Announcements

In Love and Service,

Alison G-T., *Panel 75/Area 91 Delegate (Saskatchewan)*

Dan P., *Panel 75/Area 24 Delegate (Iowa)*

Lori P., *Panel 75/Area 14 Delegate (North Florida)*

Mike F., *Panel 75/ Area 69 Delegate (Utah)*

A Brief History of the Pre-Conference Remote Communities Meeting

This is a brief recap of the history leading up to the start of the Pre-Conference Remote Communities meeting. The need for the special attention to remote communities' efforts was identified back in the 1970s 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 GSO 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.

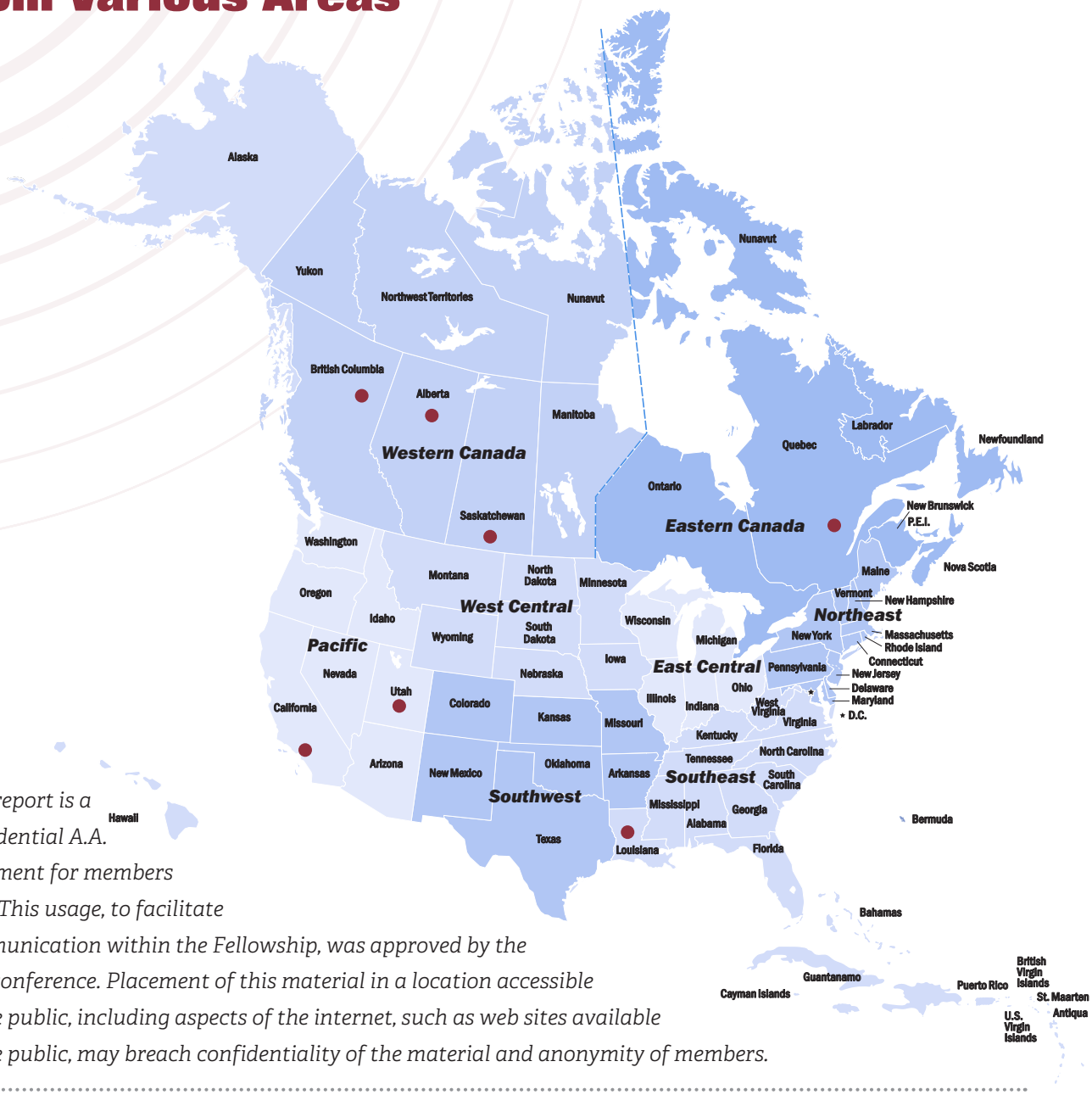
April 1996: At the 46th General Service Conference, some delegates, GSO Staff and board members met over lunch to discuss the movement and to move ahead. A Staff member was assigned to help coordinate efforts.

