

# Canadian Yearly Meeting Quaker Education Program Newsletter – September 2013

## CYM In Session – Kemptville, Ontario, Aug 17-24 (all photos by Bruce Dienes)

Yearly Meeting this year, as usual, was a time of community, of worship, of business (and sometimes busyness), of learning, of play. What was unusual this year was a change in

schedule made to support the year of the youth challenge, with a goal of bringing 50 young Friends and young adult Friends together for the annual Meeting. It was truly a multi-generational gathering

I was sad...and am sorry...that I was unable to write a daily blog this year...and grateful that a young adult Friend was willing to contribute some entries to share with others who weren't present. I hope that this issue of the newsletter will convey to those who read it a sense of the Yearly Meeting in session

**June-Etta Chenard - 'The Joy of Dyeing: Paper Arts to Soothe the Soul'** (from a conversation with Lesley Read, New Brunswick MM).

The retreat, led by June Etta Chenard, took place Friday evening and all day Saturday. It was different in that it was a time of renewal through art. We were invited to play like young children, to let go of judgment, to respect silence and to connect with the spirit. We worked on our own but in community. We made painted books of quotations lined with tissue that we also painted. We also made papers using dyes and we made cards. The end results were very beautiful.

Often, when we do art, we can be too analytical and critical about things like composition and perspective, wondering if we've got it right. Here, we were to play



like children and people made things we were totally surprised about – an unexpected delight. I appreciated that June Etta was very generous and creative – gave a lot of herself.

Afterwards, a circle formed outside where we shared our experiences in a spirit of worship and with much gratitude. It was meant to be a retreat and it was. We felt that we had been truly touched by the inner spirit.

**Caroline Balderston-Parry – SPG  
Lecture – "'The "I don't-know" Place:  
Holy Spirit with me Always.'**

(a blog selection – Nat Egan-Pimblett)

Borrowing from the writings of Friends, from essayists and mystics, Caroline punctuated her speech with poetry and song. In three parts she explored different aspects of her topic, "the I don't know place" and its relevance to Quaker practice: how it is not a state to be embraced and not dreaded, its relation to prayer and how it might shape our worship, the roles that we can play for those near to us who find themselves in the "I don't know place". At the end of each section Friends were given a few minutes bracketed by singing bowls and music to respond to queries in listening pairs. We carried forward the incomplete responses, ours and our f/Friends' the fertile ground of discussion sown for the week ahead of us.

This year, for the first time, a video of the lecture is available at this link

<http://vimeo.com/user20788368>

**Contact** - Sue Starr, **Quaker Education Program Coordinator**  
22-35 Lewes Blvd. Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4S5

E-mail - [gepc@quaker.ca](mailto:gepc@quaker.ca)

Phone - 1-867-334-6629

Fax - Toll Free 1-888-843-8401

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**Ben Pink Dandelion – Quaker Study - 'The End of the World, the Beginning of Quakerism, and what happened next.'** (From a conversation with Anne-Marie Zilliacus, Ottawa MM)

"I had read Ben's books and was looking forward to hearing his presentation. He's an engaging speaker with a delightful dry wit. He offered an interesting take on the period when early Friends thought they were in 'end times', then looked at how Quakers later tried to apply that thought through the ages. It seems that all movements start with this 'on-fire' feeling about being close to God. You find this continuing to come into Friends' experience over the ages with various movements such as the "Holiness Movement". I appreciated hearing about what was going on among early Friends – we often don't acknowledge how evangelical they were. It was a movement hugely on fire and I think we get nostalgic for that kind of spiritual movement. We long for the feeling but not for proselytizing."

On the last day Ben identified elements of Quaker life that are different from those of early Friends: Private life is primary, plural theology, people are joining us as adults, more meetings yet fewer members, more work, and more 'stuff'. He also talked about where Meetings were growing and pointed out that there is maybe more hope in Canada where we're a small organization and know each other better. He left us with these hopeful reflections:



*Ben Pink Dandelion and Deborah Fisch-FGC*

- "No matter what I think is going on here, it is my community."
- "We need to be a Quaker because we're not good enough."
- "We have the ability to communicate this to the wider world."
- AND ... "Worship works for us."

**Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business** (a pragmatic view - from a conversation with Dan Cooperstock, Toronto MM)

Schedules for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business allowed less time than in previous years as part of the overall program design for this year of the youth challenge. Meetings were held in the mornings only, and three concurrent threshing sessions ("Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel – serving Friends", "A Communications strategy for CYM", and "Determine Priorities and Envisioning Change") were scheduled for one of the mornings.

