



Canadian Friends Service Committee

E-Newsletter

CFSC in the news

Our peace and social justice work has been covered in four media pieces since the last edition of the E-News! Have a look:

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JUSTICE

They don't just want better prisons. They want no prisons

For Canadian Quakers, a radical commitment to social justice has led to challenging incarceration itself

Karen Ridd of the Canadian Friends Service Committee, the Quakers' peace and justice agency in Canada, and a restorative justice instructor at Canadian Mennonite University, is pictured outside her office in Winnipeg on July 29, 2026. (Photo by Brook Jones/Free Press)

They don't just want better prisons. They want no prisons

By Josiah Neufeld, Aug. 7, 2026, *Broadview*

A few weeks ago, the erstwhile punk-rock-poet John Samson Fellows taught an

auditorium full of people how to fold a paper cup. With each fold, he explained that origami is an activity he likes to do with people who are incarcerated. "It can be really empowering to make something with your hands in that environment," he explained over the rustle of fingers creasing paper.

Samson Fellows is perhaps best known as the former frontman for the indie-rock band the Weakerthans and the author of an anthem beloved in his hometown for its self-deprecating refrain: "I hate Winnipeg." But for the last number of years, he's been teaching creative writing and literacy to people in Manitoba jails.

"Three weeks ago, while I was still preparing for this talk, I got a furious email from a manager from the Winnipeg Remand Centre where I lead classes," Samson Fellows told his audience as they put the finishing touches on their paper cups. "He informed me that origami paper is contraband and told me to stop sharing it with my students immediately."

When Samson Fellows called back to apologize and ask why origami paper was considered contraband, he was told that any object that could be modified into something else was forbidden.

"So," he said, pausing to give weight to his next words: "Anything that can be changed or transformed is not permitted in the Winnipeg Remand Centre. Any change or transformation is not allowed in Manitoba prisons," he repeated. "In case I am being too subtle, this is an anecdote about how prisons can't be reformed, and must be abolished."

To most of the audience, this was likely not a revolutionary statement — though its implications surely are. Samson Fellows was speaking to a roomful of Quakers, a Christian denomination known for its radical commitment to social justice, convening in Winnipeg for their annual gathering.

[Read the rest of this article.](#)

Faith groups concerned by growing military spending



By: John Longhurst

Posted: 2:00 AM CDT Saturday, Aug. 8, 2026

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In response to growing threats around the world, Canada is increasing its military spending. In March, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the country had met its NATO benchmark of spending two per cent of GDP on defence, with plans to spend five per cent by 2035.

Faith groups concerned by growing military spending

By John Longhurst, Aug 8, 2026, *The Winnipeg Free Press*

Sandra Wiens is in charge of government relations for the Canadian Friends Service Committee, also known as Quakers. She believes “there are far better ways to spend money than on the military” when it comes to global security.

Quakers are especially concerned about how military spending might take money away from social programs and foreign aid, she said, and about the lack of funding for peacekeeping. That historic approach to international conflict “has been systematically dismantled over time,” Wiens stated.

Wiens also believes there is a need for a national conversation about what security means to Canadians. For her, that conversation would include questions such as: “What are the threats? What are the best ways to address them? What are we cutting to fund the military? What is the role of foreign aid? What will lessen conflict, or create more of it?”

Right now, there is no space for those questions, Wiens said.

“Let’s start a conversation. Let’s listen to other voices ... let’s not only talk about military necessity.”

[Read the rest of this article.](#)

NEWS | ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ

Among Friends – Quakers' social-justice group inspired by visit to Eeyou Istchee

BY PATRICK QUINN SEP 4, 2026



Among Friends – Quakers' social-justice group inspired by visit to Eeyou Istchee

By Patrick Quinn, Sep 4, 2026, *Nation News*

A group of five women from the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), the social justice arm of the Quakers, returned to Ottawa from a memorable visit to Eeyou Istchee full of gratitude for Cree hospitality and inspiration for their work in advancing Indigenous rights.

