

# BOUNDARY PEACE INITIATIVE

## Peace Congress Convention a Big Success

By: Miguel Figueroa—President

The Canadian Peace Congress held its 2018 Convention at the Steelworkers Hall in Toronto on November 24 and 25. The first day was primarily devoted to a series of guest speakers; the second, to the organizational business of the CPCCon.

Joan Phillip, a B.C. indigenous leader, kicked off the convention with a welcome and land recognition statement, and spoke of her participation in native, environmental and peace struggles. Her uplifting remarks ended with the observation that the indigenous peoples have learned from their own experience that peace and social justice are indivisible.

Next to speak was Canadian Peace Congress Acting President Miguel Figueroa, whose wide-ranging comments addressed a number of alarming developments that have aggravated international tensions, including the acceleration of military spending and war preparations, the imperialist-sponsored wars of aggression against Syria and Yemen, the continuing oppression of the Palestinian people, and 'regime change' operations orchestrated from Washington against the peoples and governments of Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and elsewhere. He sharply condemned the foreign and defence policies of the Trudeau government and domestic politics, which are contributing to the dangerous drift toward a new 'cold war'.

He noted the increased activity and influence of the Peace Congress, and gave a warm welcome to delegates, especially those from four new peace councils – in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Halifax – that have been formed over the past year alone.

Figueroa stressed that the main challenge facing the peace movement was how to build and broaden its ranks in order to effectively respond to the growing danger. The Peace Congress will be reaching out through its "Unity Appeal" to other peace, solidarity and other labour & progressive forces to discuss ways to achieve this objective.

The Congress will also campaign on a number of critical issues in the coming year, including: opposing the arms deal with Saudi Arabia; campaigning to withdraw Canada from NATO and to dissolve this

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aggressive military alliance, including sending people to Washington for anti-NATO demonstrations next April; and to put peace on the agenda during the run-up to the federal elections next year.

Bahman Azad, Organizational Secretary of the US Peace Council and a member of the Secretariat of the World Peace Council, presented greetings from both organizations. He spoke of the divide in the world peace movement, around the issue of imperialism. Broad opposition to foreign military bases has proved to be a unifying issue. A just-concluded conference in Dublin, with both streams participating, set opposition to bases as the core of united action. This includes a global effort during the NATO summit next April, and action on bases in Okinawa and Guantanamo in May.

The Convention honoured the lifelong contribution of former Peace Congress president John Hanley Morgan, and presented a posthumous award which was accepted by his widow, Jeanette. Morgan served as CPCCon president from 1972-86, and was also part of the leadership of the World Peace Council for several years. Ms. Morgan spoke of their life together in the peace movement, citing some of the main challenges during those years, and the continuing relevance of the organizing and political tactics employed by the peace forces in the 70s and 80s.

International criminal lawyer, writer, and blogger Christopher Black accused the USA and its NATO allies, including Canada, of war crimes by launching aggression and wars of occupation against a number of countries in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and other covenants of international law.

Mr. Black spoke particularly strongly against the so-called "responsibility to protect" (R2P) doctrine which, he said, has no basis in international law, but rather serves as a pretext conjured up by the imperialist powers to justify their unilateral and illegal actions. This doctrine, he said, "returns us to the law of the jungle, where the powerful do as they wish, and the victims suffer what they must."

The imperialist powers are using NATO as their primary instrument to enforce world domination. Through a series of actions, including the militarization of outer space, the USA and NATO allies are preparing for nuclear war, a war that they expect to win.

Chairing the Saturday afternoon session began with presentation of greetings from the mayor of Grand Forks, BC, read by Laura Savinkoff, convenor of the BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition. (Continued page 2)

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Independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett drew mainly from the example of the US-led war on Syria to illustrate the gross misrepresentations and lies spewed out by the western mainstream media which mostly repeat the propaganda handed out by the imperialist powers. Ms. Bartlett cited many instances in which reliable testimony she gathered from people on the ground in Syria directly contradicted the official positions reflected in commercial media.

Eva Bartlett was followed by Tamara Lorincz, a member of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace and of the Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power. A doctoral student on environmental issues, Ms. Lorincz spoke on the environmental impact of the military, noting that the fossil fuel emissions of the military industrial complex are excluded from calculations of countries' 'carbon footprint', and are routinely ignored in media coverage dealing with the deepening crisis of climate change, even though the military is the single greatest contributor to this global problem.

