Telecommunities Canada

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
2021

Zoom conference
November 30, 2021
2:00-3:00 pm EST

Attendees: Gerry Valentino, Katherine Carruthers, Chris Cope, Peter Frampton, Adrian Schmidt, Ivan White, Fred Campbell, Garth Graham, Marita Moll,

1   Approval of minutes of the 2020 AGM

Motion: That the minutes of the 2020 AGM be approved as circulated
moved: Chris Cope
seconded: Peter Frampton
Motion carried

2   Financial report

TC treasurer Chris Cope noted that we had no income over the last year and our only expenses were bank charges of $8.25/mth. Current bank balance is $5,153.18. Our bank account is decreasing at the rate of $99/yr.

Motion: That the financial report be accepted
moved: Garth Graham
seconded: Fred Campbell
Motion carried

Discussion:
Marita Moll noted that there had been a discussion about collection of membership fees last year but that it didn't really seem feasible until TC could show more value for members who are paying fees. She noted that TC was moving in that direction and that there had been a lot of activity in the past year. It was noted that the Paypal button on the TC webpage was still active. Chris suggested that many would happily pay a small fee to keep TC going but that we would need to put out a request to the mailing list to get this going. However, we might want to start by thinking about what we would use donations for. Garth Graham suggested we move that discussion to agenda item 7: Any other business.

3   Appointment of auditor

Chris Cope suggested that limited activity on the account means that there is really nothing to audit. He recommended that we forego an audit.

Motion: That the need for an audit be waived
moved: Peter Frampton
seconded: Gerry Valentino
Motion carried

4   President's report

Marita Moll noted that the full President's report had already been circulated. She highlighted the following points:
-- Over the last year we had organized monthly meetings with invited guest speakers
-- We issued a newsletter documenting meetings attended, meetings organized and other various other initiatives between January and May which was a particularly active period. The newsletter is posted on the website.
-- The TC community was saddened to learn about the passing of director and longtime supporter Brian Beaton. A memorial note highlighting Brian's contribution to community networking was added to the webpage.
-- TC is an important entity in the ICANN space. Marita is still representing TC on the ICANN At Large Advisory Council. She noted that ICANN is still one of the rare bodies which financially supports multiple stakeholders, including civil society and end user voices, in a decisionmaking process.
-- Marita is also representing TC on the steering committee of the Canadian Internet Governance Forum. The CIGF has been holding an occasional panels on a specific topic rather than a full day event due to co-vid restrictions on gathering.

Motion: That the President's Report be received
moved: Chris Cope
seconded: Garth Graham
Motion carried

Discussion: There was a brief discussion and clarification of the CIGF and the role of CIRA (Canadian Internet Registration Authority) which had originally started up the CIGF and was still providing support. Decisions about the Forum are now made by a steering committee composed of representatives from various Canadian internet-related interest groups. The CIGF sessions are public. Marita will circulate meeting notices on the TC list.

There was a brief discussion about the status of the TC domain name. Kevin Battersby is currently hosting TC on his own servers and has been paying the registration fees for the last few years. Marita and Garth will follow up on this issue.

5   Directors reports

Chris Cope has stepped down from his long-time role of chair of the board of the National Capital Freenet but still serves on the board. He notes that community networks are always fragile and, though NCF is still healthy, membership continues to decline. The

program with Ottawa Public Housing has been a success and is bringing on some new members. However, NCF is competing with Rogers and its proposed low-cost programs (contingent on the proposed merger with Shaw). NCF has started reselling internet on cable. However, the role of ISP may not be the one that keeps NCF relevant in a rapidly changing context. NCF has been quite successful with programs assisting users navigate the internet in a safe and effective way.

The NCF MESH network research phase has been completed and funding is being sought to move to a pilot phase of this project. At the municipal level, Ottawa is still trying to solve issues around internet accessibility in rural areas.

