

**CERAASA**  
**(Canadian Eastern Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly).**  
**A Brief History by:**  
**Pierre C., Area 87 Delegate, Panel 62.**

CERAASA dates back to 2007-2008. Jo-Anne L. was the Trustee at large for Canada at the time She proposed to hold a service assembly for our region to the ten delegates from Eastern Canada As a delegate for Area 80 (Manitoba) Panel 52, Jo-Anne L. had experienced WRAASA (Western Region AA Service Assembly) and thought it would be a good idea for the Eastern Canada Region to hold such an assembly as well. Not coincidentally, she was the guest speaker who addressed the participants following the Saturday night banquet of the first CERAASA in 2013. She was invited in appreciation for her suggestion and leadership in developing the event. (You can hear her share in the *Un jour autrefois* section on our aa87.org website.)

Up until 2013, the delegates of the four Quebec areas had the opportunity to meet several times a year at the Éditions de La Vigne Board meetings, at the Inter-area Committee meetings, and at the Provincial Assembly. The Ontario delegates also had opportunities, including the ODC (Ontario Delegate Committee). However, delegates from areas 81 and 82 in the Maritimes did not have this opportunity. At best, outside of the Conference, the ten delegates from Eastern Canada met at the Regional Forum once every other year. Jo-Anne L. believed that a service assembly would help with the unity of the Eastern Canadian region, the involvement of the members, and in a better preparation of our Eastern Canada delegates for the General Service Conference. At that time, six of the eight regions in the Canada/US Conference had such a service assembly.

The first ever Regional Service Assembly was held in 1968 in the Pacific Region, PRAASA. In the early 1990's, NERAASA held its first activities after the PRAASA was attended by the current and past delegates from the Northeast Region. These delegates had found that the Pacific Region delegates were very well prepared for the General Service Conference and were intrigued by this fact. In November 2011, SSAASA did the same for the Southeastern US states.

As early as September 12, 2009, when Ginette W. was our Area 87 delegate, the question of a proposed Eastern Canada Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly was raised at the Area Committee meeting. Although there were no developments reported at that meeting, the question remained as to whether Area 87 would be supportive of such a project and whether Area 87 would be willing to financially support the expenses incurred by taking part in such an assembly.

On November 14, 2009, at the Area Committee meeting, the question as to whether each area of the Eastern Canada Region would support such a project and if each area would be willing to financially support the project for its start-up, following which the event would become self-sustaining in terms of registration fees and whether eventually the areas could host it.

The discussion continued until the Area Committee meeting of December 12, 2009 where a decision was made to support the project by a large majority vote of 41 in favour and 1 against. The principle of an Eastern Canada Inter-area assembly was thus adopted. However, the term ASTECAA did not appear until 2011 when the guidelines were developed. The members present felt that the French term ASTECAA sounded better than other suggested acronyms. Previously, Jo-Anne L. had suggested the English acronym CERAASA as the acronym ECRAASA for Eastern Canada Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly already existed. ECRAASA is the acronym for the East Central Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly.

So, it was around 2010 and 2011 that discussions took place during conference calls between the ten delegates from the Eastern Canada Region and their alternates to share on the feasibility and agenda of a service assembly. Richard B., then the Panel 60 delegate from Area 90, chaired these discussions. As the most bilingual of participants, he ensured the meetings ran smoothly. In 2010, on the Friday afternoon, alternates met in a room at the Delta Hotel to continue the discussions. But it

was at a lunch of the Eastern Canada delegates at the 61st General Service Conference in 2011 that it was decided that the first CERAASA would be held in Area 87.

On October 7, 2010, Jules R, informed the Area Steering Committee members of a communiqué received announcing the NERAASA in February 2011 in Area 49, Tarrytown, New York. It was then decided that Pierre C. and Jules R would attend to see what it was all about and to get some ideas. After discussing this with the other Quebec delegates and registering for the event, Pierre C., Jules R., Richard B., Luc T. (then Chair of area 90) and Estelle F. (then a delegate from Area 89) flew to NERAASA.

NERAASA is a fantastic experience with over a thousand participants and truly the experience of the inverted triangle. All the presentations that the Quebec delegation attended were made by GSRs, DCMs and Committee coordinators. Other than reading highlights from their areas, the current delegates were strongly encouraged not to speak and to listen to what the members had to say. Pierre C. and Jules R. returned to NERAASA in 2012 in Albany with about ten members from areas 87, 88, and 90 and the experience was just as incredible. The delegate from area 86, Percy G., was also there.

