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Secretive society uses moose to spread generosity

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SPECIAL TO
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The Sleeping Giant, Persian, breakfast at the Hoito, and concrete moose?

That last one could become part of

the group of things that help bind Thunder Bay residents together, that is if the Society of the Concrete Moose gets its wish.

On June 21, hundreds of concrete moose filled Waverley Park and Vickers Park. A news release called

them "lost moose" migrating through the parks and encouraged people to take them home. The concrete moose were an instant hit — even though word of mouth was the only way people heard about the migration, all 260 or so of them, were

gone by 11:30 a.m.

Standing about half a metre tall and weighing about four kilograms, most are light greyish, though some are darker.

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NEWS A3

Concrete moose were an instant hit

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Each has a tag that says: "If found in public, please take this concrete moose home." The tag also had an eight-digit identification number, a code regarding its care, a website address of www.concretemoose.ca, and a short message from the secretive Society of the Concrete Moose.

"Some of our members are in grade school," a statement on the website reads. "Others are well past university age. Apart from being citizens of Thunder Bay and upholding the Code of the Concrete Moose they do not collectively promote any specific ideology or philosophy. Members prefer anonymity."

It seems to be a mystery like crop circles, or perhaps more

aply, the Inukshuk statues.

The society's founder, who, you guessed it, doesn't want his name published, says "it's bigger than a name," explaining why he doesn't want to expose people behind the creation of the concrete moose.

Every major religion has a long tradition of anonymous giving, he said.

"The faith-based version would be 'God has been good to me so that I may be good to others,'" he said. But he added that the SCM is not a religious society. It's about recognizing the good in people and keeping that goodness circulating.

"The Society of the Concrete Moose promotes generosity and hospitality towards old friends and new residents of the City of Thunder Bay," the concrete

moose tag reads.

One of the goals is to help new residents feel more welcome. The society encourages people to give the concrete moose as a gift to people moving to the city so that they immediately feel part of the community.

There is a code that people looking after a concrete moose must follow.

They can't buy or sell their concrete moose, they can only look after one at a time, they must personalize it in some way and they must give it away before one year is up.

They also can't leave the city unless under the care of a current or former resident. But according to the group's founder, that rule has already been broken.

"Transgressions have hap-

pened, amends will be made," he said with a laugh. In this case, the "amends" is a stained-glass window from an artist in P.E.I. to make up for breaking the code.

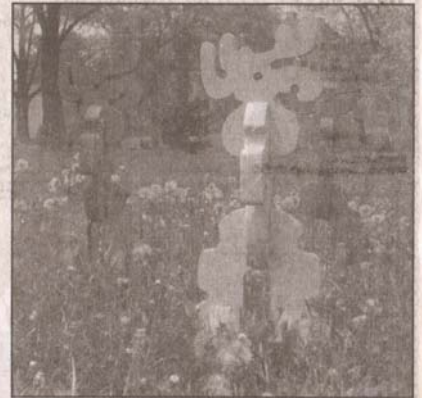
And the founder's OK with that.

"It makes the concrete moose ambassadorial," the founder said. "It's like an artistic emissary."

One woman who bagged her own concrete moose believes the concept of the society is an "original idea."

"I think people need that positive focus on the city. And they're really cute," Martha Picard, says.

The society hints there might be another migration during the first full moon in October, perhaps at Boulevard Lake.



WWW.CONCRETEMOOSE.CA

These concrete moose are meant to be a symbol of welcome for people to Thunder Bay.