

# Quaker Concern

## Advocating for Indigenous Rights During a Pandemic

By Jennifer Preston



Jennifer Preston, Romeo Saganash, and Steve Heinrichs. Romeo is a former MP and proponent of Bill C-262. Steve heads up the Indigenous-settler relations for Mennonite Church Canada. Photo: Jane Orion Smith.

Usually at this time of year, CFSC's Indigenous Rights Committee writes about our ongoing work with partners advocating for Indigenous peoples' human rights at the United Nations. We had planned to be in New York in April for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) and Geneva in June for the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP). PFII was cancelled for this year and EMRIP is still listed as postponed until the late fall, but what that means remains uncertain.

Both of these bodies do critical work to advance the human rights of Indigenous peoples, and are continuing to create studies and to dialogue with UN member States. Both bodies have implementation of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as part of their work. Indigenous peoples globally have the opportunity to submit materials to the studies and to impact their outcomes.

Every year at both PFII and EMRIP, CFSC has the pleasure of hosting a dinner with Indigenous and State representatives at Quaker House. We share a meal and have a substantive discussion on current priorities. Quaker House dinners are anticipated and appreciated by all. This is a piece we have not been able to do this year. We do look forward to hosting such events again in the future. Other pieces of our work face a similar challenge: how much can we accomplish without meeting in person?

Quaker Concern

Yet, along with our other partners in the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples (see <https://declarationcoalition.com>), we feel it is critical not to allow the international work that we do collectively in the UN buildings to go dormant until large gatherings are safe again. The PFII often has 1,000-1,500 people from all corners of the globe in attendance. We wonder—will this be possible even in 2021?

**“We continue advancing discussions that would have taken place in New York and Geneva.”**

Instead of waiting to find out, the Coalition has been meeting regularly on Zoom, and meeting also with a team of federal government officials to discuss many topics.

We are looking forward to engaging with the new Canadian Ambassador to the UN, Bob Rae, as he gets settled into the position. We continue advancing discussions that would have taken place in New York and Geneva. And, on a positive note, some organizations that would not have been able to travel have been able to participate in the Zoom conversations. However, hours on Zoom cannot replace all the dialogue and connections that take place at real world meetings. While we continue to advance our work, limitations remain.

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## Quakers condemn systemic racism, commit to act

In response to horrific acts of police violence against Black people and Indigenous people in the US and Canada, CFSC was part of two statements condemning systemic racism and calling for major changes: <https://quakerservice.ca/racism> and <https://quakerservice.ca/policeviolence>

## Webinars on right relationship with Indigenous peoples

We have been part of planning a series of webinars hosted by Pendle Hill. The five remaining sessions are:

1. Implementing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples With Sheryl Lightfoot and CFSC's Jennifer Preston
2. Cultural Appreciation vs. Appropriation/ Misappropriation With Dan and Mary Lou Smoke, Freida Jacques, and the Rev. Dr. J.R. Norwood
3. Solidarity, Guidance for Engagement With Kenneth Deer and Chief Dennis Coker
4. Healing from Intergenerational Trauma With Elicia Goodsoldier and Cante' Waste Win (Good Hearted Woman)
5. Truth and Healing With Marie Wilson, Denise Altvater, Esther Anne, and Penthea Burns

For more information and to register visit <https://pendlehill.org/learn/fall-conference-2020>

## Ban facial recognition

CFSC joined a large open letter calling for a ban on facial recognition by Canada's federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The letter also calls for meaningful public consultations and clear policies and laws regulating the use of facial recognition technology. The letter explains how "Facial recognition surveillance presents grave risks to the fundamental rights of Canadians and people in Canada by allowing for the mass, indiscriminate, disproportionate, unnecessary, warrantless search of innocent people." Other serious concerns are noted as well, including that facial recognition generates many more false positive matches for people with darker skin, potentially exacerbating racism in law enforcement: <https://quakerservice.ca/facialrecognition>

## Indigenous voices on reconciliation

In the last edition of *Quaker Concern* you read about our project sharing the responses that our Indigenous friends and partners gave us to difficult questions like: "Is reconciliation dead?" and "If you had to choose one thing you wished every person knew about reconciliation, what would that be?"

These one to two minute video responses to common reconciliation questions are now online! You can watch them on our website: <https://quakerservice.ca/IndigenousVoices> or on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CFSCVideo/videos>

## Building bridges

CFSC continues to share bridge-building perspectives on controversial topics via a blog for *Psychology Today*. Find the latest posts on "cancel culture," the polarizing impacts of COVID-19, the psychology explaining reactions to mass protests, and more: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/are-we-done-fighting>

We also wrote an article for *openDemocracy* highlighting both the usefulness and drawbacks of the anti-racist approach advocated by the popular book *White Fragility*, and some other options that are worth considering as well: <https://bit.ly/openDemocracyArticle>

## Quaker Concern

*Quaker Concern* is the newsletter of Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and social justice agency of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada. Since 1931 CFSC has been a small team but has had a big impact.

