



Canadian Project enters its third year

Bridges to Community

Over 50 people attended the second gathering of the *Bridges to Community* group – a potluck dinner sponsored by the Muslim Council of Calgary, the Anglican Diocese and Initiatives of Change. An Aboriginal grace was said by Alvin Manitopyes, a Christian grace by The Reverend Tara Livingston, and a Muslim Prayer by Mr. Nabil Adanni. Arrangements were also made for Muslim friends to say their Sunset (Maghreb) Prayer in a curtained-off area of the hall.



Attendees were invited to talk about food rules in different communities and any other topic they felt important to them, taking the opportunity of having different religious backgrounds sitting together at each table speaking frankly and in trust. As they brought their dishes, each participant was invited to explain the contents so that people picking up food would know what they could and could not eat. This included Kosher and Halal food, but also food containing sugar, nuts or wheat. In this way, without saying so, it became apparent that dietary rules are not just religious, but also have deep impact on our health.

Some discussions covered food and different international flavours; other discussions were about current local issues and comparisons between eastern and western Canada. Other topics included international matters and the current state of affairs of people in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Three different conversations were overheard of people inviting others of a different faith community to their home.

In general, this was another step toward the *Bridges* team objective of building bridges of trust and understanding for our future generation.

Keith Newman, Calgary

My English Course

I carry on a personal dream, to learn English. It is a manner for me to create links between persons and to make efforts to understand more and more the approach of Initiatives of Change. I would like to have had the possibility for more dialogue with Englishspeakers present at the gathering on May 2008 at Quebec. I decided to write in English this text for the Newsletter. That is no perfect but this is a first step.

I am retired teacher and for 27 years, I am a deacon. I have known Initiatives of Change since January 1990. Since the time I get together with the team of Quebec and I bring my experience and my ideas. I believe that I am a more universal person because I want to know people whatever their language, their creed or their race.

On February 9th, I had to make a presentation in English on Initiatives of Change. I used a PowerPoint. There were Priests, Deacons and their wives, and other persons. Also, sister Juliette Laporte, who gives English courses.

The presentation lasted twenty minutes. I read a short story of the Founder of IofC and of his manner of bringing about these changes; besides, I presented the influence that he had around the world and which has lasted till today. I followed what is up with actual facts for Canada and specifically concerning the Province of Quebec like projects *The Imam & the Pastor*, *For the Love of Tomorrow* and *Open Homes, Listening Hearts*. At the end, I finished with my personal testimony.

I presented two books: *Beyond Borders* in English and French, and *Dynamic out of Silence* just in French. Each person received on small cards 72 French sentences which were taken from the book *Dynamic out of Silence*.

Each one received in French a copy of the magazine *Changer International* and the Canadian Newsletter. Afterwards, students had a discussion time around two questions: What did you learn from this presentation? In 2009, how can you build bridges with persons who touch your life? I was grateful for the comments of these friends.

I want to express thanks to Sister Juliette and my friends of the English course for the interest they had concerning IofC. I learnt a lot preparing this PowerPoint. I hope to live an immersion experience in English in the future. Since I started to follow this course I learned to speak with more confidence.

Yvon Matte, Donnacona

The Imam & the Pastor film continues to spread the message of reconciliation

Promoting the film in Quebec

Keltoum Boumedjane, both French and Algerian, has been living in Montreal for three years. She is studying in journalism and also writing her Master's thesis in sociology of religions on "The Challenges of Interfaith Dialogue." She is a member of the "Islam, Pluralism and Globalization Chair" at the University of Montreal.

I was acquainted with IofC through different activities in Montreal that I attended and where I volunteered. I have had the privilege of being an intern last summer at Caux for a conference on intercultural dialogue.

Since early February, I have been working part time to promote the documentary *The Imam & the Pastor*, chiefly to spread its message of peace in Quebec.

I was touched by the inner journey of the two main characters. Their collaboration not only speaks of two people of different confessions having grown closer but of their reconciliation effort after deep wounds were inflicted. The impact of this film lies in its universal message, meaningful to believers and non-believers alike, because of its ethical dimension and its components of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

Each of us has experienced hurts and has had to choose between breaking up or healing up. It is a place where we can discover freedom through forgiveness and also that improbable transformation of how, deep inside, we look at the other. Those two men are showing us how the river of our differences does not have to become the sea of our divergences but can turn into one of the many streams that discharge in the ocean of our convergences.

