



Canadian Initiatives

Initiatives of Change

Summer 2015

Editor's message



Dear Readers,

Two IofC Canada's contributions to peacebuilding make remarkable stories that began in two completely different parts of the world.

One started in South Sudan, where the power struggle between tribal leaders plunged the country into a cyclone of violence. Despite repeated attempts at peace, some of the most vicious fighting there erupted during the last few months.

But in Calgary, far from these scenes of bloodshed and misery, the South Sudanese diaspora, members of the same ethnic groups, are engaged together in peaceful, constructive activities. Their leaders credit this transformation to IofC's trustbuilding workshops where they learned new ways of seeing themselves and others.

The other story has its origins in our own country. One chapter of it closed and another opened with the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report on Indian residential schools where thousands of aboriginal children suffered heart-wrenching cruelties.

But here again, IofC has played a significant role in healing wounds and creating more respectful relations between aboriginals and other Canadians. The Citizen Project and its spin-off Circles of Trust are proof of that.

IofC has much to contribute to Canada and the world. Let's all take heart from these stories and be inspired to continue this work!

Susan Korah, Ottawa

AGM participants discuss moving forward with elders' wisdom and young generation's energy

Calgary, June 8, 2015--
"Moving Forward--Crossing the River" was the theme of the June 6-8 weekend as 40 members gathered at the FCJ Conference Centre near the Elbow River for the AGM, and to reflect deeply on the transitional phase of the IofC movement in Canada.

The theme, "Moving Forward--Crossing the River," was a metaphor for moving into the future with the synergy created by combining the wisdom of the older generation and the energy of youth. The Calgary preparation team had laid the groundwork by conducting a members' survey. Presenting the results, Janyce Konkin, Regional Coordinator of Programs for Alberta said she was encouraged by the number of people who indicated their willingness to serve on committees and do the work to keep IofC moving forward.

Introducing the theme of transition, **Ashley Muller**, a new member and University of Calgary student said: "... as a newer member of IofC, I am energized to take part in such an organization that believes in building bridges of trust across the world's divides.

"Since I was first involved with IofC it became evident that the organization has been in a phase of transition . . . as in evolution, another piece to the puzzle, another form with the same genetic makeup, another brick to lay upon the foundation of the building, transition as in growth and development and expansion."

Drawing on Ashley's experience, the team presented the idea of crossing the river on a RAFT. RAFT refers to Reconciliation, Affirmation, Forgiveness, and Think Destination. (A concept that combines the ideas of David Pollock, an American sociologist and expert on "Third Culture" children, with the IofC concept of forgiveness.)

Participants were encouraged to build a 'raft' based on these qualities to move IofC 'across the river' from the past to the future.

Symbolizing the process of 'letting go' of some things, and carrying others forward, participants gathered and placed objects into peace bowls created by Banff sculptor Beverly Simms. At the end of the session, each person explained the significance of the objects they chose.

New Board of Directors

At the AGM portion of the weekend, all seven members put forward by the nominations committee were elected by acclamation. The new Board of Directors are: **Jean-Noël André, Richard Batsinduka, Lorne Braun, Augustino Lucano, Firyal Mohamed, Samrawit Mersha and Sara Vassigh.**



Ashley Muller presents survey results

Appreciation of past Directors

Three Directors, **Richard Weeks**, **Bill Parker** and **Elizabeth Slanke**, who stepped down at the end of the meeting were warmly thanked for their years of service and given cards and gifts. A gift was also given for a former Board member, Lucie Pagé.

Remembering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report

Since the AGM weekend coincided with the release in Ottawa of the TRC Report on Indian residential schools, this was very much on peoples' minds and hearts, because IofC Canada has had a long tradition of building trust between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

Two senior aboriginal members of IofC, **Alvin Manitopyes** and **Lee Crowchild**, blessed the opening and closing of the weekend. Both shared of their concerns, experiences and hopes. Many were struck and challenged by Lee's comment, "You don't need to apologize, just live differently."

Watching the proceedings from afar: A technological innovation

Technology enabled something new to take place at this AGM. Through the work of **Tim Hall** and **Chris Hartnell**, a web link had been set up which enabled members across the country to watch the meeting in their homes. They were able to view the Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday morning sessions. People joined in from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec.

