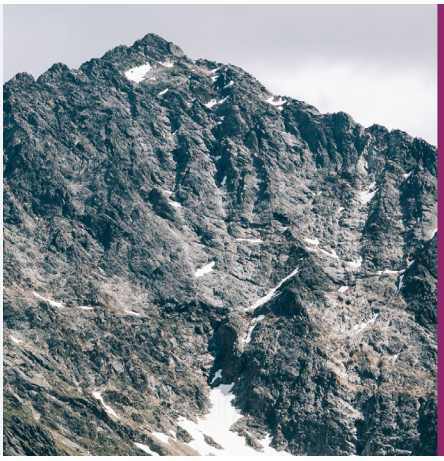
Canadian Friends Service Committee

Vol. 52, No. 3, Summer 2026

Quaker Concern

Truth and reconciliation: Quakers and reparations

By Rachel Yordy and Jeremy Vander Hoek



"We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing."
— Justice Murray Sinclair

We've released a rich new document for non-Indigenous Quakers and others who are looking to move from words to action on reconciliation. The rest of this article is excerpts from the resource. We encourage you to read the whole thing: https://QuakerService.ca/Reparations

Learning the truth

Maybe you're at the start of the journey and aren't sure where to begin. Our list starts with learning as a basis for reconciliation action. As settlers, we cannot begin to work in collaboration and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples towards reconciliation if we are ignorant of the historic and ongoing harms of colonialism.

It is important to listen to Indigenous voices and read Indigenous authors who share their experiences of colonization to understand more about its impacts and the strength and resilience of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have been practicing their laws and cultures since time immemorial and resisting colonization for many generations.

Learning more about these practices gives us a richer understanding of the history of the land we're on and the Nations that continue to exercise their rights and practice their lifeways. If you ever find yourself stuck on the reconciliation journey, learning is a great place to return to. There is a rapidly expanding body of inspiring Indigenous literature, memoirs, and non-fiction out there, and there is always more to learn.

Ideas:

- Take a look at https://NativeLands.ca, or https://whose.land to see whose territory you are on. After you've done so, take some time to learn about the Indigenous legal traditions, cultural practices, languages, and history of colonization where you are. Seek out Indigenous sources and perspectives wherever possible—like searching for the website of the First Nation whose land you are occupying or Indigenous perspectives on the Treaty territory you hold responsibilities in.
- Go to your local library, in person or online, and search for reading lists of books written by Indigenous authors, and public events where Indigenous speakers may share knowledge. Consider joining or starting a book club featuring Indigenous authors.
- Read the TRC *Calls to action* https://nctr.ca/publications-and-reports/reports and review the progress implementing the TRC *Calls to action*: https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/beyond-94. Consider where you can contribute based on your knowledge and relationships.
- Review some of the reconciliation resources that CFSC has developed:
  - Land acknowledgement guide https://QuakerService.ca/LandAcknowledgment

Continued on pg 6

Keeping up with Friends

New executive summary and infographic explain who profits from Canada's prisons

$259,654. That's the cost to incarcerate a woman in Canada for one year. Jaw dropping isn't it? Incarceration costs much more than effective alternatives. It also fails to reduce reoffending. So then, why does the carceral system persist? Who benefits? Check out our new brief *Executive summary* and infographic (perfect for sharing our research on social media): https://QuakerService.ca/WhoBenefits

You might have a problem with being too permissive

Many of us want to be kind and are reluctant to tell others what to do. In other words, we struggle to set and maintain reasonable boundaries. Our newest post for *Psychology Today* explains that boundaries don't have to hold people down. They can lift us up. The post shares some thoughts on how to agree to and maintain boundaries, even when conversations get heated: https://QuakerService.ca/Permissive

CFSC gives educational bursaries

"Growing up, I faced challenges that tested my sense of hope and belonging. Those experiences taught me the importance of inner peace—not as the absence of hardship, but as the ability to respond to difficulties with courage, empathy to self, and purpose," says Kate, one of three students who received educational bursaries from CFSC this year to support their peace and social justice education.

She's studying social work. "I promote peace through my work with youth experiencing mental health issues, substance use challenges, and structural barriers… Rather than viewing people through the lens of their struggles, I seek to understand their stories, recognize their strengths, and work collaboratively with them."

Paige is doing a Master's in Peace and Justice. "I hope that by stumbling my way towards embodying peace, I can begin sharing it with others," she explains.