NCF petitioned the government (via the Governor in Council) to overturn the most recent CRTC wholesale rates for internet, which entrenched the affordable high rates NCF has been paying since 2016. Marita noted that TC had regrettably not been nimble enough to add their support for this intervention. Fred Campbell asked about the CRTC and changes to the cost of wholesale internet. Garth Graham noted that this involved all third party internet providers who where facing price increases due to the CRTC decision. Fred provided an example of how services in Newfoundland and Labrador had been affected. Marita noted that work at the international level had made it difficult to also keep track of decisions at the CRTC that directly affected small providers. She suggested that we all needed to do more sharing of such information in meetings and on the list so we can be of assistance when the opportunity arises.

Fred Campbell explained that Ryakuga does special event community radio broadcasts which are accessible globally, thereby serving Newfoundlanders and others all around the world. So Ryakuga was broadcasting when the association of 250 Newfoundland and Labrador municipalities held the very first large scale in-person conference with 350 delegates since before the pandemic.

A second project was a partnership with the Mi'Kmaq village of Flat Bay. Discussions centered on the value of community, health and concern for others, not on personal gain. One of the discussions was around a greenhouse project in Flat Bay so the community would have better access to fresh food. A volunteer driven food distribution program that distributed approx. $2M worth of food across Western Newfoundland was also highlighted.

Fred talked about his project called "The seventh wave". The project highlights the importance of local communication networks -- freenets, local radio and local newspapers. Those which have not completely disappeared in recent years are now mostly operated by large corporations no longer vested in the communities they are serving. Fred will be giving a presentation on this for the Global Networks Forum and the International Association for Media and Communication Research.

Fred also informed the group that Richard Fuchs, a long time friend and advocate of community networks, had recently died. Fred had planned to work with Richard, as was noted in last year's AGM minutes, but this had, unfortunately, not been possible. Fred still

hopes to interview people on the subject of rural telecenters. He noted that there had been a lot of activity around rural telecenters in Spain -- particularly Catalonia -- and that he believed there was still room for such initiatives, including CAP sites.

Fred is also working on the design and management of research which focuses on how a contemporary university e-hub project can be informed by our experience with the Community Access Program and telecenters. (Any advice appreciated.)

Links two special events - MNL and Flat Bay Mi'Kmaq
http://www.ryakuga.org/mnlagm21
http://www.ryakuga.org/flatbay21

Ivan White, from the Flat Bay Community, added information about the Second Harvest Food Rescue program Fred had mentioned. It was the second largest push from that program to the community. It ended up reaching out to 6 other communities and expanding the program for the following year. Ivan has a project which is collecting and creating different mediums for people to archive information and materials -- he now has an expanded capacity through audio and video gear to enable archiving of local knowledge.

Marita suggested that there appeared to be considerable sychronicity in community communications projects undertaken by Fred and Ivan. Ivan noted that this was historical. His dad, who was the editor of "The Caribou", the newspaper of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI), had taken media and journalism courses from Fred in the 1980s. Marita noted that Fred and Ivan should be invited to speak to the group about the projects going on in their areas at an upcoming meeting.

Peter Frampton shared the fact that he was "emigrating" to Nova Scotia but would continue to work for LEF -- occasionally traveling to Toronto. LEF was entering a new phase as part of an affordable housing project which also included a social enterprise space. LEF will be repositioning itself in this project as a member of the community. Gerry and Shannon are the leads on this project. Peter noted that, in this context, with respect to technology, the question is "how do we give this away". He also noted that, in Nova Scotia, there were still a lot of CAP signs around, and that he would be checking them out to see where sites were still operational.

Gerry Valentino noted that a focus at LEF was working out how to build community on-line. A specific project involves working with the "International Doctors' Network" that is trying to take what was a physical network and turn it into a virtual one. These are trained medical professionals living in Canada but not working in the medical field. One of the challenges is that this community operates mainly in a mobile environment and people do not necessary have internet access in their homes. This complicates matters but also offers opportunities which might benefit TC. TC members are involved in a great number of excellent projects but there is a need to get that information out into the wider world. The LEF project could offer some lessons in how that might work. A second LEF project

underway at the moment is building internet accessibility to the LEF community internally.