For Dan, the primary purpose of CYM in session is to get the business done. He uses the term, 'Seeking the deep will of the Meeting' when describing Quaker business process. He appreciates an approach to Clerking that keeps things moving, is clear and supports good discernment...and values discipline from the Body – Friends who speak to the point, have read reports and are prepared for agenda items.

Although Dan sensed that the threshing sessions were likely fairly good, he might have preferred them to be held at a different time, so as not to take away from the limited hours we had for regular business sessions. With respect to business being seasoned, he wondered about the helpfulness of a special interest group on Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions against Israel when Monthly Meetings had considered this in the last year are clearly still not united on this issue

While he expressed some frustration at the amount of time given to employment relationship matters, Dan was pleased to see the work done on the [Doctrine of Discovery](#), and was generally satisfied that most of the business was completed.

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## ***Interludes, Intermissions and Games:***

Friends at CYM are consistent and persistent in finding ways to break from some of the more serious business and so there were-

### **Puzzle Times**



### **A Games Night**



...and if you were listening in the residence stairwell from time to time, you might have heard the 'fiddler in the well'.

If you [click here](#), you can get a sense of that experience

***Evening Programs:-Monday*** (from a conversation with Nancy McInnes, Vancouver Island MM)

"One of the high points for me was an evening devoted to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Allies"

experience in life and in our Friends' community. An ad hoc group did the organizing and I joined, claiming the role of ally. A panel gave brief accounts of their own experiences, which I found very moving, and then we set up stations for focused sharing.

I facilitated the "allies" sharing and found it really rich and deep. The questions posed were: 'What opportunities have you had to act as an ally?' and 'What does being an ally mean to you?'. Friends spoke of self-identifying as an ally, of feeling inadequate and awkward, of acting in support of friends and family or based on principle. Opportunities for action had included marches and day-to-day advocacy."

### ***Evening Programs – Wednesday*** (a brief report)

The Wednesday evening meal was a simple meal, and the difference in cost was donated to the local youth centre in Kemptville, where, as reported on "Inside Ottawa Valley News"

On Wednesday, August 21, over 30 Quakers, roughly half of which were youth, from all over Canada arrived at KYC ready to participate in a work bee for the afternoon. Greeted with a warm welcome and a 'to do' list, the Quakers jumped right in, completing a long list of tasks indoors and out. Outside, they mowed the lawn, tidied up the edge of the lawn and flower beds, planted some donated lilies, painted, dug up weeds, laid out landscape fabric and spread gravel. Inside, they alphabetized wooden cutouts, prepared and painted wall decorations, prepared the ceiling for painting, cleaned the carpets, and cleaned the KYC sandwich boards."

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## ***Evening Programs – Friday Family Night***

As usual, Family Night was a celebratory mix of talent, humour and community joy:



***Reflections from a First-Timer:*** (from a conversation with Lisanna Sullivan, Whitehorse Worship Group)

"As a newcomer, I felt welcome and free to go anywhere. Still, as there wasn't a specific time for newcomers to meet and have some orientation, there was a sense of isolation, and I felt kind of disconnected in general. I have a rich community at home, so I know the experience. It seemed that many who were there had known each other for a long time, and might have

been more engaged in reconnecting than in welcoming new people.

I wanted to attend the Yearly Meeting because I was interested in the spiritual practices. I didn't notice a great difference in the business meetings, either the Young Friends Meeting or the CYM from other business meetings I've experienced. I had been quite interested in the International night...and over the week noticed that there was some looseness in starting times, so wandered into the bookstore and lost track of time there, then the session had started when I did arrive."

## ***...and in Summary of their Week, the Children's Program 0 – 12, in their Epistle, expressed Gratitude:***

- ❖ For playing together in the climbing tree and meeting new friends
- ❖ For giant bubbles and creating structures and forts
- ❖ For young and old playing with dolls
- ❖ For all the wonderful visitors who came to read stories, share their own stories, and to play
- ❖ Creating and selling Quaker Trading Cards, and then playing the game and teaching it to older friends
- ❖ For doing new things for the first time
- ❖ For knowing that I am different yet feeling like I can fit in.
- ❖ For living this week in the village that upholds the child.

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