Emmett is putting the financial support toward a PhD that will look at Hepatitis C (HCV) in Ontario First Nations. "While HCV is broadly seen as curable with access to direct acting anti-viral treatment, 1 in every 14 Indigenous individuals in Canada have had HCV," Emmett notes, adding that their research will, "account for how settler-colonialism in Canada has led to a system where First Nations individuals must navigate through a myriad of federal, tribal, and provincial healthcare systems, under-resourced on-reserve nursing stations, lack of cultural competency, racial discrimination, and stereotyping around liver cirrhosis and substance use."

Friends witness against arms

When people arrived for the first day of CANSEC—North America's largest arms fair held in Ottawa each year—they were greeted by a silent vigil and Quaker meeting for worship. Friends held banners including one that read "War starts here" and another—over twenty feet long—with a few thousand of the names of the children who have been killed during Israel's war against Gaza. CFSC's Peace Program Coordinator Mel Burns greeted CANSEC attendees with a sign and message: "You can change your mind." Friends also handed out leaflets encouraging attendees to question the ethics of the conference. One person later returned to say, "I read your leaflet, and as I walked through the conference I couldn't get it out of my mind… so I decided to leave. I wanted you to know."

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.*

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

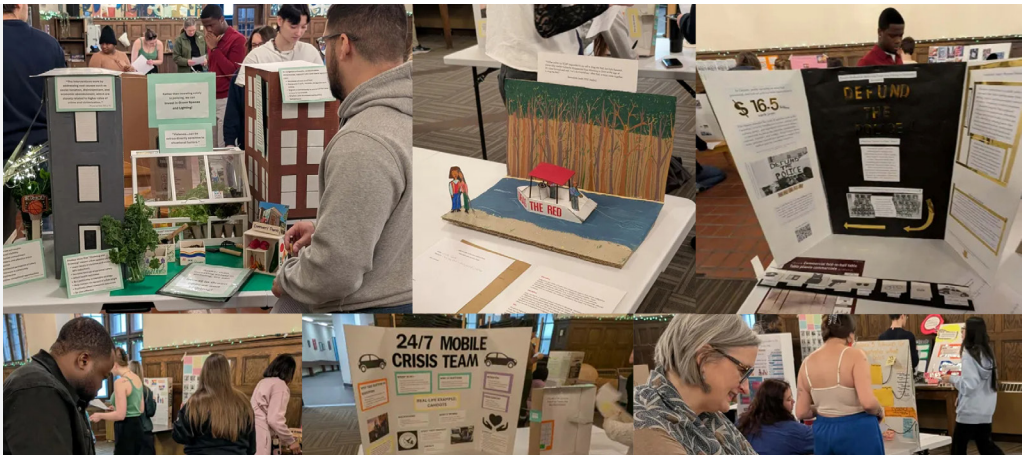
Read current and past issues online at QuakerConcern.ca. Contact us to switch to a digital subscription.

Canadian Friends Service Committee
60 Lowther Ave, Toronto, ON M5R 1C7
(416) 920-5213
Info@QuakerService.ca
QuakerService.ca
@CFSCQuakers

Charitable Number: 13214 6549 RR0001

“Who should we call?”: what if safety didn’t begin with police?

By Karen Ridd



Above: Canadian Mennonite University students use a draft CFSC resource on alternatives to policing to make and present displays, Feb, 2026.

This article is the first in a two-part series on the limits of policing and the promise of alternatives.

I grew up in a middle-class, white, well-educated household in a quiet urban neighbourhood. My family, school, and the entire society around me (especially TV shows) taught me that if you’re in trouble, you should turn to the police. They’re your friends. I expect many of you reading this article can resonate with that mentality.

It wasn’t until I was doing human rights work in Central America (with CFSC partner Peace Brigades International) that the first cracks in this myth started to appear to me. During the civil wars of the 1980s, police forces in places such as El Salvador and Guatemala were simply part of the larger security apparatus involved in arresting, torturing and “disappearing” people, displacing communities, and surveilling and even executing activists. I started to take notice of their presence at all times, to be on high alert if they were near. Indeed, when I was arrested and detained, they took me to the Treasury Police torture centre.

I began to think, “Police are not always your friends.” But I still rationalized. This was, after all, in Central America, with a long history of colonial-induced violence and inequality. In Canada the police were still my friends, right? And if there was, at times, police violence, well… that was just a “bad apple.” Ed and Al were police officers and my fastball coaches. And they were kind men. Besides, surely police are necessary. How else would people be kept safe? Who would catch the “bad guys”?

