



# Canadian Initiatives

Initiatives of Change

Winter 2016

## Editor's message



Dear Readers,  
"Moving Forward-Crossing the River" was the theme of IofC Canada's AGM last summer. As we move forward into 2016, let us reflect on this metaphor for the synergy created by combining the wisdom and experience of the older generation with the energy and idealism of youth.

An excellent example of this team work by people of different generations who share IofC's values of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love is the story sent by **Peter Heyes**, an IofC Canada member since 1964. Peter's lifelong commitment to mentoring youth has paid off in the work that he does with young people in faraway Cambodia. A project he initiated ten years ago, has been embraced so enthusiastically by IofC Cambodia youth that Peter says they are now able to manage without his help. Read his reflections on page 2.

**Chris Hartnell**, a pioneer of IofC Canada, has similarly mentored **Tim Hall**, a young film maker, who went on from completing his Caux scholarship program in the summer of 2013 to working as our very able Communications Assistant.

**Ashley Muller**, now with IofC in Oxford, UK, began her journey as an intern with **Janyce Konkin**, Regional Coordinator of Programs in Alberta.

On behalf of IofC Canada, I would like to thank all the mentors and young people who learned from them. Happy New Year to the whole IofC Canada family!

**Susan Korah, Ottawa**

## IofC Ottawa launches program of regular meetings

Ottawa, December 9, 2015—Members and friends of IofC in the Ottawa/Gatineau area have started meeting on a regular basis at the Ottawa office of IofC Canada.



Lunchtime discussion in Ottawa

Organizers of these meetings are Mary Ella Keblusek, Elaine Gordon, and Andrew Drake. Two lunch time meetings have been held so far, with eight to ten attendees at each.

At the November lunch meeting, participants split their time between sharing their personal stories, and a special presentation about South Sudan from Justin Laku.

Justin was a Caux Scholar this past summer and he is integrally involved in working with various stakeholders in the recent conflicts that have been plaguing South Sudan.

December's meeting focused on a discussion of what types of projects the team in Ottawa would like to work on together. A number of ideas are under consideration, including hosting a regular 'movie night' where the organizers would screen an IofC film (possibly in the office or in a home), followed by facilitated discussion. This could be a great way to connect with IofC members, as well as invite new people to learn more about IofC.

The organizers plan to continue the two-hour meetings on a regular basis with the first hour devoted to eating and social time, and the second hour for a particular topic or speaker.

A short survey will be sent out in January to the IofC Ottawa/Gatineau team to identify best times for gatherings and gather more ideas for projects.

**Mary Ella Keblusek, Ottawa**

## IofC partners with Intercultural Dialogue Institute in conference on Calgary's future

Calgary, Nov. 19, 2015—Janyce Konkin, IofC's Regional Coordinator of Programs in Alberta took two of IofC's key messages to an audience of 150 gathered at the Hyatt Regency Hotel here for a conference on Calgary's future. One of these was "Building Trust Across the World's Divides."

Emphasizing the difference between 'tolerance' and 'acceptance', she challenged them to "be bold – to



Janyce Konkin with IDI's Malik Muradov

explore different communities, to talk to new people in your own environment and embrace something new from an immigrant community you know little about.”

### **lofC introduced as partner in community building**

Janyce was a panelist at a conference entitled *Calgary 2020: Responsible Citizens Looking Into the Future*. Organized by Calgary’s Intercultural Dialogue Institute, with lofC as an organizational partner, the event- which ended with a gala friendship dinner- was one of the highlights of the Institute’s calendar for 2015.

The conference explored the future of Calgary as a cohesive, harmonious community and examined various tools for reaching that goal. lofC was presented to the audience as a “partner in community building.” Participants also had an opportunity to learn more about lofC through the lofC display table in the foyer.

Speaking on the subject of “Building Cohesive Society: Responsibilities of Equal Association,” Janyce shared personal stories from her local work of community building. She referred to the feeling of emptiness many people report when they experience a lack of connection to their community, their families and to their specific immigrant group.

### **Change starts with the individual**

The other lofC concept that Janyce highlighted was the belief that change must start with the individual. “If each one of us will take the initiative to change ourselves first, then the world around us will change also,” she concluded. We will build a community of common values, equal worth and respect. We become a better, healthier, safer, more dynamic society.”

During the discussion period that followed the panelists’ presentations, Janyce’s call to be bold was answered by the many commitments that participants made to learn more about other ethnic groups and to welcome refugees to Calgary.

