

Quaker Concern

Human rights are vital. How do we know when they're implemented?

By Jennifer Preston and Jeremy Vander Hoek



Participants at the expert seminar, University of British Columbia, February, 2023

How can people verify that key human rights are actually respected? For many years Canadian Friends Service Committee has focused on making sure that the vitally important rights affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration or UNDRIP)* are implemented. How is the *Declaration*—which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called the “framework for reconciliation”—being put into action to create real change?

We were pleased to lend support to a United Nations (UN) seminar at the University of British Columbia in February on this very topic. The seminar was co-hosted by the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP). Experts travelled from around the world to attend in person, and many others joined on Zoom. The two of us were there in person, taking part in the discussions (Jennifer) and being part of the team making sure things were running the way they were supposed to (Jeremy).

Implementation of the *Declaration* is the process by which Indigenous peoples, states, and other actors come together to turn the text of the *Declaration* into concrete action. In Canada this has included passing the *Declaration* legislation that CFSC spent many years advocating for. Implementation also requires verifying that states and other actors are sticking to their word. That is where monitoring mechanisms come in.

Over two days, experts shared perspectives on monitoring and what Indigenous peoples' human rights advocacy looks like in their communities. The seminar was an excellent space for new ideas like this. We also created networks to strengthen the work of all involved. Participants included Indigenous leaders, lawyers, academics, and grassroots activists.

You might be asking, what are “monitoring mechanisms”? It's a good question! Has someone ever promised to do something important for you? Maybe you've heard commitments you liked from a political candidate seeking your vote. How did you ensure they were keeping those promises after they got elected?

“Indigenous peoples didn't spend decades negotiating the *Declaration* just to have it sit on a library shelf.”

In the context of Indigenous peoples' human rights implementation, you would use mechanisms that monitor the work of the people putting the *Declaration* into practice. These mechanisms can take various shapes, and experts at the seminar discussed many. They answered questions like: How are civil society groups engaging with states to ensure action on the *Declaration*? What about the national human rights institutions, the legal community, and academia—what are they bringing to this work? Can they do more?

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Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel winning film awards

In the Winter 2022 edition of *Quaker Concern* we wrote about CFSC's funding support for Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel's documentary film work. Since then, Ellen's *Kanàtenhs: When the Pine Needles Fall*, has achieved several major awards!

The honours include being Selected at the American Indian Film Festival 2022, an Honourable Mention at the Tokyo Film Awards 2022, and winning awards at the LA Independent Women Film Awards 2022, the Melbourne Independent Film Festival 2022, and the Sydney Indie Short Film Festival 2023. Congratulations Ellen!

Rituals could increase peace in your life

CFSC's Matt Legge continues to write periodically for *Psychology Today*. The latest post explores the potential for transforming destructive conflicts without going up into your head to analyze what went wrong and who did what to whom. How is this possible? The post shares all sorts of insights about the power of rituals: <https://QuakerService.ca/Rituals>

Civil society continues opposition to flawed antisemitism definition

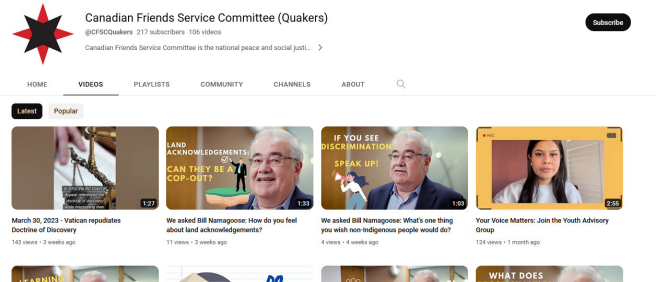
As we've written about previously, we continue to oppose hate while raising the need for a definition of antisemitism that won't be used to silence legitimate protest of Israel's human rights violations. (We support the *Jerusalem Declaration* definition <https://QuakerService.ca/JerusalemDeclaration>.) Recently we signed two open letters—one to Canadian Heritage, the other to the UN—explaining our concern. Both letters are on our website. The letter to the UN got a lot of media attention, including this article from the *Toronto Star*: <https://bit.ly/TorontoStarIHRA>

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QUAKERS
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Did you know that CFSC has made over 100 videos? It's true! We've been working hard to create all sorts of short and simple clips that we're sure you'll find worth watching and reflecting on.

Quakers love silence, but it's a little too quiet on our YouTube channel right now. We need your help. Will you please visit <https://QuakerService.ca/YouTube> and have a look around?

