



# Initiatives of Change

CANADIAN NEWSLETTER

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December 2005



*Interaction at the Initiatives of Change Club information table*

## - Youth Launch Out with New Activities -

### **The Compass Programme**

This was originally called *The Who Who Programme* with the vision of helping College, University, and now also Grade 12 students to define a vision for their life. In dialogue among the students we decided to change the name to *The Compass Programme* to give us a better identity and make it easier to promote what we are offering. Our promotion campaign started with posters being displayed on the transit system and in different schools, colleges and universities in the Calgary area. Our content team, lead by Monica Lopez, has developed a wonderful set of activities. Chris Hammer, from Calgary, a professional personal coach, has recently joined the team. He will help with the content development and delivery. The programme will be launched in January 2006 and run for approximately 10 weeks.

### **The Schools Programme**

Kimm Renaud, System Principal, Collaborative Health Services of the Calgary Board of Education, met with Keith Newman and Alex Ramirez. It was the third meeting between Initiatives of Change (IofC) and the Board of Education. This one helped to clarify the expectations and present the realities of both sides. We realized we have to take small and firm steps towards our objective. The main result of the meeting was the decision to focus first on three high schools. We are preparing an information package for the Lord Beaverbrook High School, where an interesting leadership programme is already in place.

### **The Initiatives of Change Club**

The *Initiatives of Change Club* is a recognized part of the University of Calgary and Initiatives of Change and was born from the different activities held during the winter and fall terms in the University. The Club will provide its participants (mainly from the University of Calgary) with a space of fellowship and growth, but will also keep them updated on the most recent IofC events and programmes. The Club opened with a Celebration Party on December 1 and held a fundraising raffle on December 5, 6 and 7. A fuller report will be ready for the next Newsletter.

*For more information on any of the above topics contact:*

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### **Montreal - Youth Group Meetings**

#### **Young people ask themselves: who do I want to be?**

A group of young people has been meeting monthly since October in Montreal. The group is composed of mostly women from diverse cultural backgrounds: Canadian-Burundian, Cameroon, France, and India.

In early November, the gathering was organized and led by Karen Bambonye. The first discussion was called "Ask yourself." Participants were asked to reflect on questions such as: What is your purpose in life? How would the person I'd like to be do the things I'm about to do? During the second half of the meeting, they were asked to think about where they see themselves in 5 years. The purpose was to make people realize that they hold the answers to questions that we often seek from others.

The last youth meeting for the year took place on November 30. Participants watched the movie *Motorcycle Diaries*, about Che Guevarra's personal journey. It showed how his meeting people living in miserable conditions in Latin America led him to fight for the less fortunate. We looked at his life-changing decision against our own inner personal journeys.

*Karen Bambonye & Estelle Drouvin*

## **JOY**

A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. Joy is not simply a matter of temperament, it is always hard to remain joyful – all the more reason why we should try to acquire it and make it grow in our hearts.

Joy is prayer  
Joy is strength  
Joy is love

To children and to the poor, to all those who suffer and are lonely, give them always a happy smile; give them not only your care but also your heart. We may not be able to give much, but we can always give the joy that springs from a heart that is filled with love.

*Mother Teresa*

*In this season of giving  
may you receive  
the spirit of  
Joy and Peace.*

## Life Journey in USA – ACTION for Change!



*Natalia (front row third from the left) with some of the group in Los Angeles*

Natalia Ghilascu from Moldova has come to work with IofC Canada. She is based in Calgary and available to help in other areas of Canada. Natalia arrived directly from taking part in ACTION USA, where in 10 weeks, a group of 10

people visited 8 states, meeting people in their workplaces, colleges, schools, homes – wherever they were invited. They shared about ACTION USA and the training they received in learning how to be effective “change agents.” Natalia writes, “I became aware that throughout my life experiences I bring stereotypes and pre-judgments about a person, a nation, and it affects my relationships. We need much healing to bring new perspectives and learn to trust others.” With ACTION she has “found a space for peace and love within myself and towards others.” Natalia also courageously looked at some past relationships, including one with a former colleague whom she had disliked and embarrassed publicly. “I decided to write to her a letter of real apology and say how sorry I am. What changed in me was to recognize my personal mistakes and apologize.” For info on ACTION USA email [nghilascu@yahoo.com](mailto:nghilascu@yahoo.com).

