



Canadian Initiatives

Initiatives of Change

Fall 2014

Editor's message



Dear Readers,
Students of Canadian literature are familiar with these lines by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke:
*Love consists in this,
that two solitudes protect,
and touch, and greet each other.*

Using the phrase *Two Solitudes* as his title, Canadian author Hugh MacLennan crafted a compelling story of French and English Canada, divided for centuries by language and religion. Set against the events of the First World War, this novel has become a Canadian classic and has popularized the phrase 'Two Solitudes' in this country.

We at IofC Canada have adapted these words into 'Four Solitudes' to embrace the wider diversity of Canada-- aboriginals, francophones, anglophones, and more recent immigrants.

One of the things that IofC does best is creating spaces where people from these various 'solitudes' divided by race, culture, religion and politics, can discover their common humanity and speak to each other from their hearts.

We build understanding and trust among our Four Solitudes through workshops, dialogues, circles and occasionally, conferences such as the recent one in Calgary. The value of this work cannot be overestimated. All our readers can be justly proud of the fact that they are all part of it.

Through your donations in volunteer work and money, you help to change the world!

Susan Korah, Ottawa

Gandhi challenges conference participants to change the world

Calgary, Oct. 3, 2014— "The presentation Rajmohan made was awesome," commented Alana LaBelle, a participant in the 'Creating Connections: Inner Peace and Action' conference organized by IofC's Calgary team. "I feel honoured to meet and be in the same conference with him."

She was referring to the keynote address by Dr. Rajmohan Gandhi, former President of IofC International, at the Friday night gala dinner with 160 attendees that opened the two-day event.

Highlighting two of IofC's major contributions to the world, Gandhi stated: "Frank Buchman and the teams he helped to build--MRA, The Oxford Group and IofC teams-- have taken this old idea of listening to the inner voice to hundreds of thousands of people around the world."

He went on to say that a gathering of people of diverse races, cultures and religions, which is so normal today in Canada and in many parts of the world would have been unimaginable five decades ago, but Buchman's ideas-- originally conveyed to the world through the film *The Crowning Experience*-- were a major force in changing that.

One participant said that it was "a first to hear a speaker express their work in terms of their inner voice and it really opened my eyes and heart." Firyal Mohamed also noted that "he spoke of the power of IofC in bringing normalcy to conversations around inner peace, at a time when it wasn't as widely accepted as it is today."

Encouraging the diverse crowd present Gandhi said: "There is absolutely no situation in the world with which Canada is unconnected and the people are here, all around you. So who will take the initiative to befriend them, to knock on their doors, to put their foot inside, to enter their homes and to encourage conversation, dialogue, frankness, and courage?"

Earlier, Mayor Naheed Nenshi of Calgary stated in a video-taped message that change occurs not because of leaders or politicians but "because everyday people doing everyday things with their everyday hands can make extraordinary change happen."

With notes from Joy Newman, Firyal Mohamed and Alana LaBelle, Calgary

Conference workshops inspire ideas, commitment to action

Calgary, Oct. 4, 2014—Thirty four people attended a full day of workshops on the second day of the 'Creating Connections: Inner Peace and Action' conference.

The morning's theme 'Creativity and leading from the centre' was developed through the 'Quiet Time' workshop given by Alejandro Ramirez. As expressed in the invitation: "When people listen to what is deepest in their hearts, insights often come which lead in unexpected directions. The regular practice of silence can give access to a source of truth, renewal, inspiration and empowerment."



Dr. Gandhi with Alana LaBelle, descendant of Chief Walking Buffalo



Janyce Konkin

Another workshop led by Joy Newman and Alessandro Anifowose, was entitled 'lofC changing the world'. This narrated some of the history and successes of lofC Canada with story sharing by Beverly Simms (the power of peace bowl workshops), Bill Bocock (generations of farmers), Jenny Bocock (finding inner peace), Augustino Lucano (learnings from trustbuilding workshops) and Michael Prior (responding to a need in Eastern Europe).

The session was completed with an introduction of Creators of Peace Circles by Canadian Coordinator, Anne Hartnell, who engaged the audience in an interactive taster of this lofC success story.

'The human side of recycling,' a presentation by Kathy Cottee of Edmonton Waste Management illustrated the inspiring story of people marginalized by the work force whose lives were changed by dealing constructively with waste. Two comments from Kathy's film and presentation conveyed its power. In her video *Dump* Chris Topolinsky said: "Little tiny steps are all we have to do to make a difference." Kathy herself said: "Finding something beautiful in everyone gives my life meaning."

Saturday closed with a Circle of Sharing by about 30 participants and many commitments to volunteer, help and participate in future lofC events. Many commended Janyce Konkin and her team--Romesh Anand, Ameeta Cordell, Naushad Dada, Nicole Gavelin, Karen Huggins, Alana LaBelle, Firyal Mohamed, Joy Newman, Mahendra Singh and Kal Workneh--on a superbly organized and productive conference.

