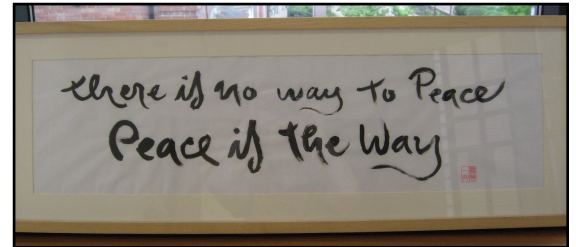


InterChange President's Report, April 18, 2009

A Message from the President

Looking back over the year, it is exciting to see how InterChange has developed. We have established local centres in several parts of the world; relationships between our members have deepened; and we have seen the continuing evolution of a different kind of organization based on our shared common values, principles and sense of community.

This report provides some of the highlights of our past year, but as A.J. Muste puts it: "There is no way to peace; peace is the way," and much of what we achieved can be found in the myriad processes of our work: in the exchanges on our listserv; in on our online organizing tool, Basecamp; and in ongoing connections, relationships and projects.



Relationship is a key concept in InterChange, featuring in several of our principles. Personal relationships are the basis of our work, enabling us to foster a community based on shared values and experiences. As an international organization, we value opportunities to get together in person, so we were thrilled to have two international Board members, Tor Iorapuu and Charles Tauber, visiting us in Toronto at the same time. Besides organizing events to introduce them to the Toronto community, we also participated together in a workshop on InterChange which deepened our own understanding of our work and communicated it to the people attending the workshop.

Dialogue among members with different perspectives, experiences, cultural backgrounds and worldviews plays a key role in our organization. Our discussions are sometimes heated, but always respectful, and allowing space for dialogue within InterChange has made it possible to develop more complex understandings of issues and deepen our sense of community.

Anne Goodman, President

2008 Annual General Meeting

InterChange held its 2008 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on March 29 in Toronto, Canada. During the business part of the meeting members acclaimed a new slate of Board members and project and committee coordinators provided an update about InterChange's work. After a potluck meal, (a key feature of many InterChange events!), we held a Dialogue circle that engaged people in discussion about a sensitive peacebuilding topic and also educated participants about how to conduct a Dialogue Circle. The model of including an educational component to the AGM worked very well, and we decided to adopt it for future meetings.

InterChange Board of Directors

InterChange Board members worked hard over the past year, taking on responsibility for committees, areas of governance, and local centre activities. In order to accommodate local and international Board members, Board meetings were conducted with some members meeting in person while others joined using Skype or the phone. Each international Board member was paired with a Toronto-area Board member to ensure regular contact. The following individuals made up the 2008/09 Board of Directors:

Anne Goodman (President) - Toronto, Canada
Katie Meyer (Vice-President) - Toronto, Canada
Carolyn Webb (Secretary) - Toronto, Canada
Michael Wheeler (Treasurer) - Toronto, Canada
Sara Escott - Toronto, Canada
Tor Iorapuu - Jos, Nigeria

IsIssa Kirarira - Kampala, Uganda
Linda Koehler-Moore - Toronto, Canada
Felicien Nemeyimana - Nairobi, Kenya
Cristin Stephens-Wegner - Toronto, Canada
Charles Tauber - Vukovar, Croatia

Felicien Nemeyimana, Cristin Stephens-Wegner and Linda Koehler-Moore will not be continuing on the Board next year, but they all plan to stay involved in InterChange in other ways. We express our appreciation to them for their contributions to InterChange.

InterChange Local Centres

While InterChange is a Canadian charity, it has members located around the world. We work at both the international and local levels. Over the past year we continued to build our international infrastructure and also put efforts into supporting the development of local centres in areas where our members are concentrated. Local Centres bring InterChange and its work into our members' communities. The form and composition of each Local Centre may differ, within set constraints and guidelines, so that it is appropriate for each local context.

Around the date of September 21, 2008 (the UN International Day of Peace), InterChange centres in Kampala, Uganda; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and Toronto, Canada held local meetings to strengthen relationships and the participation of members.

Uganda's meeting took place on September 20th at the Rhomu Care College Namilyango school. The event brought together youth, religious leaders, local and central government leaders, the media, and peace activists from across the country. The school's peace club was profiled as a model for community-based peacebuilding and a number of peace activists expressed interest in replicating the model. Mr. Emmanuel Walani, the personal assistant of the honorable Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, conveyed the Minister's interest in working hand in hand with the event's organizers to spread the campaign for peace. Youth from the school's peace club provided their views about the meaning of peace, causes of conflict, and how conflicts could be resolved. Individuals learned about InterChange's work and projects and discussed how to become active in the network. The meeting closed with the planting of peace trees, which members of the school's peace club will care for.