**Donations** are received with gratitude. The generous support of individual donors makes all of the work described here possible. CFSC issues tax receipts for donations over \$10.

Read current and past issues online at [QuakerConcern.ca](http://QuakerConcern.ca) (contact us to switch to a digital subscription).

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# The Only Way Forward: Shifting Punitive Perspectives

By Keira Mann



Community members take a knee in front of Toronto City Hall, June 2020. Photo: Matt Legge.

**D**efund the police! It's a demand that is all over the streets, the news, and in our minds right now. It's a demand brought on by centuries of inequality and injustice. Although public attention was reignited in May following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in the United States, Canada is certainly not immune to systemic racism. The experiences of Rodney Levi and Chantel Moore, two recent victims of deadly police violence towards Indigenous peoples in Canada, made it clear that this is not an issue that Canadians can ignore.

What are the alternatives? What steps can we, as individuals and as communities, take to address the punitive and systemically racist justice system in Canada? How much change is society ready for? We at Canadian Friends Service Committee have been thinking about this a great deal in recent months.

## “What are the alternatives?”

Quakers have acted under concern about the harms caused by the justice system for centuries, and have worked individually and collectively in attempts—some more successful than others—to alleviate problems caused by the system. As the peace and social justice agency of Canadian Friends, CFSC has acted on these concerns for decades, and our work has been more focused since Canadian Quakers came to unity in 1981 around the need to abolish the penal system (see <https://quakerservice.ca/prisonabolition>).

Now, more than ever before, people around the world are seeing what Friends have been trying to raise awareness of: the punitive justice system perpetuates cycles of harm, especially towards racialized communities. Although Friends have corporately

supported penal abolition for a long time, this does not mean that we have all of the answers about what a society without police or punishment could look like, or that we are exempt from our own biases.

You've probably been hearing a lot lately about how police and other aspects of the criminal justice system are systemically racist, and in need of major reform. But you may or may not feel comfortable with the idea of tearing down structures that have a long history as cornerstones of how colonial societies like Canada enforce social contracts around laws and safety. CFSC has discerned that this is an opportune moment to provide a space in which all of us can learn more about these issues.

In the coming months, we will offer a five-part interactive webinar series on the topic of shifting punitive perspectives. With the help of experts, people with lived experience, and Friends, CFSC will examine the impacts of the existing punitive and racist justice system, alternatives to this system, and next steps.

But be warned: this series is not as easy as logging onto your Zoom account a few times to watch a panel. Everyone will be challenged to examine their own perspectives, biases, and roles in relation to systemic racism. We don't want you to be a passive participant in this process. The series will be asking you to engage fully, and to bring your own knowledge, experience, perspectives, and concerns as we engage in deep re-thinking together.

These webinars will create space for discussing racism (both support of systemically racist institutions, and individual prejudices) and attitudes around crime, what crime is, how to keep society safe, and how to

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# Militarized Policing: North America to Israel/ Palestine

By Sara avMaat

## *Only Way Forward* continued

address transgressions (many of these attitudes may draw on some of Canada's colonial and systemically racist ways of doing and knowing). This will require a willingness on the part of all participants to face some personal discomfort in order to achieve positive change. Like reconciliation, this path is a journey and it will require work. It's the only way forward. Are you ready to do this work?

If you are, stay tuned. We will be releasing all of the details and how to register soon. Follow us on social media @CFSCQuakers or sign up to receive our e-news to get all of the information.



Keira Mann is CFSC's Assistant Coordinator, Programs and Events. Find out more about CFSC's criminal justice work: <https://quakerservice.ca/justice>

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The recent and historical deaths at the hands of, or in the presence of, the police in Canada and the US are profoundly troubling. First and foremost, the racism that pervades our society is laid bare and we are challenged to deal with it.

We might also ask ourselves how this relates to increasing militarization of the police and to the values that underlie their training. One disturbing aspect of this is the program of exchange visits and joint training that takes place between Israeli personnel and North American law enforcement professionals. Jeff Halper in his book *War against the People* describes (page 263) a set of operational assumptions and practices that are part of an Israeli model of policing available for export, along with the surveillance technology and "battle tested" weapons technology Israel also exports. His list includes: "interrogation bordering on torture, use of aggressive and disproportionate force, administrative detention and mass arrests, and aggressive crowd control."

