QUAKERS
Canadian Friends Service Committee

Writing for *Quaker Concern*

For decades Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) has published a newsletter. Since 1975 it's been called *Quaker Concern*. There have been hundreds of authors, each bringing a unique and valuable voice. This document provides guidelines for your *Quaker Concern* article.

What can I write about?

Quaker Concern is an educational tool and a way to show CFSC's donors where their funds go. It isn't a general interest social justice publication. Articles must be invited by CFSC. If an article doesn't work for *Quaker Concern*, you may wish to submit it to *The Canadian Friend*, which publishes content by Canadian Quakers on a range of topics.

All articles in *Quaker Concern* are about the work of CFSC, or make clear links to CFSC's active work. Please spend time on the CFSC website and see if your article can mention recent statements and resources or historical Quaker minutes. Show how your topic connects to CFSC's work and positions.

What voice do articles use?

In print, *Quaker Concern* goes out to almost 2,000 people from all walks of life. It's also read by thousands online. It's a newsletter, not an academic journal. Please use your own voice and reflect CFSC's values in your choice of words and tone. (See our communications guidance *What Makes CFSC's Voice Different?*.) Where fitting, use first person and an informal tone with contractions (can't not cannot). Avoid jargon and technical words.

How do I get started?

"Simplicity isn't about dumbing down, it's about prioritizing."[1] Identify the core point of your article. You may have lots that *you* want to say, but put yourself in your *reader's* shoes. This article is for them, not for you.

[1] Chip and Dan Heath, "Made to Stick Success Model," 2008, accessed via members section of https://HeathBrothers.com

Imagine that you're speaking to someone with a high school education. They have only a passing interest in your topic. With just a few minutes to share your ideas, what's the one thing you'd make sure they know? That's the essential point, also called the lead.

Your readers' minds are already strained with many demands. Respect them by finding what they need to know and saying it at the beginning. Don't bury the lead behind too much information.

Think about the main questions your reader may have. Fill out your article by answering those. (You can see what people are searching for related to your topic by visiting https://AnswerThePublic.com. This may give you ideas for questions to address.)

Once you're clear what the main point of the article is, draw your reader in by invoking an emotion such as curiosity (share a problem and ask the reader how they would solve it, start at the climax of a story and get them wondering how the situation got here).

Finally, think about what you hope the reader will *do*. Are there calls to action in your article (learn more, sign a petition, attend a training, have a conversation, etc.)? If so, are they made as clear and inviting as possible?

What are some other ways to connect with readers?

Do you ever find yourself reading the phone book for fun? Most of us don't. Why do you care about the issue you're writing on? Is it because of details like names, dates, or statistics? It's most likely for another reason. Try to *show* the reader that reason through a story, maybe your personal story if appropriate.

Consider sending your article to a f/Friend who knows very little about your topic. Ask them how easy it is to follow. Or ask yourself: "Would two people remember this and discuss it at a pub tonight?" When you've written an article that's inviting and meaningful, the answer is, "Yes." If the answer is "No," you still have work to do to make your article more accessible and memorable.

For better readability, use subheadings, regular paragraph breaks, and short sentences (20 words or less). Try offering lists to organize your ideas (e.g. "Three things you can do right now").

Read your article out loud to notice places you get stuck. Those are overly long or roundabout sentences. If you were speaking to a friend, how would you say that same thing more directly? There are many readability tools that give feedback and suggestions, such as https://www.webpagefx.com/tools/read-able.

If your article is feeling abstract or addresses issues most readers won't have experienced, can you provide an analogy to something commonplace? Can you be more concrete through a story in a specific setting? Can you use sensory language (metaphors that evoke colours,

sounds, smells, or textures)? Expertiments show that being concrete makes writing more compelling, and it makes arguments more convincing to the reader.[2]

Remember this important fact: how you share your message tells people how to respond to it. How do you want your reader to *feel*? If you want them to be very dispassionate and analytical, write in that voice, but recognize that many will get bored and stop reading.