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 Conference.

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 GSO 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 four 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 Twelfth Step work.

Present: The Pre-Conference Remote Communities meeting continues with two to five co-chairs and a Staff member who provides support and assistance to the chairs of this committee as well the Remote Communities *Communicator* newsletter. ■

Map of A.A. Areas with Articles Submitted from Various 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.

List of Article Submissions by Area, Delegate and Author

Area 79 — Delegate and author is *Drew W.*

Area 78 — Delegate is David S.; author is *Riane P.*

Area 27 — Delegate is Jay T.; author is *Amand B.*, Area 27 Accessibilities Chair

Area 69 — Delegate Mike F.; author is *David R.*, Past Delegate Area 69

Area 78 — Delegate David S.; author is *Still S.*

Area 91 — Delegate is Alison G.-T.; author is *Garry S.*, Treatment and Accessibilities Committee chair

Area 89 — Delegate and author is *Jocelyne C.*

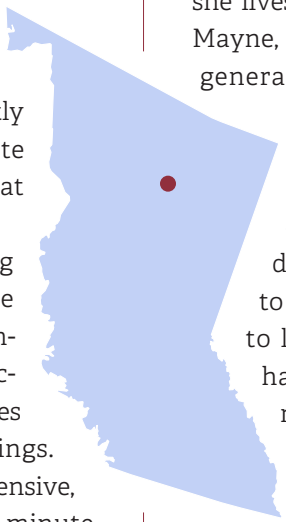
Area 05 — Delegate is Nikki U.; author is *Valerie G.*, Accessibilities chair

Bridging the Gap to Carry the Message

BC/Yukon Area 79 is the second-largest geographical area in our Canada/U.S. service structure with a lot of geographically remote districts due to our vast mountain ranges, lakes and rivers. Some districts are only accessible by floatplane, ferry or boat.

To better understand the remote community experience from a member's perspective, I spoke with two members from different communities in my area to shed light on the situation.

The first member was Lorelei, a longtimer with over 30 years of sobriety, who served on our area committee two panels ago. She recently moved from a city to Kingcome Inlet, a remote community of 82 people, accessible only by boat or floatplane.



To stay connected, she adapted — turning to virtual meetings, book studies and phone calls. She expressed gratitude for the pandemic's push toward virtual A.A., making connections possible from anywhere. When work takes her to the city, she attends in-person meetings. Leaving the inlet is not easy, requiring an expensive, two-hour water taxi to Port McNeill, or a 45-minute floatplane to Campbell River, both requiring storage of her car at a long-term parking lot.

Some in Lorelei's community seek sobriety at treatment centers off the inlet for anonymity and privacy underscoring A.A.'s role in such facilities. In her previous district she brought A.A. meetings into treatment centers. Having seen firsthand how crucial this support is, she emphasized the importance of connecting those in treatment with a local A.A. member before they leave.

Without this connection, many return home lacking vital support in early sobriety. Simply asking a member in treatment where "home" is allows A.A. members to facilitate Twelve Step work — this is Bridging the Gap in action. Let's face it, for those returning to remote communities, access to A.A. can be even more limited. If no local meetings exist, members can leave treatment with a contact list, virtual meetings listings, and A.A. literature. Sponsorship can happen remotely. Virtual literature meetings allow members to read the Big Book from home. So, Bridging the Gap doesn't just connect people to A.A. — it ensures that no matter where someone lives, they are not left to recover alone.

The second Area 79 member I spoke with was Candace, the district committee member (DCM) for District 9, which spans five small islands with nine active meetings — five on Salt Spring Island, where she lives, and one each on the neighboring islands of Mayne, Saturna, Pender and Galiano. With no active general service representatives (GSRs) when she stepped in, many members had little knowledge of the service structure.

Determined to bridge the gaps, Candace committed to visiting each group despite the difficult island ferry system, with waiting up to 10 hours for a return, or overnight stays due to limited schedules. Billeting with friends she hadn't met yet helped her get to know more members from her district.

On a pivotal visit to Saturna Island, the group believed she was the leader of A.A. With *The A.A. Service Manual* in hand, she explained her role as a trusted servant not an authority figure. A light bulb went off, and soon after, Saturna gained its first GSR. Inspired by her outreach, three of the five island meetings now have representation in the general service structure.

