

COMMUNITY

Helping the residents of the world's cruelest place

From Canada to the horn of Africa, Warren Creates has seen the worst and resolved to do his part to help

By ALLAN HAAN

law firm Perley-Robertson, Hill and McDougall.

To probe, to dig a little deeper, to enquire and investigate. This is what typically happens at the monthly meetings of the Probus Club of Manotick. The club meets every first Wednesday of the month in the Anglican Church hall on Bridge Street in Manotick. To listen to an expert on subjects that are esoteric, controversial, artistic, thought-provoking and tend to be more cerebral than popular.

Our last lecture took place on Wed., Dec. 5. The speaker was Warren Creates, an Ottawa lawyer specializing in immigration matters and human rights. He is with the prestigious law firm Perley-Robertson, Hill and McDougall. Among the many legal cases of his busy immigration practice, he also represents 3 to 5 million Afar people who live in the Horn of Africa. This region includes Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, which National Geographic Magazine (October 2005) describes as one of the cruelest places on the planet. Extreme poverty, famine, drought, persecution and interminable conflict and wars plague the area.

The area includes the Danakil Depression, a vast plain of salt pans and active volcanoes 200 feet below sea level that is deemed to

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be the hottest place on earth, with temperatures soaring to 125 degrees.

About 94 per cent of the estimated 3 to 5 million Afar people are illiterate, 90 per cent are nomadic and

ironic that the Afar people inhabit the area from which all humanity originates. It is here that anthropologists have uncovered the oldest evidence of all human existence.

Warren has taken up their cause and has become a champion and expert on their plight in Africa. He is probably more expert on this particular tribe than anyone else in Canada, indeed even the official Canadian embassy staff in Addis Ababa.

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Warren's enthusiastic and very animated presentation was supported by an excellent series of Power Point slides. There were many questions afterwards from the floor. Many, if not all in the audience, for the first time heard of these downtrodden Afar people who, still, but barely so, survive, in the cradle of all humanity.

Warren will be leading another humanitarian mission to the Afar Region in January 2008. He and the mission he is leading are taking the technology for a bio-sand water filter, as well as funding an education project. He can be reached at wcreates@perlaw.ca.