Tanzania's meeting was held in Dar es Salaam on September 27th. Participants expressed enthusiasm for InterChange as a forum through which peacebuilders could network, exchange experiences, and enhance a sense of belonging without regard to cultural or national boundaries.

In addition to discussing the work of InterChange and opportunities for involvement, participants explored InterChange's definition of "Peacebuilding" and a broader definition of "peace", which includes both "positive" and "negative" peace and that "violence" includes both "physical" and "structural" violence. Participants appreciated InterChange's support for the meeting, which provided an opportunity for them to meet and contribute to peacebuilding initiatives in Tanzania and at the international level.

Toronto's event was held on September 20th. InterChange project coordinators highlighted information about each project and invited members to join the project workgroups. A key topic of discussion was that of forming an active centre in Toronto. This conversation was informed by a survey that had been circulated to members before the meeting, asking questions such as how frequently to meet and on what topics. The group agreed that local events should be organized to bring together members to share skills, work on InterChange projects, discuss topics of mutual interest, and build relationships among one another. Since that day Toronto members have been meeting regularly to establish local infrastructure and to organize regular meetings and events.

Other Local Centres are under development in Nairobi, Kenya, and Vukovar, Croatia. InterChange is establishing a newsletter and other communication methods to help members communicate with and support one another.

Activities of Some of InterChange's Members

InterChange members have been active and an inspiration for all of us. Here is a small sample of the activities of some of our members:

- Charles Tauber (Croatia) has been running trauma healing workshops in Liberia and Ghana. He has also been actively engaged in developing a BA and MA in peace education.
- Cathy Stubington (Western Canada) is collecting the word for water in many different languages (she's up to 50 at last count!) and is organizing a creative activity using sound, artwork and a large water puppet!
- Rachel Wambui (Kenya) organized a second peace caravan across East Africa. The caravan involved camels and a range of youth activities in peacebuilding.
- Issa Kirarira (Uganda) has been running a weekly phone-in radio programme to involve people in discussions about peacebuilding.
- Musician and activist Jean-Paul Samputu (now living Canada) organized a musical event and conference in Rwanda this February commemorating the 15th year anniversary of the genocide. Plans for a Garden of Forgiveness were also developed.
- Adam Perry and Sara Escott (Canada) received funding to run a 10-week forum theatre project with Somali youth relating to their experiences and perceptions of violence and violence prevention in their community. This opportunity follows a successful pilot project initiated by In Forma Theatre, Rexdale Women's Centre, InterChange, and the Toronto Public Library.
- Henry Wai (Canada) has been offering several short and longer workshops on nonviolent communication and restorative justice.

Education and Training

Much groundwork has been laid for InterChange to advance peacebuilding education and training, which is an important future direction for us. Many of our members are currently involved in education at all levels and different locations, including schools, universities and the community. We are looking to bring our skills together to provide opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal education; education aimed at peace literacy and at reconciliation; and courses and workshops using the arts, sports and other creative means.

InterChange Research and Projects

InterChange's research and other projects fundamentally define and solidify the organization and its work. Projects have emerged from the interests of our members; they integrate with education, action, community building and relationship building; they provide opportunities for members to get involved; and they give a focus for work at the community level in the context of an international organization.

Projects that are underway include:

- Community Arts for Peace
- The Food/Peace Book
- A Collection of Mother-Tongue Proverbs, Sayings and Greetings
- Documentation of Traditional Methods of Justice
- Toolkit for Peacebuilders
- Research on Peacebuilders
- Media and Peacebuilding

Diaspora Dialogues for Peacebuilding has emerged as a broad focus area under which various projects and activities will fit. One such activity is a Toronto-based forum for youth from sub-Saharan African countries who are experiencing or have experienced conflict. This event is being organized for November 2009. This theme has the potential to link and engage members from around the world.



For more information, InterChange projects are listed on the website along with the contact people and information about how to get involved.

InterChange
c/o Transformative Learning Centre, OISE,
University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6

Contact: Dr. Anne Goodman
+1 416-978-0784
<http://www.interchange4peace.org/>
interchange@interchange4peace.org