I strongly believe this film is relevant for Quebec and also for Canada, in the educational, intercultural and interfaith spheres. I consider it a privilege to sit on its honorary committee and to be in charge of spreading out such a message of peace.

Keltoum Boumedjane, Montreal

Lively dialogue follows Ottawa showing

The first public screening of the French language version of *The Imam & the Pastor* in Ottawa took place at Saint

Paul University on January 23. The event was a collaboration between the Conflict Studies program of the university and Initiatives of Change. The panel consisted of Philothée Kigeme from Burundi, a student in Conflict Studies, Oscar Gasana, a federal civil servant, graduate from the Masters in conflict studies program, former President of the Rwandan community association, and Abdourahman Kahin, psychologist, originally from Djibouti, who represented Muslim Presence. The audience of 35-40 engaged very actively in the discussion that followed the film. At least some of the empty seats could be attributed, somewhat ironically, to the city's own unresolved conflict – a month long transit strike.

The relatively small number of people made it possible to have good and open dialogue between the panelists and the audience, following the film. "Before seeing the film, I didn't think reconciliation was possible," said Philothée, "but now I know it is. Without hope, we're at the end of the road, but when you have hope, you go on." She continued, "We need to exploit what is common to us, rather than our differences. Somebody always has to be the first to change, like the Imam visiting the Pastor's ill mother." Abdourahman noted that the words reconciliation, forgiveness, trust and peace occur many times through the film, but that without acceptance, they are not possible. "You can't put a price on peace," he said.

Richard Weeks, Ottawa

Prairie Messenger reports on Regina screening

On the front page of the *Prairie Messenger*, a publication of the Benedictine monks of St Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Saskatchewan, was a report of a showing of *The Imam & the Pastor* at Luther College, University of Regina, on January 21. The *Prairie Messenger*, an organ of the Catholic Church, reports on parochial news as well as current world affairs. It is circulated widely to congregants and the public throughout Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Frank Flegel reported that the film was hosted by the chaplaincy of both Luther and Campion Colleges, for students

and staff throughout the University. He said the story of Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye demonstrated that it is possible for two people who passionately hated each other to find forgiveness and peace. One of the audience, Matthew Livingstone, SJ, who is studying to be a Jesuit priest, said during a discussion following the film that he had lived much of his life in Muslim countries and found that there is a great deal of misunderstanding of Islam in the west. It was actually from Muslims that he had learned to pray. Those who attended, Flegel reported, described the film as a powerful experience.

The report ended with a note about the availability of the film "through Initiatives of Change, a global network devoted to building trust among people," followed by list of IofC offices.

Jean Parker, Regina

After this event in Regina, a woman in Invermere, B.C. read the report in The Prairie Messenger and ordered a copy of the film for two churches in her area.

Preview sparks interest in Toronto

Four people from the local IofC group met with six young people connected to Little Trinity Anglican Church, Toronto. The meeting was scheduled to preview the movie *The Imam & the Pastor* prior to showing it at Trinity Church. The film was greatly appreciated and was followed by an enthusiastic and interesting discussion on both the film and Initiatives of Change. We expect to meet again for the showing of the film to a larger audience and also hope to plan future events together where we can continue sharing about the way of life of Initiatives of Change.

One young woman said "It gave me lots to think about, breaking barriers in my life with the people around me."

Another person commented, "I was amazed by the confession that was said by the religious leaders and the apology."

Some of the group from Trinity Church are looking forward to seeing the next movie which is about the conflict in Lebanon, and that might happen in March.

Jessie Henthorn, Toronto

Initiatives of Change Training Programs in Asia provide valuable life experiences

Action for Life Outreach

My Action for Life (AfL) group has been on the move for about six weeks, mostly in the Mongolian Christian area of India, up near China, Bangladesh and Burma. It was mountainous, terrible roads and very cold.

It was a troubled area because of different military groups wanting some kind of independence from the rest of India. It's fascinating how the local people continue with their lives when there is so much violence around them. At Christmas time we had a concert in a home complete with a grand piano and music by Chopin, Prokofiev, songs from opera and Irish dance music. People cannot allow terrorism of any form to control their lives.

