



### **How Far Must We Walk for Peace?**

Walking for peace is a grassroots, visible, public call to action giving us hope to meet the challenges of living together without violence against one another or against our Earth and all her creatures.

Peace walks are one way to jolt us into possibility, and participation is an inclusive invitation to share that path. To commemorate the *United Nations International Day of Peace (21 Sept)*, we held a peace walk from the Peace Pavilion in Dartmouth to the Peace and Friendship Park in Halifax. The walk was organized by the Halifax Raging Grannies together with local Girl Guides (who chose the name “The Future is Peace-Walk with Us”) and Pathfinders; supported by Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace and the Ecology Action Centre. It was generously funded by the Mahatma Canadian Foundation for World Peace in Edmonton, Alberta.

Peace is collaborative, and Canadian Gandhians share their mandate of educating for peace and nonviolence by building an arc of justice from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Last fall and winter NSVoW members visited the Girl Guides and shared grassroots peace-building history and activities taking place in Nova Scotia and beyond. Together we explored the history of peace walks such as Mahatma Gandhi’s famous Salt March for economic decolonization in 1930 and the remarkable efforts of Vinoba Bhave’s years of walking for Indian land reform. On the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination, countless peace walks are held to remind us of his unconditional commitment to civil rights and a community of care.

From 2003 to 2017 Anishinaabe Elder Josephine Mandamin, known as Biidaasige-ba “the one who comes with the light,” walked around the Great Lakes to bring awareness to problems of water pollution and environmental degradation. A couple of years ago, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VoW) and the Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF Canada) organized peace walks (and a youth conference) led by Mi’kmaq water protectors from Pugwash to Halifax advocating for nuclear disarmament, social justice, and peace.

On this journey Mi’kmaq Elder Dorene Bernard with Patsy Stephens and Amy Maloney opened our peace walk with a water ceremony and blessing where we honoured the memory of Grandmother Josephine. The intergenerational aspect of this particular peace walk was marvellous, and to open on the Dartmouth harbourfront in the shadow of the boarded-up Peace Pavilion was ironic. More than 40 participants crossed the historic waters of the harbour often engaging with others along the way.



Everyone we encountered was grateful for the positive messages of peace in today’s ruptured world. The beautiful hand-made posters carried by the girls were admired as we walked along the waterfront to local Ghanian rhythms.



We arrived at the Halifax park to a lavish picnic with peace and honour songs and brief speeches. There is joy in the air when peace is the purpose!

### Unveiling Peace Pole<sup>1</sup> in Wolfville

A Peace Pole with a message of peace in four languages (Mi'kmaq, English, French, Esperanto) was unveiled on the grounds of the Wolfville Post Office. It was a gift from local Rotary clubs to recognize the long-standing peace vigil held there every Saturday for 25 years.

During the vigil, supporters would hold peace flags/signs and engage in conversation with locals who acknowledged their efforts by waving or honking their car horns.

Jane Mangle, partner of David Mangle (one of the original organizers) reminded us that on this *United Nations International Day of Peace (21 Sept)* peace dialogue is ever more necessary. Wolfville Mayor Jodi MacKay and members of Council were in attendance as well as Rotarians, peace activists, and Indigenous and Acadian representatives.

The Wolfville peace vigil began in response to the 7 Oct 2001 decision of the US and Great Britain to invade Afghanistan as direct response to the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon, and a plane crash in Pennsylvania. Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network, sheltered by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, were responsible and when a Taliban surrender was rejected, military action began and continued for more than 20 years. Canada joined the American-led

coalition for the first 14 years, making it our country's longest war and largest military deployment since the WWII.

Around the same time the Annapolis Valley Quaker Meeting and members of St. Andrews United Church decided to hold a peace vigil and co-operated on organizing it.

On 17 Nov 2001, a march and rally took place starting at Acadia University's Student Union Building. Speakers from each group gave statements including David Mangle who spoke for the vigil.

Almost a month later on 12 Dec 2001, Friend Peggy Hope Simpson said that "there was a will to continue the vigil every Saturday until the bombing of Afghanistan stops."<sup>2</sup>

*Peace Poles* "serve as reminders to cultivate peace in thought, word, and action while symbolizing humanity's shared desire for a world at peace and in harmony with all of creation."



<sup>1</sup> With thanks to Jane Mangle and her sharing details of a [second 21 Sept peace ceremony](#) including an Indigenous smudge at Founder's Park in New Minas.

<sup>2</sup> Annapolis Valley Meeting notes, with thanks to Marilyn Manzer.