



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*. By now there have been hundreds of authors, each one bringing a unique and valuable voice. This document provides guidelines for authors. Thank you for writing for *Quaker Concern*!

### **What goes into *Quaker Concern*?**

*Quaker Concern* is an educational tool and a way to show CFSC's donors how their funds have been used. As such, it is *not* just another social justice publication or one where anyone with a peace or justice concern can get published. Articles must be invited by one of CFSC's program committees, there are no submissions from the general public. 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 broader range of topics.

All articles in *Quaker Concern* must be about the work of CFSC directly, or make clear links to CFSC's active work. Please spend some time on the CFSC website and see if your article can mention recent statements and resources or historical Quaker minutes that 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 hundreds 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. (For more on this see our general communications guidance [What Makes CFSC's Voice Different?](#))

Many articles are written in first person, but that isn't always fitting. Either way, try to use simple sentences, keeping your article as free as possible of jargon and long or technical words.

Consider sending your article to a f/Friend who knows very little about the topic and asking them how easy it is to understand. To improve readability, use subheadings, regular

paragraph breaks, and short sentences (20 words or less). There are many readability tools you can consult. One free option, allowing you to paste in text and get helpful feedback, is <https://www.webpagefx.com/tools/read-able>.

### **How can I make my writing more interesting?**

When *Quaker Concern* goes out in email it includes only the first paragraph of your article with a link saying “Keep reading.” So a compelling opening paragraph will get you more readers. See if you can start your article with something that will make the reader curious (share a problem and ask the reader how they would solve it, start at the climax of a story and make the reader wonder how the situation got here).

Remember this important fact: how you share your message tells people how to respond to it. If you want your reader to be very dispassionate and analytical, write in that voice, but recognize that some will get bored and not continue reading. Note too that we use pull quotes, so try to include at least one short and pithy sentence that would look good as a quote:

**“How you share your message tells people how to respond to it.”**

### **How long are articles?**

“More words count less.”<sup>1</sup> Articles are between 750 and 1,100 words. Shorter articles are preferable. It’s much easier to run a short article with a “donate to CFSC” ad beside it to fill space than it is to receive an article that’s too long and has to be cut down. Also some authors don’t like to be edited in this way. So we encourage you to be pithy and succinct in your writing. If you strongly feel the need to write longer articles, they may be edited to fit into the print version of *Quaker Concern* and published in their longer form on the website <https://QuakerConcern.ca>.

As we read, we try to form a picture in our heads. Help readers to form a clear picture by making your sentences direct. To assist you in this, 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, because you’ll focus on the key points. Here are some cuts to consider:

- “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 phrases (to be clear, one can see that, it is important to realize, it goes without saying, in other words); and
- Unnecessary prepositions (of, in, for, about, into, on).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English trans. (Vintage Books, 1989), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Buck, “How to Write Effective Web Copy,” *Bloomerang*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXdQweAG6So>

### **How do I get started?**

“Simplicity isn’t about dumbing down, it’s about prioritizing.”<sup>3</sup> We recommend thinking about the priority information and putting that up front in your article. Why are you writing this? If you could only make one or two key points and were speaking to someone with a high school education, what would you say?

If your article is getting abstract or talking about things most readers are unlikely to have experienced, can you offer an analogy to something more commonplace? Can you make your writing more concrete through using sensory language (evoking colours, sounds, smells, or textures)? What do you want your reader to feel? Why do you care about the issue you’re writing about? Is it because of facts and figures or for another reason you might be able to convey? Don’t be afraid to share a personal story if it fits.

### **How do I use references?**

Unlike academic writing, *Quaker Concern* articles don’t need to 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 also be used to add comments, but keep these to a minimum. Please use Chicago Style notes. (If you need help, ask CFSC for a PDF about Chicago Style.)

### **What are other style guidelines?**

Type out all numbers up to ten only. “There were seven of us on the delegation. We met with 12 people in total.”

Avoid acronyms. When necessary, write the word out the first time with the acronym in brackets and use the acronym 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 instead (e.g. “Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper said...” not “Mr. Harper said...” or “The Honourable Stephen 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’s Criminal Justice 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.”

Use semicolons in bulletpoint lists that are part of a single sentence. “This sentence has three points:

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<sup>3</sup> Chip and Dan Heath, “Made to Stick Success Model,” 2008, accessed via members section of <https://heathbrothers.com>

- First;
- Second; and
- Third.”

**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
<i>Criminal justice</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• victim</li> <li>• offender</li> <li>• prisoner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• someone who’s been harmed</li> <li>• someone who’s caused harm</li> <li>• person held in prison, someone who is imprisoned</li> </ul>
<i>Indigenous peoples’ human rights</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian (except when used as part of a formal name like Indian Residential Schools or <i>The Indian Act</i>)</li> <li>• Native, aboriginal (these terms are OK but are not what’s being used in international law)</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Our Indigenous peoples, Canada’s Indigenous peoples (the possessive suggests a sense of ownership/subjugation, a continuation of a colonial mentality)</li> <li>• Indigenous peoples’ rights</li> <li>• UNDRIP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous person (for an individual, if possible try to state an individual’s specific Nation(s))</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Indigenous peoples (which makes reference to the collective rights of peoples. Note that Indigenous is capitalized, peoples is not)</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Indigenous peoples’ human rights (CFSC’s writing reinforces that Indigenous rights are human rights)</li> <li>• <i>The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i> (write it out the first time and subsequently use <i>The Declaration</i> as CFSC prefers not to use this acronym)</li> </ul>

<b>Peace</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conflict management/resolution</li> <li>• Israel and Palestine</li> <li>• non-violence</li> <li>• peace building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conflict transformation (not all conflicts may be “resolved” and conflict is not inherently bad, so transformation places emphasis on finding a creative way forward rather than on a neat and tidy “end”)</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• nonviolence</li> <li>• peacebuilding</li> </ul>

**What format do I submit in?**

Please submit in Microsoft Word format. 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?**

When submitting your article, please attach 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://pixabay.com>;
- <https://commons.wikimedia.org>;
- <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/by-2.0>; or
- <https://search.creativecommons.org>.

Make sure to 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 often require giving credit, so make note of this when downloading the picture. If you do not submit a picture with your article, we will use the above sites to find one that we deem appropriate.

**You made it all the way to the end. Thank you and happy writing!**