### - Across the Country -

#### Québec

**Montréal - *How to be a witness of hope today*** was the theme as people from eight nationalities gathered on November 9 at the Africa Centre in Montréal. The new book *Témoins sans Frontières (Witnesses without Borders)* was presented. Some of the contributors, like Henriette Nzuj-Ntumba, Roger Paul Gilbert, Adalbert Otou-Nguini and Louise Lanctôt, gave glimpses of their stories that are written up in the book. Lise Gagnon led an open circle and encouraged others present to share their own experiences of “borders in their life” when faced with different cultures and faiths. Will the challenge to be a “witness of hope” be taken on as a commitment for the sake of the next generations?

Laurent Gagnon [l.gagnon@ca.iofc.org](mailto:l.gagnon@ca.iofc.org)

#### Québec City – An evening on Witnessing Beyond Borders

A public gathering was held on November 16 in Québec City. Estelle Drouvin was introduced, having arrived from France in September to help with IofC in the province. She previously worked for 10 years for *The International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture*. She first heard about IofC while in a train in India, and then she met Laurent Gagnon in Caux in 2003 where they talked about activities in Canada. Then the video *For the Love of Tomorrow* was shown which tells the story of Irène Laure of France through her own journey from hatred to forgiveness following World War 2 and her part in rebuilding relations between the French and German people. The third part of the meeting focused on two dynamic interviews with Yvon Matte of Donnacona and Alain Marchildon of Montréal. Both of

their stories are in the book *Témoins sans Frontières*. The evening concluded with a time of silent listening and then sharing liberating stories and words. It was a time rich in simplicity and fresh hope.

Laurent Gagnon [l.gagnon@ca.iofc.org](mailto:l.gagnon@ca.iofc.org)

#### Ontario

##### Toronto – Special Reprint of The Black and White Book

The Black and White Book was written in the early 70’s in the UK and translated into 27 languages ranging from Amharic to Welsh. It was a compilation of the experiences of people of varying ages, nationalities and backgrounds, written as a guide to the world they lived in and how to change it. On the conviction of a few people in the Southern Ontario team, permission was obtained from the daughters of Sydney Cook and Garth Lean, deceased authors of the little Black and White Book, to reprint this valuable tool. A new foreword was added, and approval obtained for minor revisions that give the text a more contemporary tone. The books will be sold for \$3.00 each. Anyone interested is welcome to obtain a few copies from the Regional Coordinators:

Jessie Henthorn, 2 Edgewood Gardens, Toronto,  
Ont. M4L 3H5 (416) 469-5113

Imelda Walker, 403-180 Markham Road, Toronto,  
Ont. M1M 2Z9 (416) 267-3708

##### Hamilton – Hope in the Cities

Two trainers/facilitators from Hope in the Cities, Richmond, Virginia, USA, spent 3 days in training workshops with 17 individuals representing various aspects of the city of Hamilton and including participants from Toronto, Québec City and Vancouver. In the words of a local participant “It was a weekend of awakening my soul. I released my fear of holding back. I was forced to reach down and begin the process of saying *I Can*.”

We were challenged with three principles in dialogue deliberations: Personal Responsibility, Honest Conversation, and Acts of Reconciliation. Participants shared their perspectives and experiences and learnt how to dialogue so as to give people the space to open up. One participant said “I’ve been involved in so many committees to bring change but nothing happened. I hope this will work.” Another commented “My thinking has had to make a 180 degree shift, I have learned so much about myself.” The interaction was at a very deep level judging from the responses. “I feel safe here,” said one person who then shared deeply about personal loss.

Doreen Johnson & Marlene Osbourne

##### A Hope in the Cities Experience

Being the only Francophone from Québec in the group, it was a challenge for me to participate in this training in Hamilton. I had to totally accept the unknown and leave my comfort zone to allow me to meet others and learn how to build a contact, dialogue and interact beyond our differences.

As I am working on the website of the Québec government, the tangible experience of exchanging a ball of wool (an interactive game) to build a web touched me very much. I have always wished to create links between people and share ideas to nourish ourselves. It was exciting to listen and exchange ideas with people we did not know a lot about at the beginning of the evening, and discover we could create a web!

The web we created gave us a wonderful visual picture of the connections we make through IofC!

Learning the importance of trusting the members of the team by getting to know each one better has been fruitful – since this experience it seems easier to get along with people! As I work with many people from different origins on the project *Toward a Community of Communities: From Solitudes to Partnership* I will be encouraged by what I learned through the experience of openness at Hamilton.

Lucie Pagé

## **Saskatchewan**

### **Regina – An Opportunity for Outreach**

A retired nurse in Regina decided to raise money for the *Action for Life* course. The venue was the local Seniors' Centre where she has taken art classes. They were holding a sale so Gwen and her sister booked a table to sell items and created a display of the young people involved with *Action for Life 3* course and included brochures of the work of IofC. One man was interested and, taking the brochure, said "I belong to the Catholic Charismatic group in Regina and I'll see if our group will support these young people." The sale raised over \$40 towards AfL3.

