#### **Canadian Friends Service Committee**

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# Quaker \* Concern



### 90 Years of Service

By Keira Mann



CFSC volunteers pack medical supplies to be shipped to Vietnam for all sides impacted by war.

2 021 marks 90 years since Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) was founded. In preparation for our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I have spent much of the last six months searching out and speaking with some of the Friends that have made CFSC's work possible. Hearing these stories of triumph, persistence, and heartbreak has reaffirmed what I already knew... for many Friends, speaking up and acting for what's right is not a hobby, it is a lifestyle and a spiritual calling. This is why, for CFSC's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we would like to celebrate the people who have made 90 years of Quaker service in Canada possible.

I asked Friends, "What does CFSC mean to you?" The responses I got were incredible: stories of projects that CFSC has worked on, lifetime commitments, and meaningful impacts. You can read some of these stories on our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary website: https://90years.quakerservice.ca. You can also hear directly from some of the Friends who've served on CFSC by attending our Get to Know Thee, Friend event series each month, where we join together to hear the experiences of Canadian Friends (learn more about the series at http://quakerservice.ca/GetToKnowThee). I wanted to share a few quotes with you now:

Service on CFSC can be life-changing! The seed of a spiritual leading that grows in one's heart eventually begs for expression in some meaningful way. When that leading finds Quaker Concern a home among Friends, service naturally follows. Through service, we are challenged. We grow, we change, we mature. We find community with others who share the same spiritual passions. We are tested, personally, spiritually, emotionally, and yet we share a commitment to bring to life the leadings of the Spirit in ways that make a difference in the world. —Sarah Chandler, Interior BC Monthly Meeting (https://90years.quakerservice.ca)

One thing that I learned early-on is that many people are unwilling to work on major social justice issues because of the time and commitment that is needed to make real change, but Friends are frequently led to address these important and daunting issues.

### "Service on CFSC can be life-changing!"

There were no expectations of a "quick fix" when Friends began working on prison abolition, or peacebuilding, or supporting Indigenous peoples' human rights. CFSC was formed to be a steadfast and consistent force for social change and for 90 years, it has been.

Joy Morris is a great example of a Friend who has lived by a commitment to make change. Her work on prison abolition began with her mother, Ruth Morris, when Joy was a child. Joy continues to do this work as a member of CFSC today.



### **Supporting Bill C-15**

CFSC has been very active promoting Bill C-15, The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Together with our partners we're helping to counter alarmist, misleading, and outright false statements that some are making about this Bill. This has taken the form of educational events, a piece in The Hill Times, and helping to coordinate open letters including one with more than 200 signatories: Indigenous Nations, hereditary chiefs, activists, legal experts, unions, faith bodies, professors, and concerned individuals. For links to all of these letters and articles see:

https://quakerservice.ca/C15Resources

### Respond to hate, but not by undermining civil liberties

It is deeply troubling that white supremacist groups are increasingly active in Canada. We applaud careful and evidence-based approaches to curtailing the rise of hate movements. At the same time, we've joined with partners in expressing concern with the use of ineffective anti-terrorism laws

https://quakerservice.ca/AntiTerrorismLetter and the flawed IHRA definition of antisemitism

https://quakerservice.ca/OnlineHate, both of which may cause more harm than good.

### Addressing conflict amongst Friends

Addressing Conflict amongst Friends is a new resource jointly produced by Canadian Friends Service Committee and Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. The resource offers insights that we hope will assist Quaker Meetings in navigating conflict in healing ways. We welcome feedback on this resource. CFSC is also available to facilitate skill-building workshops for Meetings upon request: https://quakerservice.ca/AddressingConflict

### Speak up for COs

A petition started by our partners in Israel is welcoming signatures from around the world. Directed to the Israeli Minister of Defense, it expresses solidarity with young Israelis who refuse military conscription for reasons of conscience, and condemns their imprisonment: https://bit.ly/IsraeliCOsPetition

### Synthetic biology update 2021

Once a year we provide quick summaries for a general audience about the synthetic biology news making headlines. Find out how powerful biotechnologies are being used in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in medicine, in food, and many other applications: https://quakerservice.ca/SB2021

### **Spreading peace**

CFSC continues our ongoing blog for Psychology Today, sharing quick and simple tips from various experts on peace and conflict issues:

https://quakerservice.ca/PsychologyToday. You can join a free workshop series to study these skills together with a group. To be notified when the next round is about to start, fill in the form at https://quakerservice.ca/register

#### What makes CFSC's voice different?

Have you ever wondered what sets CFSC's communications apart as a Quaker service agency? We have developed a new guidance document on this topic that we're using internally to inform decision-making. Several of the Friends we consulted in developing it said they hoped that we would share it. You can read the document at: https://quakerservice.ca/ WhatMakesCFSCsVoiceDifferent (PDF). We welcome any ideas or feedback you have on this.

