



Canadian Initiatives

Initiatives of Change

Winter 2015

Editor's message



Dear Readers,
2015 is a special year in the history of IofC and the world. It is an ideal time to think of ways in which the movement can continue to have a profound and lasting impact.

This is the 70th anniversary year of the end of World War II. In post-war Europe, IofC, then known as MRA, played a key role in facilitating dialogue at a human and personal level between German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, leading to a more genuine reconciliation between their countries.

Yukihisa Fujita, a Member of the Japanese Parliament has appealed to IofC for ideas and inspiration as he still struggles with the fallout from the same war. "I am trying to make 2015, the 70th anniversary year of the normalization of Japan-South Korea diplomatic relations, an opportunity for true and lasting reconciliation," he writes.

Closer to home, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission led by Justice Murray Sinclair will issue its final report in June on the impact of residential schools on Canada's aboriginal people. As Sinclair said: "Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships."

While IofC's role in forging respectful relationships may not be as dramatic as the signing of international peace accords, it is important work, accomplished through workshops, films and trustbuilding programs. We need to keep it going through ideas, action and of course, donations. Let's reaffirm our commitment to IofC!
Susan Korah, Ottawa

Deep discussions percolate around *Beyond Forgiving* film at community coffee house

White Rock, BC, Nov. 21, 2014--What does a person need, before she or he is able to forgive? What is the role of courage in forgiveness? What are the barriers to starting this journey?

Local leaders, pastors and community members wrestled with these questions during a special preview screening of *Beyond Forgiving* in this West coast community, about 45 kms from Vancouver.



Coffee and conversation on forgiveness

At 7:00 pm. attendees began to trickle through the doors of Small Ritual Coffee Society, a unique non-profit coffee shop that serves delicious, ethically sourced coffee and provides a space to highlight community issues. They met the rich aroma of fresh coffee, familiar and new faces, as well as the rhythms of the soundtrack of *The Power of One*, another acclaimed film set in South Africa.

MRA Productions / FLT Films Manager, **Chris Hartnell**, introduced the film and Initiatives of Change. He was joined by Ryd  Harding, Chair of the board and manager of Small Ritual Coffee Society, who welcomed everyone to the space. After the film screening, participants enjoyed a special snack called 'boerewors'. This specialty of South African cuisine was offered free, courtesy of local meat and cheese vendor Beast & Brine.

Brent Unrau, a professional counselor and a board member of the Church at Southpoint, led small-group discussion about the film and its applicability to each individual's life.

One group discussed the idea of 'group mentality'. Many agreed that it could be difficult to break negative perspectives that a whole culture adopts when viewing another group of people. Further, such perspectives are easily maintained when cultures have little opportunity for contact with 'the other' – a problem that was exacerbated to an extreme with South Africa's apartheid system.

An ideal space for building trust across the world's divides

Hosts **Chris Hartnell** and **Tim Hall** (assistant with MRA Productions North America / IofC Canada) enjoyed engaging the community with the issue of forgiveness. Twelve copies of the film were sold for use in the community. Yet there was an even deeper motive for hosting that screening -- to support Small Ritual Coffee Society, a social enterprise initiated by the Church at Southpoint.

This non-profit coffee house believes that "the best ideas and the most genuine experiences will come in a relaxed, thoughtful, neighbourly and open environment". Chris and Tim recognized the potential in such a venue as a space for building trust across the world's divides.

As one individual reflected on forgiveness, "You've got to start right here. Your family, your community."

Tim Hall, Surrey, BC

Beyond Forgiving gains momentum in Quebec: New project plans underway

Montreal, Dec. 4, 2014--Since May 2014, the idea of an initiative in Quebec emerged gradually from the spirit and dynamic of the new Initiatives of Change film *Beyond Forgiving* produced in 2013 by two IofC colleagues, Imad Karam, originally from Palestine, and Howard Grace of UK. The documentary received a Gold Award for Inspiration at the International Film Festival called *Inspiration-Peace and Equality 2013* and two more awards--the Best Short Award 2013 and the Award of Excellence at the International Film Festival of *Spirituality, Religion and Vision 2013*.

Several showings of the film have already taken place and continue to multiply in Quebec. As the Regional Project Manager, I am very convinced by the potential and relevance of this tool and very encouraged by the convictions shared by people such as: "This film is a treasure for humanity, a gift to share" and: "Its background is African, but we can relate to it as a mirror of our own needs."

