

50 Years of AA in Athabasca

On September 8th, 1969 the Athabasca Group officially registered with New York. They recently celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 5, 2019. Oral histories of the groups members were taken along with much comradery and laughter during the day. One of the members even got up to sing a song for us.



Home of Athabasca Group



Athabasca Group Meeting Room

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Excerpts from Athabasca Oral Histories

Narrator: When was your first drink?

Ross: My first drink I was 17 or 18 years and a case of beer that lived in a little storage room off the basement fireplace room and I guess I figured I was ready to take one then, so I did. I didn't like it much but found out that vodka went down easier and did a better job.

Narrator: When was the first time you heard of AA?

Barry: In Jail, I just went to it so I could have a coffee and get cigarettes from the guys that come in. There was no follow up in there maybe they tried to help but I was mostly there for the coffee and whatever and to mingle with the other inmates and the people that came in.

Narrator: Please tell me about your life before you came to AA?

Brenda: I lived my life as four different people I was a student I was a mother I was a worker and I was an alcoholic so that I had these separate lives with separate morals separate manifestations of myself.

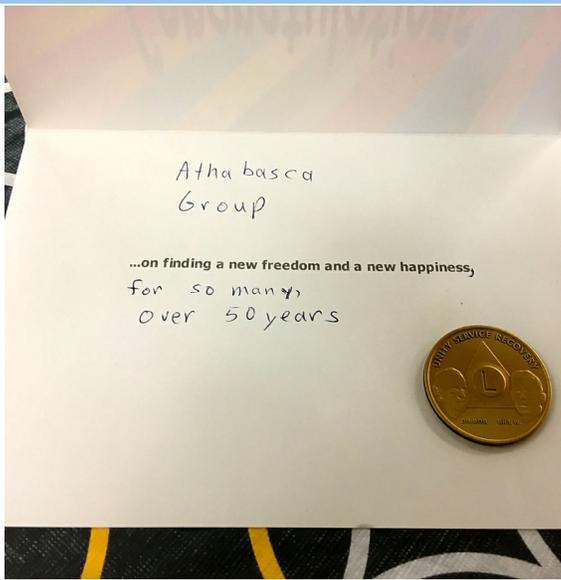
Narrator: In your journey in AA what is your perception of success of AA today and in the past?

Mark: I'm happy that it's a successful as it is but everybody knows there's a broader field to be harvested if you will the doors are open as often as they can be and I think there's enough literature and information in the public awareness there. I mean that's been tenfold in the last 10 years for the social media and whatnot different you know chat rooms and things like that.

Narrator: Please tell me a little bit about your life before you found AA?

Phil: Before I started drinking when I was 17 years old, but I graduated and went to college and then without knowing that I had it and without knowing that alcoholism is a disease until I came to AA. I was Top notch; I was a real alcoholic then. And I ended homeless, helpless, and useless and my life was just chaos in general.

Excerpts from Athabasca Oral Histories



Narrator: there anything that stick out when you went out on a 12-step call?

Phil: Yes, my first twelve step call was with Ernie, I'll never forget it he was suffering from DT and my sponsor left me with him for awhile and I finally got out and I said to Bill what are we going to do. Bill said He must go to the hospital, so we took him to the hospital.

Narrator: Do you know when AA was started in Athabasca?

Mark: This meeting was started 50 years ago, I have been here since December 15th I will have lived here for 12 years and I've gone to the Jarvie meetings Barrhead, Gibbons,

Westlock and Boyle quite often.

Narrator: Can you tell me about your early sobriety or stopped working the steps your first days of learning AA behavior?

Brenda: I think when you grow up traumatized alcoholic household that you prepared for, you're always on guard so I would say the first 10 years of my sobriety I was always waiting for the other shoe to drop until sometime into sobriety where I was able to let go of that.

Narrator: How do you find the Athabasca group treats dual addictions now?

Barry: Well it's different let me tell you everybody's heard some people who go on and on and on they just talk about themselves and how good they are but in AA they talk about what they did to get out of bed and how they stayed sober.

Narrator: What were some of the things your first sponsor taught you?

Ross: Don't show up late, make a gratitude list, told me the short form of the Serenity Prayer which is Fuck It. He taught me that having a good time didn't have anything to do with alcohol you know we should be able to play, you know we went through a lot, we spent a lot of time in Cars just talking and he was trying to get out of landscaping in business and get his orchard off the ground, we would talk about things that were real, we spent a lot of time talking about our perception of higher powers.

Archives service work is much more than mere custodial activity; it is the means by which we collect, preserve and share the rich and meaningful heritage of our fellowship. It is by the collecting and sharing of these important historical elements that our gratitude is strengthened.