Gwen McLean [gwenmclean@accesscomm.ca](mailto:gwenmclean@accesscomm.ca)

### **Regina – MultiFaith Interaction**

Jean Parker writes of her involvement with the Regina Multi-Faith Forum. She attended a Prayer afternoon at the nearby Piapot Reserve, led by Elder Arthur Kaiswatum, who frequently represents the First Nations at community prayer services. On November 26, she and other members of the MultiFaith Forum took part in a day-long conference *National Security and the Canadian Mosaic* presented by the local Muslims for Peace and Justice. Jean writes "The highlight of the day was the guest speaker from Ottawa, Dr. Monia Mazigh, wife of Maher Arar, who had worked tirelessly to free her husband from imprisonment in Syria."

In the evening, the Regina Sai Baba group brought two teachers from the Sathya Sai School in Toronto to tell how the teachings of Basic Human Values have been integrated into the Ontario curriculum in their school. The values of Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love, and Non-violence are encouraged through daily practice and integration in the school curriculum. "It was an uplifting day, a day to meet and discuss with many wonderful Canadians of Godly persuasion."

## **Alberta**

### **Québecers meet Albertans**

On Saturday November 26, members of the Calgary team welcomed Laurent Gagnon and Louise Lanctôt from Montréal to their meeting. The visitors, along with local resident Michael Prior, are some of the members of a steering committee charged with the responsibility of developing a process for the concept of *Towards A Community of Communities: From Solitudes to Partnership* and working towards an event in 2008.

A number of local people are already engaged in the topic and had many ideas. A dynamic conversation ensued following a moving presentation by Louise, a retired teacher. Sharing some of her convictions she said "I have committed myself to work for Initiatives of Change because I believe that I can

bring a measure of change to the world, beginning with who I am and with the help of people who share the same convictions and the same goal."

Louise shared of her reconciliation with her mother a year ago that prepared the way for a next step of asking forgiveness from English speaking Canadians for the resentment she had harboured since her youth. Louise's efforts to speak in English were matched with warmth and deep conversations.

On November 27, the visitors interacted with another of Canada's "solitudes" when they were taken to the Morley reserve near Calgary and met with Henry Holloway. Afterwards they experienced western culture at the Rafter Six Guest Ranch, hosted by Stan and Gloria Cowley before going on to Banff and meeting some of the local team there. Following their visit to Edmonton (see separate report below) they stopped in Rimbey to visit Chris and Betty Harvey. Louise had met Chris in Montréal some months earlier.

"There is a need for sensitive trust building, leading to partnerships of the heart" was a sentiment expressed during some of the many conversations. Addressing the need for healing and reconciliation among the Anglophone, Francophone, First Nations and new immigrants is an important step toward building bridges between the communities.

Michael B. Prior [mbprior@nucleus.com](mailto:mbprior@nucleus.com)

## **Edmonton**

A brief visit to Edmonton provided an opportunity for our visitors from Québec and Calgary to share perspectives with a diverse group of 29 people at an evening gathering in the home of Yi Yi and Sunil Datar. Present were some of the key local organizers and national Co-Chair Maggie Hodgson of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation. Over a pot luck dinner one could observe many lively conversations between the participants, many of whom had not met before. David Swann, an MLA from Calgary was able to compare notes with Jim Gurnett a former MLA and currently the executive director of the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

The evening opened and closed with a prayer by First Nations elders. A sharing circle gave the opportunity for everyone to say something about themselves. All present listened intently while Louise Lanctôt shared about her decision to launch out on a "journey of discovery." Her deep sharing opened everyone's heart and helped to create an atmosphere where honest conversations could take place. Many of those present expressed the wish to have similar gatherings in the future. One lady described the evening as "awesome." Another was especially interested in something Laurent Gagnon said, "What counts, is not who is right, but what is right."

Jack Freebury [freebury@telusplanet.net](mailto:freebury@telusplanet.net)

## **Calgary**

Two days after the departure of Laurent and Louise, Lucie Pagé arrived in Calgary from Québec City. Lucie was on her way to IofC Budget meetings in Vancouver and was asked if she could stop off in Calgary. She hadn't been in Western Canada since 1978. At a dinner attended by 16 Calgary friends, among other things, we exchanged our views on the upcoming election and our expectations from it. We spoke of the "chain of hate" being passed on from one generation to the

other and of a reconciliation and new spirit that took place after a visit to Québec by an Englishman, because of the warm welcome he received.

