

**Sister Cities International Conference – San Jose, California
- July 31st to August 02nd 2014 –**



“Yes”, I now know the way to San Jose! If there was only one adjective to describe the conference it would be “Incredible”. My experience of the conference actually began on July 29th when I drove down to Great Falls, Mt. I was catching a very early flight on Delta Airlines to San Jose on July 30th. The evening of July 29th I visited with Robin Baker and her husband Dave in their home in Great Falls. Robin is the Chair of the City of Great Falls Advisory Commission on International Relations (ACIR). For over a decade the Lethbridge Twinning Society (LTS) and ACIR have worked together to establish citizen to citizen relations between our two communities. We have followed the Sister Cities International (SCI) model in so doing.

In January of 2014, both ACIR and LTS approached our respective City Councils to propose that the step towards official twinning of our communities be considered. To this point in time, a Motion is before the Lethbridge City Council to consider the official twinning. (The City of Great Falls has already advanced the position and is awaiting the decision of Lethbridge City Council).

July 30, 2014

I arrived in San Jose in the early afternoon of July 30th and prepared for a “pre-conference” session: **Young Professional Dialogue** was held at the Irish Innovation Center. This session was moderated by SCI Board Member Joshua Walker. Speakers were Vice Consul Kevin Byrne (Consulate General of Ireland), Darcie Green, Community and Government Relations (Kaiser Permanente), Evan Low, Councilmember (City of Campbell, CA), Achraf Sekhiri, Honorary Chair, Young Diplomats Club of San Francisco (Consulate General of the Netherlands), Jack Wimberley, CEO and Managing Partner (GivePoint).



Joshua Walker, Jack Wimberley, Darcie Green, Evan Low

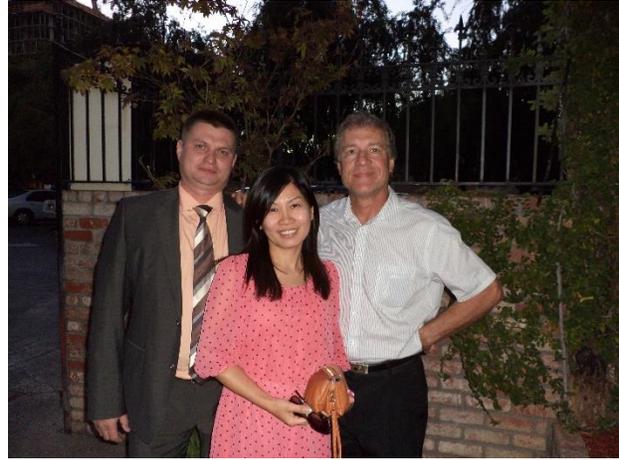


Achraf Kekhiri, Kevin Byrne, Joshua Walker

The stimulating panel discussion with the speakers and the Q&A that followed was informative and provided the current optics of the youth generation. Opportunities for youth in practically every field and interest base exist. Now, more so than ever before, are these opportunities being challenged by youth in a competitive and progressive manner. After the session, I had the opportunity of enjoying dinner with the participants. I sat at a table with a “Quality Reliability Engineer” from Intel and his wife and Vice Consul, Evgeny Zenikov from the Consulate General of the Russian Federation (San Francisco). Vice Consul Zenikov was most interested in our Sister City Relationship with Timashevsk, Russia.



Vice Consul Evgeny Zenikov - Russian Federation



Vice Consul Zenikov, Tom Dodson and Grace Liu

July 31, 2014

The first day of the 58th Annual Conference of Sister Cities International – The theme of the conference: “The Power of Digital Diplomacy”. What a fitting theme for the location of the conference being in the heart of the “Silicon Valley”!