**"The racism that pervades our society is laid bare and we are challenged to deal with it."**

Both the US and Canada have taken advantage of this export. An Amnesty International blog post (<https://bit.ly/AmnestyBlog>) makes it clear how widespread this influence has been in the US, and Minnesota Public Radio confirms that some police in Minnesota, where George Floyd was killed by a police officer, have participated in this training (<https://bit.ly/MinnesotaPoliceTraining>).

The Canadian government's strategic partnership

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## Militarized Policing continued

agreement with Israel includes such areas for cooperation as border management and security, crime prevention, law enforcement, and correctional services and prisons (see section E: <https://bit.ly/CanadaIsraelPartnership>).

Jewish Voice for Peace has an extensive report on the consequences of American law enforcement trainings in Israel: <https://bit.ly/JVPReport>. They also caution that “Suggesting that Israel is the start or source of... police violence or racism shifts the blame from the United States [and I would add Canada] to Israel,” obscuring the fundamental responsibility (<https://bit.ly/JVPDeadlyExchange>).

Apparently, the exchange does go both ways. Some questionable practices used in the occupied Palestinian territories were inherited from colonial Britain, and in 2016 Israel passed a “stop and frisk law” modeled after its US equivalent, allowing police to “search anyone, regardless of behavior, in a location that is thought to be a target for hostile destructive actions” (<https://bit.ly/InterceptIsrael>).

I hope Canadians, by now, are well aware of the detrimental effects of the similar police practice variously known in Canada as “carding” or “street checks,” and how disproportionately people of colour are affected. You can read more about this serious issue (and see CFSC’s endorsement of multiple proposed reforms) at <https://quakerservice.ca/news/policing-ontario> and in the Amnesty International Canada blog *Carding and Anti-Black Racism in Canada*: <https://bit.ly/CardingAntiBlackRacism>.

Returning to the topic of Israel’s control over Palestinians, a great deal has happened of late in response to the government of Israel’s stated plans to annex large portions of the West Bank. CFSC joined many groups in endorsing a call to Canada’s Members of Parliament to oppose the annexation, which over 70 MPs have signed. There are also three Parliamentary E-petitions that individual Canadians can sign that are well-aligned with CFSC’s positions:

» The first petition calls for Canada to stop turning a blind eye to the well-documented ill treatment of children in Israeli military prisons: <https://bit.ly/ChildRightsPetition> (For more about this deeply disturbing issue see the 2018 *Quaker Concern* article *No Way to Treat a Child*: [https://quakerconcern.ca/no-](https://quakerconcern.ca/no-way-to-treat-a-child)

[way-to-treat-a-child](#))

- » The second petition calls for honesty in labelling and excluding illegal settlement goods from the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement: <https://bit.ly/SettlementGoods>
- » The third petition calls for an end to the blockade of Gaza: <https://bit.ly/EndGazaBlockade>

I hope that this moment with people paying increased attention to militarized policing and unjust systems of control and abuse of human beings will last longer than a moment. I hope it will lead to deeper examination of the values we hold. What kind of community do we want to build? What does security really mean? How do we uphold human rights for all people at home and abroad?



Sara avMaat, Antigonish Worship Group, is a member of CFSC’s peace program committee and Israel/Palestine Working Group. As an ecumenical accompanier, she spent three months in Tulkarem, occupied Palestinian territory, monitoring the human rights situation. Find out more about CFSC’s support for a just peace in Israel/Palestine: <https://quakerservice.ca/israelpalestine>



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## Indigenous Rights continued from pg 1

We are supporting federal legislation to implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in Canada as a top priority. This legislation was committed to by the current government after the devastating loss of Bill C-262 in the Senate last year. The Coalition has met twice with the Special Advisor on Indigenous rights to Attorney General/Minister of Justice David Lametti to share information.

It is vital that legislation is developed in cooperation with Indigenous peoples and that it meets or exceeds the standards set by C-262. C-262 was widely supported by Indigenous peoples across the country and adopted by the House of Commons before the Senate prevented it from receiving Royal Assent. There is no need to re-invent the wheel and begin this work again. The federal parliament has been mainly restricted to work related to the pandemic until now, but this fall, when parliament reconvenes, the legislation on the *Declaration* must be a priority, to ensure that it has the time to move through the various stages to reach Royal Assent.

**“C-262 was widely supported by Indigenous peoples and adopted by the House of Commons. There is no need to re-invent the wheel.”**

This legislation is a point the Coalition would have highlighted at the UN this year, to remind Canada of its commitment. It is the unrelenting work of the Coalition that has taken the government of Canada to a complete reversal—from rejecting the *UN Declaration* in the international arena a few years ago to now being a State poised to have implementation of the *Declaration*, guided by a legislative framework. Such legislation will serve as a highly useful example for other States to follow. Achieving this will have an impact for Indigenous peoples globally. It is being carefully tracked by Indigenous peoples and States in other regions of the world.

