

## Bridge of Peace event hosted by WFWP and the Glasgow Peace Federation

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WFWP Scotland/UK



Bridge of Peace event hosted by WFWP and the Glasgow Peace Federation Partick Burgh Hall, Sat 19 Nov 2016 Co-sponsored by Scottish Interfaith Theme of the event: 'Empowering Women through Leadership in The Outdoors' This year's Bridge Of Peace Ceremony took place on a winter's afternoon in the warm atmosphere generated by the participants in the local town hall of Partick in Glasgow. Shubha Iyer was the MC for the day and opened proceedings by introducing the aims of the Glasgow Peace Federation to facilitate a platform for exchange and cooperation for people from diverse cultural and religious or non-religious backgrounds. Dr. Sujata Sriram, a specialist based in Queen Elizabeth Hospital and a facilitator for ART OF LIVING SCOTLAND was invited to begin the programme with a set of breathing exercises designed to relax and invigorate the audience.

Afterwards, a talented young singer Ika Liu, born in Hong Kong; Ika has been performed in many mini shows to singing contests. Ika was invited to perform a song; she chose 'We Are the World' and had everyone joining in. The young lady received a loud applause after her excellent solo. Shubha then quoted famous wise words on the Peace theme before introducing the main speaker, Pammy Johal, founder of Backbone Outdoor. Pammy explained the history and background of Backbone which was founded in 1995. Pammy's journey started when she was a young girl and took a trip to the mountain and experienced a profound bond with the natural world. From this bond grew a vision and dream which has become an influential charity empowering and revealing the potential of people of all ages and backgrounds especially those marginalised in the community.

Loving and respecting nature is a core value and integral part of our lives. Bringing this to people who have not yet had this experience is truly a transforming event in life. Pammy explained how the natural world brings us together as equals stripping us down to our core of our being. She invited five participants from the training programme to give brief testimonies of how their lives were transformed. Each participant expressed how they were transformed from having no confidence to growing into leaders in their communities taking groups on nature and survival hikes, cycling training and taking groups with learning disabilities into nature. All this talent was released in each participant by doing the training with backbone out in nature where limitations were met and overcome to transform each person. Some of those were women who traditionally only ever stayed at home due to cultural habit and never imagined themselves cycling or hill walking. After these talks the Ambassador For Peace Award from Women Federation for World Peace, Scotland was presented to Pammy by Keiko Fraser Harris, the chair of WFWP Scotland, for all her great work in the community.

She accepted the award and told the audience it belonged to all the programme graduates who had gone back to their communities as Environmental Ambassadors to lead successful projects. Shubha then introduced the final Speaker Councillor Martha Wardrop from the Glasgow City Council who described the various projects run by the Council to support those with little means in the Community to go on retreats and trips to experience nature. The Council also supports clean up campaigns in the Community and gardening projects. She also told the audience about initiatives to make the streets safer for women going out alone. The work of Backbone and its valuable contribution to the Community was also given due praise and recognition. A short video of previous Bridge of Peace Ceremonies was then presented and the Bridge of Peace Ceremony then took place. The new sisters exchanged origami crane birds symbolising peace as they passed over the Bridge. The participants were all moved by this bridge building and the symbolism of passing over the Bridge of Peace moved hearts. Afterwards everyone gathered to enjoy an international buffet and share their experiences in a happy atmosphere.

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