Adrien Welsh, General Secretary of the Young Communist League and an activist in the *Mouvement québécois pour la paix*, was the last of the featured guest speakers. He spoke of the actions of young people in support of anti-war struggles around the world, and the need to engage in the 'battle of ideas' to counter pro-imperialist propaganda to help draw more young people into the peace movement across Canada. Mr. Welsh also addressed the activity of the *Mouvement québécois pour la paix*, with examples of its recent successes.

The Sunday session of the convention turned delegates' attention to internal organizing matters. Miguel Figueroa also presented an organizational report highlighting the work of CPCon over the past few years, which has resulted in the establishment of several new local chapters and the possibility of additional Peace Councils in Kingston, Kitchener, Nanaimo, and New Brunswick in 2019.

The convention also dealt with a number of internal matters, such as updating its constitution, and reviewing its finances. It received reports about its international activities, which included travels to China (at the invitation of the Chinese Peoples Association for Peace & Development), to the Hemispheric peace conference in the Dominican Republic, and to Damascus, Syria for the executive meeting of the World Peace Council.

The delegates also discussed the contents of a "Peace Alternative" program which will be released shortly by the incoming executive. While the precise wording of the new program is not yet finalized, it will surely include "a call for massive cuts in the arms budget, opposition to any Canadian participation in ballistic missile defence, cancellation of the Saudi arms deal, ending Ottawa's collusion in 'regime change' operations in Latin America and around the world, and getting Canada out of NATO and NORAD", Figueroa noted.

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## The Story of the Northern Peoples

By: Lori Herrell (read by Delia Metcalf on Human Rights Day December 10, 2018)



It started when we lost our drums.  
We were lazy one month and didn't bother with them.  
The spirits got angry and took them away.  
We were silenced except for our tongues and our brain  
Without the drums we forgot how to listen.  
Our hearts and our minds grew crusty with lack of use.  
Our power declined.  
We lost our ability to communicate.  
Our bodies forgot they had spirits.  
Our spirits forgot they had bodies.  
We got lost and started believing we were machines so  
we build other machines to pass the time.  
We became surrounded by machines and thought they  
were our brothers.  
We had no sisters but we didn't know it mattered.  
Since we thought the machines were brothers we let  
them advise us.  
We thought they knew more than we did.  
We did everything they told us.  
We forgot how to breathe.  
We had to struggle to be happy and we were confused  
about love.  
We tried to kill or stifle anyone who didn't act like a  
machine.  
We treated our bodies like machines and they began to  
break.  
We tried using tools to repair them, but it didn't work.  
We grew old.  
But, we didn't die.  
We just divided and multiplied, until we filled up the  
whole planet.  
We began to suffocate.  
Then the spirits took pity and returned the drums.  
At first we thought they were toys.  
We used them with our sound machines.  
But, gradually their power seeped into the backs of our  
memories.  
One by one we learned again how to use the drums.  
We returned to our circles.  
We resumed the beating.  
The rhythms began intertwining again.  
Slowly we remembered how to listen.  
Our hearts limbered up  
And began loving of their own accord without the brain  
to organize and confuse.  
The brains took a much needed rest.

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## **Palestine sues US at international court over Jerusalem embassy** AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES 29 Sept 2018

Palestine files complaint with UN's International Court of Justice to return US embassy to Tel Aviv.

Palestine filed a complaint against the United States with the United Nations top court over Washington's decision to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In a statement issued on Friday, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Palestine contends the embassy's relocation is in breach of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

In its application, Palestine argued that the treaty dictates embassies must be established on the territory of the receiving state and that the "special status of Jerusalem" means that the US violated its international obligations when it moved its embassy.

According to the statement, Palestine asked the court to declare the move illegal as well as order the US to withdraw the embassy from Jerusalem.

On Saturday, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said the complaint "comes in line with the policy of the State of Palestine, which aims to preserve the character of the holy city of Jerusalem with its unique spiritual, religious and cultural dimensions".

"We defend our rights and our people without hesitation and reject all forms of political and financial extortion," he was quoted as saying by Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Ralph Wilde, an international lawyer based at the University College London, said the court must rule if Palestine is deemed a nation state.

He noted the UN General Assembly has recognised Palestine as a non-member state, "which the court will have to address in this decision".

"The case will partly hinge on the question of Palestinian statehood, and that has never been before the International Court of Justice," Wilde told Al Jazeera. "The court's jurisdiction will only be possible if it can conclude that Palestine meets the international law test for statehood."

