

# **Canadian Yearly Meeting's Consultation and Renewal Process: 2004 – 2012**

## **Introduction**

The Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C'nR) was formed by Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2004. C'nR was to consult with Canadian Friends and 'attenders' (those who attend Friends' meetings but do not take out membership) and recommend ways to foster the corporate spiritual life and structure of Canadian Yearly Meeting, so that it can continue to be a nurturing and vibrant faith community.

Our Quaker organization is always changing and adapting in response to the needs and concerns of its members. Friends anticipated future changes due to:

- costs increasing
- environmental concerns
- desire to make our Yearly Meeting a more vital part of the lives of Canadian Friends
- difficulties inherent in the current structure.

## **The Consultation Process**

The C'nR Working Group of seven Friends from across Canada began by reviewing Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel's annual State of Society reports, and reports of groups that had explored ideas for revitalization previously. They interviewed past and present CYM clerks, committee clerks, and representatives to outside organizations. They met with 54 active Meetings and Worship Groups during the fall, winter and spring of 2005-06, using a set of queries designed to stimulate discussion. Every member and attender of every Monthly Meeting and Worship Group was invited to take part in the consultation, either by participating in a session or by writing an individual submission. The C'nR Working Group compiled its consultations and interviews into several reports which can be found in the 'business' section of this site under 'past business.'

In June 2006 an interim report including recommendations was prepared. Meetings, Worship Groups, and committees were asked to comment within six months. This resulted in a final published conclusions and recommendations report.

In the words of the Working Group: "We have found our work to be highly spirit-led and have come away from long and difficult meetings with a sense that God has inspired and directed our work. This is deeply rewarding for us and we give thanks for the corporate discernment in which all of Canadian Yearly Meeting has engaged during our process."

## **The Implementation Process**

Beginning in 2007 and continuing through 2012, the Yearly Meeting considered the 51 recommendations included in the Final Report of the C'nR Working Group. Most were accepted as written; a few were modified or not approved.

In November 2007 a two-person C'nR Implementation Committee was appointed to ensure that the approved recommendations were implemented. The committee's job was to:

- notify Monthly Meetings and CYM Committees of the changes they were being asked to make
- coordinate the activities required to carry out the approved recommendations
- track progress in implementing the changes.

In 2012 the C'nR Implementation Committee submitted a final report to the Yearly Meeting.

The lengthy process of consulting, reporting, considering recommendations, and implementing changes has required faithful work on the part of many Friends across Canada. Through this process we, as a corporate body, have held a mirror up to ourselves and gained insight into our strengths and weaknesses. We are still working toward addressing our concerns around rising costs and our ecological footprints.

We made substantial changes to increase the functionality of our committees and to revitalize the role of the Yearly Meeting in our lives:

- A Youth Secretary position was created to provide support, continuity and encouragement to Young Friends as they organize their Quaker lives and business.
- A Quaker Education Program was established for 3 years, guided by a Quaker Education Program Coordinator.
- Several Yearly Meeting Committees were re-organized.
- The Youth Secretary and Quaker Education Program Co-ordinator functions have been absorbed by volunteers and occasional contracted Friends.

The C'nR recommendations have stimulated increased discussion and learning around many topics central to our lives as Friends:

- how we use electronic communication
- how we deal with conflict in meetings
- the meaning and process of membership
- how we approach the spiritual diversity among Friends

We are aware that a process of this depth resonates and develops over time. The changes we implemented made us aware of many structural deficiencies in our Yearly Meeting and we are making further changes to rectify the problems. We continue our spiritual discernment regarding how we function as a yearly meeting in challenging times.