It was an early morning as delegates to the conference gathered to board buses that would tour various “Silicon Valley” operations. The tour I chose included the Google Campus, Intel Museum, Adobe and Fry’s Electronics. We were at these facilities during their regular business hours and we got to see firsthand their actual operations and the daily routines. Google.....fantastic and unbelievable! The Google “glasses” the Google “cars” the Google “Balloon Project” that will bring the internet to the most remote corners of the earth and more! We found the technology before us simply mind boggling, and to me even somewhat scary. The concept of the “Everything Cloud” for information/data storage?????? At any rate, I did purchase a book entitled “The Circle” written by Dave Eggers. This fiction novel has been acclaimed as an “International Best Seller”. After reading this book, I am curious as to how close the book is to the present day abilities and information storage of personal information that is on record “some where” about me, my family and friends and well just about everything and anything that matters!

The tours were indeed fascinating, and thanks to SCl we were able to tour areas and facilities that are not available/allowed in a general public tour.

In the evening, I was invited to a “VIP Reception”. The reception proved to be an excellent networking opportunity among the select few that were in attendance. I met Mr. Kaoru Tabuchi (Director General) of the City of Okayama, Japan along with Mr. Mickey Mello (Founder and President) “Let’s Study Japanese” Bakersfield, Ca. We had a very interesting discussion surrounding our Japanese Twin City, Towada City, Japan

and our pending formal ESL/JSL training and the upcoming symposium to be held in Towada City in October 2014. We have gained the cooperation of our efforts with Mr. Mello and trust that he may see fit to recommend our ESL programs at our Lethbridge College, the University of Lethbridge or the Flexibility Learning Center to perspective clients.



Director General – Mr. Kaoru Tbuchi

After the reception and back at the hotel, most of the delegates to the conference were now registered. I attended a documentary screening of the film, “Finding Samuel Low: From Harlem to China”.

Later in the evening I met the delegates from our Culver City, CA – Sister City. Barbara Honig and Carolyn Wispe Burns. It is impressive to learn that Culver City had a youth delegate at the conference this year. Further, a Culver City student, Amy Wong painted a water colour art work that was a finalist at the conference this year: The art piece was entitled “Around the World”. The piece features the globe with two individuals and each of the country flags representing the Sister Cities of Culver City. (Korea, Mexico, Japan and Canada)



“Around the World”

August 01, 2014

The magnitude to the conference was realized, over 25 countries represented surely over a thousand delegates from five continents! The youth delegates exceeded 100! The opening ceremonies took place at the San Jose, City Hall. Commencement with the parade of endless flags representing the various regions represented. (The Alberta, City of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Twinning Society flags were part of the ceremony).



Our Alberta Flag – Front and Centre directly behind the Honor Guards!



The City of Lethbridge Flag in the procession



The Lethbridge Twinning Society Flag



Flags from around the world encircled the ceremonies at San Jose City Hall

It was a beautiful California morning with the sun shining brightly, ideal for the opening program. The American National Anthem was sung by actress/singer, Phoebe Jacinto and that the theme song of Sister Cities International “Sister Cities: We are One” (Originally written and performed by John Denver) was sung by a contestant from “America’s Got Talent” Manuel Romero, a Silicon Valley native.

The speeches were many, Council General’s, elected officials from the Nation, State and Local Governments spoke. Sister Cities International officials chimed in. A clear realization as to just how important international friendship relations are and those established and maintained through citizen diplomacy are at the top of the scale. The opening ceremony was followed by lunch back at the convention hotel. There was



no time lost at this conference, as while enjoying our lunch, a panel discussion was taking place that was very enlightening. One of the panel members, Dan Gordon (CEO, Gordon Biersch) spoke of his very successful brewing operation that began in San Jose.

Gordon shared his stories regarding the successful brewing operation and how the original beer brewing expanded to foods and restaurants as well as venues at ball games and such. I seized the opportunity of speaking with Dan after the session and told him that in Alberta we have excellent barley should his brewing

company wish to explore this option.....too late, they already get most of their barley from Alberta producers!

He in turn asked me if we were wishing to re-import our barley in an altered state (Gordon Beer) as he was sure that Albertan’s working in the oil fields would enjoy it!