Oral Histories versus Personal Stories

“In every community - in families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools - there are people who have knowledge and skills to share - ways of knowing and doing that often come from years of experience and have been preserved and passed down across generations. As active participants in community life, these bearers of tradition are primary sources of culture and history. They are, as folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, "living links in the historical chain, eye witnesses to history, shapers of a vital and indigenous way of life. They are unparalleled in the vividness and authenticity they can bring to the study of local history and culture.”

“Through documenting their memories and stories, the past comes to life in the present, filled with vivid images of people, places, and events. And it is not only the past that we discover, we learn about the living traditions - the foodways, celebrations, customs, music, occupations, and skills - that are a vital part of daily experience. These stories, memories, and traditions are powerful expressions of community life and values. They anchor us in a larger whole, connecting us to the past, grounding us firmly in the present, giving us a sense of identity and roots, belonging and purpose.”

Above two paragraphs courtesy of Oral History Association of Canada

<https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/>

Oral History

- 1: Facts about Life
- 2: Facts about AA History
- 3: Facts about AA Service Work
- 4: Life Story as shared by Outside Interviewer
- 5: Actual history of an old-timer

Personal Story

- 1: Brief History of What it was Like
- 2: What Happened
- 3: What it's like now

While both an Oral History and a Personal Sharing or Story do accomplish carrying the message. The Oral History tells facts that many times does not come out in a personal story. As alcoholics we tend to exaggerate many of the items in our own personal story which can take away from the factual demonstration our oral history tries to provide.

The scope of the Area 78 Archives is to provide a sense of its own past to the fellowship and to keep accurate records so that myth does not predominate over fact.

“We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian...”

“It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion...”

“We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come...”

— Bill W., 1957

Current Oral Histories on File with Area 78

Barry B.	District 9 Athabasca Group	10 Years Sobriety
Brenda L.	District 9 Athabasca Group	26 Years sobriety
Mark S.	District 9 Athabasca Group	27 Years Sobriety
Phil D.	District 9 Athabasca Group	31 Years Sobriety
Ross A.	District 9 Athabasca Group	23 Years Sobriety
Brian O.	District 14 Caroline Group	49 Years Sobriety
Sadie G	District 13	37 Years Sobriety
Bill G.	District 13	39 Years Sobriety
Bert C.	District 2 Grimshaw Group	
Ray M.	District 4	
Gerry O.	District 12 Calmar Group	
Bob M.	District 18 Nanton's Under grounders	
Roger M.	District 18 High River Group	
Moe Raymond	District 79 Out to Lunch Bunch	
Bill W.	Calgary in Calgary 1965	
Lois W.	Calgary in Calgary 1965	

Currently your Area 78 Archivist is looking at doing more along this line and would be interested in doing an oral history of your old timers in your district. If you know an old timer that might be interested please send us a text or email and let us know their full name and phone number or email

1963 to 1967 Key Chains & Mugs

{Information Wanted}

From 1963 to 1967 in the Area Minutes Area 78 had a committee called the Key Chains and Mugs Committee. Currently we are looking for information regarding these mugs or keychains and what they were initially about. We are not sure if they were part of the Alberta Conference Structure or about Area 78 Provincial AA body at that time.

If anyone in AA has information about these Key Chains or Mugs could they please contact your Area 78 Archivist. We would also love to either have a key chain or mug for our Archives as it was a part of our history as this committee existed for at least 4 years.

“Each Day my friend’s simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.”

District Archives in Area 78



An Archives Repository can fit inside one box like in the NWT in the District 35 Archivist Rhonda B.'s Home



Our it can be housed in a back room like in District 17 at the Chapter house.

Currently there are only three districts known to have District Archives. While most districts do not worry about having an archives or archivist some districts actually have a group and a district archivist. District 35, District 17 and District 18 currently house their archives in group facilities or personal houses. The archivist for District 17 is Patti B. of Lethbridge, and archivist for District 35 is Rhonda R. of Yellowknife, NWT, and the archivist for District 18 is Keith A. of Stavely, Ab.

District archives share the history of the district and of the individual groups . The problems, issues and memories of life showing in their histories and stories serves to strengthen the bonds of unity we all experience in AA.

1: Group Histories 2: Personal Histories 3: District History 4: Growing Pains

Creating a District Archive?

A district archives takes form through a natural process that helps to capture the rich texture of our AA history. We build historic collections that are unique in many ways, through the contributions that the archives receives and through collecting material that is unique to a particular district. There are many items that you will find of interest as you develop your collection. Things to look for when you start your journey in creating a district archive.

1: Storage Area 2: Archivist Wanted 3: District Archives Committee

Area 78 History Book

In September 2019 last year your Archive Committee was asked to create an Adhoc committee to look into creating and putting together your Area 78 History Book. To date your Adhoc Committee has been through two emails and has talked and come up with several suggestions for your archive committee to talk about and bring forward to the assembly.

Currently below is the table of contents we will be looking at to put into our Area 78 History Book.

