

## First Canadian GWPN webinar: The Relevance of a Women's Peace Movement

Lilly Tadin  
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WFWP Canada held its first ever Global Women's Peace Network webinar entitled "The Relevance of a Women's Peace Movement in Times of Crisis" on Saturday, July 11th, 2020. The virtual event was moderated by Lilly Tadin, the president of WFWP Canada, who welcomed all the participants who joined from around the nation.

"Crisis is defined as a time of great confusion, or suffering, especially a situation with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome," said Mrs. Tadin, as she introduced the topic for the webinar. "With everything that is going on right now due to the COVID19, life has forced us all to start living, thinking and behaving differently."

Faced with the reality of the pandemic, it was important to talk about the impact it was having on the lives of everyday women, and also to realize the valuable solutions that women could bring to the table. "Women are crucial to advancing the culture of peace through education, sustainable economic and social development, human rights and equality, democratic participation and advocacy based on true knowledge," stated Mrs. Tadin, adding that women possessed the qualities of "wisdom, tolerance and understanding at all levels -- in the family, community, country, region and globally."



She then introduced the first panel speaker, Nala Moorthy, a former high school teacher and current facilitator for the Settlement Program with the Peel District School Board in Ontario, Canada. Addressing the topic of women in times of crisis, she focused on the ways that Covid-19 has impacted men and women differently in Canada and around the world.

Women have been given more of the housework and caregiving responsibilities in the home, according to Mrs. Moorthy, and some may have had to sacrifice their jobs, whether due to layoffs or the increased need for care at home, with children out of school.

Another issue is the rise in gender-based violence and less access to support services. "This powerful pandemic has led to situations of vulnerable women living in confinement at homes with their abusive partners," explained Mrs. Moorthy. At the same time, due to Covid-19 closures, many shelters for victims of violence have been forced to close or scale back their services, aggravating the situation.

To counter all of these issues, Mrs. Moorthy suggested several empowering activities that a women's peace movement could promote: launch a campaign to inspire men and boys to help balance the burden of

household care, promote family values and offer support to couples who may be struggling during the lockdown, and collect data on domestic violence, raising awareness and giving support to women's groups.

"Each of us can only enjoy a safe, peaceful and prosperous world if all of us build the world together," she concluded. "Coronavirus is the reminder to the world that our lives as individuals are bound up with our choices and willingness to sacrifice."

The second panel speaker was Bahi Krishnakanthan, a motivational speaker, facilitator and therapist who lives in Ajax, Canada. In her speech, she emphasized the point that peace begins with me: "When we think of peace, we often think of bringing peace in the community, family, religious groups, cultural groups, etc. and we often forget, we must first bring peace within us to be effective in changing the world."



Ms. Krishnakanthan also addressed the challenges that people are facing during the pandemic, such as dealing with feelings of frustration or isolation. At such a time, it is more important than ever to "connect with other women and talk positively and optimistically, empowering others by bringing peace into their lives. Peace does not happen by itself but is something we actively do."

She encouraged the participants to reach out to others and show that they are not alone: "Being that caring, compassionate woman and listening to others can be more than enough."

Then WFWP member Eveline Stewart, the final panelist, was invited to share the perspective and visions of the GWPN founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Mrs. Stewart, who has been involved with WFWP since its founding in 1992, spoke on the founders' concern for the serious problems that societies throughout the world continue to deal with, including issues of family breakdown and a decline in moral values.

These challenges cannot be dealt with on our own. Mrs. Stewart emphasized that women peace movements need to see the necessity of collaborating together, so they can explore the concepts of universally shared values, co-prosperity and interdependence. "As a world peace organization, WFWP has raised the issue of ethics and morality centering on the family and shown the need for the establishment of a new value system aligned with God's truth," she concluded.

Towards the end of the program, participants were invited to engage in a meaningful question and answer session, and the panelists happily addressed each question. The event was a great success and only the first of many webinars to come.