In addition to our work with the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are promoting this legislation by working with a circle of other Canadian faith bodies. There is a web site in process and an advocacy tool hosted by our friends at Mennonite Central Committee: <https://bit.ly/PrioritizeUNDeclaration>

In July, I was pleased to join former MP Romeo

Saganash, and Kukpi7 Judy Wilson of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, during a webinar hosted by Mennonite Church of BC to present on the importance of the *Declaration* and the need for a legislative framework to ensure its implementation. I was asked to share on how Quakers had been involved with the *Declaration*. I also discussed why this is important for people of faith and how settlers can be good allies in this work. A recording of the webinar can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/LivingTheDeclaration>

As CFSC's work continues from home offices and Zoom meetings, international work in solidarity Indigenous peoples' human rights remains a high priority. The federal legislation is a good example of how that work happens locally, nationally, and internationally.



**Jennifer Preston**, Hamilton Meeting, coordinates CFSC's Indigenous rights program. This is the first time in two decades she has not been to the UN in the spring. Learn more about this work at <https://quakerservice.ca/Indigenousrights>

[Indigenousrights](https://quakerservice.ca/Indigenousrights)



## Did you know?

Our website has a page full of resources that can help you understand and speak up on topics from the impacts on children when parents are incarcerated to the Doctrine of Discovery, and from synthetic biology to national security.

Access them for free:  
<https://quakerservice.ca/resources>



# To Spread Peace, We Need Each Other

By Matthew Legge



As many of us continue to struggle with the impacts of increased loneliness, an economic downturn, and other effects of the pandemic, there is much that we can still do together. Indeed, our support for each other toward a world that promotes justice and health for all may be more important now than ever.

We need a peace virus to help counteract the pandemics of COVID-19, violence, and hate. There are so many ways that the peace virus can enter our lives and express itself in our thoughts and deeds. In our own small ways, each of us has the power to nurture it and help it spread. A series of online workshops offered by CFSC has been supporting participants to do just that.

So far these workshops have been offered to four groups, each group participating remotely from various parts of Canada and the US. Participants have been in their 20s to 80s, bringing a rich range of life experiences and perspectives to each 90 minute session.

**“Facilitating these workshops has been one of the most rewarding and fascinating experiences I’ve had.”**

Over the course of five weeks, participants share their stories of struggles and success. Some discussions take place in the full group (not more than 20 participants), others one-on-one in breakout rooms. Everyone gets to practice finding what they want to share and saying it, as well as really listening.

Activities and content covered include: why we see people as “other,” types of power, communication techniques for difficult conversations, how beliefs form and why they can be so impervious to counter-

evidence, and how to care for ourselves and address barriers to inner peace.

Participants raise questions like how identity categories such as gender and class play into our support for peace, what to do when someone will not listen, and how to engage in activism more effectively.

My co-facilitator—CFSC associate member Trevor Chandler— and I draw out the wisdom of the group as we reflect together on these challenging topics. The course also draws from content in CFSC’s award-winning book *Are We Done Fighting? Building Understanding in a World of Hate and Division*. Each week participants read a chapter or two and bring those practical tips and stories with them to the discussion.

For me, facilitating these workshops has been one of the most rewarding and fascinating experiences I’ve had in my service work at CFSC.

But what do the participants think? All respondents to our anonymous survey said that they would recommend the course and they found it useful. One explained: “The book and the course itself was FAR MORE than I had anticipated. The facilitators were knowledgeable, sensitive, and supportive. I am sad it is over... It was so wonderful.” We’ve had some valuable feedback about several details we can improve on as well.

To register for free for a fall session of this workshop series visit <https://quakerservice.ca/register>



Matthew Legge is CFSC’s Peace Program Coordinator. Find out more about *Are We Done Fighting?* at <https://AreWeDoneFighting.com>

# Friends on the Move



Usually we share our recent travels, but due to COVID-19, here are recent virtual events instead! CFSC is now hosting film nights on Zoom. Our first screening was *Conviction*, followed by a discussion with former Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth Irwin Elman. Then we screened *Cottagers and Indians* with a rich Q&A with its director Drew Hayden Taylor. We will announce our next screening soon via our E-news and social media.

We would like to offer our deep gratitude to Tasmin Rajotte, who

served CFSC in multiple staff roles for almost two decades. Tasmin started out coordinating the Quaker International Affairs Program housed under CFSC, which did important and groundbreaking work around intellectual property rights (see <https://quakerservice.ca/news/intellectual-property-rights>). She went on to serve as coordinator of CFSC's criminal justice program, and more recently provided staff support to our board of directors, fundraising, strategic planning, and many other areas. We thank Tasmin for all of her

dedication, leadership, and service work over these many years, and wish her the very best as she follows her leading to work in the areas of ecology and environmental sustainability.



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