But I come from Manitoba and in 1988 the police shot and killed an unarmed, unthreatening Indigenous leader—JJ Harper—claiming they thought he was a suspect they were seeking in a robbery (even though Harper was a tall, heavy set middle-aged man, while the suspect was a skinny, short teenager. They were both Indigenous, which was, for the Winnipeg police, enough).

This was not, of course, the first police killing of an Indigenous person. And sadly, it has not been the last. But it was egregious, and the police tried to cover it up and the cover up failed. This murder, and the killing of Helen Betty Osborne (and the police inactivity in investigating that death) lead to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) in Manitoba. The AJI was groundbreaking, even though too few of their 296 recommendations have been implemented, even 35 years later. But it did peel back the curtain, showing non-Indigenous people the racist reality that Indigenous (and other BIPOC) people far too often experience at the hands of police and the justice system.

According to a data collection project undertaken by several universities and civil society groups, when it comes to police shootings of civilians, “Taken together, Black and Indigenous people comprise around 8.7 percent of the population in Canada, yet account for 27.2 percent of the police-involved shooting deaths.”[1] The AJI had led to even more cracks in my unquestioning belief in policing. Yes, the police may at times make me safer. But I was now aware that the police made other people, especially more marginalized people, much less safe.

One sector of particularly vulnerable people is those with mental health challenges. As the *CBC* has pointed out, a “substantial majority” of people killed by police struggle with mental health issues, addictions, or both.[2] Benjamin Perrin in his book *Indictment* (if you haven’t read it, I strongly encourage you to do so—it’s excellent and very readable. My Transformative Justice

Continued on next pg

students love it!) includes a chapter on policing. He points out that police operate on a fulcrum of power. When they "power up" (with weaponry, horses and dogs, threats or numbers), most of us "power down." We submit. But for people in a mental health crisis, or with certain types of neurodivergence, this submission is not a given. Indeed, when the police "power up" they may be triggered into "powering up" too—entering into a dangerous cycle that all too often results in their being killed by police.

As I started to question the inherent goodness of police as a social structure, I also began to learn about the history of policing. It has roots in England where "night watches" were hired to protect the property of the wealthy. The Northwest Mounted Police were sent across the country to subdue Métis and Indigenous independence in the west, and then used to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families. TV shows like *Dragnet* were created in collaboration with police with the goal of sanitizing the tarnished image of policing. Not to mention the image that is seared into our collective memory: Derek Chauvin, kneeling on the neck of George Floyd as he pleads "I can't breathe."

"A 'substantial majority' of people killed by police struggle with mental health issues, addictions, or both."

So, the police are built on the flawed foundation of existing to protect the property of the wealthy, maintain their positive image through misrepresentations in entertainment media, and pose a threat to large sectors of the population. That's all obviously problematic. But we need safety, and what other options do we have? Surely it's just a matter of more oversight, or body cameras, or more training, right?

The problem is, it's not actually a matter of "a few rotten apples." The barrel that the apples are stored in is a rotten barrel. It's a barrel of "us" versus "them", of power and dominance, of control of people and protection of property. It's the barrel that damages the apples, not the other way around.

The good news is that there *are* alternatives. Lots of them. CFSC, with the collaboration of University of Winnipeg student Julien Wyman, is currently compiling a *Compendium of alternatives to policing*. We have more than 35 entries! Canadian Mennonite University students have already engaged with a draft copy of the *Compendium*, and we'll be publishing the final version in the coming months.

Ultimately, we hope to explore the possibility of Canadian Friends formally encouraging alternatives to policing. Watch out for more communication from us on this topic, and stay tuned for our next installment of this series in the Winter 2027 issue of *Quaker Concern*. We'll explore a number of the alternatives out there. In the meantime, if you want to check out some options, how about:

- Clan Mothers Healing Village—an Indigenous women-led non-carceral Healing Lodge where vulnerable women and two spirit people can heal, grow, and learn new skills: https://ClanMothers.ca
- Equipe mobile de médiation et d'intervention sociale in Montreal: https://emmismtl.ca and Here2Help in Toronto: https://h2hresponds.ca working to deescalate conflict situations and promote the safety and wellbeing of all community members.
- Downtown Community Safety Partnership—a non-police presence that offers support and care, with a special concern for the unsheltered residents in my area in Winnipeg: https://www.dcsp.ca

