

The stone in your shoe: Report from Western Half-Yearly Meeting

By Kirsten Ebsen

At this year's 2006 Spring Western Half Yearly Meeting (WHYM) in Sorrento, B.C. the British Columbia Quaker Committee for Native Concerns (BCQCNC) invited Jessie Sutherland, author of the book *Worldview Skills: Transforming Conflict From The Inside Out* to give a special plenary session at the gathering. Although WHYM offers many special interest groups, it was felt a presentation addressed to all participants collectively, except for the very young, might be of interest. Informational sessions on timely topics of keen interest to Quakers have occasionally been offered at WHYM on Saturday nights. As usual, the family format continued to be followed on Friday and Sunday evenings. The focus on family intergenerational activities is one of the strongest features at WHYM.

Jessie Sutherland was born and raised in Vancouver. She has received very favourable international reviews for her book. Her hands-on experience working on four continents towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples includes work across Canada in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and in northern Indigenous communities.

In 2004, she launched Reconciliation Education Teleconferences where people from anywhere in the world can listen to a monthly featured speaker and join a lively discussion about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on the telephone. She has hosted a series on the following themes: Residential School reconciliation, What is reconciliation?, *Worldview Skills for Transforming Relationships*, and most recently, *Weaving Webs of Community*. This most recent series broadened the conversation from the usual First Nations, church, and government dialogues to featuring: Black Canadian – First Nations relations, Doukhobor – First Nations relations, Chinese Canadian – First Nations relations, Jewish – First Nations relations, Indo-Canadian – First Nations relations, and First Nations – African cross-cultural exchanges for peace-

building and reconciliation. Friends were inspired to learn how these teleconferences are building a unique network for reconciliation and infusing local initiatives with new strategies.

Jessie also talked about her work with “Kids from Ka-na-ta” that links First Nations and non-First Nations students in grades four to 12 for cross cultural exchanges. She developed (in collaboration with colleague Tsionni Fox from Akwesasne, Six Nations) *Worldview Skills* workshops for students, teachers, and parents. This project enabled her to visit schools and inspire projects across Canada. For example, a grade seven class in Nova Scotia made a video on different worldviews about trees by interviewing First Nations elders, scientists, loggers, environmentalists, and people on the street. For Jessie, these projects are hopeful signs because they foster genuine cross-cultural dialogue about how we view the environment at an early age.

In her book, *Worldview Skills*, she postulates a theory for reconciliation as “a parallel process of personal and political transformation from systems of domination to relationships of mutuality.” This includes the need to transcend the victim-offender cycles and a host of other paradigm shifts, which then enable the process to occur within a new framework. *Worldview Skills* is a continuation of the work developed for her M.A. thesis at the University of Victoria.

Her presentation at WHYM was titled “The Stone in Your Shoe.” This is also the name of one of the chapters in her book. She told Friends, “transforming pain into purpose is one of the most effective ways to transcend victimisation.” Some of the other skills required to actualise this process include what Jung referred to as individuation (or taking conscious responsibility for ones own actions), recognising our own mirrors — both positive and negative, creating rituals which help us to recognise the gifts inside our pain, and finding meaning and direction through close observation of nature.

She says, "When we transform our pain into purpose, turn enemies into friends, develop intimacy with nature, and share our gifts with the world, then we will know we are the spark for a new era rising out of the ashes." At the end of her presentation we broke into pairs and a lively discussion ensued. Unfortunately we ran out of time, as we could have talked all night. Sutherland's work is transferable to so many different levels: personal, regional, or international.

On Sunday, she held a four-hour workshop for young friends on the theme of motivation and performance.

I believe her work is compatible with our Peace Testimony. I also believe it is important for f/Friends to remain open to outside influences that are compatible with the work we do. Otherwise we could atrophy in the future, as some religious institutions have.

When all was said and done, the author appeared very much at

home among Friends. Joining us for the whole weekend gave her ample time to converse with all who were led to speak with her individually. It also gave her a broader perspective and understanding about Friends' activities on a regional level.

For more information about Jessie Sutherland's work and publications, please see: www.world-viewstrategies.com. ↻

Kirsten Ebsen is a member of Vancouver Monthly Meeting.

Progress report from the Faith and Practice Development Committee

By Molly Walsh

Our committee met May seventh and eighth in Toronto. Our task was to review monthly meetings' responses to "The Lifelong Journey" and to prepare it for publication in pamphlet form for the August, 2006 Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) gathering. Each Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups will be mailed a few copies of this chapter following CYM.

The committee is pleased with this expanded chapter which incorporates material from an earlier chapter, "Stages of Life." Its content has been greatly enhanced by many rich excerpts sent from Friends across Canada.

In the fall of 2006 we will be compiling excerpts for our chapter "Faithful Lives." Valuable initial work was done on this at the 2005 pre-CYM workshop in Camrose, Alberta, and more material is still needed.

We would like to remind monthly meetings and our individual contributors that there is a careful process to follow when submitting extracts for consideration. A form entitled "*Derived Passage suggested for the Faith*

and Practice of CYM in the Religious Society of Friends" must be filled out and submitted with the extract, giving the details of the source of the passage. This form has been sent to Monthly Meetings as each chapter is undertaken and is also available on the CYM website, by e-mail from zilli@inter pares.ca, or from any Faith and Practice Development Committee member.

We advise Friends to avoid long biographical accounts of Friends' lives, and suggest you rather concentrate on passages about "lives that speak" to our spiritual condition. Submitted extracts should have already appeared in published form.

The deadline for these extracts is October, 2006. We are looking forward to the exciting work which lies ahead. ↻

Molly Walsh is a member of Montreal Monthly Meeting