

Family reunion, secret society, or servant of Yearly Meeting?

A Report on the Fall 2005 Representative Meeting

By Beverly Shepard

Joyous greetings, hugs, smiles, quick catch-ups on news — a celebratory atmosphere prevailed as people gathered from across Canada in Ottawa in November. Friends who have become dear to each other through their shared work and infrequent encounters met again like members of an extended family. Seeing each other after a separation of months; preparing for a couple of days of being together, working hard, invoking the spirit in each of us, and discerning Divine will; knowing we are about to be pampered by members of Ottawa Meeting — those who attend Representative Meeting (RM) find it meaningful and important, yet I am constantly surprised to learn how many Friends across Canada are scarcely aware of its existence.

Representative Meeting isn't just for those on it. Each member is appointed by his or her Monthly Meeting to serve in this capacity, or is a committee clerk or Yearly Meeting clerk. Between August of one year and the next, there is much to be done to maintain our Society, and it's RM which oversees that work and makes the necessary decisions. It's just a bonus that it's such a rewarding service!

For your present reading delight, here are some of the matters that came before Friends at the gathering in November.

Martha Laing, Clerk of Religious Education Committee, reported on the Travelling Library, presently under the care of Yarmouth Monthly Meeting. There's material for both adults and children, curricula and individual books, including a lot of new ones purchased from FGC with funds from an anonymous Canadian benefactor. Particularly recommended is an adult curriculum entitled *Friends' Ways*.

We continue to be concerned about Friends United Meeting's policy on hiring and sexual activity. CYM, one of five YMs affiliated with both FUM and Friends General Conference and troubled by this issue, sent a letter from RM last spring to the Board of FUM. Finding a way forward together is a spiritual challenge which will exercise our deepest capacities for understanding and compassion.

We received an inspiring report from the co-clerk of Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting. Reykia Fick reported on the fundraising results for sending Young Friends to the World Gathering of Young Friends last August — the officially designated Canadian Young Friends, others who had been accepted to attend, PLUS Young Friends from Guatemala! After costs, there will be a surplus — this is fundraising with real energy and commitment! Reykia expressed the thanks of Young Friends to CYM and indi-

vidual Friends for their generous support. Attending this event has transformed and inspired our Young Friends — if you haven't yet experienced a presentation from one of them you should invite one to your Monthly Meeting soon.

We heard that the size of Camp NeeKauNis has been approximately doubled by the purchase of the neighbouring property, which includes a small house. Imagine the possibilities! Friends are asked to be mindful of Camp's financial needs, given the expansion of the camp, but the Camp NeeKauNis committee would also welcome ideas and visions for our new, larger facility.

We meet for long hours at Representative Meeting, and we do so willingly because there is much important work to be done: expressing our testimonies inside and outside our own YM, supporting our youth, offering special opportunities such as Camp, and ensuring that we have the funds and the energies to do all we do. Asking your Meeting's Representative what's been going on at the meetings is one of the best ways there is to feel connected to Friends across the country and to learn about the faith community of which you're a part. ☞

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