### 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 achieved a great deal.

**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. Contact us to switch to a digital subscription.

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### Giving Life and Spirit to TRC Calls to Action

**By Jennifer Preston** 



Participants engage in the ancient practice of making fish leather during a workshop funded by CFSC.

n June, it will be six years since the formal closing events commemorating the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the release of the 94 Calls to Action. Many thousands of people at the closing event heard the words of TRC Chief Commissioner Murray Sinclair: "If you thought the truth was hard, reconciliation will be harder." CFSC remains steadfast in our commitment to the TRC's Calls to Action. In the past year, CFSC has convened and supported a number and variety of initiatives to foster reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

A key step for settlers is listening to Indigenous voices on truth and reconciliation. Throughout the year we promoted our reconciliation video project, which presents several Indigenous individuals' perspectives on what reconciliation means and how settlers can engage in consequential ways (watch them at https:// quakerservice.ca/IndigenousVoices). We look forward to building on this with more voices from Indigenous friends and partners this coming year. We are grateful to those who took time to share their personal reflections and offer suggestions.

The CFSC Reconciliation Fund was established in follow up to the work of the TRC, based on the leading of a CFSC donor. The Fund supports grassroots, communitybased efforts of Indigenous people in Canada who are working on culture and language revitalization. This fund goes toward projects of Indigenous individuals or communities, and CFSC accepts applications at any time. For more information on the Fund, see https:// quakerservice.ca/ReconciliationFund.

In 2020 the Fund supported an intergenerational workshop for Cowichan (on Vancouver Island) community members on the traditional skill of making fish leather. The leather-making workshop was held at Xpey' Lelum (Cedar House) and led by a Cowichan Elder, Hul'q'umin'num language teacher, and knowledge keeper, Philomena Williams, with fish leather expert Janey Chang. Participants had the opportunity to scrape fish skins with a variety of tools, tan and oil the fish skins, and learn more about the history of the practice locally and globally. Some participants were surprised to learn that fish leather is three times stronger than deer hide! Tim Kulchyski, Cowichan Tribes biologist, shared that he was told as a child by a Cowichan elder that the best fishermen wore leather capes made of Chinook salmon skins.

## "CFSC remains steadfast in our commitment to the TRC's *Calls to Action*"

Near the close of 2020, CFSC hosted a virtual evening of songs and stories with our long-time partners, Dan and Mary Lou Smoke. The Smokes generously shared cultural teachings and personal experiences. Dan reminded us that going into winter is the time to gather for stories and sharing. Mary Lou encouraged the virtual audience to sing along with her on Zoom. Since 1991, Mary Lou and Dan have hosted the radio program Smoke Signals (CHRW 94.9 FM Radio Western, http:// www.radiowestern.ca/program/smoke-signals), which seeks to bridge the gap of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews. CFSC has supported Smoke Signals for many years, most recently through the Reconciliation Fund.

One of CFSC's core commitments to the TRC's Calls to Action has involved building relationships with an ecumenical group, the Faith in the Declaration coalition. CFSC hosts the coalition's website. This coalition of faith partners is working collaboratively Continued on next pg

#### Calls to Action continued

to support implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including through federal legislation, Bill C-15. This is in direct response to TRC Call to Action #48. There are several initiatives and actions underway, including suggestions for ways to support the legislation—all this and more can be found on the website.

CFSC has recently joined with several others in the coalition to draft a submission to the parliamentary committee working on Bill C-15. Our submission emphasizes: "As peoples of faith, we recognize the systemic injustice that we have been a part of and we are committed to change. We are committed to the deconstruction and transformation of the power structures that have oppressed and continue to oppress Indigenous peoples." And it concludes, "C-15 provides the federal government with a framework to create the paradigm shift required for a reset; a framework to build trusted working relationships with Indigenous nations and communities that are essential for the path away from colonization."

In February 2021, Faith in the Declaration hosted a virtual public event with Chief Wilton Littlechild, Kanien'kehá:ka activist Ellen Gabriel, and Professor Sheryl Lightfoot on the importance of Bill C-15. Hosted by Archbishop Mark MacDonald and opened by Elder Mary Fontaine, the event provided much food for thought and was attended by more than 500 people. Videos are available on the website.

