

Canadian Friends Service Committee Annual Accountability Report 2015-2016

"I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles in which vital and transformative events take place."

- Rufus Jones

Message from the CFSC Clerk



CFSC's Recording Clerk Graeme Hope and Clerk Lana Robinson at our general meeting at Friends House in Toronto. October, 2016.

What you will read in the following pages speaks to a number of things CFSC has long been involved in; Indigenous Peoples' human rights, reform of the punitive aspects of the criminal justice system, building peace. You will read about the actions that CFSC has been engaged in, and the positive impacts of the work that CFSC staff, members and associates do on behalf of Friends in Canada. What you will not read about is the work that has been going on behind the scenes to lift up the work of our program committees, which are the *raison d'être* for CFSC.

To that end, I am pleased to tell you that we have completed our vision for, and have begun implementing, a strategic plan for the whole of CFSC. We are encouraged by the success of many of the structural changes we made last year, and going forward we believe the strategic plan will guide us in making the best use of all of our resources within our new structure.

We are energized by the addition of two new staff members to our Toronto office; Megan Shaw who is our office assistant, and Yugita Hogan who has taken on the role of Program Coordinator for criminal justice work.

Additionally, we have developed some new communications tools, like an informational brochure that brings Light to the personal stories of people and communities that have been directly affected by the work that CFSC does; the work that you help support!

I hope you find the same great hope and excitement in the following pages that we experience at CFSC. In a world where so many things call out for action, we are happy to share with you the progress that CFSC has made working toward a world where peace and justice prevail.



Lana Robinson, Clerk



QJF resource *From Harm to Healing: Transforming the Justice System* is distributed during an education session in Sorrento, British Columbia.

Criminal Justice

When crime happens, it harms everyone. The impacts ripple out and compound, affecting perpetrators, families, employers, prison staff, children...

We seek to prevent, repair, and move beyond harm. This means challenging common but ineffective approaches to punishment, and working on fresh ways to restore damaged relationships.

Over the last year, this has taken many forms. At the grassroots, we offered workshops across Canada to explore punishment and how we can move beyond it. These workshops invited participants to consider why we punish and how thoughts about punishment affect both us personally and our criminal justice system. The impacts of punishment are explored in terms of their harm on all.

We supported other education and awareness raising activities about criminal justice too. For example we helped Understory Magazine, an online magazine of literary writing and visual art by and about Canadian women, to publish a special issue on women and the justice system.

We endorsed the No On Prison Expansion (NOPE) project. This research project looks at prisons in Canada and provides important information: what resources are going into prison expansion? This will inform proposals for alternatives to the failed approach to criminal justice that relies on imprisoning more people.

We continued to engage actively in networks and coalitions including the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, and National Associations Active in Criminal Justice. This year we again collected and shared resources put out by different criminal justice organizations as a way to improve understanding of, and learning from, each other's work.

We've also been active in consultations with government to seek improvements to policies. We made a submission to the government of Ontario about its deeply harmful use of segregation (solitary confinement), an issue that has been in the media a lot lately and is of great concern to Friends. Following consultations where CFSC and many of our partners called for major changes, Ontario set new limits that reduce the use of solitary to a maximum of 15 consecutive days. We will continue to seek the total abolishment of solitary confinement, but this change can be viewed as a step in the right direction.

Following a different round of consultations we participated in, Canada made positive changes to the system of victim surcharges. These changes give judges the opportunity to waive fines if they determine that a person who has committed an offense is genuinely unable to pay the fine. We were also part of a successful push to reverse a government decision and reappoint Howard Sapers, whom we've felt has been effective in his role as Correctional Investigator for Canada.

At another consultation, the agenda included the Criminal Records Act. The Act was changed under the previous government to increase application fees and wait times for a record suspension (formerly a pardon). We explained why these legislative changes are harmful. They prevent full reintegration into society, no matter what one's positive contributions have been since committing a criminal offence. CFSC is optimistic that this discussion will also lead to positive steps being taken, and looks forward to ongoing participation in the process.



Friends and members of Samson Cree Nation during Canadian Yearly Meeting 2016

Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights

We recognize the urgent need for, and the great potential of, reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. We work for the realization of Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

For decades at the United Nations we have helped to open new spaces for discussion. This work has supported the development of a set of shared standards, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. We continue to educate about the *Declaration* and to raise its profile. We have helped print and distribute almost 200,000 pocket-sized booklets of the *Declaration*, work that continued this year. A decade ago very few people were aware of the *Declaration*, but today it is regularly referenced by governments and Indigenous Peoples.

We co-hosted and presented at educational events across Canada on multiple areas of our work. We briefed Cabinet Ministers, other Members of Parliament, professors, students, Indigenous Peoples' representatives, Friends and the general public about issues including:

- The *Declaration*, other aspects of international law, and the human rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in Canadian law;
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action;
- The ongoing catastrophe of the mercury poisoning of the People of Grassy Narrows; and
- The proposed construction of the Site C dam in British Columbia for which the consent of the Peoples of Treaty 8 has not been obtained.

