



# 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:** Ben Kormos **President-Elect:** Tim Anderson **Past President:** Terry Felton  
**Secretary:** Marlene Doherty **Treasurer:** Karl Herzog

**Directors:** Debbie Barry, Judy Cochran, Bill Fitzsimmons, Gustavo Jimenez, Gerry Meek,  
Les Morgan, Orlin McMillan, Duncan Stanners

September 25, 2017 Edition: 51.10 Reporter: Mike Carlin Editor: David Williams

There was a lot of excitement prior to and during the meeting as members and over 25 guests packed into the restaurant at the Grey Eagle to meet and listen to our guest speaker, **Ghada Alatrash**. We were not disappointed.

The front desk was staffed by **Bernie Ward** and **Des DeFreitas**. **Bill Quinney** sold 50/50 tickets, and guests were warmly welcomed by **Tim Anderson** and **Bev Picard**.

**President Ben Kormos** called the meeting to order at 12:15, thanking all for attending and the Grey Eagle Hotel and staff for their gracious hospitality.

*O Canada* was led by **Robyn Braley**, followed by an outstanding invocation provided by **Judy Cochran**.

Seated at the head table were Ben Kormos, **Debbie Barry**, **Marlene Doherty**, **Chris Davis**, **Gustavo Jimenez**, Judy Cochran and our guest speaker Ghada Alatrash.

Visitors and guests were introduced by **Tim Anderson**. **There were** 26 guests, including:

- **Aya Mhanna**, a Syrian accompanist who assisted our guest speaker with music on her OUD (which is a short-neck lute-type, pear-shaped stringed instrument common in the Middle East) as well as by singing a Syrian love song
- **Sam Nammdura**, head of the Syrian Refugee Support Group in Calgary
- **Heather Janbay** from New York and friend of Ghada
- **Christine Rendell**, District Governor Nominee

**Gwyn Lewis** won the **50/50 pot** of \$51. Interesting to note, Gwyn will be boxing in his first professional boxing fight on October 14th.

Sergeant-at-Arms **Garfield Ganong** imposed numerous fines generating over \$50. Offences were levied to **Ben Kormos** for starting late and **Chris Davis** for campaigning.

May 4 - 6, 2018: District Conference, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Calgary  
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## My Passion, My Moments, Our Rotary

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### Hot Seats

- **Bill Fitzsimmons** requested assistance for a build with Habitat for Humanity. Bill needs another four or five people. If you can help, contact Bill.
- **Bill Lawless** reported our golf wind up was held on Wednesday with 15 golfers in attendance. Bill Fitzsimmons won low gross with a score of 85 and **Ken Montgomery** won low net (after a count back to overtake **Mike Carlin**).
- President Ben reminded everyone of our upcoming event **“Alive Inside”**, an evening devoted to the importance of music therapy in managing dementia. The September 28 event will be held at the Plaza theatre. Ben also advised the time for the **Rotary “After Hours”** at the **Kensington Legion** has been moved to **4 PM** so that we can attend both events.
- Bill Quinney thanked those that helped the Chestermere club hold “The Amazing Race” this past Saturday. Bill also thanked **Cha Cha Chansiri, Chris Ritter and Darren Grierson** for their support. Approximately, \$5,000 was raised for the community and Shelter Box.

### Guest Speaker

Debbie Barry introduced our guest speaker. Ghada Alatrash is a Syrian-Canadian author and doctoral candidate and research assistant with the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. She has an MA in English Literature from the University of Oklahoma. She has been profiled in several media presentations, including CBC, PBS, Aljazeera and Gulf News, among others.

She co-chairs the Syrian Women’s Club of Calgary and has been a member of the Rotary Club of Calgary for the past 12 years, and a Paul Harris Fellow. She will be a presenting author at the 2017 Wordfest in Calgary this fall for her book titled “Stripped to the Bone – Portraits of Syrian Women”. One of her life causes is to “amplify the voices of the silenced”.



Debbie also introduced Aya Mhanna, a Syrian singer, composer and musician, who performs with the local Calgarian group “Hymn”. Aya worked for the Red Crescent in Syria (a humanitarian aid society) and is a school teacher by trade. She provided back ground music on her OUD for Ghada.



"Syria has become the great tragedy of this century - a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history," said Antonio Guterres, head of the UN High Commission for Refugees. In October of 2015, during Canada's Federal Election campaign, the government of Canada "committed to resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees by February 29, 2016." According to data produced on January 29, 2017, a total of 40,081 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada to date. The Syrian Diaspora today is a complex topic that speaks to issues of dislocation, displacement, loss, exile, identity and a deep desire for belonging. Ghada's research today seeks to better understand these issues and the lived experience and human condition of the Syrian Diaspora who have become, within the past two years, part of our Canadian citizenry and local communities, as well as members of our schools and workforce.