Candace's dedication — sacrificing time with family and navigating logistical hurdles to foster

connections — transformed the district and the members she served. With success not always guaranteed while we work to bridge the gap with remote communities, her story is a reminder that service is about showing up, planting seeds, and trusting the process.

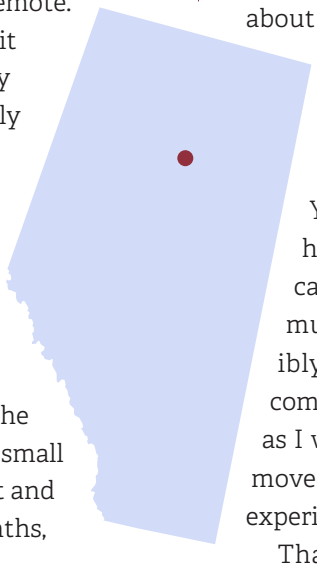
So, how can we reach the remote members who haven't found us yet? Maybe it's proposing new ideas in our districts or areas — CPC workshops, newspaper or radio advertisements, PSAs or outreach to the professional community. If we can reach those professionals who have direct contact with alcoholics, if we are creative with developing new initiatives, we have the chance to save another life. Ideas need committed service leaders to bring them to life. The question we must ask ourselves in serving remote communities is simple: Are we doing all we can to ensure no one is left behind? At the heart of our Twelve Step work with remote members is the principle of inclusivity.

Drew W.

Area 78 — Northern Canada

Staying Connected Through Service

What comes to mind when you think of Northern Canada? For most people, it's probably two words: cold and remote. For me, it is simply home. I grew up in Tetlit Zheh (Fort McPherson), a small community that now has a population of approximately 900 people, and it was even smaller when I moved away at the age of five. I later moved to the capital of the Northwest Territories, which holds about half the population of the entire territory. To put that into perspective, when I attended a Taylor Swift concert in 2024, the Rogers Centre in Toronto held more people than the whole NWT. While our population may be small compared to the provinces, our land is vast and beautiful. Still, during the long winter months, it can truly feel cold and remote.



I sobered up in 2016, and like one of the Daily Reflections says, it was the greatest event of my entire life. From the beginning, I did not fight the program. I was a willing pupil, desperate for change, and the members of Yellowknife A.A. loved and encouraged me as I trudged the Road of Happy Destiny. I remain grateful to my first sponsor, who encouraged me to be of service. At the time, I did not fully understand what that meant. I only knew that I wanted to give back what had been so freely given to me. That was the beginning of my general service journey.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving as the GSR of my home group, alternate DCM and DCM of District 35, and later as Public Information chair and secretary for Area 78. I still remember my first area service event and the feeling of walking into a room filled with trusted servants carrying the message beyond their own groups. Something shifted in my recovery that weekend. Service strengthened my sobriety. Through service, I developed a deeper understanding of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts, and learned humility, patience and connection.

Most Area 78 service events were held in Alberta. While many members could drive, attending meant flying from Yellowknife each time. Over three panels, that became a significant commitment. Thankfully, Area 78 offered a Remote Communities Fund and travel assistance during my time as DCM, allowing me to participate without placing financial strain on my district. At nearly every event, members expressed surprise and joy that someone from the North had made the journey. Despite the distance, the sense of belonging made every trip worthwhile. I especially treasured learning about other remote communities and forming friendships that stretched far beyond geography.

One of the most meaningful moments of my service journey came when Area 78 travelled north for the May Area Committee Meeting in Yellowknife in 2024. For the first time, I did not have to leave home. Instead, my service family came to experience where I live. Sharing my community with friends in the Fellowship felt incredibly special. During that weekend, the other area committee officers surprised me with a baby shower, as I was expecting my child in July 2024. I was deeply moved. In a setting meant for business and service, I experienced profound love and care.

That moment reminded me why service matters. Service is not only about meetings or responsibilities. It is about connection, unity and carrying hope. Through service, I found friendships, spiritual growth and a sense of purpose I never imagined possible. Today, I know this to be true: service keeps me connected, service keeps me grateful and service truly helps keep me sober.

Riane P.

Area 27 — Louisiana

Holding the Door Open: Emergency Access in a Storm-Prone State

In Louisiana's Area 27, we have learned that remoteness can arrive suddenly. When hurricanes make landfall or winter storms freeze roadways, regions of our state can lose access to their regular meeting spaces overnight. Our Accessibilities Committee has responded with a focused and practical tool — the Area 27 Emergency Weather Online Meeting Plan.