Joy Newman [joy.newman@ca.iofc.org](mailto:joy.newman@ca.iofc.org)

### BC – Vancouver

During the first weekend of December the Finance Committee, consisting of Treasurer Bill Parker, Vice Chair of IofC Council Lorne Braun, members at large Lucie Pagé and Keith Newman, and National Coordinator Anne Hartnell, met in Surrey, BC.

Following the convictions that were expressed at the Consultation in Montréal, the Committee looked at Project requests and areas of growth. With times of prayer and quiet discernment for God's leading, the Committee put together a draft budget for 2006 to present to the Council at their January meeting.

A potluck supper was held at the Hartnell's home on the Sunday so that some of the local team could meet up with Lucie. Lively discussions about Québec and Canada ensued and developed into people sharing about how they have overcome barriers in their own lives, communities and countries.

Anne Hartnell [annehartnell@ca.iofc.org](mailto:annehartnell@ca.iofc.org)

### Ghana – Clean Africa Campaign Leadership and Training Programme

Eden Saraka, a university student from Ottawa, writes of a recent experience.

I met many people from all parts of Africa – as close as Togo and as far away as Uganda and Ethiopia – with diverse backgrounds such as military and police officers, professors, members of parliament, and lawyers. Our common goal and passion for a “Clean, unified and forward moving Africa” is what brought us together in an environment where we were all free to speak with our minds and hearts.



Eden (bottom right) with the CAC training group in Ghana

My fellow brothers and sisters from the *Clean Africa Campaign Leadership and Training Programme* reaffirmed how the media and international community tends to downplay the positives about Africa and its population so that we are deprived of hearing about the positive contributions that Africans are making to the world.

I remember walking down the streets of Accra with a Kenyan, a Liberian and a Ghanaian friend discussing “Africa's Issues, Our Issues” – where we have failed and succeeded, and how we can pick ourselves up and rise. At times, I feel overwhelmed when I think about all the problems being endured

not only within Africa, but also by vulnerable citizens of the world. I feel proud to say that I had the privilege of engaging in an “ideal” network where we all shared common views, passion, and a forward movement to bring change. *For Eden's full report see <http://www.ca.iofc.org/SarakaReport.htm>*  
Eden Saraka [Esaraka1@yahoo.ca](mailto:Esaraka1@yahoo.ca)

### - Canadians Serving Abroad -

John Freebury, from Edmonton, is presently working with a team in Oxford in the UK to develop a new Communications Network for the International Fellowship of IofC. John took part in the *Action for Life 2* course and is using his computer skills in Oxford.

Justin Walford, from North Vancouver, BC, is now in India taking part in *Action for Life 3*. He is learning much about himself as well as the people in the course and those they interact with. In November he wrote “I have had to accept that I need to again look at some painful patterns in my life – ones which I thought I had dealt with but which have again popped up in these new and at times difficult surroundings. Still, I am glad to be here, and am glad to be challenged in the ways that I have been.”

To read about *Action for Life 3* see [www.afl.iofc.org](http://www.afl.iofc.org).

Peter Heyes, a retired teacher from Alberta, is using his skills and training as he works alongside the participants of *Action for Life 3*. He joined them in India, after spending some weeks in Ghana assisting with the Clean Election programme there.

Aron Tegenfeldt, a former Caux Scholar and participant of this year's Canadian Consultation, will be returning to the China-Burma border in the spring to carry out a peace-building training workshop. This is a follow up to Aron's fall visit when he assessed the training requests and met with various NGOs from Kachin State who have committed to participate in this training. It may provide an opportunity for further border training/assistance in the future.

### Why are you going to India?

As part of the IofC Canada team, and having taken part in the first *Action for Life* in 2001-2002, I am going to India to contribute to the Initiatives of Change international centre, Asia Plateau. As a retired professional nurse with previous experience, I feel I can enhance their ongoing programs and look forward to working with these dedicated young people. I will make time to follow up with Indian team members and other friends I made on previous visits. I am grateful for the privilege of returning to India where I experienced the recognition of the value and respect for the SPIRITUAL part of each person. I know this will renew my spirit and I will have much to share on my return.

Gwen McLean [gwenmclean@accesscomm.ca](mailto:gwenmclean@accesscomm.ca)

**A Financial Note:** If you would like to have a part in supporting any of the activities that you see in this Newsletter or the general expenses of Initiatives of Change in Canada, gifts and donations are very welcome and are tax deductible. Cheques should be made payable to Initiatives of Change and sent to the Accountant, Mr. Bruce Murray at 2114 Weiler Avenue, Sidney, BC V8L 1R4.

For more information on Initiatives of Change, please email to: [info@ca.iofc.org](mailto:info@ca.iofc.org) or visit the website at [www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org).