With notes from Janyce Konkin and Joy Newman, Calgary

Quebec students initiate Forgiveness Project

After seeing a memorable film about Diomède Niyonzima, a Burundi genocide survivor, who lost 43 relatives, we decided to undertake a project. Diomède currently lives in Quebec City and is President of Kira Burundi, a non-profit organization that helps street youth in his native country.

Our project is an introduction to forgiveness, a concept used worldwide, yet whose meaning and impact are little known to most young people today. Our approach consists in creating a space for dialogue and sharing between Diomède, and interested students from Collège Maisonneuve (a CEGEP which in the Quebec system of education, is a post-secondary institution that students attend before University) in a relaxed atmosphere conducive to raising awareness about social issues involving forgiveness and reconciliation.

Isabelle Fortier, the CEGEP's spiritual and community life advisor, put us in touch with Laurent Gagnon, the Quebec Coordinator of Initiatives of Change Canada, who had already presented the *Imam and the Pastor* to the students some years ago. It was a film that Nabil El Hadj Moussa, one of the student initiators of the project, remembered well.

Mme Fortier told us about the film *Beyond Forgiving*, which Laurent had presented to her last summer. A meeting was scheduled for a presentation to a dozen students both Christians and Muslims. This tool, focusing on forgiveness between two South African citizens, deeply moved us and inspired us to pursue our project. Laurent's advice and the story that his colleague Joseph Vumiliya bravely told us about his experience with the Rwandan genocide, will help us go forward with our plans to be more inclusive and to mobilize. We will definitely help the promoters of this documentary to pursue their task with conviction.

Sarah Yasmine Mefti, Montreal

Editor's note: Paying a warm tribute to Lorne Braun of Canada, who is retiring at the end of this year from his position on the International Council of lofC, Andrew Lancaster of Australia described him as "always efficient and never stressed." Here are Lorne's own reflections as he comes to the end of his term.

Lorne Braun reflects on time with International Council

In 1984, during a prolonged time of unemployment, I came to understand the difference between job and vocation. With studies in theology, building technology, linguistics; and later in political and ethnic conflict analysis, I have enjoyed a 30-year career in international development. I was attracted to lofC and began participating in Vancouver, then in Canada, and for the past six years on the International Council. I am a behind-the-scenes leader, a supporter and an administrator. I have tried to bring my skills and gifts to help build a stronger base for the international structure which exists to support the worldwide movement and network.

Some of the highlights for me have been the visits to Latin America to encourage teams in Colombia, Brazil and Argentina; several visits to Ethiopia (where I worked for three years several decades ago); and visits with lofC friends in many other countries.

A great joy has been working with a group of dedicated colleagues who are committed to living out in practice the principles of IofC. As I transition out of my official role as Treasurer, I am left with a solid appreciation for the values and practices which are foundational to IofC. My challenge to you is to be open to serving where both your head and heart lead you.

Lorne Braun, Vancouver, BC

Editor's note: Seventy people from 32 countries gathered at Caux from July 18-20 for the Global Assembly of IofC International. Here are some comments from one of the two delegates who represented IofC Canada. For a full report see <http://www.iofc.org/global-assembly-2014>.

Representing Canada at Global Assembly 2014

Caux, July 22, 2014--Participating in Global Assembly as one of two Canadian representatives, I talked about Canadian programs, emphasizing those I knew the best, the programs oriented towards bringing the 'four solitudes'

(aboriginals, francophones, anglophones and newer immigrants) closer together through meetings, discussions and films.

What touched me the most was the sharing from Australia, about the challenges the team was facing and how an outside expert helped them have a fresh and honest look at themselves.

During the event we had five workshops, 'Generational Transfer' being the most popular. In the workshop on teambuilding that Ulrike Keller (Switzerland) and I led, people from all continents shared their unique approaches: from feeling fully accepted in the team and sharing the same values, to having projects to work on, and creating partnerships with other organizations, and having the right balance between work and just being together, connecting.

Lively discussions arose around the budget of IofC: whether we would choose a larger budget and keep almost all services at the present level or cut the costs and services. In the end, the larger budget was passed for 2015, although some expressed concern that the faster we spend, the less time and money is left for IofC as an organization.

Morning reflections were a very important part of the GA. During one of them, Amit Mukherjee from India shared how listening to his listening to the inner voice led him to make positive changes several times. For example, once he was inspired to take over the leadership of a run-down hospital, which became a success. We all left inspired and ready for big changes and listening.

The last day, after the 'Living Differently' pilot project presentation, we were divided into regional groups and shared our next step ideas. One of these ideas was that Canada and US could perhaps share the work around the documentary *Beyond Forgiving* and consider a joint invitation to the two protagonists to visit.