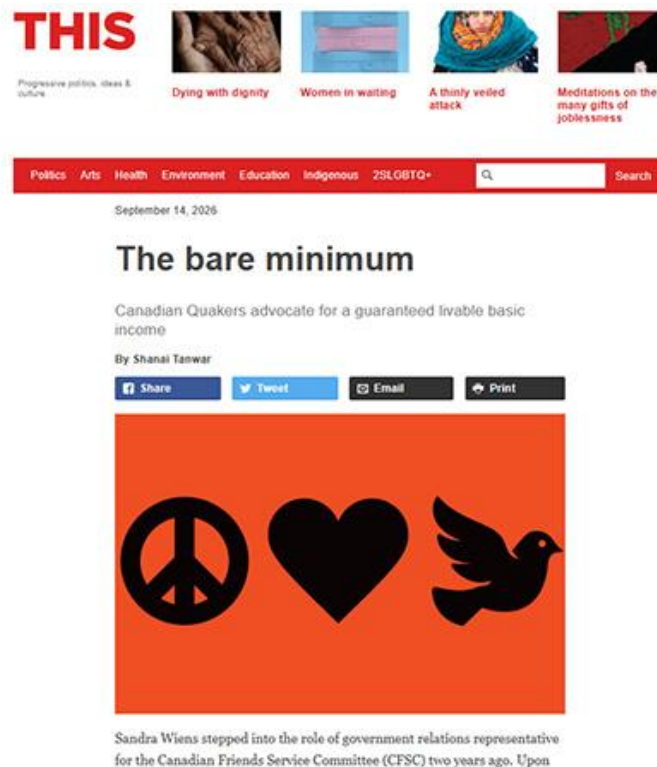
The trip was organized by CFSC general secretary Jennifer Preston, who spent part of her childhood in Waskaganish and has long known Donald Nicholls, the Cree Nation Government's director of justice and correctional services, through their mutual work at the United Nations.

"My team was thrilled to go up to Eeyou Istchee," said Preston. "Since the 1970s, the Quakers have been doing a lot of work on Indigenous rights and the Crees were always one of our big partners in the international work developing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

[Read the rest of this article.](#)

Also check out our staff's blog posts about this trip!

- Jennifer Preston - [Relationships, relationships, relationships!](#)
- Karen Ridd - [Prevention, care, and self-determination: justice initiatives in Eeyou Istchee](#)
- Sarah Bear - [Welcomed into relationship: reflections from Eeyou Istchee](#)
- Sandra Wiens - [A traditional way of life maintained: the economic security program for Cree hunters](#)
- Mel Burns - [What presence makes possible](#)



The bare minimum: Canadian Quakers advocate for a guaranteed livable basic income

By Shanai Tanwar, Sep 14, 2026, *THIS*

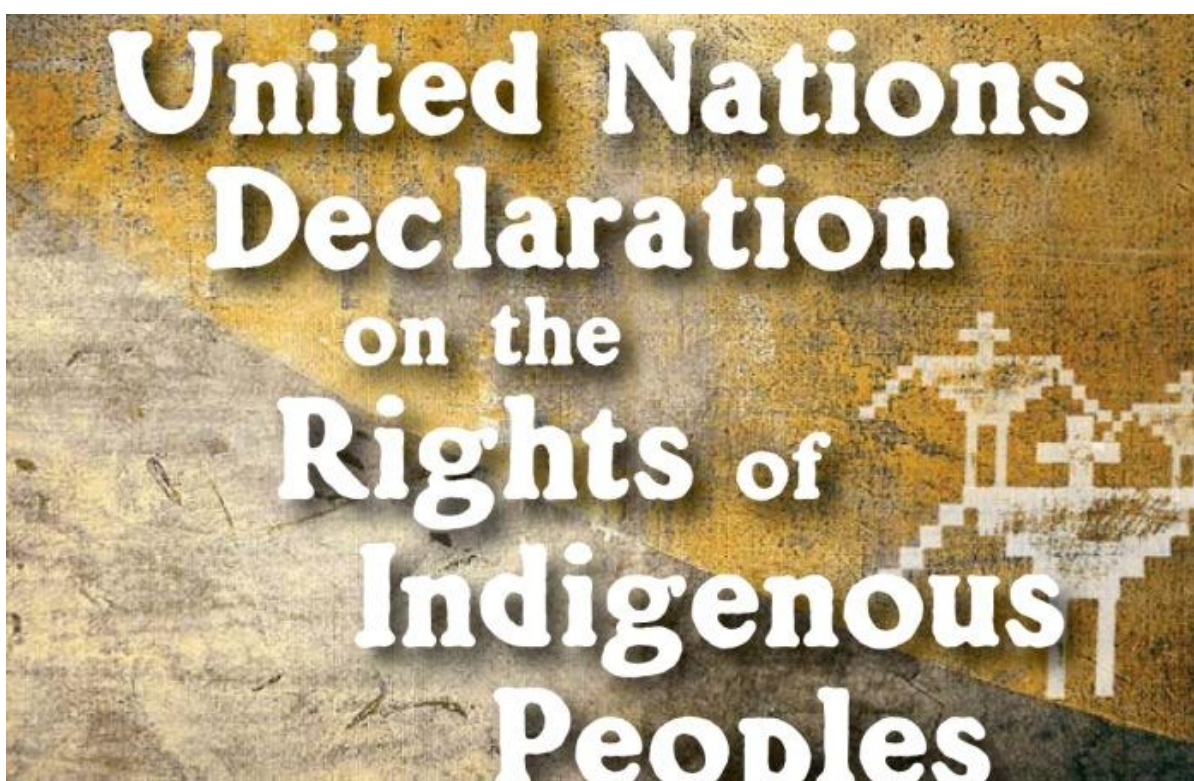
Sandra Wiens stepped into the role of government relations representative for the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) two years ago. Upon joining the Quaker group focused on peace and justice, she was one of the members who noticed a pattern. It seemed like unhoused people who were previously incarcerated were asking to go back to prison, and some even wanted to remain there.