When severe weather makes in-person meetings unavailable, Area 27 activates a centralized Zoom space so displaced home groups can host their regular meetings online. Simultaneously, unaffected groups across the state may volunteer to host meetings in service to impacted areas. The plan preserves continuity for established meetings while also offering Louisiana-based fellowship during shared crisis.

Preparation is ongoing throughout the year. We solicit home groups and individual volunteers willing to serve as emergency hosts who are placed on a reserve roster. When extreme weather is forecast, the Accessibilities Committee activates the plan by notifying the volunteer roster and circulating a sign-up sheet for hosting time slots. We publish a continuously updated meeting schedule through a shared Google Sheet linked on the Area 27 Events page and distribute a flyer through DCMs and home groups to spread the word while protecting anonymity.

Internally, committee members coordinate what we call "Zoom baton-passing" shifts, ensuring the Area 27 Zoom room remains open and secure without multiple hosts logging in simultaneously. Volunteers are provided with a brief script identifying the meeting as part of the emergency weather plan; after that, each group proceeds according to its usual format. Closed captions are enabled, and recording or screenshots are not permitted, reinforcing both accessibility and anonymity.

The plan was first activated during the January 2025 winter storm, when 11 meetings were hosted over two days. Its second activation came in January 2026, as another winter system affected northern Louisiana, resulting in 16 online meetings across four days. The storm coincided with Area 27's January assembly which was held virtually due to the storm. Area 27's Online District 25 stepped up, offering their Zoom space and their service for the plan's activation. In both instances, displaced home groups were able to maintain their regular meeting times in an online format. Members joined from darkened homes and unaffected parishes hosting in service. The meetings became steadying spaces in the midst of uncertainty. In a state where storms are a certainty, the plan offers a standing reminder that isolation does not have to follow disaster.

While the Emergency Weather Plan has become a defining focus of our remote outreach work, it rests within a broader commitment to reducing barriers year-round. One such initiative is outreach to assisted living facilities, led in collaboration with District 21. Committee members coordinate directly with facility managers and directors to place A.A. pamphlets and central office contact cards in literature racks and on bulletin boards. Through partnerships with the New Orleans and Lafayette Central Offices, surplus and out-of-print pamphlets are redistributed to these facilities as a low-cost entry point to the program. For residents who can no longer travel easily to meetings, a single pamphlet or phone number may serve as the first bridge back to fellowship.

Our Accessibilities Committee also promotes tools such as the Accessibilities Checklist and the *Plain Language Big Book*, encouraging groups to consider physical, linguistic and cognitive accessibility in their meeting spaces.

In Area 27, we understand that remoteness may be permanent or temporary, predictable or sudden. By maintaining a standing emergency meeting system and ongoing outreach to underserved populations, we strive to ensure that when barriers arise, whether from storm surge or limited mobility, the hand of A.A. is always extended.

Amand B.

Area 69 — Utah

Fostering Connection in Remote Communities

I found sobriety in A.A. in Cedar City, Utah, a small town that when I joined had only six meetings a week. I was able to do about 77 meetings in my first 90 days, participate in one district meeting and hear a lot about the area from the district secretary.

After one year of sobriety, I got custody of my baby daughter and moved home to a much smaller town named Fillmore.

I found out a couple of years ago that Fillmore had an A.A. group in the 40s or 50s. That group must have ended at some point. In the 1980s, an A.A. sober alcohol and drug counselor moved to town and began to ply his trade. He started an A.A. group. I did meet the guy, as my dad dragged me to his office. I had a few sessions with him and quit.

A friend who went to meetings back then told me that they would have a meeting and then all go get drunk together (minus the counselor). I didn't get back until 1993. Around that time the group was meeting with four or five people. I don't remember talking about A.A. much, we used the format and the readings and then most people talked about what they learned in treatment, and most were staying sober. There was an old holdout from the 1980s meetings though, and he would stay sober nine months of the year when he was working and drink in the winter when he wasn't working. Our district had a DCM and a secretary treasurer, but no district meetings. We had one guy taking meetings into the jail.

For reasons of my own, my activity in A.A. fell off for several years. I just didn't go to very many meetings or do any service. An out-of-town truck driver who took me through the Steps had yelled at the group and told them that what they were doing wasn't anything close to A.A.