**Editor’s note:** It’s a win-win situation for all concerned. Long-time lofC Canada member **Peter Heyes** from Sturgeon County, Alberta, is a man of vision, but he also has ways of turning that vision into action. He spends eight months a year in South East Asia. Over the years Peter- together with partners and friends in Canada and Cambodia- has developed a program bringing on average 20 to 25 Canadian dental workers a year who have treated thousands of poor village adults and children in that South East Asian country. Here, in Peter’s own words is the story of this initiative which began ten years ago at a dinner in Canada, and continues to flourish with the dedicated support of Cambodian lofC youth.

### **Alberta’s Peter Heyes reflects on ten years of dental care program in Cambodia**

Eleven years ago I took care of four Canadians visiting Cambodia. One of the women was afraid of going out into the city so each day I’d meet with the group and take them around. When I got back to Canada they thanked me for my help and asked if I’d join them for dinner. One of the husbands was a dentist and during our meal he asked if I’d heard of Kindness in Action, which is an Alberta based dental NGO that mainly did volunteer work in Central America. I started to think how wonderful it would be to bring them to Cambodia to help the poor. I asked if they would go to Cambodia. He didn’t travel with KIA but suggested I write to them. I sent them a proposal, was short listed and finally was told a group would come the following year. It was only at that moment that I realised that I would have to all the logistical work, dealing with the government, finding patients, etc. In my innocence I’d imagined that they would simply go to Cambodia, do the work and then head back home without any help from me.



**Peter Heyes with dental volunteer**

### **Support from Son Soubert, Advisor to King of Cambodia**

I spoke to my young lofC friends, who were all in university at the time, and they decided it would be a good thing for us to do. I also contacted His Excellency Son Soubert, -- High Privy Counsellor to the King of Cambodia--who runs two children’s homes. He thought it would be a good idea to host the dentists so that the 150 or so children he cares for could have dental treatment. We also contacted other agencies such as “Buddhism for Development” and the Roman Catholic church to see if we could treat the people in the rural areas where they worked.

### **Spin-offs from dental care program benefit communities**

Over the years we’ve developed a program bringing on average 20 to 25 dental workers from Canada who have treated thousands of poor village people and children in care. Many of these people don’t have the money to even travel into the town to have treatment. The young lofC Cambodia people who help me are now mostly married with families but believe that this is an important program and are happy to do the work. They have worked on all ten programs, and so they are able to do them without my help.

***I’m the Western person who worries about everything while they just tell me to calm down and that all will be well!***

Apart from the help given to around 10,000 vulnerable people, my lofC friends receive a salary and the Canadian volunteers donate money to various projects. For example, one group purchased a rice grinding machine for the mother of one of the lofC friends. She now provides about 50 children in Soubert's home in Battambang (city in Northwest Cambodia) with one noodle meal a week for an entire year with funds I obtain from the dental workers and a Canadian friend. This is a huge treat as all the other meals are rice. Others have "adopted" children and paid for their education.

### Hope for future

It's hard work but I've gained so much from it. I'm very close to the friends who help me and they care for me in so many different ways. They have gained confidence working with foreigners and this has helped them with their jobs and also with the work they do with lofC in Cambodia. Group leaders have told me that my Cambodian friends are the best volunteers they have worked with, and that our program is the best organized. It's good to know that we are appreciated. I have no idea how long I'll be able to continue bringing the volunteers to Cambodia but I'm hoping the local people will be able to carry on with the work.

**Peter Heyes, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

**Editor's note:** Born in Toronto, **Ashley Muller** first met lofC while she was a student of International Development and Political Science at the University of Calgary. After an internship with the lofC team in the city, she completed the Caux Interns Leadership Program in the summer of 2015. She is currently working at lofC's office in Oxford, UK, fulfilling a wide range of responsibilities. One of these is her role as Coordinator of Peace Circles. Here is a shortened version of her journey from scepticism to a deep appreciation of the role of women as peacemakers. For a fuller account, please see our website <http://ca.iofc.org/young-canadian-discovers-power-peace-circles>

### Young Canadian discovers power of Peace Circles

All this talk about Peace Circles really used to agitate me. From my entitled and selfish outside perspective, it sounded to me like an escape and disconnect from the realities of the inequalities and injustices facing our world. If I am honest in exposing my pre-peace circle judgements, it seemed like an outdated way to vent about conflict, to talk about the problems in life in order to make yourself feel good about engaging in world issues, and then continuing with life with no sustainable solution or forward thinking.

**However, I was completely wrong.** Despite being involved with Initiatives of Change (lofC) since my student days at the University of Calgary, and advocating on behalf of lofC projects for one and a half years, I had yet to experience a Peace Circle – a foundational tool used within lofC towards peacebuilding, trustbuilding, and reconciliation. After moving to Oxford, UK in September, to work full time with Initiatives of Change, I was given the opportunity to attend a Peace Circle. Our group of ten women met on three different weekends throughout October and November, composed of two full-day and one half-day training sessions. To be honest, I was quite hesitant towards it.



