

PLOUGHSHARES CALGARY  
SOCIETY



# PROPOSAL

A CALGARY MUSEUM FOR  
PEACE & RECONCILIATION

# A PROPOSAL FOR CALGARY

We propose a museum for peace and reconciliation, one that would show individuals and organizations working to resolve and transform conflict. To quote the influential theorist Johan Galtung, “A peace museum informs us about peace and how to get there.” Such efforts are especially timely in our troubled world. Narrative and photography, documentation, and interactive displays would be original, lively, and encouraging. Exhibits would focus on:

- peace theorists
- peace heroes
- international law
- diplomacy
- conflict resolution strategies and initiatives
- nonviolent movements
- UN peacekeeping
- humanitarian organizations
- anti-nuclear weapons campaigns
- refugee reception



We would work towards cooperation with and initiatives from Indigenous individuals and groups, potentially including original material about the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, its ninety-four recommendations for action, and Indigenous ways of managing conflict. If appropriate, information could be provided about truth commissions and their contributions to peacemaking elsewhere, including South Africa.

After consultations with teachers, parents, and relevant experts, provision would be made for exhibits and activities suitable for children. Exhibits could display stories and video material about peace education and peace initiatives around the globe.

An established museum would sponsor conflict resolution training, provide a centre to coordinate local groups, and sponsor arts events, lectures, and film series. It would be a place where visitors can gain more information after their visit. Relevant books would be displayed and sold, giving special attention to local authors and perspectives.

# WHY A MUSEUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION?



Peace, a silent sister in history, needs more attention than it gets. There is a vacuum here, and it is one that should be filled in the interests of accuracy and hope. The tendency to take peace for granted until it disappears is short-sighted and dangerous. The tragic war in Ukraine is one of many reminders of this theme. Human history and the human present feature war and violent conflict, to be sure, but it is a misleading distortion of human history to think that violent conflict is the whole story, or even the main story of humankind. Efforts for peace are longstanding and energetic and have, in many contexts, proven successful.

Given global interdependence and the need for cooperation between national, ethnic, and faith groups, the need for what UNESCO called 'a culture of peace' is clear. Museums are well-positioned to engage with communities to expose and confront pressing issues in our troubled modern world. And yet a Washington Post essay by Menachem Weckers (August 25, 2021) reported that the United States has 450 war museums and only one peace museum. Canada has no peace museums. Calgary has one military museum and no peace museum. By providing information about nonviolent conflict resolution, past and present, a peace museum can display facts supporting citizen engagement, hope, and progress.

# WHY CALGARY?



Calgary is home to a diverse population and multiple companies with international connections. It is a suitable venue for a museum for peace and reconciliation, and evidence suggests that such a project would receive widespread community support. Calgary is one of 109 Canadian cities and 8063 cities globally to have joined Mayors for Peace. It is a city that has welcomed tens of thousands of refugees fleeing violent conflict and valuing peace. We have a Calgary Peace Prize, a Peace Bridge and a Reconciliation Bridge. In nearby Okotoks, Robert Stewart of the Rotary Club of Okotoks sponsored an online resource center, the Canadian Centre for Teaching Peace, which at its peak was estimated by Google to have received some 50,000 inquiries annually. Further peace activities in Calgary include the John de Chastelain Program in Peace and Conflict Studies (Mount Royal University) and the Floating Lantern Peace Ceremony, a Hiroshima & Nagasaki memorial.

Related groups have included the United Nations Association; the Calgary Ploughshares Society (formerly Project Ploughshares Calgary); the Gandhi Society; the Dr Irma Parhad Programs at the University of Calgary; the Consortium for Peace Studies at the University of Calgary; Humainologie; the Voice of Women; Educators for Environment, Peace and Social Justice; the Peace Africa Alliance; the Alliance for the Common Good; and the Calgary Interfaith Council. There is strong evidence of community interest and support for information and activities supportive of peace.

# WHO WOULD BE THE AUDIENCE FOR A MUSEUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION?

Teachers could bring students on field trips; parents and grandparents could bring children on outings. University students could get novel and inspiring ideas for research on such topics as nonviolent societies and cultures. Features planned with Indigenous persons would provide information about the challenges of reconciliation and opportunities for cooperation. Sponsored simulations and training in areas of mediation and conflict resolution would provide a practical aspect of interest to workers and businesses. Novel themes for arts competitions and exhibits would inspire new work. In addition, the unique nature of this venture, with its displays and activities, would give it considerable potential as a tourist attraction.

