

A Gentle Guide to the Art of Town Crying or What Should The Town Crier Say?



Each event is different, each cry is different. For a Town Crier it can take anywhere from an hour to several days to compose a cry that best suits the purpose of a gathering and truly welcomes those attending.

Here are some basic guidelines the professional Town Crier considers:

- A good cry is rarely more than **125 words** in length. Criers know that beyond this attention of the crowd begins to wander.
- A good cry contains some **point of history or background** that is not generally known. Starting off with an interesting local twist makes everyone attentive to what is about to follow.
- A good cry contains elements of **humour**. This is preferably not an inside joke that only a few might relate to: it is a moment of lightness that everyone hearing the cry will appreciate.
- A good cry is written with **careful attention to the choice of words**. A repeated phrase, elements of alliteration, and a formal structure makes the Crier's efforts to get the message across easier.
- A good cry contains the **correct phrases**. In corporate situations in particular the Crier is often asked to proclaim on a topic that has many "**buzz-words**" surrounding it. Making the Crier aware of these terms in advance is to your advantage.

Finally there are a few elements that you should consider that will add to the Crier's presentation:

- The Crier will begin using a **signaling device**. Swinging a heavy bell requires room and a margin of safety. If the Crier works with an Escort the bell and scroll are often handed off during the cry.
- The Crier **needs to be able to get to where they can be seen**. Many times a stage has been set up and there is no easy access for the Crier to enter or exit let alone use the bell.
- Each cry begins with a **gathering call and greeting** whether it be "O'yez!" or "Hear Ye!" or "Gather Round ...". These are usually personal trademarks of the Crier.
- Each cry ends with a **final line** such as "... and may God Bless Canada!" or "... God Save The Queen!" or "... God protect and preserve the Constitution of the United States of America!" This is traditional and only omitted under the rarest of circumstances.
- If the Crier is an official representative a Town or City, then the Crier should introduce the Mayor or other local dignitary immediately at the end of their cry. **That is the Town Crier's official job!**

You will wish to avoid:

- Having the Crier run down **long lists** of names, financial data, product lines or anything that is better handled by someone else as part of a speech.
- Having the Crier **read advertising copy**. A good Crier will take the absolute essence of what you wish said and present it properly for you. Extended advertising copy, designed to be read in a magazine or on broadcast media, often does not proclaim well. Provide the Crier with the material and highlight the key elements you wish to see in the cry.
- Thinking "**We can figure it all out when you get here!**" rarely, if ever, works.
- Having a Master of Ceremonies introduce the Crier. **Let the Crier start the event and obtain everyone's attention**. Let the Crier introduce the MC after the cry (if they are not introducing a local official or announcing the singing of the national anthem.) A Crier who is introduced does not need to ring the bell or go through the traditional greetings and simply starts with the proclamation.

Remember, the Town Crier usually **opens, welcomes and proclaims** at your event. It is that simple.

How carefully you plan ahead and how carefully you provide the Crier with background on what you wish to have said determines the effectiveness of the Crier at your event.