Poverty and the conditions resulting from it were the recurring factors. The connection revealed an underlying concern shared by the CFSC: growing income inequality and the cost of living crisis were triggering a set of interconnected issues that Wiens calls a

“polycrisis.” And so began the advocacy of the Canadian Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) peace and justice agency for guaranteed livable basic income (GLBI), an income-tested payment that tops up earnings to ensure a livable income.

“We’re prison abolitionists,” says Wiens. “So we don’t really agree with the idea of people being in prison because we find it is a harm[ful] place. It’s like a prison to poverty pipeline. That really underpinned how we started looking into and researching with other networks to see why they were working on the guaranteed livable basic income.”

[Read the rest of this article.](#)



Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: no backsliding on human rights commitments

It has been almost two decades since the international community adopted the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as a global human rights standard. As we mark the anniversary of the Declaration’s adoption by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and their supporters are urging all governments not to backslide on this critical human rights

commitment.

The Government of Canada released its fifth annual progress report on *Declaration* implementation on August 28, 2026. It acknowledges that while some *Action Plan* measures have advanced, others continue to progress at a slower pace, citing ongoing barriers such as fragmented access to funding and insufficient oversight.

Indigenous Peoples have been raising concerns regarding backsliding or regression in implementation of the *Declaration* in Canada and globally. These concerns have been particularly prominent in British Columbia, where developments over the past year have raised serious questions about the durability of progress towards implementation.

British Columbia was the first province in Canada to specifically tackle *Declaration* implementation through legislation, with the *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) receiving unanimous support in the BC legislature when it was passed in 2019. However, implementation of the *Declaration* has become increasingly politicized in British Columbia, especially following recent court decisions such as *Gitxaala v. British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner)* and *Cowichan Tribes v. Canada (Attorney General)* upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In April 2026, Premier David Eby proposed suspending key provisions related to DRIPA implementation. Following strong opposition from BC First Nations and Indigenous leadership, the Province ultimately withdrew the proposed changes.

As recently as August 2026, an application by BC Conservative MLA Harman Bhangu for an initiative petition seeking the repeal of DRIPA was approved in principle by Elections BC. Beginning in October 2026, the petition will have 90 days to obtain signatures from 10 per cent of registered voters in each of BC's 93 electoral districts in order to proceed to the next stage of the initiative process.

These alarming developments demonstrate why implementation of the *Declaration* must be understood as an ongoing human rights obligation, not a political commitment that can be shelved or weakened when its implications become challenging. Progress towards implementation must be durable and robust, and governments must not regress from measures that they have already taken to recognize and uphold Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

On the eve of the *Declaration*'s 20th anniversary, there are opportunities to celebrate its historic adoption by the UN General Assembly and the progress made towards its implementation in Canada and internationally. However, this anniversary also marks a moment of accountability. The Minister of Justice has reaffirmed Canada's commitment to "moving forward together to advance *UN Declaration* Act implementation with a clear focus on achieving meaningful and lasting results for generations to come." Meaningful and lasting progress requires results that are not only achieved, but sustained. As we approach twenty years since the adoption of the *Declaration*, this milestone must also be an opportunity to measure whether governments have translated their commitments into durable implementation of the

inherent, Treaty, and human rights of Indigenous Peoples affirmed by the Declaration.

This joint statement was released by the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in which CFSC is an active member. Find out more at DeclarationCoalition.com



Featured resource: *Unshackled* video series

We continue to post new videos once a month of Lisa sharing her story of what incarceration is really like, the differences she experienced in an Indigenous Healing Lodge, and what she thinks needs to change to deliver real healing and justice. Check them out on our social media or [our website](#).