It was at a dinner of Eastern Canadian delegates at the 61st General Service Conference in 2011 that it was decided that the first ASTECAA would be held in Area 87. On his return from the Conference, Jules R., then Area 87 Panel 60 delegate informed Pierre C., then Area 87 alternate delegate and probable delegate of Area 87 in 2013, that he would surely have to participate in organizing the first CERAASA. To make it official, on June 11, 2011, at the Area committee meeting, Jules R., made the following proposal: "That Area 87 host the first CERAASA in 2013. This proposal was unanimously adopted. Even though he had seconded the proposal. Pierre C. was not sure what he was getting into and how to organize it.

The first CERAASA in 2013 was modeled after NERAASA. Some 476 participants registered, and all went well - except reception difficulties with the walkmans on Friday night. This problem was easily solved the next day, one wire was just not tight enough, and the simultaneous translation as some members said they could hear the interpreters too close to them. It was with the surplus at the end of the event that Area 87 was able to purchase the cubicle for the interpreters. This same cubicle is still used today at our area meetings and at CERAASA.

The business meeting at CERAASA was also somewhat chaotic. The area 87 panel 50 delegate was the chairperson. The guidelines should have been ratified as-is before any changes were proposed. That's what is called gaining experience!!

The turning point in the story of the first CERAASA was without a doubt the first meeting of the Organizing Committee on April 1, 2012. After an initial go around of the table, all members present seemed to agree that at best, perhaps 50 members would be interested in the event until Pierre C. spoke up to say that he did not see how ten areas could interest less than 350 people. Diane H., Chair of Area 87, agreed. In the minutes of the meeting, it is written, "We are doing this event with conviction and enthusiasm, and it will be a success!" Each member of the Committee had a job to do, and that job was done with excellence - a team effort of "we" not of "I".

G.S.O. staff member Mary C. was invited to make a presentation at this first CERAASA along with Barb K., Trustee at large for Canada, and Donald C., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee. There was also a table for the display and sale of literature. Diane P. and Ginette W. did an outstanding job.

As the Area 87 delegate, Pierre C. acted as liaison with the other nine delegates from Eastern Canada and his job was to keep them informed of developments and registration numbers at least once a month, and more frequently before the event. The entire organizing committee was very keen to make everything work. With the G.S.O.'s permission, a table with a banner for registrations was even set up

at the Eastern Canada Regional Forum in St.Catharines, Southern Ontario in July of 2012. In addition, a few weeks earlier, Jules R. had prepared a website in English and French with information and the possibility to register and pay online.

In 2012 and 2013, time was allocated for the organizing committee chair, Jules R., to report back at all area meetings and assemblies. From December 2012 to January 2013, 5 or 6 members had visited all the districts in Area 87 to speak to GSRs and to promote the event. We should not forget the work of the area 90 members, specifically, Richard B., Gilles F. and Luc T., for their unwavering help in organizing and promoting the event.

The first Canadian Eastern Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly, which was held on February 22, 23 and 24 at the Sandman Hotel was a total success with 476 AA members attending! On Friday, we had the pleasure of tasting the delicious maple fudge prepared by our area chairperson, Diane H. Over the weekend, the hotel staff had never seen alcoholics drink so much coffee and were totally amazed that we picked up the chairs and tables at the end of the assembly on Sunday. They had never seen an organization do this before.

It was a golden opportunity to learn more about service, an important part of our Three Legacies, and to share with our AA friends from Eastern Canada.

A great deal of information was made available including an historical account of the General Service Conference, the structure of the Conference, the theme of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Conference (The General Service Conference takes its Inventory – Our Solution in Action), to name only a few. Several presentations were also part of the program, some of them directly related to the Agenda of the following Conference to be held in April. Many of these presentations were given by “members from the base”. The assembly was filled with positive energy, the kind of energy that would certainly prompt us to continue

and to improve our work in the carrying of the AA message. (Excerpt from: Écho, Echo, Eco Bulletin, Volume 8/Number 2, Spring 2013).

Subsequently, the ASTECAA was held in these locations:

**2015 : Area 83 (Mississauga)**

**2017 : Area 81 (Moncton)**

**2019 : Area 90 (Laval)**

**2021 : The assembly did not take place**

**2023 : Area 86 (St. Catharines)**

\*\*\*Thanks to Diane, Jules, Raymond and André for their participation in the writing.