The work that CFSC is undertaking with Faith in the Declaration very much compliments the ongoing work we've been doing for decades with Indigenous partners in the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The TRC placed a high priority on this work. Indeed, in the ten principles of reconciliation articulated by the TRC, the first names the UN Declaration as "the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society."



Jennifer Preston, Hamilton Meeting, coordinates CFSC's Indigenous Rights program and serves as CFSC's General Secretary.

Find the resources discussed above: https://FaithInTheDeclaration.ca

### The Lived Experience of COVID-19 in a Minimum Security Prison

#### By Nancy Russell

uring my years working in the youth justice field, I was often stunned by the repeated gaps I encountered between policy and practice. Policy was regularly recited as assurance that legal obligations were being met (all necessary medical and dental care was being offered, prisoners were free from physical punishment, and so forth). Frequently, the reality was something quite different.

I learned to hold the voices of people with lived experience in high esteem, and I continue to always strive to include them. Engaging those with lived experience has become a valued component of policy tables, service design, and service delivery across multiple sectors. If we want to find out what's really going on in a federal penitentiary, a visit to the Corrections Canada website will not give us the whole story.

### "What is policy does not always happen."

Enter Kevin Belanger. Kevin reached out to CFSC by letter in February 2020. He was writing as Chair of the Inmate Committee at the Joyceville Institution Minimum Security Unit. It was in that first letter that Kevin included a cautionary comment that what is policy does not always happen.

Kevin is 60 years old and has spent six years inside Canadian minimum-security institutions. He has consistently held the position of Inmate Committee Chair and as a result developed significant connections with both inmates and Corrections Canada staff. Kevin has been involved in various initiatives including the provision of a two-page guide for inmates contained in the version of The Bible that is distributed throughout Canadian prisons.

He has also written two articles for the peer-reviewed Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, which brings prisoners' voices together with academic arguments about

#### Minimum Security Prison continued

issues to do with incarceration. Kevin is now on parole and living in Eastern Ontario. He says he intends to continue to help those on the inside and to work for change to the system.

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, I had the good fortune to spend an hour and a half on a call with Kevin Belanger. Below are excerpts taken from that conversation and written in his own words.

### "He got full parole a year ago and still has not left the institution."

In the last year there has probably been a 30% to 50% increase in parole hearings at Joyceville. I think I only counted five who didn't get parole. But all of us who got out as the result of a parole hearing—we had places to live lined-up. The Parole Board is not letting anyone out who doesn't have residency of some kind. Even if they meet the release criteria to get into a half-way house, it's more difficult [to get a space] now because [half-way houses] have gone to single rooms since the pandemic.

I sat for seven weeks waiting for a bed—got parole on Jan 20<sup>th</sup> and was released on March 4<sup>th</sup>. That was two months—the days and nights were long—I was living out of already packed cardboard boxes. I had to learn patience years ago—to be in the system you must learn patience.

I know one man who's been there 13 months waiting to be released. He got full parole a year ago and still has not left the institution. Housing is a huge issue.

I lived in minimum security—no walls, no fence. The rules changed. They had to change for the pandemic. We went from nine hours a day of free time to an hour and a half. No programs, all in-person visits cancelled, gym and weight room closed, library closed, and no chapel services.

Healthcare was coming to us, they brought the medications. Our groceries were delivered right to the door and we cooked our own food. We had 41 houses with six to eight guys in each house.

Joyceville is two separate institutions on the same property– medium and minimum security. We were mostly lucky on the minimum side. Especially given the aging of our population, COVID-19 would have been terrible. But sometimes they would do things that just didn't make sense. From December 15-22, 2020 we were locked down for nine days during the first outbreak at the institution. I was working in the community every day for three months before that but work was stopped. Right before Christmas we couldn't get out to phone our families and all they heard about us on TV and the radio was, "large outbreak at Joyceville Institution." Before it was done, they had over 160 cases.

There were four [or] five phones. That's where you call your family. That's what got people wound up the worst, the lack of access to family, not [being] allowed to call for even five minutes to reassure family that we were OK. I think you should have been able to come out, one house at a time: short calls supervised by an officer. One call per guy.

Sometimes it's just little things, very little things, that mean nothing if you are outside but when you are inside, it means the day. That's why when we couldn't get out for over a week to use the phone, that really hit lots of guys hard. Most staff will say, "This doesn't make any sense to me either."