There was a period in the middle of this lower activity when the group grew to 25 people. I observed carefully. They were connected to A.A. as a whole. There were still no district meetings, but they found their connection through YPAA. This had become a fun group. They made the trip to the city (about two hours away) several times a month to attend YPAA events.

The problem with a small town is that people get sober and get better jobs in other places. A few years later, the group had shrunk back to meetings with four or five people. This is about the time that I re-committed to A.A. I had hit bottom sober and was all of a sudden willing to do anything asked of me. I began to help out with the jail meeting. I fell in love with the process. I wanted to do anything to help my new jail buddies.

When I am not connected to A.A. as a whole, I lose my emotional sobriety, I get on a dry drunk. When a group isn't connected to A.A. as a whole, the whole group has a dry drunk quality to it. Our group wasn't too pleasant. It didn't give you that feeling that you normally get from attending A.A. I wanted something better in case my new jail friends got out and came to a meeting. I didn't feel young enough to go to YPAA, and I didn't know anything about it, so I went over to the neighboring town and asked them to start the district again. The district hadn't had a DCM for about 12 years. The two guys that were there, said that they had both been DCMs and that it would be my turn. I was glad to accept if it would mean making our group better for the incarcerated crew.

Being the DCM gave me a seat on the Area Committee. I made sure to attend. I craved connection to A.A. and I knew it would help the group. They were so welcoming. I got so many smiles and warm looks. I got included when lunch or dinner reservations were made. At first, I didn't pay much attention to the busi-

ness, especially the financial reports. The education came slowly. I was more interested in making friends in A.A.

I brought people with me, GSRs, interested A.A.s, even the guys from the local treatment center when they would let them go. Often, we slept four to a room to save money. I was assigned to the Archives Committee. After several months, I knew that our district needed to grow, we needed more people in the groups, so I switched over to the CPC Committee. I filled up literature racks at the local counseling center, the hospital and the jail. I donated Big Books in English and Spanish to the library. When I tried to meet the drug court judge, he had me address the whole court. I found out that probation and parole can't send people to A.A. but they can recommend recovery meetings. I made a schedule of all the recovery meetings in the district including A.A. and gave a stack of them to the probation officer. I joined the local Prevention Coalition and met lots of professionals. I put A.A.'s schedule in the Community Calendar section of the local newspaper. I got the local treatment center to start bringing their guys to the meeting. Some oldtimers from other towns started visiting us regularly, giving us some stability.

I remember reading a story in the back of the Big Book where the guy was the only sober A.A. in Chicago. He would go to Akron often to get his batteries recharged. He would also send newcomers there. Area 69 was my Akron. Sometimes when the meeting started, with the readings and reports, my eyes would tear up, and I would be glad to be home.

Over the years as Spanish-speaking newcomers would come in, it would fall on me to try to talk to them and try to interpret for them. I had to start studying Spanish again so I could be more effective, but the most effective thing that I was able to do was connect the newcomer to the Spanish District. I remember calling the DCM one time. I asked him to call the newcomer so he would know someone other than myself. He refused. He instructed me instead to find a meeting place for the following Saturday and brought down 12 people to have a meeting with the newcomer. What camaraderie and fun.

Above all, remote communities need connection. We need to be a part of A.A. as a whole. This involves travel, phone calls, Zoom meetings, literature and anything else to make it work. I am responsible to do what I can to connect A.A. groups together.

David R.

Area 78 — Alberta and the Northwest Territories

The Importance of Literature in Remote Communities

Welcome to Area 78, the largest area in the U.S./Canada service structure covering all of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Western Nunavut, parts of British Columbia and a few municipalities of Saskatchewan. I'm Still S. and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is July 25, 2014. I'd like to share with you my experience with remote communities.

I sobered up in Mississauga, Ontario, where it was easy to do 90 meetings in 30 days but even then, I was aware that the attendance at meetings didn't reflect the diverse cultures. In 2017 we moved to Creston, BC where there were four meetings a week, and if you wanted to attend others, it was an hour drive minimum in various directions and sometimes impossible during the winter months.

At my first assembly as a newly elected GSR in 2021, we had the opportunity to choose our own committee, and remote communities jumped out at me because I could relate to that. I attended the North/South Connection Virtual Forum in 2022, and I was truly humbled by the lengths that people would go to in carrying the message. My reports to my district included all the information I was getting on remote communities, and in 2022 they added a Remote Communities Committee and I was elected chair.