The people's expectations for the Quebec project related to the film are increasing as demonstrated during the IofC meeting on October 14 in Quebec City, where among the 23 participants, some leading personalities expressed their interest to team up with IofC in a project. They saw it as a great vehicle to address the need to bring reconciliation and trust among the "four solitudes" that IofC has identified within the population of Canada- Aboriginals, Francophones, Anglophones and more recent immigrants. In response to this, both organizations Espace Art Nature and IofC have decided to continue their partnership through a joint project. This new venture, in preparation for 2015-2016, is on the model of the Citizen Project and consists of dialogues in public forums and intercultural workshops towards rapprochement.

Joseph Vumiliya, Montreal

Harmony Café brews 'pay it forward' concept, stirs people to community action

Calgary, Dec. 7, 2014—A community initiative that had been two years in the planning came to fruition here on Nov. 8 as Harmony Café held its opening event to provide a space where people can come together to dialogue and learn new paradigms for living a meaningful, values-filled life.



Food for thought and action

Initiatives of Change-- together with a number of organizations, fellowships and individuals in the Calgary region-- is involved in organizing this monthly gathering at CommunityWise Resource Centre, a venue for grassroots and non-profit organizations.

Approximately 30 people attended the opening event.

One of the main concepts being promoted at Harmony Café is that of "paying it forward." While organizers prepare, cook, set up and serve food at the Café, no charge is given on the bill. Rather, participants are encouraged to give what they can and pay-it-forward to others who come after them. Participants also receive a "pay-it-forward" card and are asked to go out into the community and do a good service over the following month.

The second monthly Harmony Café went off very well. Participants had meaningful discussions around the question: "What does Harmony mean to you?" and other meaningful books or articles they had recently read that would bring awareness to new paradigm shifts toward a more peaceful coexistence.

Three people reported having deliberately participated in a "pay-it-forward" activity. One offered financial assistance to a young family in need; another bought four \$10 Tim Horton cards and handed them out to homeless people on the street; and a third hand-delivered a misdirected Christmas parcel from his home to a neighbour a couple of blocks away. This shows the various ways that "paying-it-forward" can make a difference in people's lives.

The evening ended with a spontaneous circle singing favourite songs, with children as young as three joining in. The next Harmony Café will be in January at CommunityWise.

Janyce Konkin, Calgary

Catherine Graham, Duchess of Montrose had roots in Canada, strong ties with MRA/IofC

On a glorious, sun-caressed autumn day in early November 2014, Catherine Graham, Duchess of Montrose, having "slipped the surly bonds of earth," as her favourite poem expressed it, was laid to rest after a funeral service in the Scottish village of Drymen.

Catherine, --Cathy to all her friends-- was a true-blue Duchess, having married James Graham, 8th Duke of Montrose, Chief of the Clan Graham, an elected hereditary peer, a former Conservative Party spokesman on Scottish affairs and currently backbencher in UK's House of Lords.

The Duchess was not only a Canadian, she also had strong connections with IofC or MRA as it was known until 2001. She loved reading *Canadian Initiatives*, as she kindly informed the editor in an e-mail dated January 26, 2014. "As a Canadian, married to a Scot and living in Scotland I am keen to keep in touch," she wrote.

The niece of Canada's Nobel-prize winning Prime Minister Lester Pearson, she inherited the title of Duchess of Montrose in 1992 when her husband's father, the 7th Duke of Montrose died. She was part of the crew for MRA's all-African film *Freedom*, produced in 1956. Written entirely by Africans it dealt with the healing of divisions in the run-up to independence. It was the first feature film to be made in Nigeria and went on to win a prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

She worked in Brazil, Peru, Bolivia and Chile with a film written by Brazilian dockers. In Bolivia they put on a performance for tin miners in some of the worst poverty and deprivation imaginable. There was great bitterness and unrest. Cathy was among those who visited the miners in their homes and met their wives and children. One friend who went with her said, "If you were in a tight situation, there was no one better than Cathy to share it with."



The Duke and Duchess of Montrose

In the late sixties she served on a multi-faith MRA Committee in Ethiopia and Eritrea. She helped set up two international conferences and ran support programs in the schools.

The spirit of service permeated her entire life. On any given evening in her later years, Cathy Graham might have been found washing dishes or serving tea and sandwiches to the destitute in the heart of Govan, a district and parish situated 2.5 miles west of Glasgow city centre. The next day, she might be welcoming royals and nobles to her husband's ancestral estate near Loch Lomond.

"We will miss her wonderful hand-written letters and her thoughtful phone calls. We will miss her courage and her loyalty and above all her gentleness," said Anne Wolrige Gordon, daughter of Peter Howard (world leader of MRA in the 1960s) at Cathy's funeral.

Anne spoke for all of us, in Canada and around the world.

Susan Korah, Ottawa

Jenny Bocock shares personal memories of Catherine Graham

My first memory of Catherine, the Duchess of Montrose or Cathy to everyone, was her whizzing around doing cartwheels on the front lawn of the Moral Re-Armament (MRA) centre on Mackinac Island, Michigan when we were young girls. I was envious of this talent. Later she cooked in the kitchen there, full of fun and energy.