**Ashley Muller**

### First impressions

My first impression, when I entered the room where the Peace Circle was held, was one of intimidation by the diverse representation of the women. I immediately became insecure, but as I began lowering the walls I had put up, I began realizing that these women in the room were even more empowered to combat injustice, to bring a voice to the voiceless, than I could even imagine. It was an opportunity to learn from other women how to meet the needs in their own communities, introduce authentic ways of sustainable living, and seek peace in new and creative ways.

We discussed topics including: What is peace? Where is your place of peace? What are the qualities of a peacemaker? Identify the peacemakers in your family line; the importance of team building; forgiveness of perpetrators (of violence), and overcoming victimhood; addressing core lofC values and principles: honesty, purity of intention, love, unselfishness; identifying our personal judgements towards ourselves and reconciling with those.

### Power to create peace in fellowship with other women

The Peace Circle is a place of coming into alignment with your personal convictions. Far from leaving you with nothing to do after 'venting,' it empowers you to join in fellowship with other women attempting to play their role in trustbuilding, peacebuilding and making change at every level of society.

**Ashley Muller, Oxford, UK, former intern with lofC Calgary**

### Quebec Team and partners host meeting for solitudes to build together

Quebec City, Nov. 11- Following the launch of the film *Beyond Forgiving* in Quebec City on June 11, the committee called "Intercultural Bridge" created by Initiatives of Change and Development and Peace, held a gathering with the theme **Out of our solitudes, dare to build together.**

This committee is made up of seven people with different backgrounds who have met monthly since August 7 to prepare for the first of a series of gatherings that will be held each season with diversified and relevant topics for society.

Forty-five dynamic participants highly appreciated this event with a diversity of programs- Aboriginal ceremony and legends, Mexican and Quebec legends. A quiet time of silence was followed by a circle of sharing, music and tasting of traditional Innu bannock bread. There were also two presentations by Quebec personalities. Louise Lacroix gave information on Quebec International Solidarity Days, and James Thwaites, Professor and Director of the Department of Industrial Relations at Laval University spoke on Human Rights. This is an encouraging sign for the next steps with the committee, participants and partners.

**Lucie Pagé, Laurent Gagnon, Joseph Vumiliya**

### **IofC Calgary co-hosts book launch with young South Sudanese poet**

Calgary, December 15, 2015— The Compass program developed by IofC's Calgary team ten years ago to give young people some direction to their lives continues to bear fruit, as one of its recent graduates, **Nyabuoy Gatbel**, a 22-year-old South Sudanese writer and model, teamed up with IofC to launch her first book of poetry, *The Fire Within*. Approximately 40 people attended the event held at the Parkdale United Church.

#### **Dialogue of Healing**

"It turned into an amazing catharsis and dialogue of healing for many as people took turns reading her poems," said **Janyce Konkin**, IofC's Regional Coordinator of Programs in Alberta.

The poems- described by the author as validating the experiences of the people who have experienced these things (war and trauma) - gives voice to those have no voice. "This is a perspective and a voice that says you matter. I hear you. I see you," she said.

Brian Seaman, who moderated the evening's discussion commented that the evening's honest and open conversation was a reminder of the power of story to break down barriers and lead to a deeper understanding of the shared human experience.

*The Fire Within* poetry book is all about validating everyday human experiences. It questions what we believe, our vulnerabilities, shame, guilt and basic human desires. It forces one to look within and address the hidden barriers to change," explained Nyabuoy.

#### **IofC's role**

Asked how the Compass program helped her, Nyabuoy said: "I know everyone wants their experiences, voice, dreams and journeys in life validated. People want to feel important. And especially as youth we need the tools to carve a direction in life that honours us uniquely as individuals. The Compass Program gave us the tools to design the world we want and who we want to be in it."

"IofC can continue to help by providing a safe place where my community members can express and change their lives as a result," she added.



**Nyabuoy Gatbel**

### **Calendar of Events**

#### **Calgary**

**Workshop on children, youth and families for the South Sudanese Community. Jan. 30, 2016, hosted by IofC and partner organizations. For more details contact Janyce Konkin at 403-270-0975 or Khor Top at 587-896-7239.**

Other IofC events are in the planning stage and will be posted on the events page of our website. Please check <http://ca.iofc.org/events> from time to time.

### **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](http://www.ca.iofc.org)

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

*Canadian Initiatives* is published four times a year by Initiatives of Change Canada. To subscribe, e-mail [admin@ca.iofc.org](mailto:admin@ca.iofc.org)

To submit articles and pictures, email [susan.korah@sympatico.ca](mailto:susan.korah@sympatico.ca). **The deadline for the next edition is March 11, 2016.**

For more information contact the national office or visit [www.ca.iofc.org](http://www.ca.iofc.org)