

The Weekly Westerner

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Grey Eagle Hotel, 3777 Grey Eagle Drive (Corner of 37 St SW and Glenmore Drive)
Mondays 12.10 pm - 1.30 pm

President: Gerry Meek **President-Elect:** Bill Fitzsimmons **Past President:** Tim Anderson
Secretary: Karl Herzog **Treasurer:** Judy Cochran
Directors: Marlene Doherty, Darren Grierson, Ken Montgomery, Alex McFadden

Together We Are People of Action - Building Community

May 4, 2020 Edition: 53.33 Reporter: Duncan Stanners Editor: David Williams

Once again we held the meeting on-line using the Zoom tool.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86184001447?pwd=aWd6M29BVIZ4ZkZ4ZzZYWHA0SzhGQT09>

This meeting was facilitated by Team 2: **Ken Montgomery** as host, **Bill Quinney** as greeter, **Dan Pigeon** monitoring chat.

Guests

Linda Strang, guest of Steve Strang

Bonita Felton, guest of Claude Masse

Martin Parnell - Cochrane Rotary Club

Jakob Hettinga – Outbound Exchange Student - Belgium

Anne-Marie Simoneau - Fish Creek Rotary Club

Linda Morris – Fish Creek Rotary Club

Laura Pipolo -2018-19 Inbound Exchange Student – Brazil

Kaylee Quinney – Outbound Exchange Student - Spain

Rick Grass - Airdrie Rotary Club

John Fortunka - Assistant District Governor, Fish Creek Rotary Club

Other Guests – Rotary Club of Gilly-Chalarwe, Belgium

Our special guest this week is our inbound youth exchange student, **Margot Robins**, who participated in our meeting from Belgium.



President Gerry Meek welcomed everyone. He provided a short summary of what the youth exchange (YEX) student program is all about. He noted that this year's program had to be cut short in **March** so the students could all return to their homes. The program for the next Rotary year has also been cancelled.

Steve Strang, our Inbound Counsellor and current Youth Director, introduced Margot.

Margot launched into a PowerPoint presentation which was based on all of the Facebook pictures and movies that she had posted to keep family and friends at home back in Belgium informed about everything she experienced. It is titled "**Margot's Canadian Dream - 7 months in Canada**".

She went through her experiences chronologically, starting with her arrival in August 2019. It was her first time on a plane on her own. On arrival, she was three hours waiting to see the immigration people, who cleared her in five minutes! She was met by Steve Strang. Her first impression was that we drive BIG cars.

She went on a road trip with **Steve** and **Linda** to BC. What she learned:

- The road is a part of the trip with so much to see on the way.
- Our portions at restaurants are too big. She was full after the starter.
- First Nations issues are complicated and delicate.

In September, she stayed with Claude Massé and Bonita Felton. She attended the Peace Conference at Waterton and met all the other YEX students from our District. She started school, and noted that we have many more options than she did at home where the curriculum is far more restricted. The schools are more modern and computers more up to date. She made her first close friend, **Valentina**, another YEX student from Peru, who was also at her school.. What she learned:

- Never trust the Calgary Transit app. Busses are not always on time. However, the drivers are nicer than home, as one stopped the bus to let her on.
- High school is a maze.
- Dodge ball is rough.
- She attended a hockey game - the Oilers "suck"!
- We sing our national anthem a lot.
- It can snow in September.

In October, she made more new friends of fellow YEX students in Calgary, who became like sisters. She liked the zoo, particularly the North American animals. She enjoyed Thanksgiving, saying that turkey is almost never seen at home. She enjoyed her drama class and Hallowe'en, which is a much bigger deal here. What she learned:

- Be careful with your phone plan. She was shocked by a bill she received.
- How to use a clothes dryer.
- Teachers here are close to their students.



- There are a lot of Asian immigrants, unlike at home where they're mostly from Africa.
- Oil is a delicate subject.
- Churches are more modern and busier. We are more religious than Belgium.
- With the elections, she found politics are interesting.
- Wildlife is everywhere. Just pigeons at home.

In November, she visited the Glenbow, built a snow fort, discovered poutine and got a taste of the cowboy culture seeing farmers in jeans and boots. She took an Italian cooking class with **Judy Cochran**. She attended the Rotary Remembers ceremony, where she met an RCMP officer in dress uniform. She noted that Canadians helped to liberate Belgium and we celebrate their victories, while in Belgium they remember the losses. She attended a parade at Lacombe, built a gingerbread house and went skiing. She learned:

- Peanut butter is one of the best. She took two kg back with her to Belgium and guards it carefully!
- When it's sunny out, it doesn't mean it's warm.
- Dressing for school is far less restricted than at home.
- How to invite yourself to activities.
- Alberta is so new. What we consider old is new compared with the thousands of years of history at home.
- Christmas starts right after Hallowe'en.
- Distances between places are huge.
- We eat out at restaurants far more often.
- She likes board games.
- Inter-city transit is almost non-existent.