We also elected the International Council. Before casting each vote, I discussed it with my Canadian colleague Anne Hartnell, so that it would reflect a wider Canadian point of view.

Ildze Elizabeth Slanke, Montreal

Au-delà du Pardon (Beyond Forgiving) artwork nearing completion

Surrey, BC, Oct. 4, 2014--Chris Hartnell, Manager of MRA Productions North America, and Tim Hall, Communications Coordinator are putting the finishing touches on the *Au-delà du Pardon / Beyond Forgiving* DVD in English and French (subtitled). They have been working with Laurent and Lise Gagnon in Quebec, and Viola Sebahana from the Ottawa office to translate the materials into French and package the DVDs for French and English speakers. Work on the menus, covers and labels are nearing completion. This work also includes translation of a study guide designed as a resource for facilitators to generate positive dialogue among viewers of the film on the themes of forgiveness, reconciliation and action.

The IofC – IC team looks forward to this resource being ready to address the needs of forgiveness and reconciliation between the four solitudes of Canada: aboriginals, francophones, anglophones and newer immigrants. As preparations continue, they invite you to consider how *Beyond Forgiving* might be a tool for positive change in your own community.

www.ca.iofc.org/beyond-forgiving

Tim Hall, Surrey, BC



Lorne Braun with Edward Peters

Elders' panel brings valuable historical perspective to Caux says convenor

Caux, July 31, 2014--I was in Caux from July 11 to July 31 as one of the International Panel of Elders, while the 'Just Governance for Human Security', 'Seeds of Inspiration' and 'CATS' (Children as Actors in Transforming Society) conferences took place.

I attended the Global Assembly, representing the Elders alongside Elisabeth Peters (Sweden) and also represented IofC Canada as the non-voting representative, alongside Elizabeth Slanke.

With more and more people coming to Caux who have very little background information on IofC and its history, it is important to have enough people available throughout the summer who have that historical perspective.

As the current Convenor of the Elders, I co-facilitated a lunch meeting with Elders, and some members of the International Council. Part of our role as Elders is to give support to the IC, so it was helpful to hear ways in which we can do that.

Anne Hartnell, Surrey, BC

Caux makes unique contribution, says conference assistant

Having been introduced to Initiatives of Change by my friend Dr. Genevieve LeBaron, a former member of IofC Canada's Council, I attended Caux for the first time in 2013 and found the experience to be so overwhelmingly unique, that I decided to join a conference organizing team for 2014.

Despite having grown up as a true global citizen in every sense of the word-- born in Iran, raised in Dubai, living in Vancouver and having worked in different parts of the world-- I can truly say that the experience at Caux is unmatched. From the beautiful venue, to the inspiring individuals which it attracts, I soon realized that Caux has the power to change the world for the better, a year at a time.

My role in the 2014 organizing committee allowed me to meet individuals who made significant changes within themselves in the face of extreme difficulty. Moderating a panel titled 'Qualities of a Changemaker' with Hanna Hopko, a civic activist and journalist from Ukraine, remains one of my most memorable moments from Caux. Listening to Hanna detail her experience of risking her life and that of her family's in her fight for Ukrainian rights brought me and members of the audience to tears.

While most of us could imagine that the conflict in Ukraine was painful, it was not until we heard Hanna's story that we began to grasp the terrifying experience of those who are on the front lines of such conflicts every day. It was then that I realized the investment in Caux is a necessity in a world where dialogues without the restraints of formality and bureaucracy have become a rarity. With this renewed appreciation for the work of Initiatives of Change,

I plan to return to Caux in 2015 to continue the work of creating conversations and relationships that otherwise would not happen.

Laya Behbahani, Vancouver



Laya Behbahani with Adelbert Otou Nguini from Cameroon

Calendar of Events

Calgary

Harmony Café Sat. November 8 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm at CommunityWise , 223 - 12 Avenue SW. All are invited for dialogue, healthy vegetarian food, local music and other surprises! This is a pilot project that will run the first Saturday of each month. For details, contact **Janyce Konkin at 403-270-0975.**

Ottawa

Multicultural Women's Friendship Circle
Tuesday evenings 6:30 to 8:00 pm from Oct. 28 to Dec. 2 at Suite 105-261 Cooper St. Contact: **Susan Korah at 613-241-4967.**

Quebec

The permanent **Circles of Trust** resume in the fall in Victoriaville, Montreal and Quebec City. The monthly **Circle of Dialogue** in Montreal will continue its meetings in the fall and winter. For details, contact **Laurent Gagnon at 514-364-9808.**

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 105-261 Cooper St., Ottawa ON K2P 0G5

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To submit articles and pictures, e-mail susan.korah@sympatico.ca. **The deadline for the next edition is December 19, 2014.**

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