

# My Experience With Quakers Abroad

By Aden Spurr

My first experiences with Quakers began at Camp NeeKauNis. It is such a beautiful place to spend your summers meeting new people and then getting to know them so intimately over 10 days or less; working and playing, learning and growing. There are always people from all over the place at camp. Kids and adults from the United States, Europe, and other parts of Canada (as well as other parts of the world) coming and sharing what gifts they have with each other. From these people that attended and volunteered at camp I learned many useful skills, from how to make peanut butter cookies, to how to re-roof a building in seven days; or the correct use of a chainsaw at 6 in the morning. There was always someone with some piece of wisdom, a joke or a just a hug. Unprogrammed meeting on First Hill, listening to the cicada drone and watching the ants crawl through the grass. Just sitting on a hill with anywhere from two to one hundred people in silence. This always was (and is) a very calming and centering thing for me.

Camp NeeKauNis led to Young Friend retreats held at Meeting Houses all around Ontario, where I met even more wonderful people and learned even more about the world. I could be myself, and not have to worry about what the other kids thought. Likewise they could be themselves. The diverse community that we managed to create in even less time was something that I will always be thankful for, and good Friendships that continue even though I don't see most of them as often as I would like.

As we got older, my friends became even more involved in Quakerism. I started to learn more about Quakers in Canada and around the world by hearing stories about CYM, FGC, and the World Gathering; stories about the coming together of people from multiple backgrounds to share ideas and to listen and learn about each other, to have fun and worship together. And here again community was built, much the same as in my own experiences.

Last year I was fortunate enough to go on a Grand Americas adventure with three Friends, Katrina, Rebecca, and David. The four of us met in Richmond, Indiana (where Katrina had gone to University) to start our road trip through the States. While I was there, I got a small peek at life at a Quaker school. I saw a much larger, more diverse, and complex version of what I had experience growing up at NeeKauNis and YF Retreats. Our travels brought us to Guatemala where we spent some time in Chiquimula visiting with some Quakers that attended the World Gathering with Katrina and Rebecca. They were so gracious and kind. Taking us around to all the local spots. Giving us tours of their schools and Meeting House. Visiting the radio tower that broadcasts Radio Truth to the world. And then seeing the actual broadcasting booth and the 2 computers that send out the signal was pretty cool. We had the chance to sit in on a Young Friends night that was really interesting. We told them a bit about how we practise Quakerism, and learned a bit about them as well. The kids were very eager and intelligent and it made me happy that gatherings of this kind happened other places as well. Our hosts gave us the chance to go to a service put on at their Meeting House that was completely different than how I had known Quakers to worship. But my small understanding of Spanish aside, I could feel and see that it was the same to them as sitting on the Hill at NeeKauNis is for me.

I've met a lot of really wonderful people on my journey, not all of them Quakers, but enough that I feel the better for it. It always amazes me what a few energetic, motivated and sometimes quite stubborn Friends can accomplish and create.

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