In December, she hooked up with her next host family, **Henry Dunfield** and Darlene Heninger from Fish Creek. She noted she felt like she won the lottery with all her host families. She went to Stettler to ride the Polar Express and felt like a little kid again. She discovered curling, did lots of skiing and went to the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller. For Christmas, she experienced "tree hunting", cutting down your own Xmas tree. At home, there is no Santa Claus, only St Nicholas who doesn't do stockings or give gifts. New Year's eve was spent eating pizza and singing karaoke. She learned:

- In our big cities, there are big houses compared with those at home.
- Sports are really big here.
- It's not unusual to talk to strangers, and while it's a kiss on the cheek at home it's hugs here.
- Costco is like another world.
- I can have my opinion taken seriously. At home, my parents' opinions dominate.
- Fireworks are illegal.



In January, she got her first experience with -30°. Boiling water freezes instantly if you throw it into the air. Steam freezes on your glasses, and you almost feel out of breath from the cold. She was amazed at West Edmonton Mall, with its amusement park, water park and ice rink. She went dog sledding, skiing, snowshoeing and ate Beavertails at Banff. She learned:

- Canadians are too polite. We don't like to say no and won't say what they don't like for fear of offending.
- -30° really exists. It never gets that cold at home.
- LGBTQ are treated more kindly and openly.
- Volunteering is more accessible.

In February, she celebrated Chinese New Year, went to a lacrosse game, went shooting, skating and met wolf dogs in Cochrane. She learned:

- People are really honest.
- Lacrosse is more violent than it sounds.
- Lockdown exercise.
- I'm bad at hip hop.
- Weapon culture is different.
- How to skate.
- What a baby shower is all about.
- Movies are very comfy.
- Casinos for charity are a great idea.
- Went to my first school dance.

For her last month in Canada, she again changed host families to stay with **Mel and Dan Warman, and their dog**. School was closed. She tried crosscountry skiing. She drove a Zamboni, and enjoyed Peter's Drive-In. She took her last trip to the mountains and savoured her last root beer. When she arrived home, her family dog didn't seem to notice she'd been away. She made poutine for her family. What she took away from the whole experience:

- Talk to everyone.
- Adjust to different situations.
- Enjoy each day and make the most of it.
- Voice your opinions.
- Enjoy the lifelong friends you have made.
- Find solutions by yourself.
- Take initiative.

She thanked us all, and promised, "I'll be back!"

Steve Strang thanked her.



Gerry thanked everyone who had spent time with her, particularly Steve and the host families Claude Massé and Bonita Felton, Henry Dunfield and Darlene Heninger, Mel and Dan Warman and Frans Hettinga and Anne-Marie Simoneau.

Bryden Horwood was finally able to deliver the Rotary inspirational moment. He is inspired that the club has been around more than 50 years and senior members like **Bill Quinney** and **Steve Rickard** who have been members more than 30 years; and of course, **Clarence Buckley**, who has been a member for more than 50 years. He is inspired by our bench strength, and our ability to attract new members. He is proud of the work that we have done both locally and internationally. And finally, he's inspired by the way we deal with unexpected changes, as evidenced by the attendance at this meeting of over 60 people.

President Gerry ran the meeting overtime. First, there was a moment of silence to contemplate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands.

Club dues have been changed such that members who find themselves in financial restraint can pay in two instalments or defer payment until January. See our web page: <http://www.calgarywestrotaryclub.org/ClubBusiness.htm>. If you wish to quit, please let **Karl Herzog** know before June 30 so we can avoid paying RI dues. We want everyone to remain a member. An e-mail will be going out shortly.

There has been some discussion regarding donating to the club: for example, the amount we are all saving on lunch. Please consider donating to the charity of your choice, for example the United Way Covid-19 fund. Gerry will be talking with Ken Montgomery our Director Fund Development about setting something up.

This year's District 5360 conference has been cancelled. There will be a four-hour virtual conference on June 6. Details should be available shortly.

The Rotary International conference is also cancelled. There will be some kind of virtual conference around June 20-26.

The District has decided to provide each club with \$25 per member, or \$2,100 for us. We'll need to decide how to use it, perhaps in our service and grants program.

There are mental health seminars from the District available on line.

Next week, our speaker will be **Todd Hirsch** from ATB. Please invite friends and/or prospective members.

Best wishes to all the mothers for Mother's Day this Sunday.



Final thought: "When you change the ways you look at things, the things you look at change."

Martin Parnell jumped in to tell everybody about The People of Action website <https://peopleofaction.ca/>. He encouraged us to get a club passport and attend nine virtual meetings in nine weeks <https://peopleofaction.ca/club-meetings>

To wrap it up on a note of levity, Ken showed a video that Bill Fitzsimmons found about a virtual meeting gone bad.

Coming Events

| May: Youth Service Month | |
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| 4 | YEX Program: Margot Robins and Friends. Via Zoom. |
| 11 | Todd Hirsch: Economist - ATB Financial. Via Zoom. |
| 18 | No Meeting - Statutory Holiday |
| 21 | Evening Meeting |
| 25 | Michael Chiasson: Motivate, Challenge, Inspire - Every Student Matters. Via Zoom? |
| June: Rotary Fellowship Month | |
| 1 | Calgary's National Music Centre |
| 8 | Mark Neufeld, Calgary Police Chief |
| 15 | Can Learn Presentation |
| 22 | Gerry Meek Day. Programme TBA. |
| 29 | Canada Day Special - Immigration and New Canadians: Peter Veress |
| July Stampede and Okanagan Cherries Month | |
| 3 | Parade Breakfast |
| 6 | Stampede Yahoo! |
| 13 | TBA |
| 20 | TBA |
| 27 | TBA |