If you have an account, please also follow us, like, and comment on at least one video. We want to know what content speaks to you and what you'd like to see more of.

Quaker Concern

Quaker Concern is the newsletter of Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and social justice agency of Quakers in Canada. Since 1931, CFSC has worked for a world where peace and justice prevail.

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Canada, Stand Up for Palestinian Children's Rights

By Sara avMaat



A graphic made by the Canada, Stand Up for Palestinian Children's Rights campaign.

In the context of the recently escalating violence in the West Bank, I would like to highlight a particular concern for Palestinian children. According to a 2022 year-end report by Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCIP), evidence they have collected suggests that Israeli forces use intentional lethal force against Palestinian children in circumstances that may amount to extrajudicial or wilful killing.¹ Indeed, as of Feb. 23, thirteen children had been killed by Israeli forces already this year.²

Additionally 500 to 700 Palestinian children, mostly teenage boys, are prosecuted in Israeli military courts each year. The rate of conviction is over 99%. No other country in the world has a practice of systematically prosecuting children in this way.

One case that I hope many Canadian Friends are already aware of is that of 16-year-old Shadi Khoury. On October 18, 2022 Shadi was beaten in his home in East Jerusalem by Israeli police. He was then dragged barefoot, blindfolded, bleeding, and alone, from his home, and placed in detention. After 41 days, he was released on house arrest. His lawyers do not expect real discussion of his case until May.

“500 to 700 Palestinian children, mostly teenage boys, are prosecuted in Israeli military courts each year.”

Shadi's case is perhaps unusual because of who he is. His father, Suhail is the general director of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in East Jerusalem, his mother Rania, is the director of the Yabous Cultural Centre. One of his sisters is the director of the Palestine

Youth Orchestra and his grandmother, Samia, was one of the founders of Sabeel—an ecumenical grassroots center for liberation theology among Palestinian Christians, seeking to promote peace with justice in the Middle East. Shadi, himself, is a student at the Ramallah Friends School.

What, sadly, is not unusual about his case, is the way it took place. In the year-end report mentioned above, DCIP describes children arriving at interrogation bound, blindfolded, frightened, and sleep-deprived. More than half were detained from their homes in the middle of the night. 99% were interrogated with no family member present. 70% experienced physical violence. 58% were subject to at least one strip search. 25% were isolated in solitary confinement for two or more days. The average amount of time in solitary confinement in 2022 was 21 days. The longest documented was 45.

I have been working with the coordinating group for a campaign endorsed by CFSC called Canada, Stand Up for Palestinian Children's Rights. The group includes Quakers, Mennonites, United Church members, Presbyterians, at least one Catholic, and some who are not part of a faith community.

Together, we have been advocating for the Canadian government to appoint a special envoy to report to Parliament on the human rights situation of Palestinian children, and to make recommendations for action. A group of Canadian members of Parliament (MPs) originally recommended this course of action in 2018.

We have called upon supporters to sign up to receive an email every month or two with updates on the campaign and sample letters that could be used as

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Canada, Stand Up continued

templates to send to MPs. If you are willing to join the letter writing campaign, here is where to sign on: <https://bit.ly/CanadaStandUp>

Here is a sample of a monthly update: <https://bit.ly/PastUpdateExample>

Besides the letter writing we're working to identify sympathetic MPs and ways to be heard by Parliamentary committees. We're also looking at how to promote more media attention and more balanced reporting on human rights in the West Bank and Gaza.

For information on CFSC's work for just peace that would benefit all in Palestine and Israel, and for copies of open letters and statements, see our website.

“CFSC supports young people who refuse military service.”

Currently CFSC partners with Mesarvot, an Israeli network that supports young people who refuse military service. Israel is a highly militarized society and performing military service after high school is a forgone conclusion for most young people. The refusal to serve is perceived as betrayal and conscientious objectors face considerable hostility. You can read their statements and find out how to send messages of support to them via: <https://refuser.org>



Sara avMaat, Antigonish Worship Group, is a member of CFSC's peace program committee. She previously spent three months in the West Bank monitoring the human rights situation.

1. Defense for Children International-Palestine, "Year-in-review: A deadly year for Palestinian children," December 23, 2022, https://www.dci-palestine.org/year_in_review_2022

2. "Israeli forces kill 11 Palestinians in Nablus raid," Al Jazeera, February 22, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/22/israeli-forces-kill-palestinians-in-nablus-raid>



CONSCIENCE CANADA
Promote peace. Stop paying for war.

