

Chapter Leadership Conference

Toronto 2013Nov23

Arash Yazdani and I enjoyed our day at the PEO Chapter Leader's Conference very well this year. I wish to thank Arash for his part on the organising committee for the conference. The theme was "Connecting by Communicating".

The day started with greetings from the conference chair and president elect Dave Adams. Mr. Adams spoke about the safety concerns and regulations reflecting on our profession. In particular he spoke about the collapse of the mall in Elliot Lake, the condition of the Gardiner expressway and other infrastructure in Ontario.

Our keynote speaker for the days was Alan Mallory, a PEO member. Alan and 4 of 5 of his family summited Mount Everest in 2008. In an excellent presentation with great photos he showed the preparation, trek to base camp, acclimatisation, ascent and descent from Everest. Some of the challenges included constant sickness, high altitude, cold, wind, avalanches and crevices. See <http://www.alanmallory.com/>.

I was struck with the means of crossing crevices and making ascents using ladders bound together with poly ropes. One picture showed 5 ladders strapped together, anchored and laid horizontally over a black void. Imagine crossing this with crampons. Dual safety ropes tied off the participants. This use of ladders violates some of the guidelines printed on caution stickers and plastered all over ladders we see in Canada.

Following the presentation, we had an interactive session related to good communications and lessons learned on Everest. The family team that summited needed to use good teamwork and communications with each other, other teams, their Sherpa guides and porters, as well as medical staff at the base camp. Satellite phones were confiscated by authorities due to political tensions at the time of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. At one time, dead batteries and forgetfulness prevented communications with Alan's sister near the summit.

We learned several things which can be applied to better communicating with our chapter members and the public.

In the afternoon we had a couple of breakout sessions. Arash lead a session on "Increasing Interest through Outreach". Several examples of chapter successes were presented.

I attended a session on social media and increasing its use for chapter communications. Linked In and Twitter were recommended. At my age, I am described as an immigrant to the digital age. There is a lot to learn to keep the conversation alive.

The last event was a chapter success story telling session. The winning chapter, Simcoe-Muskoka, entertained us with singing and audience participation. This was an act tough to follow.

We were introduced to our new registrar who will be announced next week. Our President, Annette Bergeron, congratulated us on a successful conference and wished our chapters well for the next year.

Clarence Klassen, P. Eng., chair PEO Peterborough Chapter