From the North/South Forum sprung the Inter-Area Remote Communities Working Group, and I joined that. There were no guidelines at that time, so we just shared ideas and what we were doing in our areas. Each year they have a forum with speakers covering language, culture and geography with translation in French, Spanish and ASL, and this year LSQ (Langue des Signes Quebecois) was available.

I had obtained a copy of the Accessibilities Workbook, and there was little information for remote communities. Area 79 had created their own workbook as had Area 02 and that helped a lot. I believe it's time, with all the accumulated knowledge, that remote communities have their own workbook.

I have been privileged to do presentations at Campouts/Roundups and chair the Remote Communities Workshop at the International Convention in Vancouver in 2025. I also distribut-

ed the new pamphlet "Indigenous People in A.A." to the Ktunaxa reservation here in Creston and to the DehCho Health and Services in the Northwest Territories where people in Fort Providence gather for an online meeting out of Yellowknife, NWT. When Yellowknife was evacuated due to fires, along with another member, I decided to keep the meetings going so that when our members were safe, we had a place to reconnect. It was a blessing. I have sent lots of literature to Fort Providence including the *Plain Language Big Book* and *Living Sober*. Gaining trust and knowing that they are loved and valued has increased members' attendance.

Here in Area 78, we have our own remote communities online meetings called "Spirit of the North " which meets three times a week. I am honored to be part of an amazing group of dedicated people always ready to extend the hand of A.A., be it through fellowship, literature, connections or sponsorship. This meeting can be found on the Meeting Guide app.

My suggestion is to get a Literature Catalogue. There is so much literature available in so many languages. One example is a member, who is neither Chinese nor does he speak the language, saw the need for a Chinese meeting and was able to get one started with the help of a translator. This meeting is thriving! Another example is when a member asked if we had the Big Book in Low-German for a community here in Area 78, the answer was "Yes!!!!" and we were able to get this from the central office.

In closing, look around at your meetings and ask yourself, "Do they reflect the diversity in your area?"

Still S.

Area 91 — Saskatchewan

The Need of A.A. in Care Facilities

Even though some of us reside in densely populated areas, remote communities exist within our cities. Specifically, A.A. members residing in long-term care facilities, senior living complexes, nursing homes, people with mobility issues and shut-ins living blocks away from support and fellowship. This phenomenon is exacerbated for members that are in care facilities in the remote regions of rural areas. The Area 91 Remote Communities Committee has been discussing this issue for a period of time.

We know there are A.A. members in these facilities, and unless their home groups or other members are

carrying the message on an individual basis, these members are suffering without the benefit of this Fellowship and other contact. There are also potential A.A. members not yet reached.

Given the vast number of "senior care homes" and the different levels of care provided, attempting to organize this endeavor has been, at times, overwhelming. As well, there are large hospitals that have a "nursing unit" attached and the patients/residents are subject to hospital policies and regulations. The committee has realized that there are only two known A.A. meetings in hospitals in Area 91. Some committee members have requested hospitals provide an opportunity to start meetings, and the predominant response is that there is no space available that could be designated for a regular meeting time and day. The other response has been that prior meetings became disruptive due to a few A.A. members with other issues.

The committee realized that each individual facility would need to be approached separately. We are currently seeking the support of the Public Information Committee. As we attempt to problem solve this daunting task, the Area 91 Remote Community Committee would welcome any feedback.

Gary S.

The Responsibility to Overcome Barriers

It is my pleasure to share our area's experience regarding remote communities in Northeastern Quebec. A remote community is defined as a population for whom it is difficult to carry the message due to language, culture or geography.

The first Remote Communities Conference was held in Toronto in July 1996 with 15 area delegates. Since then, the Inter-Area Remote Communities Work Group (IARCWG) has met monthly, bringing together members engaged in service work with remote communities. A member from our area who serves on this work group, Gary C., has worked diligently with local government resources (police, social workers, probation officers, etc.) and with local Innu communities to reach alcoholics in remote Indigenous communities in Northern Quebec.

Language

The population of our area is predominantly French speaking. English-speaking members are primarily located in Quebec City and are served by four English-speaking A.A. groups. During the summer, several Spanish-speaking workers are present in rural areas; however, we do not have any Spanish-speaking A.A. groups. To our knowledge, there have been no requests for interpretation in other languages or for sign language for the Deaf. It is now possible to attend online meetings in the following languages: German, Spanish, Hebrew, Japanese, Norwegian, Punjabi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Thai. Several online meetings also provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation. A French-speaking hybrid group offers Quebec Sign Language (LSQ) interpretation on Thursday evenings.

