

Creating a Culture of Peace, by Peter Tongue, Victoria, BC

Just for the record, I am not a political activist. Recently however, I did take the opportunity to attend the second People's Summit for Departments of Peace. The recent Victoria event was part of a global initiative and was attended by sixty delegates from twenty different countries. The local Chapter of the Canadian Institute for the Creation of a Department of Peace hosted the event. Peace building and non-violent communication are core concepts here, paired with recognition that conflict must be faced in its early phases - before the escalation to violence.

One reason I chose to attend was a desire to develop a sense of the direction in which this Peace Alliance is heading. Another was to advocate for youth and to ensure that they had a clear, strong voice in the process. Along with Shivon Robinsong, who taught some wonderful 'spirit' songs, I was given the opportunity to lead opening meditations to set the intention for the Summit each day. This simple practice ensured that our hearts were engaged in the process, as well as our intellect.

This is a multi-dimensional approach working with countries at the grassroots level as well as at the Government level. It was an honor and privilege to share with Israeli and Palestinian representatives, their grief, concerns and compassion. It was humbling to hear about the challenges of poverty, starvation and warfare from a Ugandan youth delegate and disappointing to learn that our own government refused visas to other delegates due to attend from Africa. The Philippines sent a Government official on behalf of the President as well as a grassroots Mediator. It was really encouraging to learn that Canada, Australia, the UK and USA all have active groups.

Currently, the US has the most developed plan and infrastructure. A democratic Presidential candidate before the last US election, Dennis Kucinich has joined forces with noted spiritual author and teacher Marianne Williamson, to create a Ministry of Peace in the US government. Presently, there is a Bill before both Houses of Congress to create a US Department of Peace. In support of the bill are seventy-three Congressional co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and two senators in the senate. There is still a long way to go but the momentum is building.

Canada is home to chapters in Ottawa, Vancouver and Victoria where Saul and Penny Arbess are working hard to move the initiative forward with the support of former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs - Lloyd Axworthy; and former Canadian Ambassador on Disarmament to the United Nations - Senator Douglas Roche. Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama have also added their support to the global initiative.

Five experienced campaigners are part of a powerful and influential International Steering Committee and I was delighted to share in the proposal and acceptance of the inclusion of a sixth, fully equivalent member from amongst the youth delegates attending the Summit. Youth members will serve shorter terms than the traditional five members giving a broader range of experience to youth delegates. Over the next twelve months, two of the youth delegates from Victoria will serve four-month terms - a marvelous conclusion to the four-day summit.

So how does the work of the Department of Peace tie in with the Indigo and Crystal children?

One of the main roles of these children is to bring peace to the world.

Our older, teenage children are the system busters. They have come in to break open the outdated regimes that are no longer working. Our educational, economic and political systems are good examples. Our younger children are less concerned with earthly issues and more concerned with personal authenticity. Ultimately, new structures and paradigms need to be in place for these children as they enter into adulthood. The good news is that the work has begun. There are a significant number of organizations already in action, creating structures for peace building and non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Organizations already exist linking

spirituality, peace and youth. Nina Meyerhoff is with an organization in the United States called "Children of the Earth" out of which has grown "The World Spirit Youth Council". This Council will host their annual conference for youth 15-30 yrs of age, in Nepal in September.

How does this work connect with the work that we are doing here in Victoria? The development of spiritual connectivity and peace building in children is vitally important for a healthy, harm-free future. We must begin and continue to hold sacred space for the children as they develop their gifts. To create peace in the world we also need to connect with others of "like mind" To bring this to fruition, we need to operate at local, regional, national and global levels. At times, this task seems overwhelming and yet every time a child makes the connection to spirit and experiences that place of peace, we are reminded of the beauty of this opportunity.

At the Peace Summit I had the honor of working with Diane Longboat of the Mohawk Six Nations. It is people like Diane who will lead the way to healing among the aboriginal peoples of the world so that trust can be re-established This is another vital piece of the work we have before us. It is an awesome task for the world to be healed and radiate peace and love, but it can be achieved, one step at a time.

In the meantime our work at the local level continues.

Websites expanding on this article:

www.thepeacealliance.org

www.departmentofpeacecanada.com

www.children_of_the_earth.org

www.worldspirityouthcouncil.org

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