



Canadian Friends Service Committee E-Newsletter

September, 2015

New justice resource

CFSC has released a new 4-page educational resource - *From Harm to Healing: Transforming the Justice System*. The resource answers questions about penal abolition, dispels myths, and offers viable alternatives to a criminal justice system that harms criminals, institutional staff, families and communities. *From Harm to Healing* touches on what penal abolition is and is not, how Friends are involved, the impacts of punitive approaches to justice, as well as several successful examples of restorative and healing approaches used in Canada, and ways forward.

Additionally, the criminal justice section of CFSC's website has been updated to include more about our work on the impacts of justice systems on children and youth, justice community grants, as well as links to other statements and resources.

From Harm to Healing: Transforming the Justice System:

<http://quakerservice.ca/PenalAbolition>

New and improved justice web pages: <http://quakerservice.ca/our-work/justice/>



WHAT IS PENAL ABOLITION?

Penal abolition seeks to eliminate the punitive mindset which pervades society and justice systems by transferring harmful approaches to ones that are healing. The term "penal" originates from the Latin and Greek words for punishment, and to "abolish" is to cause suffering to be suffering inherent in the justice system that Quakers wish to abolish - for victims, perpetrators, institutional staff, families and communities.

Quaker work towards penal abolition has been shaped by diverse experiences and an evolved understanding of the root causes of injustice. Early efforts by Quakers focused on reforming prisons to make them more humane and to substitute prisons for capital punishment. However, evidence showed that the social objectives of imprisonment - deterrence and rehabilitation - were not being met through punishment.

Quaker activist Ruth Morris noted that reform within prisons often simply "ended up serving the very system that was so destructive." Now Quakers work with others in creating alternatives to incarceration, such as restorative justice, transformative processes, diversion and trauma-informed systems.

The global increase in incarceration despite the rise of more effective alternative approaches, has led to questions around punitive approaches. "Punitive approaches are guided by concerns, misuse of power, and fear, forcing additional trauma. The predominant focus on punishing offenders commits the great majority of the system's energy and resources to legal processing, prisons and incarceration. Justice for survivors and communities become unlikely." (Canadian Yearly Meeting, 2010)

HOW ARE QUAKERS INVOLVED?

Quaker and former prison governor, Tim Newell, comments that the early penetration and improvement of Quakers, including George Fox, brought home to the developing Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) "the reality of being 'looked up'." The worldwide community of Friends has worked on concerns related to justice for over 350 years. This has included founding organizations such as the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Alternatives to Violence Project, promoting restorative justice processes, and participating in the establishment of norms and standards at the United Nations.

In Canada, Quakers have held longstanding concerns with prisons. They called for prison abolition in 1981 at their Canadian Yearly Meeting (Minute 91) and for those harmed to become the centre of restorative and transformative approaches at their Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2010 (Minute 79). Quakers in Canada are also involved with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), prison visitation, restorative justice, rehabilitation and conditions working toward penal reform.

"The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice. Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been powerless and oppressed. We are increasingly clear that the imprisonment of human beings, like their enslavement, is inherently inhumane, and is as destructive to the captives as to the captors."

Part of Minute 91 by the Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in 1981

Image: 'We're Building the Prison' by Stephen St. John, 1811 by John Searle. © Thomas of the Bible Museum

Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) sessions

Prince Edward Island was the site of the annual gathering of Canadian Friends from August 16th to 22nd.

Friends joined in worship, business, and fellowship and CFSC was well represented. We offered two Special Interest Groups: one on penal abolition and another on reconciliation and our work at the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). You can read all about this year's CYM in our new issue of Quaker Concern: <http://www.quakerservice.ca/QCSummer2015> (to get the 3 annual issues of Quaker email to you directly sign up here: <http://www.quakerservice.ca/qc>)

Quakers Commit to Reconciliation Journey

Canadian Quakers affirmed their ongoing engagement with the journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples during their annual gathering. CFSC presented materials on the TRC and suggested a commitment for Friends to undertake in response to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action



CFSC Program Coordinator Jennifer Preston (left) spoke on a panel about repudiating the doctrine of discovery as part of the closing events of the TRC earlier this year. Photo credit: Rachel Singleton-Polster.

(http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

Friends responded to this call, and approved a minute that honours the painful truths embodied in the TRC report by actively working for the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. As a faith body we appreciate reconciliation is an ongoing process and not a one-time event. As Friends, we are committed to walk this journey. Resources including a 1 pager of queries for Friends, and a 2 pager explaining the TRC are available at <http://www.quakerservice.ca/reconciliation>

New paper on Canadian Friends and BDS

CFSC has released a new research paper about the relationship between Canadian Quakers and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) Movement. The paper examines the history of BDS, how Friends came to support aspects of the movement, as well as how dialogue plays a role in the quest for peace in Israel/Palestine. Additionally, it looks at how their involvement in the movement has affected the opinions of Friends, based on 70 responses to a poll that was circulated in July and August of this year. To read the full paper, visit: <http://quakerservice.ca/BDSPaper>

FWCC World Plenary to be held in Peru

Friends World Committee for Consultation will be holding meetings in Pisac, Peru from January 19-27, 2016. Watch their short video inviting Friends everywhere to participate at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNKVPlyH3gg>

Friends not going as an official representative of CYM may apply for an open place. For details see:

<http://www.fwccworld.org/peru>

Seeing through the bars

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, of which CFSC is a member, has posted a series of talks on empathy and the impacts of crime on all involved. As part of the series, CFSC associate member Kate Johnson delivered a fascinating talk about her experiences offering programs in men's prisons:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSIGiPeI7-8>

What are your thoughts on the CFSC E-News?

Do you love the e-news just as it is? Do you have ideas about how we can improve it? We'd really appreciate hearing from you!

Please take 1 to 5 minutes to answer five questions we have for you, our loyal readers, about the e-news:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N8GNT9X>



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