After lunch, *concurrent breakout sessions* were offered:

1:30PM – 2:30PM

- 1- Green Growth: Using Green Technology as a Sustainable Tool for Economic Development.
- 2- Vulnerable Populations in the Middle East.
- 3- Always Ready, Always There: Connecting Your Programs to Federal, State and Municipal Governments.

3:00PM – 4:00PM

- 1- Intel's The Internet of Things
- 2- The U.S. Department of State's Diaspora Panel
- 3- Engaging Young Professionals

I was able to participate in the Vulnerable Populations in the Middle East and the Engaging Young Professionals sessions.

The evening portion of the conference was held at the Tech Museum of Innovation for the City of San Jose Welcome Reception. It was at this venue that I met the only other representatives to the conference from Canada. A delegation from the City of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Robert Eady is from the Development Services Department of the City of Thunder Bay. Robert was the lead for the Thunder Bay delegation of four in attendance.

The reception proved to be an excellent networking opportunity. After the reception we made our way to the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts where none other than Dionne Warwick provided us with an unforgettable concert.



Board Chair Elect of Sister Cities International - Bill Boerum



Sister Cities International President – Mary Kane

After the concert it was back to the convention hotel, where I was able to enjoy time with the delegates from Culver City.

August 02, 2014

The morning began with an inspiring opening by Keynote Speaker, Secretary Thomas E. Perez (Secretary of Labor, United States Department of Labor). Secretary Perez focused on the over 100 youth delegates at the conference and addressed them as being the future and indeed the generation to carry Sister Cities International into the future. Secretary Perez was followed by the Foreign Diplomatic Corps Panel:

Moderator: Mark Chandler – Director, San Francisco Mayor’s Office of International Trade and Commerce

- Consul General Philip Grant – Consulate of Ireland.
- Consul General Tibusay Lugo – Consulate of Venezuela.
- Consul General Numo Mathias – Consulate of Portugal.
- Consul General Masato Watanabe – Consulate of Japan.
- Consul General Andy David – Consulate of Israel
- REGRETS: Consul General Cassie J. Doyle – Consulate of Canada.

The Foreign Diplomatic Corps Panel members spoke soundly that citizen diplomacy through efforts such as Sister Cities International works and is vital to good international relations from all points of view.

After breakfast, *concurrent breakout sessions* were offered:

10:30AM – 11:30AM

- 1- Using the Sister Cities International Website and Member Benefits
- 2- Show Me the Money: Grant Writing Workshop
- 3- Sports Diplomacy: Bringing the Globe Together through Sports
- 4- Connect Globally, thrive Locally: Partnering with Local Businesses for Positive Economic Impact

12:00PM – 1:00PM

Keynote Luncheon Session: Cisco’s Internet of Everything Presentation

My impression? “Wow, where are we going????? Not so sure of the future, but technology will certainly be leading the way!”

1:30PM – 2:30PM

- 1- Mind Your Manners: Protocol Training with a Digital Twist
- 2- Virtual Exchanges: Using New Technology to Enhance People to People Exchanges

2:45PM – 3:45PM

- 1- Sister Cities in the Headlines: PR Basic Workshops
- 2- Looking Within: Advocating for Funding Locally and through Membership

The conference concluded with the Lou Wozar, Annual Awards Dinner.

* Noted: The Michael A. Guido Distinguished Leadership Awards recipients this year were:

- 1- The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
- 2- The Honorabel Condoleeza Rice

The Global Corporate Responsibility Award recipient this year was:

- 1- Toyota Motor Corporation



There were functional robots at the conference



Wonderful dinner presentation and excellent meal



Aveen Karim – Membership Manager of SCI addresses the 100+ Youth Delegates at the conclusion of the conference



Friendship and contact established



Youth Delegates from China



"Do you know the way to San Jose?" I do now!

The 58th Annual Conference of Sister Cities International – San Jose, California, a huge success on all accounts! Next year the 59th Annual Conference "Muskie to Monet" will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- July 16 – 18, 2015 -

Harold Pereverseff
President
LethbridgeTwinning Society
www.lethbridgetwinningociety.com