A Message from Jan Slakov, Conscience Canada

A message from Jan Slakov of Conscience Canada
It was in Victoria Monthly Meeting, with the indefatigable Edith Adamson leading, and with support from CFSC, that Conscience Canada (CC) got its start. After more than 40 years, our numbers have been in decline. Personally, in a way I feel that I grew up with CC. I became a member not long after taking my first real job. More importantly, my involvement with CC has given me an opportunity to learn about nonviolence, a rich education. This is a community that brings meaning to my life.

Given that we can't be sure that we will always be able to manage the Peace Tax Trust Fund we established (hoping that the government would eventually take over that task), we decided to close the Fund. But we are still conscientious objectors to military taxation. As Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta states, in her book of that title, we are still "Refusing to Be Enemies." Many of us have found ways to resist paying military taxes, often by low income living and making enough donations that our taxable income is negligible or nil.

If a key part of our raison d'être is no longer to maintain the Fund, what is our mission now? We can still work to help conscientious objectors clarify and assume our rights and responsibilities. We can still help each other in deepening our understanding of and commitment to nonviolence. There's still a lot of work to be done, and we welcome your queries and involvement! You can reach us by email at Info@ConscienceCanada.ca or phone: (604) 223-9328.

Jan Slakov is the president of Conscience Canada.

“Prisons are a destructive and expensive failure as a response to crime.” —1981 Prison Abolition Minute

42 years ago Canadian Friends called for the abolishment of prisons and for more healing and life-affirming approaches to justice. What does that mean to you today? We'd love to hear your thoughts! Contact Nancy Russell: Nancy@QuakerService.ca

Being an anti-racist Quaker here and now

By Monica Walters-Field



Monica Walters-Field (first row, second from the left) helping to represent Friends globally in anti-racist work as part of CFSC's delegation to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

This took shape for me while I was sitting in silence in a weekly Meeting for Worship hosted by Canadian Friends Service Committee. In that receptive and giving space, I felt led to stand up. The coming together of a number of events and conversations in my mind and heart showed me that we often buy into thoughts and practices that in fact imprison us. They put us in old patterns that benefit very few people. These patterns don't create change. Let's be courageous, Friends, and stand up! This is something I've been "seasoning" and wanting to share for a while now: I feel a concern that some of the stories we're hearing about anti-racism are actually harmful.

Take stories about historical Quakers. These Friends, people of their time, did not all live lives that upheld or evidenced Quakerly practice. In the time of slavery, daily injustices, and cruelty, some Friends owned slaves, showed outward discrimination, and barred people of colour from joining Quaker Meetings. It is important to know this active violation of the foundational Quaker belief of that of God in all. My query is, "How come the violation stories are those most frequently used today to define Quaker history?"

There were also Friends risking their lives and livelihoods to take part in the protest of slavery and the ensuing discrimination and exploitation of people of Africa and their descendants. These Quakers must have equal space in the story today. Why? Because they are the "examples and patterns" that must be our teachers of what we do to face injustices and fight to be a world that is egalitarian and in right order.

These were the Friends raising their voices and having brave conversations in their Meetings, in their communities and families, breaking the laws and directions of the time, risking isolation and personal

discrimination and exclusion from communities and families as well as imprisonment and death. We need to remember the many Friends who were doing this and be inspired by their examples.

Referencing historical racism in a way that tells only a part of the story isn't true to those Friends who suffered and went through hardships in the struggle against slavery. And it isn't true to those of us today who continue to outwardly call out any practice that does not honour the fact that human rights are everybody's rights. Only picking the parts of history that tell a story we want to hear, and leaving out what goes against that, that's dishonest. Quaker history was mixed.

“Guilt or dwelling on the past isn't constructive... We need to ask: what are the problems right now and how do we address them in a way that leads us to right order for everyone?”

Today, too many stories and excuses are being made about history. We don't have to keep going back over and over it to go forward. It's good to know the truth, but our work has to be about what are we doing now about exclusion, discrimination, and current injustices? Are there Quaker Meetings today that do not accept people of colour? Are there Meetings today active in supporting worker discrimination and exploitation? If so, that needs to be addressed openly. But if we're just talking about past history and then making assumptions about today, then we're not doing our work for justice. We need to think more about how this or that idea actually fits, or doesn't fit, with who we are now and how we're making progress together.

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Being an anti-racist Quaker continued

If you see your job as reminding people about historical wrongs, what are you doing beyond that? Knowledge can lead to truth, but we have to be mindful that old stories repeated can just have us spinning our wheels. Guilt or dwelling on the past isn't constructive. It's a personal thing. It's not what we need. We need to ask: what are the problems right now and how do we address them in a way that leads us to right order for everyone? How do we work towards exemplifying the belief of that of God in all with the same measure?