As this too is a work in progress if you think you have an idea or concern with the Table of Contents below please feel free to talk to the archivist.

Table of Contents of Area 78 History Book

- A: Table of Contents**
- B: Copyright Page to be written by Archivist**
- C: Forward-To be written by Current Delegate or Table Officer**
- D: Preface to be written by Archivist**
- E: Dedication/Acknowledgements to be written by Archivist**
- F: District Chapters-Taken from submissions**
 - 1: Oral Histories**
 - 2: Group Histories**
 - 3: District Histories**
- G: Assembly History through the Years-Extrapolated from Assembly Minutes**
 - 1: Area 78 District Reports**
- H: Delegate Reports-Extrapolated from Area Minutes**
- I: Illustrations**
 - 1: District Maps-Taken from Area Minutes**
 - 2: Group Meeting Photos-Submitted to us from Groups**
 - 3: List of Area Officers through the years-Taken from Assembly Minutes**
- J: Appendix**
- K: References-How to contact Area 78**

Group Histories for Area 78 History Book in Archives

District	Group
3	Grande Centre Group History Group 114714-District 03
12	Leduc Live and Active Group ID 114728 District 12 Group History
12	Leduc Thursday Night Open Meeting District ID 127418 District 12 Group History
13	Balmoral Easy Does it Group 697834 District 13 Group History
13	Group History of the Ladies 12x12 Group ID 707582 District 13
13	Monday Night Mens Group 647411 District 13 Group History
13	Noon Group ID# 164985 District 13
13	Red Deer Hospital Meeting ID 664105 District 13
13	S1REN Group History District 13
17	Sunset Group ID D53-11518 District 17 Group History
20	Wainwright Thursday Night Group 114763 District 20 Group History Official
35	Big Book Rejuvenation GSO ID 603600 District 35
61	Big Book Tool Box Talk Group Group ID 692901 District 61
61	Millshaven Group History ID 119605 District 61
64	St. Albert Breakfast Group History Group ID 114607 District 64
76	Bow Trail Group 114565 District 76 Group History
77	Edgemont Group 613070 District 77 Group History.doc
79	Crossroads Group 114644 District 79 Group History.pdf
79	New Life Group History ID 125034 District 79.pdf
85	King Solomon Lodge Laughter Nooners Group #666002 District 85
85	Weedon Hall Freedom Group Weedon Hall Freedom Group #666003 District 85

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance — that principle is contempt prior to investigation." Herbert Spencer

Red Deer Archives Workshop November 2nd, 2019

On November 3rd, 2019 Area 78 Archives and District 13 hosted another Archive workshop. Thanks be to Jan and helpers for making the day a fun filled and learning experience for all. Throughout the day we had a hands on archiving experience and learned the difference between an oral history and a personal story sharing. It was an interesting day to hear from two of District 13's old timers and hear how AA has changed and not changed and their struggles in early sobriety and what happened.

Thanks goes out to Bill G with 39 Years of sobriety. and Sadie G, with 37 years of sobriety the two old timers from District 13 for spending the day with us.

Excerpts from 2019 Red Deer Archives Workshop

Leslie from District 10: If you remember your first meeting can you describe to me what you felt or thought of that first meeting?

Sadie: I remember my first meeting it was my homegroup it was the Stettler Heartland Group it was in the basement of the old hospital and the ceilings were lower than this and the room was about this long and everybody was smoking and you couldn't even see the end of the room. I thought I don't even know what these people are talking about didn't have a clue couldn't conceive it at all so that was my first meeting.

Bill: My first meeting was in a church basement and again there was smoking, and I thought I'm going to throw up if these people ask me to say something and they did and I had to say I was an alcoholic and it caught in my throat

Unknown: What was your first drinking experiences like?

Sadie: Wow, that was back a long way I was probably 12 or 13 my first drunk and it was kids my own age out at a country dance in the west country and I liked it because when I was child I remember my mom had a party at the house then I peeked out the bedroom door when she was having this party and they were playing the piano and singing and I thought when I grow up I'm gonna be like that. So that was my introduction into to starting to drink.

Bill: Mine was around 12 as well and I was pretty shy about stuff and I had a few beers and I became really sociable and being very comfortable in being that way So that was my first drinking experience and I loved it.

Terry: Did You get a sponsor and a homegroup right away?

Sadie: I got a sponsor right away in Stettler there was only two other women in the group besides myself, so it was either pick one or the other. So, I had a sponsor right away but I didn't know much about a homegroup and there were only two meetings, so it took a while, and I had to be informed by people on what was kind of going on so I just went to the meetings.

Bill: I got a sponsor right away and he told me I was joining a group and I did and one of the things I was impressed about was they had a greeter at the door and I thought I want to be the greeter and we had a business meeting and they said you had to be sober three months to be the greeter and I thought I'm never going to get to be the greeter.