1. Tracking (In)Justice. "Police-involved deaths are on the rise, as are racial disparities in Canada: A look at recent trends in police-involved deaths in Canada.", Feb 10, 2023, https://trackinginjustice.ca/analysis-increase-in-deaths-and-racial-disparities

2. Kate Nicholson and Jacques Marcoux. "Most Canadians killed in police encounters since 2000 had mental health or substance abuse issues." CBC, Apr 4, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/most-canadians-killed-in-police-encounters-since-2000-had-mental-health-or-substance-abuse-issues-1.4602916



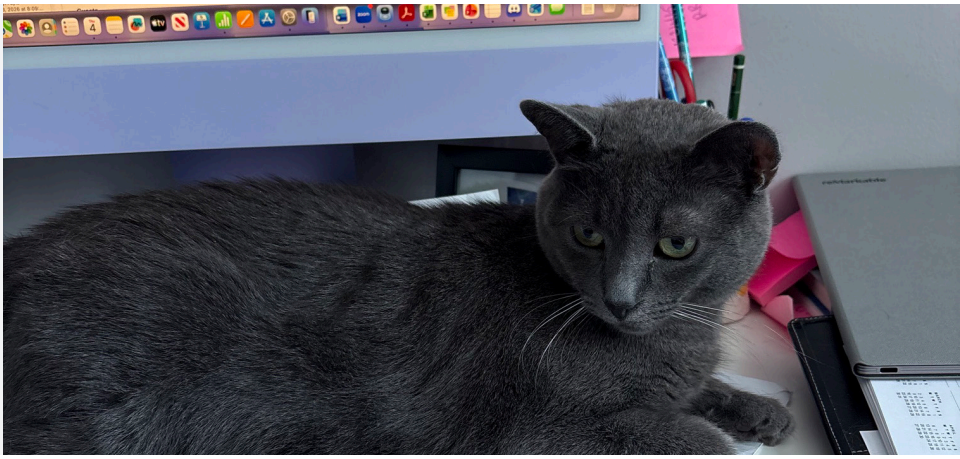
***Karen Ridd** is CFSC's Transformative Justice Program Coordinator.*

Stay Up to Date

Get our monthly emails and *Quaker Concern* direct to your email. Contact us to subscribe or to update your subscription.

From the General Secretary's desk

By Jennifer Preston



I am writing from Winnipeg, Treaty One territory and homeland of the Red River Métis. CFSC has lots going on at the annual gathering of Quakers from across the country. One thing is we're celebrating 95 years of CFSC! As part of our celebration evening Lisa Bowden, who you might know from our Unshackled video series (https://QuakerService.ca/Unshackled) lead us in a beading workshop. This week, in addition to discussions on our substantive work in several areas, we have a proposed minute for the business meeting committing the national Quaker body to financial reparations to Indigenous Peoples. More on this in our new resource https://QuakerService.ca/Reparations

CFSC had some new tee-shirts printed here at Red Rebel Armour, a local Indigenous business. The shirts say "Stand Firm, Stay Peaceful." Contact info@quakerservice.ca to order yours for $25 plus shipping.

Sarah Bear has been hired as the CFSC's Indigenous Rights Program Coordinator. We're super excited to have her on our team, and you will be hearing from her in our next edition of Quaker Concern. In mid-August she will be joining myself and other program staff members on a road trip to visit and learn from our Cree partners in Eeyou Istchee. Follow CFSC on Facebook and Instagram if you'd like to follow our trip.

Recently I was invited to join a dialogue with federal, provincial, and territorial cabinet ministers to discuss Canada's work on human rights at the international level and implementation of this work. The need for a monitoring body to ensure the implementation of the *National action plan* related to the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act* was the focus of my presentation and that of our long-time partner, Kenneth Deer. Kenneth and I were there representing the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples https://DeclarationCoalition.com.

These meetings are held every few years for governments to hear from Indigenous Peoples and civil society. Does this dialogue have impact, or is it performative? That may be a glass half full question.

In June I spent two days virtually with 22 leaders of Quaker agencies from many areas of the world in a Global Quaker Convening discussion on what it is to do our work in the world we are in. Under the theme of Salt and Light we shared about our work, our challenges, and what we can bring to a damaged world. Esther Mombo (Kenya) reminded us all that we are the salt for the systemically wounded world and we are the Light, even when it is dim.

We discussed a series of questions and perhaps asked more than finding answers. Coming together with so many sister organizations where we can share courage and look to the groundwork of the future is awesome and inspiring. Some of the questions at the end of our time together:

- How can we do things together so that we are more than the sum of our parts?
- Are there ways we can transform not just ourselves, but the world?
- Is there a way that when we gather, we have more to offer?