Quaker Concern uses pull quotes, so include at least one pithy sentence that would look great as a quote:

> **"How you share your message tells people how to respond to it."**

What about the title?
A good title invokes an emotion and highlights the number one point your article makes. A compelling title and opening paragraph will get you more readers. (When *Quaker Concern* goes out in email it includes only the title and first two paragraphs of your article with a link saying "Keep reading.")

How long are articles?
"More words count less."[3] Articles are between 750 and 1,200 words (900 words max if there are four articles instead of the usual three). Shorter articles are preferable. It's much easier to run a short article with a "donate to CFSC" ad to fill space than to cut down a long article. If you strongly feel the need to write long articles, they may be shortened for the print version of *Quaker Concern* and published in their longer form on the website https://QuakerConcern.ca.

As we read, we form a picture in our heads. Help readers form a clear picture by making your sentences direct. After drafting your article, see if you can cut 50% of the words (while still keeping the final version to at least 750). You may not get there, but setting such an ambitious goal will help to tighten your messaging. This will make it more engaging and reader-friendly. You'll give the key points room to shine. Consider cutting:

- "To be" verbs (the program is designed to serve incarcerated mothers -> the program serves incarcerated mothers);
- Passive voice (Jennifer was invited to give a presentation in Ottawa -> Jennifer spoke in Ottawa);
- Filler and wordy phrases (to be clear, one can see that, it is important to realize, it goes without saying, in other words, due to the fact that, in order to);
- Intensifiers that don't add meaning (highly, completely, really, very, extremely);
- Redundancy (it came as a very unexpected surprise -> it was a surprise; the event was held at Friends House -> the event was at Friends House); and

[2] Dennis Proffitt and Drake Baer, *Perception: How Our Bodies Shape Our Minds* (St. Martin's Press, 2020), 91.
[3] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English trans. (Vintage Books, 1989), 7.

- Unnecessary prepositions (of, in, for, about, into, on).[4]

How do I use references?

Unlike academic writing, *Quaker Concern* articles don't reference every point made. That said, please don't plagiarize. Provide footnotes when using other peoples' ideas, direct quotes, statistics, and names of specific documents. Footnotes may be used to add comments, but keep these to a minimum. Please use Chicago Style notes.

Do I include a call to action?

Please try to, yes! Ideally your article won't just convey information and make the reader feel something, it will also include a next step. If you want people to take action try to be precise and make the action as easy as possible. Help them see what it will lead to and why it's time sensitive.

An overly vague call to action with no clear time-sensitive result is something like: "You can make a difference! Reflect on yourself and find ways to be more peaceful."

A more reader-friendly call to action is something like: "A Parliamentary e-petition opposing Canada's purchase of armed drones is closing for signatures on March 10. Please sign it before this fast approaching deadline! To stop this purchase we need to come together to show strong opposition."

What are other style guidelines?

Type out all numbers up to ten only. "There were six of us on the delegation. We met with 14 people in total."

Avoid acronyms. When necessary, write the word out the first time with the acronymn in brackets and use the acronymn afterward, e.g. British Columbia (BC).

Don't use titles or honorifics for people. If need be, you can list their job or relevant qualification followed by their full name (e.g. "Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper said…" not "Mr. Harper said…" or "The Honourable Prime Minister Harper said…").

We don't use the names of CFSC program committees in external communications like *Quaker Concern*. These names get confusing and are unnecessary. Say "CFSC" or "CFSC Program Coordinator" not "The Quakers Fostering Justice Program Coordinator."

Italicize the names of documents, but not of organizations or movements. E.g. *Quaker Concern*, *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Black Lives Matter.

Use a serial comma. E.g. "first, second, and third" not "first, second and third."

