

FREEMASONS CIVILITY INITIATIVE (THE INITIATIVE)

Lodge Presentation 1 Civility Speaking Notes Version
To be delivered in the timeframe of January/February 2017

FOR REVIEW BY THE PRESENTER

Prior to making this presentation, please review the following. This presentation takes about 6.5 minutes to deliver.

This is the first of several presentations on the Freemasons Civility Initiative. The committee that has put this Initiative together is hoping that Freemasons throughout our jurisdiction will take up the challenge of promoting civil actions and behaviours within the lodge and with their family and friends.

PREAMBLE:

*The Speaking Notes are provided to give Civility Initiative presenters with a "script" as a guide when speaking about this initiative. This enables a degree of personal selection in the delivery while providing some assurance in the quality, consistency of the message and the desired outcome. To assist in that process key points are **highlighted in bold** within the speaking notes.*

PURPOSE:

To educate the brethren on the importance of the practice of masonic principles via civil behaviour inside and outside lodge.

Demonstrate a Freemason's civil conduct as an example to influence peers, family, and society for the betterment of society as a whole.

To initiate interest in the presentation consider this "ice breaker":

- Who has experience a rude, uncaring, impolite, aggressive, belittling behaviour or were the recipient of someone's feelings being hurt in the last week?

Encourage comments.

- Eg: Were you cut off by a driver? Did you hear verbal abusive language? See a selfish act of some kind?

Is this behaviour acceptable to you? ... Why not?

INTRODUCTION

- **Brethren we have a problem in today's society; the world about us is becoming increasingly uncivil.**
- Polarized and hostile speech dominates the news media, our political arenas, and our everyday lives. This behavior has become epidemic. It is costing us money, our health, our dignity, and is putting our democratic heritage in jeopardy.
- If we don't address this state of affairs now, incivility will soon become our "new normal." And when this happens, we may be within just a single generation of it becoming so ingrained in our collective psyche, that our children and grandchildren may not know any other way. Do we really want to imagine such a world?

- Demonstrating civility in our conduct as Freemasons is how we can provide instruction to our peers and reassurance to the youth of today that what is seen in the media need not be the norm.

WHAT IS CIVILITY

- **Behavior** exemplified by our actions of politeness, courtesy, caring sensitivity to the needs of others and how we treat our surroundings.
- A **code of conduct**, values and ethics based on actions demonstrating the three Rs: *Respect, Restraint, Responsibility*.
- **Acting like a Freemason** which aligns with masonic teachings. (*i.e.*, “practice out of the lodge those precepts which are ever inculcated in it”).

OBJECTIVES of the FREEMASONS CIVILITY INITIATIVE

Develop and deliver a Civility Initiative to Freemasons in BC and Yukon to:

- Bring **awareness** to brethren of the importance of civility in the world around us.
- Acquire tools to assess our own level of civility, how we treat each other and how that affects our lives and those of our love ones
- Provide **guidance via educational materials** and links to resources such as the National Civility Center (<http://www.civilitycenter.org/>) that can be shared with the brethren of British Columbia and Yukon;
- **Inspire** brethren to act as Freemasons and thereby demonstrate civility in all our **actions**;
- Target the month of **May as Civility Month** for action (in lodge, home, work, everyday dealings) and a starting point ongoing personal improvement, empowerment and influence;
- **Demonstrate** to the world around us the **benefits** of the civil conduct we are taught as Freemasons

WHY IS CIVILITY IMPORTANT?

- Polarized and **hostile speech** dominates the news media, political arenas and **everyday** lives. Aggressive **intolerant** behaviour appears to have replaced active listening;
- **Incivility** appears to becoming the “**new norm**”;
- Within our **lodges** we have observed acts of **incivility** that have had negative effects;
- The *Charter of Rights* set forth the right of **inclusivity** and **respect**. As a result, today’s youth and millennials are **intolerant of incivility**. Those not of such an era who accepted or participated in the uncivil behaviour face a challenge and opportunity for growth;
- **Demonstrating civility** in a Freemason’s conduct provides **instruction** to peers and **reassurances** to youth that the media images need not be the norm for society.

