



QUAKERS

Canadian Friends
Service Committee

Annual Accountability Report 2024

“At its best, the Quaker method does not result in a compromise. A compromise is not likely to satisfy anyone completely. The objective of the Quaker method is to discover Truth which will satisfy everyone more fully than did any position previously held. Each and all can then say, ‘That is what I really wanted, but I did not realize it.’”—Howard Brinton



Members and staff at CFSC planning meeting, Camp NeeKauNis, September, 2024.

There are no sides.

There are no sides. **There’s only a place where we are all safe and loved. A place where we can heal and find justice.** There is no distinction between you as a donor and Canadian Friends Service Committee—all of the work that I’ll touch on in my note to follow **only happens through your gifts.**

My message to you this year is so radical that I want to repeat it: there are no sides. Don't get me wrong. **We, like you, care deeply about justice and peace.** That's what we think about and strive towards each and every day. And it's because of that deep Spirit-led reflection and work that I can say that there are no sides.

We find balance, healing, and wellbeing together or not at all. **To thrive, we need each other.** For this reason, this year we've been **advocating on your behalf in Ottawa** as you'll read about below.

Recently we asked our supporters to send us handmade cards. We were overwhelmed by the beautiful response! We were able to send a custom card to each of Canada's 336 Members of Parliament with a hopeful message. **Each card lifted up your values: reminding MPs to work on your behalf with integrity, grace, and respect.**



Handmade cards we received from supporters and sent to Members of Parliament with a message of hope.

When we meet with decision makers—ones who agree with us and ones who don't—we make sure to make this point. We want them to remember that their work **isn't about bickering** and being divided.

It's not just in Ottawa where you **act as a caring and quiet reminder that there are no sides.** There's a lot to navigate at the United Nations. Frankly, it can be intimidating. Imagine

walking into this giant building, through the airport-style security checkpoint. Where do I go now? How do I register to attend a meeting? How do I get on the list to make a statement?

For decades, one thing CFSC has been able to offer is a **welcoming presence**. You help to make sure that Indigenous partners who've never been to the UN before are in the right rooms at the right times. You help with logistics. You make introductions. You host off-the-record dinners where diplomats and Indigenous representatives can mingle, build relationships, and have important conversations. Sometimes this leads to major advances. **This only happens because of caring people like you who know that this work matters!**

In addition to all of your quiet efforts behind-the-scenes, your donations have made it possible to deliver many projects again this year. You've hosted discussion groups, educational presentations, and workshops to help **build knowledge and skills for advancing peace and social justice**. You've made financial grants to support **Indigenous cultural revitalization efforts**. And you've provided **humanitarian aid to Gazans** and support for Israelis who refuse to serve in the military for reasons of conscience.

Your gifts have made a major impact this year. [Will you give again now?](#) Thank you!

In Friendship,



Vince Zelazny,
Clerk,
Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

Peace



Now more than a year on, your donations continue to help aid to reach families in Gaza. Photos by Amjad Fayomi.

The main goal of CFSC's peace work is to identify, engage constructively with, and **transform conflicts**. This year we welcomed a new Peace Program Coordinator, Mel Burns, and launched a major new project that's been **years in the making**: *Weekly tips for better conflicts!*

For years we've been reaching out and **listening to so many stories** from folks from all sorts of backgrounds who are working for peace and social justice in countless ways. We combined this with a **thorough review of academic evidence**. We wanted to learn what different disciplines know about human behaviour and beliefs and **how peace can spread**. While thinking and talking about it, we never stopped **doing peace work**. We've been continually **learning and refining our knowledge** about what's possible, and our theories about how change happens for a more just and peaceful world.

All of this careful research and reflection—**grounded in our values and history as Quakers**—led to not one but two books: *The Four Elements of Peacebuilding: How to Protect Nonviolently*, and *Are We Done Fighting? Building Understanding in a World of Hate and Division*.

We've now had countless conversations about peace and justice issues, continued again this year for example through lively workshops we offer and presentations (we did five this year alone to different university classes and faith groups who want to learn **what it means to be actively nonviolent in their daily lives**).

There's so much **inspiring and practical peace content** in our books and presentations, our free workshops, on our ongoing blog for *Psychology Today*.

But we realize that many people who need to hear how conflicts are being transformed positively every single day—**how justice is being achieved right now**—aren't going to read a whole book. They aren't going to take part in a workshop series. And reading a short blog post is too easy to forget.

So this year we worked with a social media expert to develop a **series of short videos!**

This series is **totally free**. It's setup as a calendar. We'll be sharing one tip each week for the next year. This will give anyone who follows our social media or signs up for emails a reminder, once a week, to spend just a few moments (most videos are under 1 minute long) reflecting on a particular peace skill. **Many are simple, but powerful!**

In addition to our diverse efforts to **spread peace skills**, we again acted as a **voice for Friends** on a range of pressing peace issues like the devastating war in Gaza (and now other countries in the region).

In Ottawa we're actively engaged in the Canadian Peace Partners Network, which regularly meets with the government to try to bring a **peace lens to foreign policy**.