[4] Andrew Buck, "How to Write Effective Web Copy," *Bloomerang*, January 10, 2019, https://YouTube.com/watch?v=pXdQweAG6So; "Writing Concisely: Eliminating Wordiness," *theLecturette*, November 28, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDpgpgsPc_k

Are there words to use and to avoid?
CFSC's program committees are the experts in their particular areas of work. They have suggested the most helpful wording when discussing topics they work on.

Avoid	Use
Transformative justice	
• victim • offender • prisoner • criminal justice •	• someone who's been harmed • someone who's caused harm • person held in prison, someone who is imprisoned • to describe CFSC's work, use the term transformative justice instead. When talking about Canada you may still need to say criminal justice system.
Indigenous Peoples' human rights	
• Indian (except when used as part of a formal name like Indian Residential Schools or *The Indian Act*) • Native, aboriginal (these terms aren't what's being used in international law) • First Nations (this term does not include Inuit or Métis and may be seen as excluding non-status Indigenous people, so is best to avoid unless the specific context requires it) • Our Indigenous Peoples, Canada's Indigenous Peoples (the possessive suggests a sense of ownership/subjugation, a continuation of a colonial mentality) • Indigenous Peoples' rights • UNDRIP	• Indigenous person (for an individual, if possible try to state an individual's specific Nation(s)) • Indigenous people (for more than one Indigenous person e.g. "Indigenous people make up 4.9% of the population of Canada" this would not be "Indigenous Peoples" because that refers to a collective) • Indigenous Peoples (which makes reference to the collective rights of Peoples. Note that both are capitalized) • Indigenous Peoples in this territory, Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, Indigenous Peoples residing in what is now called Canada (these variously attempt to recognize the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous worldviews, and historical realities) • Indigenous Peoples' human rights (CFSC's writing reinforces that Indigenous rights are human rights) • *The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (write it out the first time and subsequently use *The Declaration* as CFSC prefers not to use this acronym)
Peace	
• conflict • conflict management/resolution • polarization	• Don't use this word to mean wars or killing. Conflict isn't inherently bad or good. Try being more specific by adding a qualifier (e.g. constructive conflict, creative conflict,

• Israel and Palestine • non-violence • peace building • defence	destructive conflict, violent conflict…) • conflict transformation (not all conflicts may be neatly "resolved" and talking about resolution can imply that conflict is always bad, which it isn't. Conflict transformation places emphasis on finding a creative way forward rather than on a neat and tidy "end") • Polarization is often written about as a negative but if it's navigated well it can be beneficial by increasing viewpoint diversity and creativity. So try being more specific. For example affective polarization is a dangerous subtype where people don't just disagree with the other side but feel negatively toward them *as people*. • Occupied Palestinian Territory (if that is what's being described) or Israel/Palestine (which comes first is alternated with each use, to signify that both have equal value and neither is treated preferentially) • nonviolence • peacebuilding • don't use the word defence to refer to killing people or to the military. CFSC doesn't believe that the military is primarily about defence or security. Instead of talking about defence spending try military spending or weapons spending, or talk about the actual activities (buying bombs, fighting in wars in foreign countries with a majority of those killed being civilians, etc.)

What format do I submit in?
Microsoft Word. Put the title on the first line, followed by the name(s) of the author(s) on the next line. At the end of the article, include a line about the author(s), listing their Meeting(s) if applicable, and their connection to CFSC.

What about pictures?
Submit a picture as a separate .jpg file in the highest resolution available. We can't publish pictures that are less than about 200 kb in size.

If you don't have a picture, please find one using: https://pexels.com, https://pixabay.com, https://commons.wikimedia.org, or https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/by-2.0.

Save the picture's origin in the filename (e.g. name the file "Peace article photo – source Pixabay.jpg"). When submitting your article, please also tell us the photo caption and photo credit. Even creative commons pictures may require credit, so make note of this when downloading the picture. If you don't submit a picture with your article, we'll use the above sites to find one that we deem appropriate.

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