Our new year was spent around the open fire. We each lit a candle for what we wished for each one of us, and talked about what the year had meant for us. Some of us were sad as family and friends had died. The young folk said very profound things. I said I don't worry about the past too much as it's gone and, at my age, I can only focus on one day at a time.

We had an interesting interaction with addicts in a centre for men, and another visit to a centre for vulnerable women – mostly street workers. The Baptist church is very strong in Nagaland and one aspect of worship is the mass prayer. It's amazing – everyone shouting to God. It was wonderful because it gave me a chance to tell people that God can't shout back and that he speaks softly through our hearts.

Now we are back at the centre, having a time of evaluation and planning for our next outreach in Asia, leaving on February 1. I bumped into Gwen (McLean) yesterday – she's enjoying herself here getting to know the young folk with AfL, the Asia Plateau interns and older people she's met before.

Peter Heyes, from Edmonton

Action for Life Challenge

I want to challenge the world to care. It's a difficult task. And to do it, I must really care. If I can't commit to bringing that transformation in the world and if I don't care about it deeply and strongly, then how can I genuinely challenge others to do so? If I see someone's potential to care for a

situation and make a positive change in the world or in their own lives, I want to be able to challenge them to make that change. That means I need to be the one who cares first.

Nejla Azima, from Toronto

Encounters in India

I was met at Asia Plateau by Tsering Nyima, a young Tibetan friend, who is the Coordinator of the Asia Plateau Intern Program (APIP). In the next days I met the assistant coordinators and ten young people from Assam, Tibet, Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan. I appreciated the way I was included in this program, and during the next weeks I had an IofC refresher course, which I needed very much!!

I spent four days in Baramati with Anasuya Garagate where it was great to be part of her extended family of children, grandmas and aunts.

In the first week of January, the Action for Life 4 groups returned from their two-month outreach into four areas of India. The influx of these 30 plus young people revitalized our spirits. It was really so special to get to know our Canadian participant Nejla Azima from Toronto. She is a gifted young lady who obviously is enjoying her experience with other international participants, and is sharing her gifts and talents with her friends in AfL, which I believe is a vital program of Initiatives of Change International. Peter Heyes from Edmonton, one of the coordinators of AfL, is also a gift to AfL as a teacher, sensitive listener and his wonderful sense of humor. AfL4 left for outreach into four other countries.

During the first week of February, eight new APIP members arrived, and it is a privilege getting to know one another through telling our life stories. February 9-14 we had 100 Tibetan young people come for a conference titled *A Global Vision for Young Tibetans*. Having this one-to-one encounter with Tibetans is indeed a humbling experience. What this nation and people have been through I had not really understood and still have so much to learn.

Before returning home, I will visit friends in Nagaland, Shillong, and Kerala and will be back in Regina April 3.

Gwen McLean, from Regina

Cambodia-Vietnam Dialogue relates to life in Toronto

I am a young man from Vietnam who traveled to Cambodia with a group of 24 young Vietnamese, to take part in the 2nd Cambodia-Vietnam Dialogue in the summer of 2005. This Dialogue was initiated by the AfL2 team and is now an annual event. The Dialogue's mission was to bring 50 young people from the two countries together to help each other raise awareness of reconciliation concerning the history between Vietnam and Cambodia, and to apply IofC's philosophy of change: the four absolutes "love, purity, unselfishness, and honesty."

After graduating from the Foreign Trade University in Ho Chi Minh City, I moved to Toronto in 2006 where I am currently pursuing Administrative Studies at York University.

My Dialogue experience relates to life in Toronto because there are representatives from all parts of the world, and we're all aware that diversity and equity are very complicated here. There is negative history between various nationalities and opposing religious groups; we literally have a mixed bowl of soup. To me, it's extremely hard to keep an open mind. People tend to group with people who are like themselves in terms of age, race, religion, etc., and inclusion/exclusion in these "groups" are very sensitive issues.

Maybe IofC's role in bringing groups together is in the same way that IofC is doing around the globe. Put them in the same room and, instead of pointing fingers, educate them on IofC's philosophy: change starts from individual, "Be the change you want to see in the world." It's not easy, honestly. I'd like to think of myself as an open-minded person, but there are times I'm not really open. Therefore I understand that it's a great deal for a person to open his/her mind, especially when he/she belongs to a certain group.

