

A photograph of a pond with lily pads and a red fish. The lily pads are green with some yellow and purple spots, and the water is dark. A red fish is visible on the right side of the image.

*A strategy for
justice & peace*



Canadian Friends
Service Committee (Quakers)

CANADIAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (QUAKERS)



You may not have heard much about Quakers. That's because we tend to work quietly to transform our world for the better. Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) is the peace, social justice, and international development arm of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada.

Since 1931 we've been a small team, mostly volunteers, doing work with a significant impact.

We come together as CFSC because of our shared Quaker faith and practice. This plan arose from that practice, including worshipping silently together.

We seek to experience and answer to the Spirit in all creation. In the pages that follow, you'll see how CFSC expresses peace, integrity, equality, simplicity, and respect for all. Building from these values, and key to all of our activities, when we work with others, we create true partnerships.

Our work alleviates suffering and develops transformative and sustainable approaches to human rights, justice, and peace. As described in this narrative summary of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, we act in four ways: practical assistance, research, education, and policy dialogues.

Much more information is available online, or by contacting us

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HUMAN RIGHTS



On a day that was to be full of tears, we were honoured by a very special request. After six years crossing the country collecting the heart-wrenching testimonies of thousands of residential school survivors, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) asked CFSC staff Jennifer Preston to facilitate a panel session at their closing events.

Jennifer wrote to supporters at the time,

"When I stood at the sacred fire, when I was humbled by the commitment and actions of the three TRC Commissioners, and when I felt Grace from the courage and strength of survivors as they told their stories: I knew we had to do more. It's not enough to recognize and acknowledge the terrible legacy of residential schools in Canada."

Our Indigenous rights work focuses on the urgent need for reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. To get where we are today, we supported the creation, adoption, and today the full implementation, of the minimum standards affirming the human rights of Indigenous Peoples - the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. It was because of this principled work that we were invited to facilitate the TRC closing session about the *Declaration*, which the Commissioners have called the "roadmap for reconciliation."

In Canada and at the UN, we work with Indigenous partners to ensure that governments collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and put the *Declaration* into practice. We are regularly educating classes, governments, NGOs and Indigenous Peoples about the importance of the *Declaration* and a human rights-based approach. We focus on understanding the TRC's final report and engaging as Quakers in the *Calls to Action*, necessary for the difficult work of reconciliation.

PEACE



A Congolese woman looked out of her window to see a group in the street, holding a loud protest, as a large number of soldiers advanced on them. Instead of staying inside and hiding, she walked out into the street, alone.

She placed herself right between the two groups. From behind her came the energetic and angry shouts of the townspeople. In front, she saw the well-armed soldiers drawing ever closer.

With conflict transformation skills she'd learned, she managed to talk to both sides, listening carefully. After some time, both groups agreed that their interests could be served without violence. The townspeople and the soldiers dispersed.

This is a true story. It is one of an endless number of examples of nonviolence in support of peace. Did you know that skills like these exist and are taught and used every day?

Our peace work takes place at the grassroots in Canada, DR Congo, and Israel/Palestine. In each of these very different places we are contributing to creating a culture of peacebuilding to identify, engage constructively with, and transform conflict.

We're helping people learn the skills they need to be peaceful with themselves and those they interact with.

We produce official statements and responses to the causes of conflict and war - issues like Islamophobia, encroachment on civil liberties, and environmental concerns. We support concrete activities like services for refugees and cross-cultural peacebuilding experiences that change hearts and strengthen communities.

Photo: Like the woman in the story above, Carine Kabedi is working to transform conflicts in the DR Congo.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE



A woman we'll call Amelia gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Just two days later, the infant child was taken to a foster home. "It was the saddest day of my life," Amelia told reporters.

In the prison where she was serving time for a drug-related offense, a program which would have let Amelia nurse and care for her baby had just been cancelled by the government of British Columbia.

CFSC's actions increases awareness about the dangers of a mindset focused on punishment, rather than on restoring damaged relationships. Many of our efforts are directed to a largely ignored and vulnerable group - children and youth, especially the kids of incarcerated parents. We strive to increase the use of best practices in considering the best interests of the child at every stage - arrest, charge, sentencing, incarceration, and release.

Crime's lasting legacy is the torn fabric of people's lives. Canada's criminal justice system does little to alleviate the suffering of people harmed by crime and equally little to rehabilitate the people who caused harm. More than 95% of those who are put in jail will one day be our neighbours once again. They need programs and services which rehabilitate.

We help key actors dialogue with each other and share information to strengthen their work. We write letters and provide input at consultations. We give small grants to community groups taking action, like telling the stories of how prison affects women and their children.

In promoting evidence-based approaches to criminal justice, we faithfully seek to prevent, repair, and move beyond harm throughout the system.

Photo: An incarcerated mother and her baby. Credit: Birth Behind Bars.