

# Western Half-Yearly Meeting, Spring, 2003

*By Arnold Ranneris*

From May 16 to 18, we gathered at the Sorrento Centre, on Shuswap Lake, as Western Half-Yearly Meeting has done for the past 27 years. There were 153 of us, including 24 children, 15 young Friends, many parents, couples and singles. In short order we felt like a family. Clerk Graeme Hope and WHYM Ministry and Counsel did good preparation for the gathering, and the Centre, owned by the Anglican Church, provided good hospitality. It had been several years since I was able to attend WHYM, so I approached it with new appreciation of what has nurtured Western Friends.

The weekend grounded us in worship, worship-sharing, interest groups, playing, singing, and meetings for business. In the latter, there were two sessions, largely to maintain the functioning of the weekend and WHYM operations.

Woven into the meetings for business were meaningful reports of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) concerns. We valued the presence of two FWCC visitors from nearby Washington State: Nancy Yarnall and Anne Stever. Shauna Curry's report, as a representative to the Section of the Americas was stirring, and noted: the Friends Peace Conference in Greensboro, in January, attended by some 250 Friends in the US and Canada (14); the Section's Annual Meeting in March; as well as the upcoming FWCC Triennial in Auckland; the 2004 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage; and the 2005 gathering of Young Friends to be held in the United Kingdom.

An evening meeting on Saturday, under the care of Ministry and Counsel, was in the form of "The Experience of the Spirit" of CYM. After a report on the State of the Society among the seven Monthly Meetings that comprise WHYM, the focus tended to be on the care and nurture of children in our meetings. There was much wisdom and nurture in the ministry. "Doing things together" in worship, play and activity seemed to be most important. One Friend summarized it in this way: "How do we minister to children, and receive their ministry?" Another Friend said, "The philosophy I take with my children is the same as with my garden — I plant what seems to grow."

There were 14 Interest Groups to choose from in the two sessions allocated to SIG's. I attended one convened by Orion Smith on the work of KAIROS, the ecumenical social justice initiative sponsored and supported by CFSC representing the Society of Friends, and by most mainline Canadian Churches. Also part of this was a sharing about the recently-held World Social Forum in Brazil which had an estimated 100,000 in attendance, and worked on the premise that "another world is possible". The other Interest Group I attended was initiated by Friends in the Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting and explored possible new configurations of organisation within Canadian Yearly Meeting. For some, this meant a separate Western Canadian Yearly Meeting; for others, a time to reflect on and appreciate the wider Canadian Yearly Meeting connection and its many benefits to all, and the possibility of finding a new structuring within CYM. A small committee was formed to get input from the seven monthly meetings, and several worship groups and allowed meetings within WHYM.

The weekend closed with the lively and talented Family Night, including a display of "balancing" on Sunday evening. The sense of spiritual energy and fellowship was very tangible all weekend, and we left for our homes energized and inspired to continue to live our lives in the Light, with the fellowship of the Spirit. ✨

*Arnold Ranneris is a member of Victoria Monthly Meeting.*



*— Drawing by Chris Carpenter*