Other than that, the Joyceville staff really stepped up to the plate. We had pre-ordered turkeys and staff delivered them to our houses.

Everything [on the outside] has changed so much, but the penitentiaries have not changed. Maybe [the system] had great intentions twenty or thirty years ago—but this is 2021. Maybe it's time to change the policies and the programs?

You have guys who have been inside 20 to 30 years and then you let them out. Well, they don't know how to manage a bank card, they are used to cash, what do you mean "tap your card?"

We have so much aging population inside now. We are the caregivers. We have cons (us) looking after other cons. We are not equipped to do that. These are the real things that need to be addressed.

Yes, we do look after each other. But we are not nurses or personal support workers. If you have such an aging population you better think about this—prison—any federal pen, is not the place for these guys. Just look at the Correctional Investigator's report from a few years ago. [Editor's note: See our 2018 article Canada's Aging Prison Population for more about this issue: https:// quakerconcern.ca/canadas-aging-prison-population].

I sometimes think that senior staff have never been inside an institution. There are 43 institutions across Canada, I realize

#### Minimum Security Prison continued

you can't be in them all. But you shouldn't make blanket policies, because all institutions are different.

### "This is our home."

I can only speak for Joyceville. 95% of the frontline staff were great people. And senior management too, they would help us with anything they could. I had good communication with the Warden.

When National Headquarters takes away the power from the institution—this is where the problems start. Let the Warden be the Warden. Let staff do their jobs. Most of them are very good at it. Most of us don't want failure either because we have to live there. You have to remember this is our home.



**Nancy Russell** is CFSC's Criminal Justice Program Coordinator.

#### 90 Years continued from pg 1

Mom's heart and soul was tied to the criminal justice work of CFSC. She was deeply committed to working at a personal level, and participating in a Quaker program visiting the Don Jail led her to bail out guys who were waiting for trial and bring them to live with us if they didn't have other places to stay. But she knew that helping individuals did not begin to address the real problem of a criminal justice system that addresses wrong-doing through punishment rather than trying to address the root causes that led to the harmful behaviour. This is why I've been a member of CFSC's criminal justice program committee for the past four years: to participate in working toward a system of justice that is not systemically racist, classist, and harmful. —Joy Morris, Calgary Monthly Meeting (https://90years.quakerservice.ca)

In her recent Get to Know Thee, Friend presentation, Rachel Singleton-Polster described the work of Friends and of CFSC as "quiet diplomacy." It's a term that I have heard used many times to describe the work of CFSC but I'm not sure I truly understood the meaning or value of it until I saw it in action when I was part of a CFSC delegation to the UN in 2019. Jane Orion Smith, former General Secretary of CFSC and member of Winnipeg Monthly Meeting, describes what CFSC does well:

The core of CFSC's work is relationships. We've said that for a long time but its meaning is deeper than a few words can do

justice. It means knowing each other, across work tables and dinner tables. Developing trust and mutual understanding. Being willing to listen when it's hard and being open to be changed. Speaking up when it's needed, trusting that together you can work through conflict and difference.

I can't fit 90 years worth of stories into this article but I hope that you will visit our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary website to read more and see some of the pictures. I also hope that you'll share with me and others what CFSC means to you. If you have photos of CFSC's service work in action, or a story of your experience with CFSC, email me at keira@quakerservice.ca.

Thank you to all of the people who have shaped CFSC over the past 90 years. Thank you to the donors who have gifted us with the financial ability to do this important work. Without you, none of this would have been possible.

**Keira Mann** is CFSC's Assistant Coordinator, Programs and Events.

### Happy anniversary CFSC!

Please consider giving CFSC an anniversary gift by donating to our "90 Thousand for 90 Years" campaign at https://90years.quakerservice.ca or by mailing in the form on page 8.

### What Does it Mean to be an Apartheid State?

#### By Elizabeth Block

In the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the Israeli regime implements laws, practices and state violence designed to cement the supremacy of one group–Jews–over another–Palestinians. So says B'Tselem, the premier Israeli human rights organization.<sup>1</sup>

The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid defines apartheid as "inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them."

#### Apartheid State continued

Under international law apartheid is a crime against humanity. Although most famously associated with South Africa, apartheid isn't actually specific to any one country or one exact system of racial domination. Many countries have been accused of (but never prosecuted for) establishing apartheid systems, including China in its treatment of minority groups such as the Uyghur, and Myanmar in its treatment of the Rohingya.