Culture

Some members may feel more comfortable attending special-interest meetings where they can openly share certain personal experiences. For example, we have three women's meetings in Quebec City and Chicoutimi, and three men's meetings in Quebec City. We do not currently have meetings specifically for young people or for the LGBTQ community. However, members may access online meetings that are readily available in the three main languages spoken in Quebec.

Within our area, we also have four Indigenous groups — one in Quebec City and three on the North Shore. The Naskapi group located north of Schefferville is an Indigenous group that holds hybrid meetings, making it possible to reach members in remote communities far from urban centers. Each year since 2002, an Indigenous Convention has been held in August in Pessamit on the North Shore. This event serves as a meaningful gathering point between members of the First Nations and other A.A. members. Speakers, primarily from First Nations communities, share their difficult journeys and their renewal through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Geography

Our area covers a vast territory extending 800 kilometers along the St. Lawrence River and 550 kilometers northward. On the Upper North Shore, the distances to attend a meeting can be very great — often requiring hours of travel. To serve these remote areas, we rely on virtual groups, 16 of which are from our area.

Conclusion

Faithful to our Fifth Tradition — "Each group has but one primary purpose: to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers" — our area has the moral and spiritual responsibility to overcome the barriers that may prevent someone from accessing our message of recovery, whether those barriers are language, culture or geography.

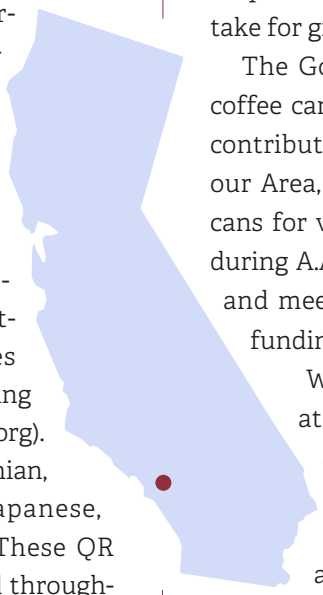
Jocelyne C.

Area 05 — Southern California

One Voice, One Message

As the newly elected Accessibilities chair, I do not feel well equipped to speak on our area's history of challenges. However, I can share how previous committee members helped us overcome barriers local to Area 05 through "One Voice, One Message, Many Communities." Our last panel committee started two incredible and exciting projects we are still working to increase awareness of and participation in for our Area. Our current committee spends most of our energy and resources looking for the best ways to expand these projects.

The committee created one tool in particular we believe will be incredibly valuable in Area 05. According to the Los Angeles County database, there are some cities where almost 50% of the population has limited English Proficiency. The committee created a website (accessibilities.org) and flyer containing all the non-English speaking meetings within the greater Los Angeles area. The website includes QR codes that take users directly to a meeting guide from our central office website (lacoaa.org). The languages currently available are Armenian, ASL (American Sign Language), Farsi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish. These QR codes have been printed on flyers distributed throughout our Area.



Our second biggest project arose when a deaf GSR joined Area 05. This made us acutely aware of how we fall short in some of our remote communities. In response, the committee started the "Gold Can Fund" to raise funding for ASL translation in the Area for alcoholics who need it. According to our research, there are approximately 100,000 potential alcoholics in our Area, who may need ASL translation. If you have never experienced a barrier like this, consider yourself very blessed. We in Los Angeles County benefited from learning more from deaf members in our group about how isolating trying to get sober can be. They discussed difficulties many people never imagine as they simply tried to receive the message of hope and recovery in meetings. Stories from our deaf members involve struggles such as a lack of fellowship, strained communication, finding a sponsor and taking commitments. It is hard to imagine how one could possibly stay sober without the connection some of us may take for granted.

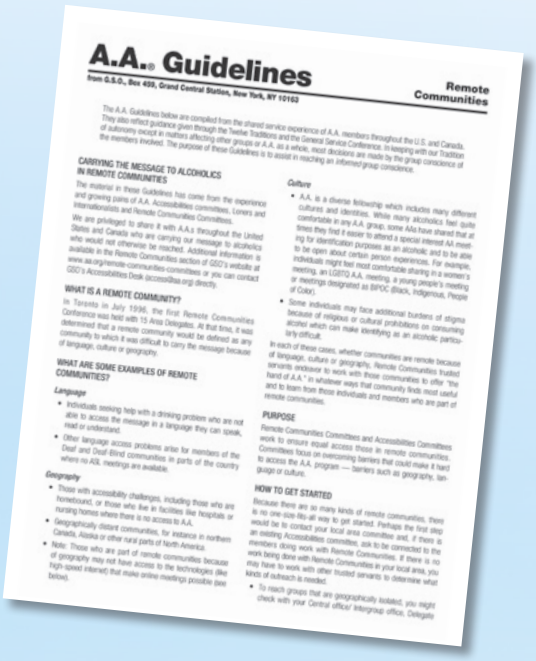
The Gold Can Fund tries to solve for this. It is a coffee can with a gold flyer and a QR code for digital contributions (or a hole on the lid to collect cash). In our Area, it is common practice for meetings to pass cans for various A.A. needs at the end of the meeting during A.A. announcements. Thankfully, our members and meetings have helped implement this, and our funding has been going strong.