Ghada's aspiration is to engage the notion of a "cultural *verstehen* of others," or an empathetic understanding of others, and to reflect on how it can act as an important tool in a process of "cross-cultural pollination" between Syrian newcomers and Canadian hosts, and as one method to understanding the human condition of Syrian refugees: to create a world like the one John Lennon imagined, a world where "there are no countries . . . nothing to kill or die for . . . no religion . . . all the people living life in peace . . . all the people sharing all the world."

She believes that this knowledge would give way to an emerged empathetic understanding and help in dismantling the walls that separate "us" from "them". After all, we all have the same color of heart.

In her fictional short stories, she explores, through her experience, the issue of identity as a Syrian citizen, as a Canadian national, as a woman, and as a human. Her identity reflects, in incommensurable ways, how pieces of her heart are scattered all over the world's map, some left in Syria, some in the U.S. where her family currently lives and where she once grew up, some here in Canada, and some along the



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way, here and there. She is deeply cognizant of the fact that her identity and her experience as a Syrian immigrant is very different from that of a Syrian refugee's experience.

It is of great importance to understand the difference between exiles and refugees

Edward Said (2002) also speaks on the condition lived by refugees and explains that it is one "produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of traditions, family, and geography." Said further goes on to highlight the difference between refugees and exiles, and writes,

Although it is true that anyone prevented from returning home is an exile, some distinction can be made among exiles, refugees, expatriates and émigrés. Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word 'refugee' has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance. . .

Palestinian national poet, Mahmoud Darwish, offers a definition of this complex word and writes,

You ask, What is the meaning of "refugee"?

They will say, One who is uprooted from his homeland.

You ask, What is the meaning of "homeland"?

They will say, The house, the mulberry tree, the chicken coop, the beehive, the smell of bread, and the first sky

The words in the poems speak of moments that are only intrinsic to the experience of a Diasporic body. They are moments that are rooted in the experiences of the Diaspora. They speak of the experience of homelessness and the longing for belonging. They can only be expressed by the pained bodies and souls of those who have lived such experiences.

In a poem titled, "And we love life," (Darwish, 2008) he writes:

And we love life if we find a way to it.

We dance in between martyrs and raise a minaret for violet or palm trees.

For we also love life if we find a way to it.

And we steal from the silkworm a thread to build a sky and fence in this departure.

We open the garden gate for the jasmine to step out on the streets as a beautiful day.

We love life if we find a way to it...

Darwish also writes:

We are captives of what we love, what we desire, what we are.

We are not basil returning in spring to our small windows.

We were not leaves for the wind to blow us back to our shores.

We are not birds able to fly.



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Today, as a Syrian-Canadian citizen, Ghada personally thinks of both Syria and Canada as two countries she is able to wholeheartedly call “my homelands” and, as she listens to the song “Home, sweet home”, and sings it, she dedicates it to both countries, Syria and Canada.



Marlene Doherty expressed the thanks of the club and presented Ghada with our special Jubilee Boltman.

**Coming Events**

<b>October: Economic and Community Development Month</b>	
2	Dr Charles Samuels: Centre for Sleep and Human Performance
9	<b>No Meeting: Thanksgiving Day</b>
12	<i>Rotary After Hours - Bring a friend - Kensington Legion (6:00 pm)</i>
16	Todd Hirsch: Economist
23	<b>Noon meeting cancelled</b> in favour of an evening Assembly @ Kensington Legion, 6 pm
30	Hallowe'en Programme: Costumes and Magic Tricks
<b>November: Rotary Foundation Month</b>	
6	RI Foundation and Calgary Rotary Clubs Foundation
11	<b>Rotary Remembrance Day @ Carriage House, 10 am</b>
13	<b>No Meeting</b>
20	Grey Cup Special Weekend Presentation
23	<i>Rotary After Hours: Bring a friend - Kensington Legion (6:00 pm)</i>
27	Roger Chaffin, Calgary Police Chief
<b>December</b>	
4	TBA
11	St Matthew's School Children's Choir?
14	<i>Rotary After Hours: Bring a friend — Kensington Legion (6:00 pm)</i>
18	Jubilee Programme: End of Jubilee Year
25	<b>No Meeting: Christmas Day!</b>

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<b>January</b>	
1	<b>No Meeting: New Year's Day</b>
8	Inspirational Speaker: TBA
15	Dr Adam Montgomery: The Invisible Injured (Psychological Trauma in the Military)
22	Provincial Court of Alberta: TBA
27	<i>Rotary After Hours: Bring a friend - Kensington Legion (1:00 pm)</i>
29	<b>Team Meeting</b>
<b>February</b>	
5	TBA
12	<b>No Meeting: Strawberry Shortcakes preparation and delivery 13th and 14th</b>
19	<b>No Meeting: Family Day</b>
26	TBA
<b>March</b>	
6	TBA
12	TBA
19	TBA
26	<b>Evening Assembly</b>