We've also **advocated continually** for Canada to unequivocally support the International Criminal Court, stop the flow of arms to Israel, and support just peace.

A partnership with American Friends Service Committee (our sister Quaker agency, which has Gazan staff) has allowed us to continue sending **urgently needed humanitarian aid to Gaza**.

And we continued to help young Israelis access information and support when they decided to listen to the voice inside that tells them to **refuse to serve in the military**.

In Toronto once again we helped provide practical and high quality **advice and support services to refugees** and other newcomers, free of charge.

Indigenous Peoples' human rights



CFSC staff Sandra Wiens and Jeremy Vander Hoek at Indigenous Peace Summit in Washington, April 2024.

The main goals of CFSC's Indigenous rights work are the **implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** and greater **engagement** by Canadians in the **Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission** of Canada (TRC).

This year has been an important one as we continue to work hard in Ottawa, together with partners in the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We're advocating for Canada to **fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act** that it passed into law.

As our partners have identified, one of the **most important implementation steps** will be the creation of an **Indigenous-led human rights monitoring mechanism**. Such a mechanism would be able to hear cases and **act when Indigenous Peoples' human rights are violated**. We continue to raise our voice in Ottawa on the importance of such a mechanism.

It's hard to state what a big deal this is. CFSC is there **working in solidarity alongside many Indigenous Peoples' organizations** to see that all laws and policies in Canada are in line with international standards on Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

Although this work is slow and frustrating, and doesn't get the attention it deserves, there is also **much to celebrate**. Major steps forward are being realized.

For example, just this year the Supreme Court of Canada has definitively recognized the *UN Declaration* as part of Canada's positive law. This couldn't have happened without decades of effort from Indigenous Peoples and partners like CFSC. **We're working hard to emphasize just how significant this ruling is**. Now no one can deny that the *Declaration* outlines the standard for Indigenous Peoples' human rights and is key in defining **Canada's human rights obligations**.

We again helped people to learn what the *UN Declaration* says through sending **thousands of pocket-sized copies** to Indigenous nations, organizations, schools, and other groups. Our video series *Indigenous voices on reconciliation* **continues to grow in popularity** and generate discussion and learning, with one video having been viewed almost 70,000 times. We again supported partners at **United Nations meetings in New York and Geneva**, where rights conversations advance.

We continued a **multi-year collaboration with the University of British Columbia** to learn from Indigenous Peoples about their priorities and to share this knowledge and recommendations on how to implement the *Declaration*.

Our final research engagement in Aotearoa / New Zealand is this December. We're looking forward to taking all that we've learned to **develop tools and resources with our Indigenous partners**. These will help promote implementation of the *Declaration* in communities and governments.

Transformative justice



Transformative justice program planning meeting, Friends House, Toronto, June 2024.

The main goal of CFSC's transformative justice work is to **eliminate the punitive mindset** that pervades society and justice systems by transforming harmful approaches to ones that are healing.

In March we welcomed a new Transformative Justice Program Coordinator, Karen Ridd, to help continue our work to promote responses to crime that are **healing rather than causing further harms**.

Our education efforts in this area included a brief video we made explaining the **impacts on children when a parent is incarcerated**.

This year we've spent time **listening and re-envisioning** our transformative justice work. This has included engaging in planning exercises and beginning a report (still in progress) that looks in-depth at who benefits from the current carceral system.

It has also included **expanding our networks** to engage with a **wider range of organizations** impacted by the current "criminal justice" system. For instance, we've been meeting with victims' groups to talk about better ways to centre their needs in restorative practices.

Our conversations have led us to a new **focus on guaranteed liveable basic income (GLBI)** as a way to prevent people from being in the life circumstances that drive many crimes. We're getting training, going to lots of meetings with experts and advocates, and otherwise ramping up to make this a **major focus of our efforts in Ottawa**. It's a promising

time for this work as bills in both the Senate and House of Commons are proposing that Canada seriously study GLBI.

In addition to GLBI, we've been active in promoting the full implementation of Canada's new *Federal Framework to Reduce Recidivism*. **There are many ways that communities can be kept safer by investing in effective programs** that help to keep people out of prisons and jails.

We've been busy **educating about these alternatives** to prisons, as when we presented to the encampment at the University of Winnipeg and to the Annual General Meeting of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties.

We've continued to participated in **consultations and on advisory groups** to engage with different levels of government, with academics, and with like-minded organizations. We've sent **educational information and resources to many incarcerated people** and chaplains across the country.

We gave financial support for a keynote speaker at the National Symposium on Restorative Justice and supported several initiatives **helping families and incarcerated people**.

And we continue to **help Friends** grappling with issues and concerns related to the carceral system.



In closing

The work you support when you donate to CFSC is deeply important. It is a **testimony to the world we want**: a world where there are no sides and where we're free to reach our fullest potential. We know that this work has **deep impacts on people**, beyond what we can express in a written report.

Much of what we accomplish happens because of relationships and quiet conversations. **It happens because of you.**

Your values at work in the world

All of these efforts toward justice and peace are yours. Please, [donate now](#).