Janyce Konkin, Calgary, Anne Hartnell and Tim Hall, Surrey, BC

IofC works with Calgary South Sudanese to heal wounds of war

Calgary, June 15, 2015—Home to the largest population of South Sudanese in Canada, Calgary could potentially be a powder keg of tribal tension that could flare up into violence at any given moment. But instead, dialogue, discussions, the city's first ever South Sudanese ethnic gala and peaceful demonstrations in support of human rights have marked community life for the diaspora in this city.

This is in no small measure due to the trustbuilding and healing and reconciliation workshops organized by Janyce Konkin, IofC's Regional Coordinator of Programs for Alberta.

Most of the work of healing wounds and building bridges of understanding within this community -- torn apart by years of internal strife in their home country-- is being coordinated by 'graduates' of these workshops. In the forefront of these community building activities are **Augustino Lucano**, **Khor Reat Top**, **Nhial Wicleek**, and **Gatluak Bichoik**; also **Nyabuoy Gatbel** who met IofC through the Friends of South Sudan Network.



Janyce Konkin with South Sudanese in Calgary

Asked to share what difference IofC has made in their lives, **Khor** said that he learned to look at similarities instead of differences. "An important lesson for me was that people who don't reflect, react instead. It is important to start with myself," he added.

Gatluak said that he learned to look at how he internalizes his feelings and emotions and recognized that he needed to accept himself first, to heal his own wounds first. He said that he now chooses his words wisely and listens more before speaking. **Augustino** has internalized the power of QuietTime (an IofC practice that promotes listening to one's inner voice) to reflect on how he can continue to focus on unselfishly helping others, in Canada and in South Sudan and Kenya, where many South Sudanese refugees continue to live.

An important result of IofC's workshops is that a dialogue has been opened up between two South Sudanese community associations in the city to build a unified group that will work together to meet everyone's needs.

Throughout 2014, the South Sudanese community organized and participated in several important events including the Sudanese ethnic gala on August 16 and the Nuer genocide Memorial on December 20. The latter event --commemorating the massacre of 20,000 members of the Nuer tribe during the South Sudan civil war-- was groundbreaking because the members of various tribes stood together as one to protest in peaceful and constructive ways against the violation of human rights.

"We are working extremely hard to bring awareness, unity and peace to the diverse South Sudanese communities through events targeting certain topics and workshops," said **Nyabuoy Gatbel**, adding that 2015 is busier than ever in this regard.

Janyce Konkin, Calgary

IofC-Farmer's Dialogue sponsors two events to open dialogue on faith, science and environmental issues

Vancouver, May 9, 2015--It started as a partnership between the IofC Canada film team (**Chris Hartnell** and **Tim Hall** of MRA Productions / FLT Films North America) and A Rocha Canada (a non-profit Christian environmental organization) when they established a shared media studio at A Rocha's Brooksdale Environmental Centre in 2013.

This partnership was strengthened last spring when IofC - Farmers' Dialogue supported two events that A Rocha co-hosted with Regent College, a Vancouver theological school.

Holy Ground: Answering God's Call to Creation Care

This was a three-day conference from May 5-8 featuring over ten speakers, several field trips and hands-on workshops. Topics ranged from "Earthing the Gospel" to "Stories of Hope" and "Creation's Care and Us: An Indigenous Perspective."

A generous supporter of Initiatives of Change's involvement in both events, **Bill Boccock** from St. Albert, Alberta was able to attend. "As a farmer and member of Farmers' Dialogue it was a privilege to attend the conference hosted by Regent College and A Rocha Canada in Vancouver," he said. "Benefiting from Chris Hartnell's initiatives and networking, I met dynamic people and outstanding leaders, one being Preston Manning who had been a dinner guest at our farm approximately 50 years ago. Chris and I had breakfast with Terry LeBlanc who spoke at the conference on "Creation's Care and Us: An Indigenous Perspective". One of Terry's perspectives is "We do not care for Creation, Creation cares for us."

Earthkeeping: A Climate for Change

This was an evening event on May 7, featuring acclaimed atmospheric scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, named one of *Time Magazine's*



Bill Boccock (left) with Jeffrey Greenman

top 100 most influential people in the world in 2014. Much of her work has been about engaging Christians with climate change – even co-authoring a book with her husband called *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-based Decisions*.