Volunteering is what I like to do best since I perceive myself as having something to give to society, and I may learn valuable experience along the way. Because of my studies I am not as active as I used to be back in Vietnam, but I give in ways that I can, such as being a Peer Mentor to help new students have a smooth transition to university life.

Quoc-Thanh Ho, Toronto

Youth Activities

Interfaith Youth Council partners with IofC

In September 2008, IofC Calgary formed a partnership with IDEA (Interfaith Dialogue, Education and Action) to provide biweekly meetings for up to 12 youth from six different faith communities. Through dialogue they discuss shared values, through artistic expression they learn about each other and through action in community projects they put their values into action.



Stefan Zulauf, after working last year with the founder of the Interfaith Youth Council (IYC), Afroza Nanji, is coordinating this year. A young lady from the Sikh community is working with Stefan in the meetings.

On November 30, representatives of IYC were invited as guests to the worship chapel at the Bethany Care Centre. As part of the service they were asked to share a worship song of peace.

If anyone would like to participate in this project, please contact the Calgary office 403 270 0975 or email: iofc.calgary@ca.iofc.org

Joy Newman, Calgary

IofC Club at UofC

January 19–23 was Clubs Week at the University of Calgary where newly appointed Interim Youth Coordinator for IofC Calgary, Stefan Zulauf, and Deepa Sury, the IofC Club's Vice President, welcomed students to their table on campus.



New students signed up to attend the first meeting of the Semester under the theme *What kind of world do I want?* This meeting was on Wednesday, January 28 and a good discussion took place about IofC's role in building bridges of trust.

Joy Newman, Calgary

Another meeting of the IofC Club was held on February 9 and plans are underway to hold three events in the next couple of months. The Club's president, Nicole LaVille is busy advertising the first event, to be held on March 5. Entitled *Visions for Peace*, it will include a showing of Kofi Annan's speech recorded at Caux, the international conference centre of Initiatives of Change. This 13-minute speech will be followed by a discussion where everyone can share what is on their mind when it comes to peace.

Stefan Zulauf, Calgary

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 19. IofC Club at UofC. Visions of Peace. A conversation with Mohamed Sahnoun. Contact: szulauf@gmx.net

March 22. Interfaith dialogue about Lent (fasting in 3 religions) and Trust in God. Toronto United Mennonite Church. Contact: Iman Al Ghafari 647 400 1737

March 24. Care of the Earth event at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Regina. Contact: Jean Parker 306 522 1514

April 5. Montreal: Film showing of *The Imam & the Pastor* at the church of the Gagnons. Contact: l.gagnon@ca.iofc.org

April 16. Creators of Peace. The first of 6 Peace Circles to be held in Richmond, B.C. Contact: annehartnell@ca.iofc.org

May 30. Quebec City - Open Homes, Listening Hearts activity, in partnership with the Espace Art Nature group of Neuville. Contact: lucie.page@ca.iofc.org

June 13 Montreal: Open Homes, Listening Hearts activity. Contact: lise.gagnon@videotron.qc.ca

July 9 to August 15. International Caux Conferences. Trust and Integrity for a Sustainable World.

Building Communities of Hope

Author, film critic and grass roots peace-builder from Northern Ireland, Gareth Higgins, was the guest speaker at the Justice Institute of B.C. on February 26. IofC partnered with the Justice Institute and UBC for this event.

Using film clips, poetry, his engaging style of storytelling and personal experiences, he led the audience of students, staff, conflict resolution trainers and members of the public through an interactive experience.

"What has happened to our capacity for empathy?" he wondered. "The original conflict is within ourselves" he said. "My contradictions can either trap me or teach me how to reconcile with others." He encouraged the audience to build teams that have diversity, to get out of our own culture to understand it better. He suggested that one community doing well is a good thing, but it won't bring change. What is needed is for a number of communities to work together on issues.

During a conversation with one of the audience at the end of the evening she said "As I listened to this speaker, it struck me that to promote peace I cannot just be peaceable, I must be involved with bringing people together to avert conflict."

Anne Hartnell, Surrey

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For more information visit
www.ca.iofc.org