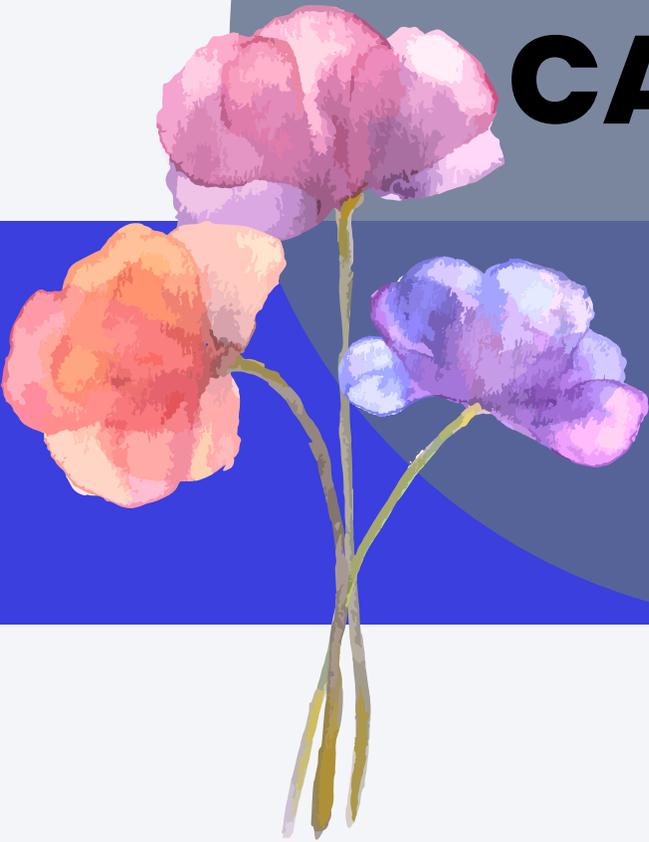


## WOULD THIS MUSEUM BE THE SAME AS THE MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN WINNIPEG?

In short, no. The Human Rights Museum offers information and displays about tragedy and atrocity when human rights have been violated, and about efforts to support and sustain human rights. This museum is important, influential, and original; our working group would seek advice and assistance from its staff. However, as the above description indicates, the focus of the proposed Museum for Peace and Reconciliation places more emphasis on a variety of nonviolent conflict resolution practices and initiatives. Its focus would be different from that of the Winnipeg museum, which attends specifically to human rights concerns.



# ABOUT PLOUGHSHARES CALGARY



This strong and active group was founded in 1982 as Project Ploughshares Calgary. In 2017, for administrative reasons, Project Ploughshares Calgary was dis-affiliated from the national organization and incorporated in the province of Alberta as a non-profit society with the name Ploughshares Calgary Society. The group has been continually active since its 1982 founding, engaging in letter writing; holding regular educational meetings; organizing workshops, conferences, and providing presentations in schools and churches; and distributing material about key issues. Presentations and discussions at educational meetings have included such wide-ranging topics as the problem of land mines, conflict resolution, restorative justice, nuclear disarmament, Islamophobia, and dilemmas concerning returning ISIS fighters. For many years Ploughshares Calgary organized a well-attended Holiday Peace Fair at which other charities such as Habitat for Humanity, Unicef, and L'Arche sold items to support their activities. For the past ten years it has organized an annual Hiroshima & Nagasaki commemoration event, the Floating Lantern Peace Ceremony.



# **ABOUT OUR CURRENT PRESIDENT: TRUDY GOVIER 2017-2022**

President of the Ploughshares Calgary Society (2017 – 2022), Trudy Govier has a Ph.d. in Philosophy from the University of Waterloo. She has been a member of faculty at Trent University and at the University of Lethbridge and has also taught at the University of Amsterdam, the University of Calgary and the University of Winnipeg. Govier's critical thinking textbook, *A Practical Study of Argument* (1985) is presently in its seventh edition. Involved since 1982 in organizing, presenting, and the study of peace and conflict issues, she is the co-editor of *Dilemmas of Reconciliation* and the author of several related books including *Forgiveness and Revenge*, *Dilemmas of Trust*, and *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Acknowledgment, Reconciliation, and the Politics of Sustainable Peace*. Between 1997 and 2005, she worked extensively with the South African philosopher Wilhelm J. Verwoerd, who was on the research staff of that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.