Speaking on the science of climate change to over 800 people at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, Dr. Hayhoe stated that our climate is changing because of carbon and other particles being injected into the atmosphere. Emphasizing that our choices matter – that humans have the choice to mitigate, adapt to or suffer from the effects of climate change, she commented, "This is where values come in. How do we determine where to go with these choices? How do we determine what's too much suffering? How do we determine what's enough mitigation? The science doesn't answer those questions."

A unique response panel followed Dr. Hayhoe's talk and discussed her proposed solution, which she described as 'a convergence of values.' As Regent College President Jeffrey Greenman stated, "Katharine's presentation was ultimately an appeal for compassion, for empathy and ultimately for love."

Initiatives of Change – Farmers' Dialogue supported these events as a way to build meaningful bridges around environmental issues where often 'science' and 'faith' can be pitted against each other.

Chris Hartnell, Tim Hall, Surrey, BC

Beyond Forgiving film launch in Quebec encourages four solitudes to build together

Quebec City, June 11, 2015-- After several months of ground work with five partner organizations, *Beyond Forgiving*, the IofC film made in South Africa, was screened to an audience of 56 diversified and enthusiastic participants in the spirit of the evening's theme: "To come out of our solitudes - Dare to build together."

After the film screening, four chosen participants --each one representing one of the four 'solitudes' of Canada (aboriginals, French, English and new immigrants) --gave a testimony and made a link with the film in the context of Quebec. All witnesses spoke from their heart, deeply moved the audience, and gave hope as well as ideas on how to face our needs together.

They were: Marie-Émilie Lacroix, a First Nation Innu, teacher and author, Denis Paquin, oblate priest, author and psychologist, Cynthia Patterson, deacon, wife of the Anglican bishop of Quebec City, and Olga **Garcia** from Mexico, teacher working with diverse immigrant communities.

After a long time of silence participants were invited to share their own deep convictions on the relevance of the film and its use in the region.

Each partner contributed to the success of this event from the planning and promotion to services during the launch. IofC and some partners are forming a committee to prepare a follow-up to this activity. There is a future.
Laurent Gagnon, Joseph Vumiliya, Montreal

Play *Voix du Silence* featured in closing events marking TRC report release

Ottawa, June 2, 2015 ---The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) held several closing events here between May 31 and June 3 to mark the release of its final report on Indian residential schools.



Moving enactment of residential school experiences

Over the six years when the Commission held hearings across the country, people associated with IofC Canada have engaged in the process and taken part in the events.

In Quebec, the Citizen Project and the Circles of Trust that have grown from it have helped raise awareness and bring Canadians of all backgrounds into the conversation. The TRC recognized the importance of this contribution by including in the closing events a performance of *Voix du Silence*, which was a central part of the Citizen Project, a fruitful partnership between IofC and Espace Art Nature.

Voix du Silence is a moving retelling of the residential school story through the words of survivors, evoking pain but also the hope of healing and reconciliation. The performance on June 1 was on an outdoor stage erected in front of Ottawa City Hall and was introduced by TRC Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild. Fifteen people responded to the invitation to take part in a Circle of Trust the following day.

On May 31, twenty local IofC friends gathered for supper at the home of **Richard and Rosalind Weeks** to welcome the four members of Espace Art Nature, Isabelle, Bénédicte, Jean-Noël and Pierre, and Nicole O'Bomsawin from Odanak. Earlier that day, thousands joined the Reconciliation Walk with residential school survivors, church and union groups, First Nations, local, provincial and national political leaders, led by the TRC Commissioners. The question for us all is: How do we continue to walk together in an ever more meaningful way, recognizing that 'this ending is only a beginning'?

Richard Weeks, Ottawa

Calendar of Events

A full calendar of events will be published in the Fall edition of *Canadian Initiatives*.

AGM survey results point to promising future

The AGM coordinating team received 40 responses to the survey they sent out. Briefly, 58 percent of respondents were under 65 years; there has been a 26 percent surge in younger generation support over the last five years; 53 percent have been involved for less than 20 years; 72 percent have some interest in carrying the load of committee work into the future, with the highest level of interest indicated in programs and fundraising. "Thank you to all who responded, because the results formed the basis of some very fruitful discussions at the AGM on the future of IofC Canada," said Janyce Konkin, who led the coordinating team.

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-Metcalf St., Ottawa ON K2P 1P9

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