

## WFWP Vancouver, Canada's conference on the Women's Role for Peace

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### **Taking action for peace: WFWP Vancouver conference on the "Women's Role for Peace"**

Everywhere that we find conflicts and social ills around the world, we also find passionate men and women working to change that. Indeed, Women's Federation for World Peace believes in taking action for peace rather than turning a blind eye to conflict, and it is with this in mind that WFWP Vancouver held a conference under the theme of "Women's Role for Peace" on October 19th, 2019. Five women leaders in the Greater Vancouver area shared their personal experiences, visions and tips on what we, as women of this age, can do to help others and promote peace around us.

Ms. Helen Abelseth as Mistress of Ceremonies opened the conference by acknowledging that we were standing on the land of the Qayqayt First Nation of New Westminster and warmly welcomed everyone.



Ms. Yukie McHale, the vice-chairwoman of WFWP Western Canada, shared the vision, goal and

activities of WFWP in Canada and worldwide. Family is a cornerstone of world peace and mature couples are the foundation of strong and loving families, Ms. McHale stated. She encouraged every woman to become a woman of peace through cultivating the mother's heart for others by developing and expressing empathy, forgiveness and unconditional love.

The event was enriched through a musical performance by Ms. Jeong Gicole, a young lady who sang us a beautiful song that she composed, accompanied by her guitar. This was followed by the main session of the afternoon, as the five panel speakers each addressed a conflict or social issue in different parts of the world and the role that women had in bringing peace.



The first panelist was Ms. Jonquil Hallgate, the co-chair of Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force, who has been involved in serving people who are unhoused for the past two decades. She shared her experiences with people who lost their loved ones and became homeless. She mentioned how we should change our perception about homeless people and we can approach them by asking their names, greeting and connecting with them, instead of judging them. There are lots of opportunities to reach out in our communities to create peace and a better world around us and it starts by respecting the human dignity of each person like our own family members.

Ms. Halchigul Pattar, a human rights activist from Xin Jiang, China, shared about the Uyghur ethnic minority in that region. These are people from China who have Turkish ancestry. Their culture and language are under oppression and have no freedom under the Chinese communist government. She is trying to let the leadership of Canada know about the situation in China in order to help her people.

Ms. Cathy Merchant, the founder of the Living Interfaith Sanctuary in Vancouver, shared about the role of women in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the peace initiatives that many of them have spear-headed in order to try to resolve the tensions there. She offered very insightful stories of how women of all ages keep their families and communities together, help educate their young people and fight for freedom of their people and land.

Ms. Cynthia Hoang, a passionate activist against pornography and the founder of the Vancouver Anti-Porn Society, shared her vision by drawing on knowledge gained through her years of activism. She spoke about the harms of pornography and porn culture on relationships, society, sexuality, and mental health, including her own personal experience. As a young university student, her insight into the detrimental effects of pornography and her activist work were inspiring and informative for many attendees, including some young people in the audience.

Lastly, Ms. Christina Lee Kambashi, the chairwoman of WFWP Western Canada, shared her hope for the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea by telling the story of how her father escaped from North Korea at a very young age to find freedom and peace. Furthermore, she emphasized that peace in the Korean Peninsula is very important geopolitically in the global context.

Ms. Kambashi pointed out that Father and Mother Moon have founded many organizations, including WFWP, with "peace" in their names, adding that peace is the ultimate goal and vision of God, our creator. She encouraged women to promote peace in their families and societies by finding and following the

passions in their hearts, just as the WFWP founders have done throughout their lives, which inspired her to follow in their footsteps. We are all one family under God and by loving, serving and living for the sake of others, we can build peace within and around us.

After hearing all of these powerful presentations, the audience was invited to engage with the panelists in a QandA session. Among other questions, each speaker was asked to share how the conference participants could support their activities and organizations in the future.

Ms. Gicole then sang another beautiful song for everyone, and after this lovely musical interlude, Ms. Satomi Adshead led the participants in an Origami box-making session. All the ladies were happily engaged and took home beautiful patterned papers.



To conclude the afternoon, everyone was invited to stand in a circle and hold hands while singing "Let there be peace on earth", led by Ms. Asayo Morimitsu. It was a very moving moment as everyone sang in unison for peace on earth truly to be realized with a full heart. Refreshments were served afterwards and there was time for networking and personal interaction with one another.

Many thanks to all the sisters and brothers who helped make this conference happen. From finding the perfect conference room, preparing the lists of participants, origami making, singing songs, being the MC, taking photographs, helping with guest registration, preparing food, tables and chairs, organizing, inviting guests and speakers, audio-video support, making the program and banner, to prayers and support from behind the scenes. Of course, we also want to thank each participant who joined us for the conference. Their feedback reflects how much they enjoyed the event and could learn from each presenter. It made them think about life and people in a different way and everyone enjoyed the whole program very much. They all look forward to joining us again in the future!