We are lucky to have such amazing cooperation with our local central office. They have a fantastic meeting guide on their website that made the multilingual meeting flyers possible. They have also helped to provide all the services we needed to launch the Gold Can Fund. They hold our funds, pay the interpreters with funds collected, and have staff who help deaf alcoholics find meetings with translations. More information can be found on the Los Angeles Central Office website (lacoaa.org) ■

Valerie G.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities (MG-19)* is now available in English, French and Spanish on aa.org: *A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities | Alcoholics Anonymous* (aa.org).



A.A.® Guidelines

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Remote Communities

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared service experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The material in these Guidelines has come from the experience and growing pains of A.A. Accessibilities committees, Loners and Internationalists and Remote Communities Committees.

We are privileged to share it with A.A.s throughout the United States and Canada who are carrying our message to alcoholics who would not otherwise be reached. Additional information is available in the Remote Communities section of GSO's website at www.aa.org/remote-communities-committees or you can contact GSO's Accessibilities Desk (access@aa.org) directly.

WHAT IS A REMOTE COMMUNITY?

In Toronto in July 1996, the first Remote Communities Conference was held with 15 Area Delegates. At that time, it was determined that a remote community would be defined as any community to which it was difficult to carry the message because of language, culture or geography.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF REMOTE COMMUNITIES?

Language

- Individuals seeking help with a drinking problem who are not able to access the message in a language they can speak, read or understand.
- Other language access problems arise for members of the Deaf and Deaf-Blind communities in parts of the country where no ASL meetings are available.

Geography

- Those with accessibility challenges, including those who are homebound, or those who live in facilities like hospitals or nursing homes where there is no access to A.A.
- Geographically distant communities, for instance in northern Canada, Alaska or other rural parts of North America.
- Note: Those who are part of remote communities because of geography may not have access to the technologies (like high-speed internet) that make online meetings possible (see below).

Culture

- A.A. is a diverse fellowship which includes many different cultures and identities. While many alcoholics feel quite comfortable in any A.A. group, some AAs have shared that at times they find it easier to attend a special interest AA meeting for identification purposes as an alcoholic and to be able to be open about certain person experiences. For example, individuals might feel most comfortable sharing in a women's meeting, an LGBTQ A.A. meeting, a young people's meeting or meetings designated as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).
- Some individuals may face additional burdens of stigma because of religious or cultural prohibitions on consuming alcohol which can make identifying as an alcoholic particularly difficult.

In each of these cases, whether communities are remote because of language, culture or geography, Remote Communities trusted servants endeavor to work with those communities to offer "the hand of A.A." in whatever ways that community finds most useful and to learn from those individuals and members who are part of remote communities.

PURPOSE

Remote Communities Committees and Accessibilities Committees work to ensure equal access those in remote communities. Committees focus on overcoming barriers that could make it hard to access the A.A. program — barriers such as geography, language or culture.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Because there are so many kinds of remote communities, there is no one-size-fits-all way to get started. Perhaps the first step would be to contact your local area committee and, if there is an existing Accessibilities committee, ask to be connected to the members doing work with Remote Communities. If there is no work being done with Remote Communities in your local area, you may have to work with other trusted servants to determine what kinds of outreach is needed.

- To reach groups that are geographically isolated, you might check with your Central office/ Intergroup office. Delegate

There is a monthly meeting of area Remote Communities trusted servants called the Inter-Area Remote Communities Working Group (IARCWC). IARCWG meets online the last Sunday of each month at 10 a.m. (PST), 1 p.m. (EST). The working group is comprised of representatives from any of the 93 delegate areas in North America who have an interest in bringing A.A. to remote communities.

Zoom ID: **935 567 510**

Password: **381612**