US President Donald Trump announced the relocation of the American embassy in Israel in December, sparking international outrage.

Decisions by the ICJ are binding, but the court has no power to enforce them and countries, including the United States, have in the past ignored its rulings.

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The Convention also approved a "Plan of Action" for the coming year, which will include mobilizing – together with other peace forces in the US and Canada – to oppose the 70th anniversary celebrations for NATO in April 2019 and campaigning to ensure that peace becomes a major issue in the coming federal elections which will be held on October 21, 2019.

The final act of the Convention was to elect a new Executive of eleven, with Miguel Figueroa as President. The new Executive is gender-balanced, youthful, and includes several people of colour, drawn from across the country.



### (From page 2) **The Story of the Northern Peoples**

The machines fell into a cold, brittle sleep.  
Our spirits began to touch each other again.  
We found the sisters again and our bodies woke up and remembered how to die.  
With the return of death, our powers came back in full.  
We used our tears and the blood of the sisters to heal,  
The damage we had done when we thought we were machines.  
The damage was immense and almost irreversible.  
But the spirits returned with the drums just in time.  
It took many years and some new rhythms added to the old.  
But now the Earth is green again and we breathe deeply  
And walk the Sacred Path.



### **Our Mission**

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site:** [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org)

***BPI meetings are suspended until at least 3 people commit to meet monthly. To commit call (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).***

## What's Up?

As we enter the New Year of 2019 there are many issues that need to be addressed as individuals and collectively. We must act locally as well as spread our wings globally. Remember every positive action each one of us takes does have an effect. Whether we are nearing 100 years old or just starting our lives we have a voice and we need to exercise that voice to inform, educate and inspire each other to act and live the life we envision. Hopefully, the life you envision is one of peace and justice, of equality and honour, of integrity and accountability, one of kindness and love for all Creation. Together we can walk hand in hand with all humanity to live peace in our everyday lives and share our love with all that surrounds us, near and far. Watch for announcements of events and actions in the coming months and plan on joining us.

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles are the author's responsibility and may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524 or 250-442-0434** or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).

The BPI is a member of: BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition, Canadian Peace Congress, Abolition 2000, Lawyers Against the War and an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. We work with a wide range of local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Go to the Government of Canada website for MP contact information at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The Minutes of the BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition Conference are finally completed. I apologize for the delay. They will run in a series. They were compiled by Laura Savinkoff from comprehensive notes by Beth Novokshonoff.

### **B.C. Southern Interior Peace Coalition Conference, October 27, 2018 At The Slavonic Senior Citizens Centre, Grand Forks, BC**

**Participants:** I will not list the participants here but the list will be included in the original document.

#### **Welcome and a round of introductions began at 9:50 a.m.**

Laura Savinkoff welcomed everyone to the conference on behalf of the BPI and the Slavonic Senior Citizens Society. Roy asked if we would be acknowledging on whose territory we were meeting. Laura and others responded that this region was never a permanent settlement for First Nations and that disputes over claims to the territory among surrounding nations continues. There are various 'myths' or 'stories' as to why this was never a permanent settlement but there is no consensus on that. Therefore we can recognize that this territory is under colonial status.

The introductions identified participants with the groups/organizations they either represent or are associated with.

Laura took this opportunity to introduce and thank the kitchen staff – Mary Lebedoff, Katie Slastukin and Kit Gagne. She also acknowledged and thanked Beth as our volunteer note taker—a big job.

The Minutes (they were attached to the conference package as well as circulated through email so will not be attached here) from April were accepted with no business arising that will not be addressed through reports or discussion.

JJ explained that to date no reply was received from the correspondence with the Ministry of Education to allow peace groups into local schools to introduce peace and environmental studies. We discussed how to pursue this question further with no resolution on how to proceed. We have approached BCTF and now the Ministry with no response from either body. Therefore we will put this aside for now.

JJ asked Mark and Roy if they know of anyone in the Vernon area that is or could be involved with our organization as was the case previously. Mark said that he did not know of any group but there are individuals who do participate, such as Susan Ghattas.

#### **Group Reports:**

Laura expressed disappointment that no written reports, besides hers, were submitted. We unanimously passed a Resolution that all participating groups were to submit written activity reports and Motions at least a week prior to a conference.

**Kelowna Peace Groups:** Mark said due to various reasons no written report was submitted and he would not take up time with a verbal report, especially since not much has happened among their group.

(More next issue)