Great questions! We will gather again soon and keep this discussion going.

***Jennifer Preston** is CFSC's General Secretary.*

Continued on next pg

- Reconciliation queries https://QuakerService.ca/ReconciliationQueries
- Reconciliation video series https://QuakerService.ca/IndigenousVoices

Relationship building

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reminds us, repairing relationships is at the core of reconciliation. Consider how you might build relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Perhaps there are learning experiences at the local Friendship Centre, First Peoples' Centre at a nearby university/college, or public events at the First Nation nearest you. These events are great places to meet people and connect. Repeated attendance is valuable as it demonstrates a willingness to engage in deeper ways than a single event. Colonialism maintains its power by reinforcing the barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Reconciliation aims to break these down.

Ideas:

- Search for Indigenous organizations and Nations that regularly host public events.
- Visit exhibits and events at Indigenous Cultural Centres, museums, art galleries, etc. and watch for Indigenous artists, curators, and community representation in national and provincial spaces.
- Attend a KAIROS *Blanket exercise* https://KairosCanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights/blanket-exercise or *Mapping the ground we stand on* activity in your community https://AlongsideHope.org/mapping-exercise; or if interested in learning more about the American context, join a Towards Right Relationships event such as their *Roots of injustice, seeds of change* https://FriendsPeaceTeams.org/upcoming-events.
- Remember the following dates and look for local events where you can show solidarity:
  - May 5 is the National Awareness Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit, and LGBTQ+ people. (There are also commemorative events on February 14 and October 4 in many communities).
  - June is National Indigenous History Month, which brings with it many public events all across the country.
  - June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, a day recognizing and celebrating the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.
  - September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Many also refer to it as Orange Shirt Day in reference to the story of Phylis Jack Webstad, whose orange shirt was taken from her as a child in residential school.
- Support Indigenous authors, knowledge holders, and communities economically by purchasing books and resources, attending workshops, participating in fundraisers, and purchasing goods from Indigenous makers and vendors—this is a direct way to invest in Indigenous livelihoods and contribute to the reconciliation economy as you build respectful relationships.
- Research whether there is a treaty or agreement governing the lands on which you live, work, worship, and play. If so, when is the affiliated Treaties Recognition Day or Week? What events are commemorating and/or calling for accountability in relation to this treaty/agreement?
- Consider how you might introduce yourself in circles and workshops in respectful ways. (How might you frame your ancestry and relationships with land and First Peoples? If you are a settler, how much space do you want to take up in the circle?)

Providing individual and collective reparations

Maybe you've already developed relationships with Indigenous individuals or organizations nearby. Perhaps you are quite active in your reconciliation journey, participating in advocacy and activism alongside Indigenous Peoples. If so, this may be a good time to consider offering reparations either individually or with organizations you are involved in (Monthly Meetings or other Quaker bodies, workplaces, volunteer groups, etc.).

Providing reparations is often a process, as it requires conscious consideration of where reparations make sense. Your relationships with local Indigenous organizations and/or Nations may provide clear answers on where to begin.

For example, offering reparations to the People(s) on whose land your Meeting House sits is a tangible way to recognize the ways in which you've benefited from

Continued on next pg

your presence on that land. There is not one way to offer reparations, or one right Indigenous body to give these to. So much depends on the context of colonization and your individual or community's place-based relationships. If contemplating financial reparations, 1% of annual income is a common baseline. However, Friends may wish to consider more than that amount.

Ideas:

- Carefully consider the examples in the section below and reflect on what may be relevant to your local context. Learning from the experiences of other local faith bodies or organizations might also be helpful.
- Reparations should not be framed as 'charitable donations'—they're a form of restitution for historic and ongoing harm. It is not appropriate to ask for feedback or reporting after the provision of reparations. Funds are intended to be spent how the recipient sees fit.
- If you do move forward with offering reparations, please reach out to CFSC with any questions and tell us about your experience.

Advocacy and activism

Deeper involvement, including advocacy and activism, is a great way of sustaining your commitment to reconciliation. As you continue to attend events and stay connected with local Indigenous organizations or Nations, look for opportunities where you can get involved more concretely. Are there any calls for volunteers for events? What are the political challenges local Indigenous Peoples are facing? Join a protest or write letters as part of an advocacy campaign as these opportunities become available. As mentioned earlier, the reconciliation journey is not linear. Finding opportunities to support Indigenous Peoples near you can unfold organically. Settlers need to keep an eye out for these opportunities, and to remember to center Indigenous voices and calls to action.