WHY SHOULD FREEMASONS BE INVOLVED

- The practice of civility is grounded in **respect** and **inclusiveness** and is **essential** for the success of any society.
- **Practicing** civility reminds us of the **impact** our actions have on others;
- Civil **behaviour** adds to the **well-being** of family, community and society;
- Freemasons’ **demonstrating** their **triumph** over **ignorance, intolerance** and **bigotry** through

civility will show these **impediments** to human progress can be **overcome** for the benefit of society at large.

WHY AS A FREEMASON SHOULD I CARE ABOUT CIVILITY?

- Freemasonry's belief is that each Brother has a responsibility to **be the best he can** and is **obliged** to:
 - Make the world a **better** place,
 - Commit to a **charitable approach** to life and fellow man, generosity of spirit,
 - Sharing that **generosity of spirit** with family and community.
- Freemasons meet on the **square** with **respect** and **dignity** and demonstrate moral **leadership**;
- Freemasonry that **contributes** to the betterment of society is **sustainable** and will grow with increased **relevance**;
- **Question:** Are we not all striving to be good, moral and ethical men striving for personal **improvement** by exercising **trust** and **inclusivity** in all manners of civility?
- Freemasons stepping up to demonstrate a **civil** approach to **interpersonal discourse** within and outside **lodge** will **benefit Freemasonry** itself and raise the profile of Freemasonry in the community;
- Good **men of society** who **recognize** our purpose strengthen our organization.

WHERE IS THE CIVILITY INITIATIVE AT THIS TIME?

- A planning and implementation **Working Group** (WG) of **12 Ambassador** Brethren representing our jurisdiction lead by **MW Bro. Stutt** and **RW Bro. Burch** was formed in July 2016 and supported by our Grand Master.
- Development of a **Civility Initiative Project**. - purpose, scope, briefing materials, supporting civility resources/presentations/speaking notes *etc.*, communications, engagement strategy, milestones, and logistics for a focus event have been developed
- Conduct *May is Civility Month* in May 2017 - details available in early 2017

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

As Freemasons we are stewards of the language of civility.

- All Freemasons are directed to "**practice out of the lodge those precepts and moral duties inculcated in it**".
- Every Freemason has an opportunity to **self-evaluate** and **engage** in demonstrating acts of civility in all our interactions.
- **Participation in dialogue** is an important part of fostering a respectful environment.
- Civility **Ambassadors** can:
 - Provide **advice** and assistance to DDGMs, DEOs, Lodge Education Officers;
 - Access to available civility reference materials;
 - Assist in the delivery of civility awareness discussions, presentations or brethren wanting to become more active in the Civility Initiative;
 - Track the Lodges that have received the Civility presentations.

WHERE CAN THE CIVILITY INITIATIVE MESSAGE BE SHARED?

- Throughout our **jurisdiction every day by your actions;**
- In our **lodges through focused discussions;**
- With **family and friends.**

WHEN CAN WE BE ENGAGED IN THE CIVILITY INITIATIVE MESSAGE?

- Starting today in all our dealings with family, friends and associates ;
- The Civility Initiative primary focus is **May 2017.**

WHERE CAN WE GET CIVILITY RESOURCES?

Your DDGM has access to resources provided by the Civility Ambassador for your part of our jurisdiction. In addition the following sources are available for you to access:

Web links to:

- The National Civility Center:
<http://www.civilitycenter.org/>
- Masonic Civility Resources:
<http://www.masoniccivility.org/2016-11-11-lodge-document-resources.html>

Freemasons Civility Initiative resources available from your Lodge Secretary:

- Civility Initiative Outline

CONCLUSION

- All of us can **improve** our practice of civility in both our **thoughts and actions;**
- Living our **masonic** tenants and **principles** in our **daily lives** allows that masonic quality to be evident to all whom we **encounter** and **engage** for it is the **exemplification** of civility;
- Freemasons have the opportunity to **demonstrate our value** to society and become the home for **quality men** to pursue self-**improvement;**
- **Masonic virtues** are the content of character and **elements of human spirit;**
- This is an opportune **time** for the investment of our masonic virtues as a positive **influence** directed at the challenge of **improving civility in society.**

The hope of your Civility Ambassador Team is that you, my brother, will take up this challenge.