Our work to educate about FPIC has included sharing detailed legal documents like one produced by CFSC Associate member Paul Joffe, *Veto and Consent: Significant Differences*. We've also shared less technical information, such as our work on the publication of a special issue of *Northern Public Voices* magazine that focuses on FPIC, featuring a range of perspectives from leading experts.

Once again this year CFSC joined with partners to participate in meetings of the United Nations in Geneva and in New York. We helped issue joint statements on Indigenous Peoples' human rights, we

met with delegations at the UN, and we hosted friendly space for government and Indigenous Peoples' representatives to meet and discuss matters of mutual importance.

In response to the TRC, we worked with six churches to issue a joint statement on the *Declaration* as a roadmap for reconciliation. The statement explains "The *UN Declaration*, with its emphasis on self-determination and consent, freedom from discrimination, and rights to spirituality, culture, lands, and resources, helps us to address the root causes of... inequity, and provides the means for us to correct it."

We also issued our own statement detailing our work as Quakers, which has been placed in the archive of the TRC. We then helped Canadian Yearly Meeting, the national body of Quakers, adopt an official statement acknowledging, "that part of our journey is to decolonize our own thinking and sit in the discomfort and pain of confronting where we need to deepen our understanding, bear witness, and transform our behaviour."

To that end, Friends' Meetings will:

- 1) Continue to educate themselves, including children and youth, about the doctrine of discovery, the ongoing effects of colonialism, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, residential schools and their legacy (including the TRC Report), the history of the land on which they live, and reconciliation efforts;
- 2) Formally acknowledge the traditional territories where their Meetings are located and engage in processes of reflection on the meaning of this;
- 3) Find out about current concerns of Indigenous Peoples from those territories, including land appropriation or resource development, with which the Meeting could be engaged;
- 4) Investigate projects of cultural revitalization that Indigenous Peoples are involved in and discern if there is an appropriate role (including funding) that Friends can play;
- 5) Uphold and support individual Friends involved with grassroots Indigenous rights and provide spiritual support to Friends led to this work. This might include offering committees of care and approving minutes of support; and
- 6) Report back annually through CFSC, which will collate this information and report it.



Friends Women's Association Program Coordinator Parfaite Ntaha gives a presentation in Toronto about the work CFSC is supporting in Burundi.

Peace

Our historic and on-going peace work is about helping people gain the skills to identify, engage constructively with, and transform conflict. CFSC's core values include respect for all creation. This value gives rise to our approach to peace - the faith that non-destructive, nonviolent approaches can and must be attempted if we hope to show true respect to all creation.

This year we spent time further refining just what that means. We developed a new statement that answers the question "*What do we mean by a culture of peacebuilding?*" by examining the factors of critical importance.

Unlike most organizations, CFSC does not limit its understanding of peacebuilding to something that needs to happen in countries in the midst of or following wars. Rather, our view focuses on a *culture of peacebuilding* as an ongoing process that needs to be actively engaged in everywhere. All of our work contributes to this.

We are directly supporting important grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. This includes training local peace workers and helping them form networks, as well as offering quality medical services and counselling support.

In Canada we've increased our engagement in the work to establish a government body responsible for promoting peace. We feel that as long as this mandate does not exist anywhere, peacebuilding will be easy to ignore. Instead, Canada will continue with the status quo and miss opportunities to help prevent wars. We have a Department of National Defence, but it is time to compliment it with a Department of Peace.

We continued to carry and act on our concern for conscientious objectors (COs) to the Iraq war, who came to Canada seeking refuge. Now more than 12 years on for some, their future in Canada remains uncertain. At any moment they may learn of an upcoming court date to decide if they can stay. We have engaged with the government on this issue and remain hopeful that campaign commitments will be kept and that Canada will finally let these COs stay. This can be easily done by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Between 2010 and 2014, Quakers across Canada took time to carefully and prayerfully consider the positions of Israelis and Palestinians. In the end we felt clear that we could not, in good conscience, buy Israeli products made on illegally occupied Palestinian land. Yet, because of the principled stand of CFSC and hundreds of other organizations across Canada, this year we found ourselves "condemned" by the federal government. To our knowledge this "condemnation" has no legal implication. However pro-Occupation lobby groups continue to pressure governments at all levels to crack down on free speech and support for the equal human rights of all Israelis and all Palestinians. On its own and with partners, CFSC issued multiple statements about this, wrote to politicians, gave interviews with the media, and produced educational resources to explain our concern for the dignity and wellbeing of all.

We continued to monitor the ecological, spiritual, and social dimensions of the extreme genetic engineering techniques called "synthetic biology". This year we offered workshops on synthetic biology and tracked what was happening in the field to provide non-technical updates to Friends and the general public. We also engaged at the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity, the main international forum where the question of what to do about synthetic biology is being debated.

