



Annual Report - 2014

Initiatives of Change Association (Canada)

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Reports and stories from across the country

Creating Connections: Inner Peace and Action

Creating Connections: Inner Peace and Action was the theme of a two-day conference organized by Initiatives of Change (lofC) in Calgary in October, 2014.

Speaking at the opening dinner Dr Rajmohan Gandhi – author, academic and former President of lofC International – said that as a historian, he had observed two significant contributions made by lofC. The first was that, “it has spread and made normal the idea of listening to the inner voice. Frank Buchman, the founder of Initiatives of Change, had not made an original discovery that enabled him to say ‘when man listens, God speaks’. He was only repeating with total conviction what had been said for centuries and in different parts of the world. Frank Buchman and the teams he helped build have taken this old idea directly to hundreds of thousands and indirectly to millions in our world”. This idea had also been spread by his own grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi. The second significant contribution, he said, was in bringing together people of diverse backgrounds in a time when such networks were much less common than they are today. He referenced the way in which performances of *The Crowning Experience* in the 1950s had brought together people of different races in the segregated cities in the southern USA.



Dr. Rajmohan Gandhi speaking on “Inner Peace & Action”.

Taking as his theme “Looking in - Reaching out”, Dr. Gandhi told of his personal encounter with lofC, 58 years ago, and how listening to the inner voice had helped him reach out to others. Through his writings he attempted to bring respect and greater understanding to the relationship between Hindus and Muslims on the Indian subcontinent, as well as to the current crisis between the Islamic world and the West. “Will we use this moment”, he continued, “to do adequate thinking, adequate reflection, real examination of the events that have caused this.”



An audience of 160 gathered to listen to Rajmohan Gandhi in Calgary.

Encouraging the diverse crowd of 160, Gandhi said, “There is absolutely no situation in the world with which Canada is unconnected. There is no dialogue that cannot be started in Canada that will have an effect on the rest of the world. And the people are here. So who will take the initiative to encourage conversation, dialogue, frankness, courage?”

The following day these ideas of inner peace and listening were put into practice with a full day of workshops. Alex Ramirez introduced over thirty participants to quiet time, and led the group into a period of silence. Another highlight Anne Hartnell’s interactive ‘taster’ of a Creators of Peace Circle. The conference organizers also engaged a partner, Kathee Cottee of Edmonton Waste Management, who shared an inspiring story of employment for individuals traditionally marginalized from the workforce.

2014 Overview

The year began with a delegation of seven from Initiatives of Change Canada taking part in an international gathering – Encuentro of the Americas - in Bogota, Colombia. Its purpose was to find ways of taking more effective action in the region and between the continents through renewed commitment to the principles of lofC and greater collaboration between national teams. It provided an important perspective and a useful context for initiatives in Canada through the year.

Engagement with young Canadians

Both in Ottawa and Calgary there was a productive engagement with student interns and student placements. In Calgary, a trust-building workshop and women's peace circle were organized and led by student interns from the University of Calgary's Community Service Learning Project. In the meantime, Ottawa University's Centre for Global and Community Engagement continued its partnership with lofC into 2014, providing student placements for the Archives Project. Another volunteer, a graduate in International Development at Carleton University, was searching for avenues in which to pursue her passion for peacebuilding, human rights and conflict resolution when she came across lofC Canada's website.

Laya Behbahani, a young Vancouver woman first attended Caux in 2013 and "found the experience to be overwhelmingly unique". She joined a 2014 conference organizing team moderated a panel on the "Qualities of a Change-maker".

Governance

2014 was also a significant year from an organizational and governance point of view. The membership approved new Articles and By-laws, 70 years after incorporation, in order to conform to provisions of the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act. Approval by the Canada Revenue Agency of the revised wording of lofC Canada's purpose statement is still pending.

Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle

lofC Canada's Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle fosters trust between newcomers and established Canadians. The group is a diverse mix of cultures and backgrounds sharing life together. Each session began with personal stories. Participants shared about themselves, their cultures, their life journeys and even their experiences in Canada. Several meetings featured guest speakers with their own stories of inspiration and information.

Participant Samrawit Mersha from Ethiopia shared, "Getting together with other newcomer women from different cultures and backgrounds and some settled Canadians, was an invaluable experience. I believe this program was a great example of what lofC 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." In 2015 Mersha stepped further into this 'safe environment' as one of lofC Canada's Board.



Samrawit Mersha (second from left) with the Friendship Circle.

Susan Korah, the program's coordinator, emphasized lofC Canada's contribution of building trust among the country's diverse groups. To foster trust and community between new immigrants and established Canadians was the goal of the Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle.

Trustbuilding Workshops

Trustbuilding Workshops were provided to the North Sudanese and Cambodian communities of Calgary. "It has made a huge difference to our community to learn to work together and trust each other" said Sudanese organizer Mohamed Salih. "We must continue to work with more of our community members so that we all learn these ways of building trust."

Work also continued specifically with Calgary's South Sudanese Community. In the summer of 2014 a "Participatory Assessment" was undertaken to identify problem areas within the community in Calgary. Such issues as tribalism, violence, peace & unity, employment, lack of leadership and cultural shock were all discussed and necessary solutions identified. One participant stated "I feel profound gratitude in being able to work through issues in a safe environment through dialogue and respect for each other."