We have to challenge and lay down preconceived ideas, boldly demonstrating that we believe in and live the life of equal justice for all.

Our work today includes allowing the unjustly treated to tell you what they want now, not only what was done to them. That is activism is practice.

As a faith community that cares about justice, we can't expect people to fit into our neat boxes for them. For instance, I don't fit the ideas some people have of what it means to be Black. I think those ideas are the problem, because they stop people from knowing me. Black people or people of colour are the ones who will tell you who we are as individuals. I object to any anti-racism work reinforcing preconceptions about being a Black woman/person as the same common experience solely because of skin colour. People of colour should have no requirement to follow external definitions of who they are. Don't be thinking about only people's colour, their gender, their wealth. We can't keep spinning on this wheel. We need to lay this thinking down if we want behaviours to change.

“I think those ideas are the problem, because they stop people from knowing me.”

Being an anti-racist Quaker to me means intentionally laying down the surface level of consciousness that focuses on what boxes to put people in.

My advice is to ask, “What is it that will best serve justice for all in this situation?” Quakers only exist because of change. We can't get stuck on the past as if progress hasn't happened. We only exist as a faith community today because Friends like George Fox gave up comforts and took action from the stirrings of the

Divine within them.

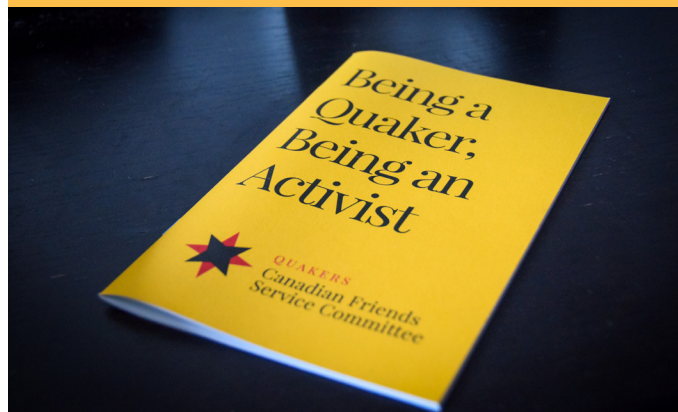
I feel there's a misunderstanding of what Quakerism is. We need to be asking as Quakers, “What canst thou say?” What can each of us do to put our own lives in right order and to work for real change now.

We need to look at each situation to identify what the injustice actually is, not some grand theory about people from this group against people from that one. We have to drop that and get to know people for who they are and what they see as justice in right order. And we have to work together accordingly.

Unless we're willing to outwardly demand and work for change now, history ceases to be a teacher.

Monica Walters-Field, Toronto Meeting, is on CFSC's Personnel Committee. She wishes to thank Communications Coordinator Matt Legge for editing a first draft of this article from her dictated comments. This article reflects Monica's views and experiences and not necessarily unity amongst CFSC on the issues covered.

Surprise! We're excited to give you a copy of our brand new pamphlet on being a Quaker activist. Whether you're a Friend or Friend adjacent, we hope this tool will help you to take grounded and effective action on your justice and peace concerns.



This pamphlet is just one of 242 educational resources available on our website. Have a look around and please share with someone you think would love this too:

QuakerService.ca/Resources

(Yes!). Can states do this work themselves? (No, that's ridiculous!).

One of the presenters was Margaret Mutu, a Māori leader from Aotearoa/New Zealand and Professor of Māori Studies. She spoke of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism created by Iwi Chairs Forum, a national body that brings together Māori leaders and communities. The monitoring mechanism looks at New Zealand's compliance with the *UN Declaration*. They have submitted annual reports to the government and to the UN. The monitoring mechanism is independent and experts are appointed by their Iwi (Nation). This is a concrete example of Indigenous peoples monitoring state actions on rights implementation—and a model that many are interested to learn from.

Creating effective monitoring mechanisms like the Māori have begun to do is an indispensable part of breathing life into the *Declaration*. Indigenous peoples didn't spend decades negotiating the *Declaration* just to have it sit on a library shelf. The rights affirmed have to be translated into meaningful actions.

“The doctrine of discovery is racist. It has been used to exploit, subjugate, and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their most basic rights.”