Finally, we responded to particular peace issues of concern, offering a national voice of Friends. This year these issues included:

- Nuclear weapons;
- Growing Islamophobia in Canada;
- Reforming Canada's national security system to include appropriate oversight, checks, and balances on surveillance and other state powers;
- Restoring Canada's funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency; and
- The Sustainable Development Goals as a new global framework for peace.

Work within coalitions on behalf of Friends

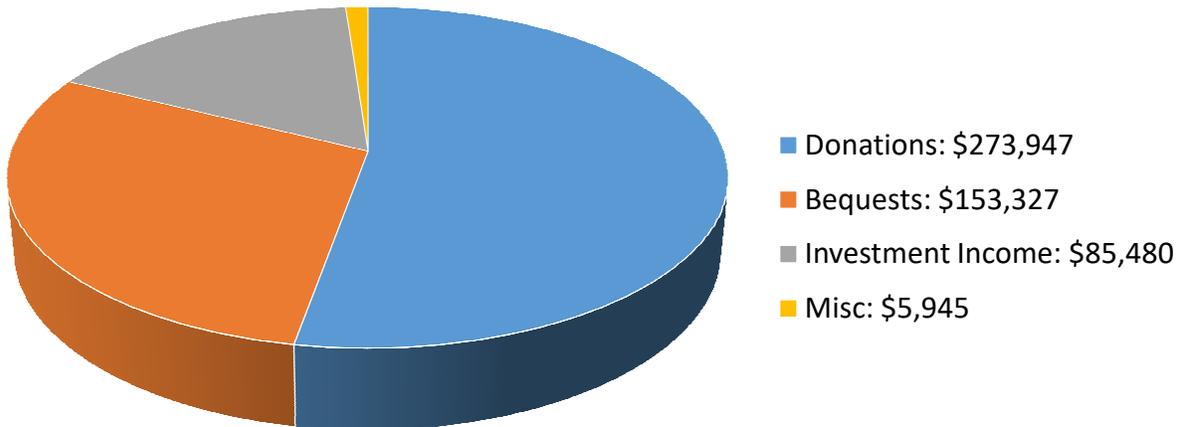
CFSC continues to fund and facilitate Quaker involvement with networks and coalitions including:

- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives;
- Project Ploughshares;
- International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group;
- Ontario, Saskatchewan and Canadian Councils for International Cooperation; and
- Canadian Council for Refugees.

CFSC also partners with Quaker Earthcare Witness, the Quaker Institute for the Future, and the Quaker UN Offices on several issues. Through these many diverse tables Quakers are represented at the national and international levels, having the opportunity to express their perspectives and work

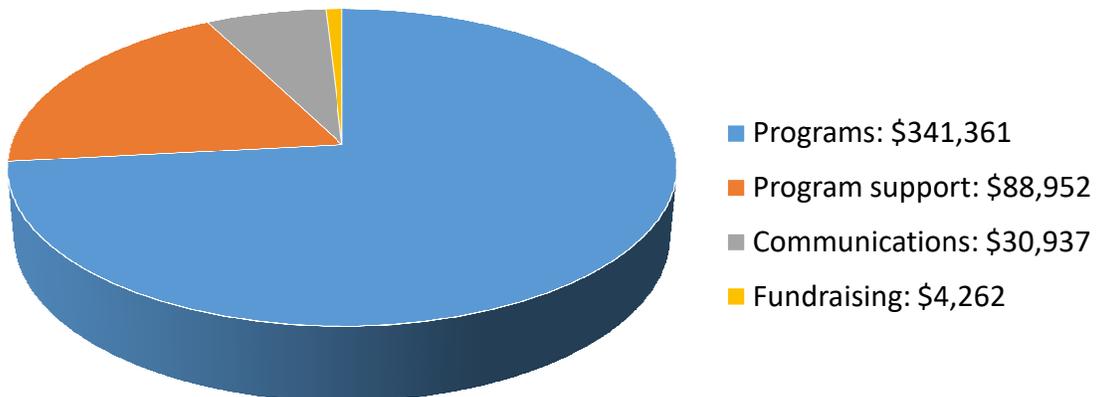
collectively with others on key shared concerns: poverty, peace, refugees, civil liberties, Indigenous Peoples' human rights, environmental issues, and more.

Revenue



Total Revenue: \$518,699

Expenses



Total Expenses: \$465,512



Far more happens at CFSC than we could ever put into words. We hope this *Annual Accountability Report* has given you a small glimpse of the many accomplishments donors have supported in the past year. For more in depth information on everything discussed above, please visit the CFSC website or get in touch with us.

Please make a donation today to help this work continue. Thank you for your trust and vision of a world where peace and justice prevail.



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