Years later, en route home from Kenya I stopped off in Asmara, Eritrea at the home of an MRA couple where Cathy was also staying. Later that summer she was engaged to Seumas (James) The Marquis of Graham, later to become the Duke of Montrose.

After she was married and expecting her first baby I went to help her in her home. Later my husband, John, daughter Rachel and I stayed with the family. She went out one day to the Women's Institute meeting with her cleaning lady. Other people were invited to dinner to meet us. Cathy prepared dinners for guests calmly, with no fuss.

A unique experience for us was when her son Ronnie played the bagpipes leading us in to dinner. She was a relaxed, warm and gracious hostess putting everyone at ease.

My sister-in-law, Phyllis, and I always felt we could take up where we left off in the last conversation with Cathy. She appreciated her Canadian friends and receiving the lofC Canadian newsletter.

She will be greatly missed.

Jenny Bocock, St. Albert, Alberta

Multicultural Women's Circle fosters trust between newcomers, established Canadians

Ottawa, Dec. 5, 2014-- As a newcomer from Ethiopia, lofC Canada's Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle meetings were, I can say, one of the good things that happened to me. Getting together with other newcomer women from different cultures and backgrounds and some settled Canadians, was an invaluable experience.

Every Tuesday evening for six weeks, 11 women of different cultures, backgrounds, races and ages, met in the small cozy office of IofC downtown Ottawa. At each session, we began by exchanging personal stories about ourselves, our cultures and our life journeys. We got to talk about interesting facts from our cultures, our experiences in Canada, our adventures and a lot more.

At four of our meetings, we had guest speakers with interesting, useful and inspiring stories and information.

Susan Korah, who coordinated this program on behalf of Initiatives of Change, emphasized that one of IofC Canada's contributions is to build trust among the country's diverse groups which include new immigrants and established Canadians; and that this was the goal of the Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle. She also had a lot to share with us including IofC activities worldwide.



Samrawit Mersha, second from left, with new friends

One of the most outstanding guest speakers was a candidate in Ottawa's last municipal election, Lilly Obina, a relative newcomer from Uganda. Her story--which began as a struggle for survival in Canada, but continued as an inspiring tale of meeting the challenges of her life with courage and determination--was indeed motivational.

It was also great to meet other IofC members **Ute Gerbrandt**, who handed out certificates, and **Elaine Gordon** at the last meeting.

I believe this program was a great example of what IofC does best in many countries; creating a safe environment where people of different cultural and faith backgrounds can have honest, open dialogues, and build caring, trusting relationships with one another.

During those six weeks, I made good friends, shared stories, learned a lot about Ottawa and Canadians in general, and have been

inspired by guest speakers. But most of all, I had fun. Thank you, IofC and all participants, with whom I definitely will keep in touch.

Samrawit Araya M. Mersha, Ottawa



Janyce Konkin

IofC represented at two Calgary peace events

Calgary, Dec. 9, 2014--**Janyce Konkin**, Regional Projects Coordinator in Alberta, and her team attended two Fall peace festivals-- the Marda Loop Justice Film Festival and the Project Ploughshares Christmas Peace Fair--and represented IofC there.

Their presence resulted in a few sales of the two videos *Beyond Forgiving*, and *The Imam & The Pastor*, as well as miscellaneous other items.

"But as usual, the biggest return came through meeting and talking with new people who had not heard about Initiatives of Change before," says Janyce. "We were also able to help make some international connections happen for a UK film director who was put in touch with our UK network. We never know when networking at such events may lead to meaningful engagements."

Ottawa office moves

The national office of IofC moved on Dec. 17. Please note the change of address at the bottom of this page. The telephone and fax numbers, as well as the e-mail address remain the same.

Coming Events

Calgary

Harmony Café, a gathering for dialogue, healthy vegetarian food, local music. First Saturday of the month Feb.7, March7, April 4 at CommunityWise 101 223 12th Ave.SW 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Volunteers at 5:00 pm.

All are invited.

Call Janyce at 403-270-0975 for details.

For other events across the country, please check our website www.ca.iofc.org

Initiatives of Change

In Canada, IofC is officially registered as a charitable organization under the name Initiatives of Change Association Canada. Donations are tax deductible. For more information and to donate online visit www.ca.iofc.org

By mail send a cheque payable to: Initiatives of Change, The Treasurer, Suite 101A-225 Metcalfe St. Ottawa, ON K2P 1P9

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To submit articles and pictures, e-mail susan.korah@sympatico.ca. **The deadline for the next edition is March 9, 2015.**

For more information contact the national office or visit www.ca.iofc.org