It's been more than 15 years since the adoption of the *Declaration*—years with too few concrete actions globally or locally. More monitoring should encourage more meaningful action. EMRIP will release a report coming out of the work of this seminar that will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council this fall.

We continue to support many partners in the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples as they work toward Canada's first *National Action Plan* to implement the *Declaration*. When federal legislation was passed in 2021 it included a deadline of two years to develop the *Plan*. While there are very legitimate concerns that not enough has been done to ensure the *Plan* is truly co-developed with Indigenous peoples, we remain hopeful and committed to this work. We see the *Plan* as a beginning. It will definitely need to be monitored. A monitoring mechanism developed by Indigenous peoples in Canada would be very valuable!

The Vatican rejects racist “discovery”

Another development of note is that on March 30th the Vatican released a statement to repudiate the doctrine of discovery—something called for by Indigenous peoples for decades. The Vatican said historical Papal Bulls (statements from the 1400s) “did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples” and that they had never been expressions of Catholic faith. Notably the Vatican also reaffirmed its support of the *UN Declaration*.

This long-awaited statement from the Vatican was the result of years of advocacy, and directly attributed to the calls made by Indigenous peoples when the Pope visited Canada in 2022.

The doctrine of discovery is racist. It is based on the notion of the racial superiority of European and Christian peoples and individuals. This false belief has been used to exploit, subjugate, and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their most basic rights. This ideology has led to practices that continue through modern-day laws and policies in Canada.

CFSC first became aware of Indigenous peoples' calls to repudiate the doctrine of discovery while we were at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues many years ago. We then developed the Canadian Yearly Meeting's minute of record repudiating discovery a decade ago (see <https://QuakerService.ca/DoctrineOfDiscovery>). In 2013 CFSC also argued to the Supreme Court of Canada that discovery must be repudiated in law.

Moving forward, it is now critical for Canada to address how “assumed Crown sovereignty” is rationalized in law. The *UN Declaration* affirms the right to redress for lands and territories taken illegally.

As Canada is working with Indigenous peoples on the first *National Action Plan* to implement the *Declaration*, we are supporting Indigenous partners in their calls for decolonization, including restitution of land.



Jennifer Preston (Hamilton Meeting) serves as General Secretary at CFSC and coordinates our Indigenous rights program. **Jeremy Vander Hoek** assists the Indigenous rights program and coordinates CFSC events. You can support reconciliation by donating to the Reconciliation Fund at <https://QuakerService.ca/ReconciliationFund>

Friends on the move



CFSC's Communications Coordinator **Matt Legge** gave a virtual presentation on the topics of violence and forgiveness to a conflict class organized by Mennonite Central Committee in Saskatchewan. He joined World Beyond War online to facilitate a month-long study of CFSC's book *Are We Done Fighting?*. And he recently finished co-facilitating another installment of our popular online workshop series.

General Secretary **Jennifer Preston** spent a few days at beautiful Pendle Hill outside Philadelphia in meetings with the heads of Quaker organizations from other countries. This was a useful opportunity for CFSC to engage with other Friends' work, and to deepen our relationships with sister organizations. The heads of agencies all participated on a panel for the American Friends Service Committee discussing the work Friends do across many organizations. There are so many commonalities and intersections of our work, all guided by Quaker testimonies.

From there, Jennifer travelled to New York to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This was Jennifer's 21st time participating at this annual forum!

As usual, CFSC had many actions happening, including hosting a side event for our partners the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and the Sami Parliaments of Norway and Finland.

The other members of CFSC's team—staff person **Jeremy Vander Hoek** and associate member **Rachel Singleton-Polster**—arrived in New York before Jenn and worked with the Quaker United Nations Office to host an evening with Indigenous youth. The focus was on youth voices at the UN and peace. We also had our annual dinner with long time partner Kenneth Deer. At these dinners Indigenous representatives and States have the opportunity for dialogue. The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples had a statement on the need for national action plans to implement the *UN Declaration*. See <https://QuakerService.ca/UNPFII>

The first week of May will see Jennifer heading to Maskwacis Cree territory in Alberta for our ongoing research project (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of the federal government) that we partner with University of British Columbia professor Sheryl Lightfoot on. We will have the privilege of being hosted by Samson Cree Nation Council member Laurie Buffalo and of working with Chief Willie Littlechild, a long-time friend of CFSC. Meetings will take place with members of the community to discuss the implementation of the *UN Declaration* in their Nation.

CFSC's Board of Directors met in person at Friends House in Toronto for two full days of relationship building, learning, and worshipful discernment of our work. More photos are available on our Facebook page.