Kathryn Carruthers is working with an organization called "Senior Women Living Together" especially helping them improve their technical capabilities. This community began as a group of single older women who wanted to rent bigger spaces and share costs. They sought out ways to create some group cohesion before renting a house together, in order to ensure compatibility. Now they looking into social enterprise initiatives to raise money to buy larger houses, and offer more affordable housing for the membership.

Kathryn is currently living in a rural community and very aware of sub-standard internet access. Bell no longer provides satellite internet and is suggesting clients use mobile plans instead. She is experimenting with Elon Musk's satellite service and hoping that it might be possible to turn this into a community hub. She notes that it is hard to build community around bad internet. There was a discussion about the potential costs and feasibility of this service for rural and remote regions. Kathryn also noted that the current available political energy in English-speaking regions of Quebec is focused on the new French language legislation so there is not that much energy available to lobby for better internet connections.

Garth Graham had no report but Marita thanked Garth for acting as zoom master and as a sounding board for her ideas for moving TC forward.

6   Election of directors

Motion: That the following slate of directors be approved for the year 2022

Clarice Leader (Man)
Chris Cope (Ont)
Garth Graham (B.C.)
Fred Campbell (Nfld)
James Van Leeuwen (AB)
Marita Moll (Ont.)
Tracey Axelsson (B.C.)
Kathryn Carruthers (Que.)

moved: Peter Frampton
seconded: Ivan White
Motion carried

7   Any other business

Garth Graham asked that the minutes reflect a vote of confidence to Marita Moll in her role as TC president.

Garth also noted that, in the meetings we have held over the last year, what surfaced for him was a groundswell of uncoordinated activity around digital equity and data sovereignty initiatives. This could be a role for TC -- to begin to knit those concepts together in some way that makes it apparent that those voices are there. The actions people are taking are very powerful, enormously important and completely isolated in every case. This could be an action agenda that we build on.

References:
- On the recent efforts made by the City of Calgary to better understand the issues and meet the challenges of digital equity for its residents: https://www.calgary.ca/ca/city-manager/articles/creating-connections-through-digital-equity.html

- For info on Toronto's recent digital equity strategy: https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-159927.pdf

- For First Nations digital equity strategy https://technologycouncil.ca/digital-equity/

- Info on "Cities Coalition for Digital Rights" an international movement which seeks to uphold human rights on the internet at the local and global level. Montreal and Toronto are among the many signatories to the declaration: https://citiesfordigitalrights.org/about-declaration

One of the questions around the issue of data sovereignty is software that funnels everything to cloud storage -- something that seems to have become a default setting. This is incompatible with the original concepts of the efficacy of TCP/IP and the internet as a distributed system. This trend is heavily promoted at the corporate level. The implication is that is no alternative -- and yet there is a challenge in the background. It could be akin to "tilting at windmills" -- however, there is a dimension of data sovereignty that is important and should be addressed.

References:
- Internet Policy Review. Volume 9, Issue 4 **Digital sovereignty.** Julia Pohle, *Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)*, *Germany.* Thorsten Thiel, *Research Group: Democracy and Digitalisation*, *Weizenbaum Institute*, *Berlin*, *Germany*, *thorsten.thiel@wzb.eu*. 17 Dec 2020. https://policyreview.info/concepts/digital-sovereign

- Digital autonomy and the security of data stored in the cloud. Panel: Digital Autonomy. Hosted by Bernold Nieuwesteeg - Digital Society Conference 2021: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQRrMo-rGbs

Peter noted that TC had already once used it's "brand" to have a major impact on telecom policy in Canada -- and was almost solely responsible for the continuation of the CAP

program which continued for over a decade beyond it's initial sunset date. So, together it is possible to put forward positions that are meaningful and take root.

8 Adjournment

Motion: That this meeting be adjourned
moved: Chris Cope
seconded: Peter Frampton
motion carried