But neither China nor Myanmar has been described as an exemplary democracy that shares Canadian values. On the other hand Israel regularly receives such praise and, for many years, has also regularly received Canada's supportive votes at the UN. Canada is one of only a few countries in the world to back Israel in nearly everything it does. This is in spite of the fact that "86% of Canadians disagree with the idea that Canada should overlook Israel's human rights violations just because it is considered to be an ally."<sup>2</sup>

As an illustration of how Canadian politicians at all levels usually treat Israel, consider a few years ago when Ontario debated a motion to condemn the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions protest movement. One Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) stood and said Israel was not only an important ally but also "a country with a stellar human rights record." Not one MPP chose to challenge this claim.<sup>3</sup>

The apartheid system operated by Israel has become ever more blatant in recent years, as illegal Israeli settlements continue to expand, Palestinian homes continue to be demolished, and even COVID-19 vaccinations are applied successfully to Jewish Israelis—including those living in illegal West Bank settlements—while being denied to their Palestinian neighbours.

Apartheid ("separateness"), like segregation in the US, was never about separation. It was, and is, about domination. Segregation in the US was sometimes called "separate but equal," when this was obviously a lie. This is the case in Israel as well, which, as so many groups have now pointed out, is not a state for all its citizens. In fact, its parliament has passed a law saying it is a Jewish state.

According to many South Africans who experienced apartheid—among them Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former South African Member of Parliament Ronnie Kasrils (who, like me, is Jewish and so faced the charge of being a "self-hating Jew" for his comments)—the situation of Palestinians is the same or worse than that faced by Black South Africans under that country's apartheid regime.

The two contexts are also very different. White South Africans wanted Blacks' labour and so, while they did create Bantustans such as KwaZulu and Transkei, they never hoped to expel all Blacks and have the country just for the whites (a policy some Jewish Israeli politicians advocate with respect to the Palestinians). White South Africans never thought of themselves as the Indigenous inhabitants of the land, as some Zionists (including Christian Zionists) claim for all Jews. White South Africans never believed that Blacks were invaders, as Palestinians have been called.

Canadians who criticize China or Myanmar aren't vilified on social media and aren't in danger of losing their jobs or of not getting a job they apply for. But criticism of Israel is increasingly being falsely called hatred of Jews and censured by institutions trying to stamp out actual antisemitism (which is of course a worthy goal, especially as far-right hate groups multiply in Canada).

Grand Chief John Kelly, in testimony before the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment in 1977, said, "To commit genocide it is not necessary to build camps and ovens. All that is required is to remove the basis for a way of life."<sup>4</sup> That is what Israel has been doing for years to the Palestinians. That is what Friends are so profoundly concerned by and why CFSC continues to support efforts toward a just peace for all.



**Elizabeth Block**, is a member of CFSC's Israel/ Palestine Working Group. She attends Toronto Meeting.

1. B'Tselem, "A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid," January, 2021, http://bit.ly/BTselemReport

2. Independent Jewish Voices, "Survey: Regarding ICC, Canadians Reject Double Standard for Israel," September 16, 2020, https://www.ijvcanada.org/survey2020-2

3. See CFSC's statement at the time for its views: https:// quakerservice.ca/JustPeaceBDS

4. Quoted in Adrienne Clarkson, "Room to Grow," *Canada's* History, June 1, 2017, http://bit.ly/CanadasHistory

### Friends on the Move



None of us have gone anywhere during the pandemic, but we've covered great virtual distances in our witness for justice and peace.

Jennifer Preston presented on Indigenous peoples' human rights to Global Affairs Canada in a briefing session for officials going on international placements. She presented to graduate students at New York University on how civil society can work effectively at the UN, using our work on the Declaration as an example. CFSC hosted a meeting between many national church representatives and Minister of Justice David Lametti to discuss Bill C-15. Jennifer and associate member Paul Joffe also presented to staff at Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada on the UN Declaration.

Matt Legge joined CBC radio in Cape Breton for a 20 minute segment that repeatedly recommended that listeners read CFSC's award-winning book Are We Done Fighting?: https://quakerservice.ca/ CBCMarch2021 Matt also presented to Coldstream Meeting and spoke to a first year class at Furman College in South Carolina that is reading the book.

Nancy Russell presented on CFSC's The Only Way Forward project to Coldstream Monthly Meeting, represented CFSC at a meeting with Minister of Canadian Heritage, Steven Guilbeault, and attended a meeting about Structured Intervention Units (the new name given to solitary confinement) with Anne Kelly, the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada.

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