

BIOGRAPHY OF DON GILLIS GRAND EXALTED RULER 2023 - 2024

Donald Everett Gillis was born and raised in New Brunswick. As the youngest son of an RCMP Staff Sergeant, the family moved around New Brunswick quite a bit before settling in the Miramichi region. Don moved to Fort Nelson, BC in 1978 where he worked to support himself through university. It was while he was working in a sawmill that the flame of his volunteer spirit was sparked by jumping onto a fire truck on its way to an emergency. This started his eventual career as a Firefighter, but also fueled his desire to assist people in need. For example, while on duty one night, Don started the Fort Nelson chapter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters after finding a small child wandering the streets in the middle of the night.

In Fort Nelson, Don organized baseball tournaments, through which he met his wife, Ann. She is his greatest cheerleader, but also works alongside him on all of his charitable and volunteer endeavors. In addition, vice versa. (She is the better curler, however.) Together they have four wonderful children and are blessed with seven amazing grandchildren.

Don worked his way through the ranks of the Fort Nelson Fire Department, including being the Training Officer, the Incident Commander, and ultimately becoming the Fire Chief of the Fort Nelson Fire Department in 1987. This eventually led to a career with the NWT Fire Marshall's office where he worked from 1993 to 2004.

His years in Yellowknife were full of volunteering. He organized the Commercial / Government Curling League for the Yellowknife Curling Club and was a Nationally Accredited Curling Official. Don was a Member - and eventually President of the Board for the NWT Disabilities Council for over 10 years, where he continued the Annual Auction Fundraiser and started the very popular Annual Soap-Box Derby. He was the co-founder of the NWT Habitat for Humanities, overseeing the construction of two duplexes and the creation of the Re-Store in Yellowknife, NWT.

Through all of this, Brother Don served the Elks for over 25 years, first joining the Fort Nelson Elks Lodge No. 400 in the early 1980's. After moving to Yellowknife, Brother Don and his wife Ann were accepted into the Yellowknife Elks Lodge No. 314. Brother Don worked his way through the Lodge Chairs and spent two terms as Exalted Ruler. He also served as President of the Territorial Elks Association.

Brother Don and Sister Ann retired from the north after 37 years. They spent two years seeking the warmth of Arizona during the winters, but spent their summers in Grand Forks, BC and were members of the Grand Forks Elks Lodge No. 493. Then, they settled in Rimbey, Alberta and were thrilled to be invited to become members of the Breton Elks Lodge No. 402.

Being an active member of any organization has been very fulfilling for Brother Don. Currently, along with his tenure on the Grand Executive, he devotes his time to the Breton Elks Lodge, serving on the RV Park Planning Committee and the Rimbey Hospital Legacy Committee, representing the Breton Elks Lodge. Community Service has been the cornerstone of all that Brother Don believes in and he is grateful to continue to serve at the grass roots level again. Brother Don is proud to be able to serve!

As your Grand Exalted Ruler, Brother Don wishes to continue that spirit of Community Service across Canada. He knows that many communities benefit from their local Elks Lodges and, in return, Elks Lodges benefit from their communities. We need to keep those relationships alive. In doing so, we can **SERVE WITH PRIDE.**

