

Camp NeeKauNis 2017 Epistle

The gathered Young Friends ask this epistle be read during announcements after Meeting For Worship.

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

From 29th Sixth Month to 2nd Seventh Month 2017, around 30 Young Friends from across the country gathered at Camp NeeKauNis in Waubaushene, Ontario for a Canadian Young Friends Gathering. This gathering was organized to bring together a critical mass of Young Friends and Young Adult Friends in order to energize and strengthen our community and rejoice in our time together in worship, play, and good conversation. This gathering was planned in part so that Canadian Young Friends and Young Adult Friends had an occasion to gather while the wider Canadian Yearly Meeting sessions were holding a fallow year, and also as a pre-retreat for the Friends General Conference Gathering happening in Niagara Falls, New York. Along with meals together, work around the camp, and daily meeting for worship, the organizers left space for Friends to offer self-directed programs as they desired. These smaller sessions sprung from the amazing diversity of gifts Friends wanted to share, from the gentle art of cat's cradle to discussions of the role of Christ in our lives and in Quakerism; from canoeing at sunset, to the plenary workshop on the surprisingly recent history of Christian homophobia and transphobia. Several Friends noted this year's gathering at Camp NeeKauNis was the largest gathering of Canadian Young Friends in some years. This is with great thanks to the committee (Rachel Urban-Shipley, Jonah Egan-Pimblett, Misia Robins, David Summerhays, Jessica Klaassen-Wright and Christina Tellez) who organised and promoted the gathering, especially the leadership of Jessica and Christina before and during the event. We are also deeply grateful for the support of Education and Outreach for assisting with funding for the gathering, particularly as travel costs are often a barrier for Young Friends who wish to attend. In the midst of this gathering, Friends also felt led to discuss the future of Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting and its relationship with Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Those of us at the Canadian Young Friends Gathering discerned a need and have a strong desire to focus on building our whole community of Young Friends (13-35) especially as the official body of Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting is on hiatus. The current hiatus was chosen because of the a small number of Young Friends attending Yearly Meeting sessions and the difficulty of filling official roles. We are excited about re-kindling the enthusiasm and spirit in Young Friends by growing our connections with each other, both through media and regular gatherings. The gathered Young Friends recognise the role effective communication provides in building and maintaining community. Both Reykia Fick, *The Canadian Friend* Editor, and Cameron Fraser, now the Canadian Yearly Meeting Secretary, were present at the gathering, and several discussions took place regarding possible ways Canadian Yearly Meeting paid staff and contractors may be able to assist Canadian Young Friends in connecting, communicating, and gathering. Gatherings are a crucial component in maintaining and strengthening the dispersed community of Canadian Young Friends. Those of us present felt a desire to maintain and increase these gatherings. Recognising this, we encourage all Young Friends who are able to attend Canadian Yearly Meeting in Barrie in 2018.

Moving toward Canadian Yearly Meeting in session 2018 in Barrie, we discerned the following steps should be taken over the next year to strengthen the national community of Young Friends and to engage more meaningfully with the wider body of Friends in Canada:

- The gathered Friends will investigate the possibility of a Young Friends pre-CYM gathering at Camp NeeKauNis in 2018.
- With this epistle, the gathered Young Friends send Lilia Fick, David Summerhays, and Daniel Von Schulmann to Representatives Meeting hosted by Ottawa Monthly Meeting this fall as representatives of Young Friends.
- As part of establishing more efficient, effective, and meaningful communication within the Canadian Young Friends community, and between Canadian Young Friends and Canadian Yearly Meeting, the following regional contacts were established.
 - West Coast - Daniel von Schulmann
 - Prairies and the North - Zaley Warkentin
 - Ontario - Wesley Weima
 - Québec - David Summerhays
 - Atlantic - To Be Determined (If you are a Young Friend living in the Atlantic, interested in being the Atlantic contact, please e-mail Daniel von Schulmann at danielvonschulmann@gmail.com)

These contacts will work with Canadian Yearly Meeting staff to facilitate this initiative.

Canadian Yearly Meeting Secretary, Cameron Fraser, has invited Young Friends into a discussion to assist in creating goals as to how he can best help Young Friends in Canada. This is an open invitation to all Canadian Young Friends who wish to be involved. The regional contacts committed to involvement in this process of goal setting. Any interested Young Friends may contact Cameron Fraser at cym-secretary@quaker.ca for more information.

As we build our community, including through further gatherings, we request the continued support of Yearly Meeting's Education and Outreach Committee. The challenges of holding gatherings are amplified for Young Friends. We are grateful for the support of all those in Canadian Yearly Meeting in dealing with those challenges and in helping us strengthen our common community.

In the Light,

Canadian Young Friends gathered at Camp NeeKauNis, 1st Seventh Month 2017