Ideas:

- Based on your knowledge and relationships, consider where you feel led contribute to the rights and policy issues important to Indigenous Peoples:
  - What are the Indigenous rights issues facing the First Peoples nearest you? How are these Peoples calling for allyship in addressing these rights?
  - What are the largest Indigenous rights challenges across Canada today? How are Indigenous leaders asking individuals/groups to get involved in support of these issues now?
  - Research and, if so led, consider joining local Land Back and water rights causes that are open to the public where you can show solidarity in a meaningful way.
- Follow the newsletters, social media pages, and events pages where local Nations and organizations post. Calls for letter writing, protest, and solidarity are often shared there.
- Discern your/your group's capacity to participate in different types of actions. Many of them require sustained commitment and unique gifts:
  - If you like organizing, you might help to coordinate meetings, track calls to action, and share important information with like-minded partners.
  - If you're more energized by working within the system you might write letters, meet with MPs, or write submissions to public consultations.
  - If you enjoy being more rebellious, you may choose to join opportunities to stand with Indigenous partners on the front lines of protests and other actions, honouring Indigenous leadership.
- Not sure where to start? We also have resources to help Friends engage in any type of advocacy. This short pamphlet https://QuakerService.ca/BeingAQuakerBeingAnActivist explores what it means to be a Quaker activist. It offers insights into historical and current challenges to Friendly activism, and how these have been overcome by Quakers in their work for justice and peace.



Rachel Yordy *is a volunteer member supporting CFSC's Indigenous rights work.* ***Jeremy Vander Hoek*** *was a CFSC staff member and has now gone back to school to become a teacher.*



Lots more great content is available on **our website.** It's organized in rows **just like your Netflix.** Have a look around!

QuakerService.ca/Resources

Friends on the move

PEACE PROGRAM COORDINATOR MEL BURNS delivered a peace education workshop in Montreal, an intergenerational creative nonviolence/craftivism workshop at Atlantic Half Yearly Meeting in Prince Edward Island, and was a Quaker United Nations delegate at the first annual *UN peacebuilding week* in New York.

WE'RE CELEBRATING 95 YEARS OF PEACE and social justice work! To kick our birthday party off, ***Sandra Wiens*** was in Burnaby, British Columbia for a film screening of long-time CFSC partner ***Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel***'s award-winning documentary *When the pine needles fall* followed by a discussion with CFSC partner ***Haana Edenshaw*** about her Indigenous rights activism.

Sandra then visited Western Half Yearly Meeting in Sorrento, BC where she spoke about CFSC's work and engaged Friends in a discussion of the film *The third harmony*, about the topic of active nonviolence. Sandra and Mel also attended and supported the protests of CANSEC in Ottawa alongside various Friends (see page 2).

Sandra was also invited to the swearing in ceremony of the new Commissioner for Corrections, Talal Dakalbab.

JENNIFER PRESTON PARTICIPATED IN MEETINGS of the governance committee of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), New York to share about CFSC's work with QUNO at the UN in support of Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

For more than two decades CFSC has been active at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and 2026 was no exception. We were on the move with plenary statements, side events, Quaker House events—including our annual Quaker House dinner and hosting the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus early every morning—North American caucus meetings, Canada events with former Governor General Mary Simon, Ambassador David Lametti, and Senator Margo Greenwood, and more.

The Forum is such a great place for relationships to flourish and to remind Canada on the international stage of commitments that need honouring. Also Jenn met ***Sarah Bear***, our now staff person, at the Forum!

Jenn also travelled to Montreal to meet with long-time CFSC partner ***Paul Joffe***.

KAREN RIDD REPRESENTS CFSC ON THE Canadian Council of Churches Working Group on Restorative Justice. And she represents that body on the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy (IFC) in the Correctional Service of Canada. On behalf of the IFC, Karen made a site visit to Edmonton Institutions for Women (a federal prison) in May. These visits involve meeting people who are currently incarcerated, to ensure that their diverse spiritual needs are being met.

The Centre for Research into the Processes, Outcomes, and Impacts of Incarceration held its annual conference in St. Catharines, Ontario in May. Karen co-presented twice at the conference: *Beading beyond bars*, a handcraft and education workshop with ***Lisa Bowden***, and on the findings of CFSC's report on who profits from prisons (see page 2), with report co-author ***Lindsay Hunt***.