



Freemasons Civility Initiative (The Initiative) Outline



Official Title is Freemasons Civility Initiative supported by BC & Yukon Freemasons. This is not a mandated program from the Grand Master or Grand Lodge but it is requested that brethren consider participating.

In BC and Yukon we need to raise the profile of Freemasonry, to improve the Masonic experience for our brethren and to make Freemasonry more relevant to our world.

One way the Freemasons of BC and Yukon can approach these challenges is to follow the lead set forth by the Civility Centre (civilitycenter.org) by developing and implementing a plan to encourage BC and Yukon Freemasons to become leaders for civility within our society. It is hoped that this process will enable greater understanding of the needs of others and how one conducts one's actions can have a profound impact on others and society in general.

Currently BC and Yukon is the only Canadian Grand Lodge participating in this undertaking, joining with 22 other Grand Lodges throughout North America as well as our brothers in Israel, Serbia and Mexico. BC and Yukon is represented on the Civility Centre Board by MWB Don Stutt along with RWB Ron Yates and RWB Barry Burch who are working as members of the Civility Task Force.

Why is Civility Important

Civility is essential for the success of any society. It is grounded in respect and in an attitude of inclusiveness. When we practice civility we remind ourselves about the impact of our actions on others while contributing to the well being of our family, community and society at large.

Civility can simply be defined as treating others as you would want them to treat you – “The Golden Rule”.

However, incivility in society is becoming the norm rather than the exception. With this in mind, we, as Masons, have a responsibility to become the ambassadors for restoring civility to our world. As Masons we are taught to meet each other upon the square and to treat each other with respect and dignity. One aspect of this is by setting an example and acting civilly towards everyone around him. But, just what is civility. There are many variations on the definition of civility.

Why Civility and Why Should Freemasons Be Involved

The state of the world is such that economic markets in free societies are increasingly replacing religious institutions, governments and civil society organizations as the arbiters of social standards. We are subject to those external forces and they frequently result in economic and social winners and losers. The demands of our fast paced market driven society today has contributed to extraordinary pressures that are manifested in a more competitive, less tolerant and less civil world. We have all observed these outcomes and been impacted by them.

Nevertheless, society today is less tolerant of uncivil behaviour. There is an increasing expectation of inclusivity and respectful treatment. Unfortunately, the scale of the changes needed to return to a civil society is intimidating. This is our opportunity as freemasons to demonstrate that civility can be accomplished.

Freemasonry is based on the belief that each man has a responsibility to be the best he can be and in doing so has an obligation to make the world a better place. Grand Lodges are likewise well positioned to assist in restoring civility in society. In a world where civility is lacking we can and should show the way.

Unfortunately, as Freemasons each of us has witnessed situations where brothers of our Craft have disturbed the peace and sanctity of our lodges by bringing inappropriate and undesirable behaviour and attitudes where it doesn't belong. So even we have some work to do. Our civility initiative is intended to bring awareness and improvement within and thereby expand our influence outward as well.

It is time now for action. Freemasons of BC & Yukon are well positioned to assist in bringing about a reformation of our society, by sharing the teachings, symbols, language and working tools of Freemasonry as a means of restoring civility to humanity. Meeting the needs of a changing society enables the delivery of one of the primary lessons taught by our gentle Craft, *"... the practicing, out of the lodge, those great moral duties which are inculcated in it."* In doing so we demonstrate our value to society and the exemplification of Freemasonry as the home for quality men who pursue self-improvement.

What Has Happened So Far

Under the direction of RWB Burch and with the support of our Grand Master, we have established a planning and implementation group comprised of 12 Civility Ambassadors representing most areas of our jurisdiction. This group has been working since July of this year to create a plan to carry the message of civility through our brethren and out to our communities. This team is intent on developing a plan and supporting materials, the provision of assistance and coordination of the implementation of the Freemasons Civility Initiative in their respective areas.

The Initiative Plan

RWB Burch and the Civility Ambassador team have developed a plan to bring Civility to the attention of our brethren and be promoters of civility within our family, friends and communities. In order to implement the plan this team is in the final stages of completing a complement of resources that can serve as the foundation of the Civility Initiative in BC and Yukon.

The Civility Initiative and associated timelines are as follows:

Phase 1

Develop an implementation plan for the Civility Initiative in BC & Yukon
- completed September 30

Phase 2

1) Create awareness of the need for civility among our brethren in two presentations.

- a. Introduce the Civility Initiative and promoting the brethren's support - to be delivered in the timeframe of December 2016 to February 2017
 - b. A call to the brethren to take action on improving civility within their circle of family and friends - to be presented in March and April, 2017
- 2) Conduct Freemasons Civility Month in May 2017 - the scope of the Initiative to be determined in consultation with the Grand Master and the Community Relations Committee - to be determined by February 15, 2017

Phase 3

Review the Freemasons Civility Month outcomes. Conduct a post implementation review and determine successes and needed improvements - September 2017

Phase 4

Develop the plan for Year 2 of the BC & Yukon Civility Initiative - October 31 2017 if warranted

Support from the Grand Master

Building on the Grand Master's leadership for improving civility within the jurisdiction, support is being requested to implement the Civility Initiative. The following roles have been drafted for consideration for each of the key Grand Lodge players.

Roles

The Grand Master

It is requested that the Grand Master communicate directly with his Elected Grand Line and appointed Grand Lodge Officers seeking their support for the Civility Initiative and the suggested path forward. It is hoped that at your Official Visits and during other occasions you will take the opportunity to address the brethren and promote the BC and Yukon Civility Initiative.

Approval is requested to send out Civility Presentations and supporting materials directly to Lodge Secretaries within BC/Yukon.

Elected Grand Line

It is hoped that when opportunities to address the brethren occur they too will speak to and promote the Freemasons Civility Initiative.

Appointed Grand Lodge Officers – DDGM

It is requested that the DDGMs' support the Civility Ambassadors in coordinating the delivery of the Civility Initiative within their respective Districts.

The plan is to have 2 communications delivered to each Lodge

- 1) One in the December 2016 to February 2017 time frame - introducing the Initiative and promoting the brethren's support
- 2) A 2nd in March - April 2017 timeframe calling the brethren to take action to support Civility Initiative in May, 2017.

These communications could ideally be delivered by the District Education Officer. It is requested that the DDGM request their DEO to assist in this process. Civility resources will be available to communicate the two messages

Other Appointed Grand Lodge Officers

It is requested that other Grand Lodge Officers (GLOs) assist their DDGMs in making sure the messages are communicated to their District's Lodges. It may be necessary for GLOs to be the primary communicator to some Lodges – it is hoped they will do so if requested.

Civility Ambassadors

These brethren will be the voice of the Freemasons Civility Initiative to the Lodges and will help to facilitate the implementation of the civility plan for the BC&Y jurisdiction. They are charged with inspiring the brethren to participate. Specifically they will:

- Actively participate in the civility planning process
- Receive, compile and evaluate resources. Contribute to briefing summaries.
- Coordinate delivery of the Civility Initiative presentations with DDGMs
- Promote civility activities and events to Lodges in their area
- Act as the local subject matter expert on the Freemasons Civility Initiative

Chairman of the Community Relations Committee

Upon the receipt of a copy of the Freemasons Initiative Outline it is requested that the CR Committee advise on how the Initiative may be communicated to a larger audience (i.e., the public) and how the Initiative can best be promoted to that audience.

The Brethren

Brethren are asked to review the information provided and to act as a Freemason. By exemplifying Freemasonry in our circle of friends, family and acquaintances we will be acting in the civil manner we wish the rest of the world to follow.