First Nation and Non-First Nation Bridge Building

Circles of Trust between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people created with the Citizen Project in 2012-2013 in Quebec continued in 2014. Several Circles of Trust gatherings took place in Montreal, Victoriaville and Quebec City. These Circles are opportunities to revisit the past and explore the paths that lead to a better future. They have the aim of strengthening bridges of trust initiated between participants during the project through listening, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of inclusion that welcomes new participants.

Some of those linked to the IofC network continued to participate in events organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools including the Edmonton National event where community and provincial leaders including the acting Premier of Alberta and the Mayor of Edmonton made commitments to take specific actions for reconciliation. Charlene Bearhead, through the Public and Catholic school systems, arranged for 4000 students to attend this event and participate in reconciliation programs.

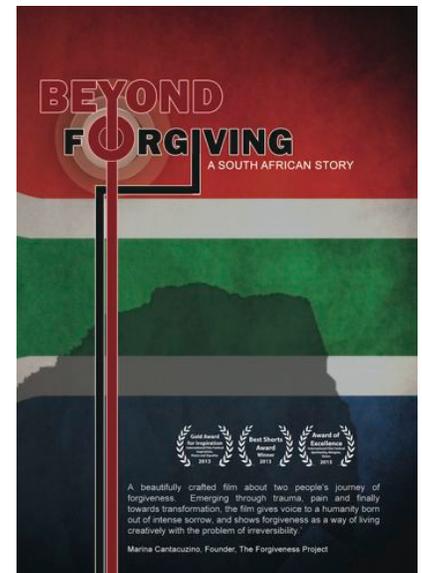
Beyond Forgiving Comes to Canada

The documentary *Beyond Forgiving*, filmed in South Africa by Initiatives of Change, made its Canadian premiere on January 25, 2014 at the Missions Fest Vancouver Film Festival to an audience of almost two hundred and fifty.

It tells the courageous story of forgiveness and reconciliation between two people: Ginn Fourie, a white Christian woman, and Letlapa Mphahlele, a black atheist and militant during the terrible period of apartheid. The film holds significance for Canadians in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on Residential Schools, and regarding tensions related to the Charter of Quebec values.

One graduate student of Peace and Conflict Studies commented after the Canadian premiere, "The film encourages me to consider where I am harbouring unforgiveness in my own life, and how much of the story of 'the other' I may be missing."

In Calgary the Albertan premiere of *Beyond Forgiving* rounded out the activities of the *Creating Connections Conference*. Again in British Columbia a group of 40 gathered at a local coffee shop to view and discuss the film's themes of forgiveness and reconciliation.



Chris Hartnell (volunteer manager with MRA Productions / FLT Films North America) shares about *Beyond Forgiving* during the screening at *Creating Connections*.

In Quebec the film was screened many times in Montreal, Victoriaville and Quebec City – each screening followed by exchanges and sharing of convictions. Participants have commented: "A treasure of humanity, a gift to share"; "It's background is African but we can relate to it as a mirror of our own needs"; "This film makes us aware of needs, leads us to answers and generates hope"; "It opens our minds to new perspectives on how to live together and accommodate difference".

Beyond Forgiving is now available on DVD! In 2014 MRA Productions / FLT Films North America* also released a full French-subtitled edition of *Beyond Forgiving* (in French – *Au-delà du pardon*). Each DVD comes with a complimentary dual-language study guide for facilitators. The guide offers contextual information about South Africa, protagonist biographies, and even suggested discussion questions for a post-film dialogue. To order your copy visit: www.ca.iofc.org/beyond-forgiving

*MRA Productions North America, a division of IofC Canada [Business No. 11904 5912 RR0002]

IofC Canada Communication

Multi-media material is used by IofC to promote its approach and values.

- A new IofC Canada brochure was designed and finalized.
- A newsletter *Canadian Initiatives / Initiatives canadiennes* is released quarterly.
- Rajmohan Gandhi's full keynote at *Creating Connections* was shared on Youtube.
- IofC Canada & IofC USA partnered to supply 1,000 copies of *The Imam & the Pastor* to World Vision in an effort to equip each of their African field workers with a tool to build peace in their own communities.

Finances

Initiatives of Change Association (Canada), incorporated in 1944, is a registered charitable organization [Business No. 11904 5912 RR0001] and donations are tax deductible.

	2014	2013
Revenue (including legacies)	\$232,625	\$187,377
Expenditure	<u>\$200,470</u>	<u>\$206,365</u>
Increase/decrease in reserves	\$ 32,155	(\$ 18,988)

The Audited financial Statements for the year ended December, 2014, have been circulated to the membership and are available, upon request, from the IofC office in Ottawa or on the website.

IofC Canada is indebted to many individuals, foundations and governments for their financial contributions without which its work would not have been possible. Our gratitude also goes to the many volunteers who together contributed several thousand hours of their time and talents to promote our objectives.

Social Media

- www.facebook.com/IofC.IC.Canada
- www.twitter.com/IofC_IC_Canada
- www.youtube.com/user/initiativesofchange

Building trust across the world's divides

Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a world-wide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, who are committed to the transformation of society through changes in human motives and behaviour, starting with their own.

It has been active on every continent for over 70 years. Initiatives of Change Association Canada is a member of Initiatives of Change International, which affiliates national IofC associations worldwide and has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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