



Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Defend the earth. Defund the military!

Œuvrons pour la paix. Défendons la Terre. Définançons l'armée!

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Mary Wynne Ashford 1939-2022 a “Code Red” vision

Dr. Mary-Wynne Ashford worked not only to heal her patients, but also to heal this world we share. Her main focus was on disarmament and peace, and she recognized that our various struggles are all related and complementary.

Just a year before her untimely death she spoke at a Code Red rally on the steps of the BC legislature. We share these excerpts from her speech to amplify her vision, and to encourage us to continue with our efforts, despite how daunting our task may seem.

“Global threats require global solutions. But most nation states put their own self-interest above the common good. Governments are slow to act until they are forced by their citizens. Our role as civil society has never been so essential . . .

Nations fear to adopt measures that they think would reduce their competitiveness. But instead of competition they must now agree to cooperate to serve the greater good . . . At the national level we need to elect leaders who can cooperate across artificial party lines. The cabinet should have not only gender parity but it should include members from all parties . . .



Photo credit: Dr Melissa Lem

It's too late to tinker around the edges. So how do we fund massive change? We move the money . . .

The world's military spends 1.29 trillion dollars a year. Imagine what we could do with 1.29 trillion dollars a year. We need a global peace force to replace national militaries . . .

In the years that I've been working, pressuring with civil society to get changes at United Nations, we were always closed out of all of the meetings. Now they're calling upon civil society experts to come, to participate in conferences, and to help in decision making. This is a whole new role to have meaningful participation. So – your letters, your phone calls, your letters to the editor, your Instagram posts, your meetings with parliamentarians, really make a big difference . . .

So we were asked for one piece of advice that doctors and nurses could give to politicians . . . Above all, do no harm.”

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Conscience Canada, jpresente!

Jan Slakov

Our good news is that the Conscience Canada (CC) board has decided to continue with the organization, albeit with a modified mandate. The bad news is having to face the fact that our efforts, indeed all peace efforts, are today not succeeding as needed.

The numbers — of dollars spent on weapons, of people killed, of rising carbon emissions, also of conscientious objectors, or letters we write and protests we engage in — these all matter. We also see how some things that matter go beyond what any numbers can measure.

At our board meeting at the end of November, 2022, the board decided to keep our organization going, on the following basis:

We see CC continuing to serve as a hub for conscientious objectors (people committed to nonviolence, whose conscience is offended by cooperation with the war, militarism and destruction that are enabled by an "othering" worldview). The CC "hub" will serve to offer educational opportunities and tools such as the PTR to help people minimize or eliminate contributions to war and violence, to deepen our understanding of and commitment to nonviolence.

CC provides a home for a unique culture and community. Without it, people who "refuse to be enemies" (riffing off the title of a book by one of our supporters, Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta) would have a harder time living in accordance with their convictions. With it, we can strengthen and deepen our efforts to create "another world" (see [Arundhati Roy](#)) that we know is possible.

As always, we welcome your input. Many thanks to the people who have made use of the Peace Tax Trust Fund, which is being closed down, and to those who are helping our "relaunch" with funds and ideas.

What do you think of this proposed purpose for Conscience Canada?

We need to update our "mission" statement at our AGM. If you would like to suggest changes, feel free to contact us, preferably by April 10.

Conscience Canada works:

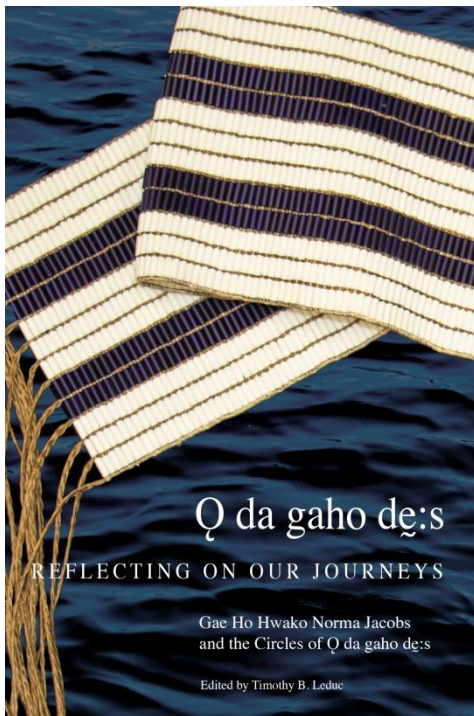
- to help conscientious objectors understand and embrace their rights and responsibilities to contribute to ending injustice, violence and systemic harm;
- to create a healthier world, where humans treat each other and all beings with respect, so all are able to live fully and well;
- to increase Canadians' awareness of the link between taxes and war and to promote a change in law to allow Canadians to redirect military taxes to peaceful purposes as a right of conscience guaranteed in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- to prevent and end war, violence and militarism and instead support non-violent conflict prevention and resolution.

Start by feeling the pain

Jan Slakov

I remember how, decades ago, when my life was in crisis, I sought guidance or insight, often in books. It feels somewhat similar now, as some of us keep sharing our discoveries, in our striving to deal with the crisis we're living through, with war and climate chaos proceeding apace.

One source for this guidance has been *Q da gaho d̥e:s: Reflecting on Our Journeys*. authored by Gae Ho Hwako, and other participants in the Circles of Q da gaho d̥e:s, including editor Timothy B. Leduc.



In the Introduction, Gae Ho Hwako describes how, generations earlier, the Peacemaker was sent by Shogwaeyadisho' (the Creator) to help Haudenosaunee nations who were at war with each other create a confederacy of peace. The Peacemaker chose as his main assistant a man who was grieving for the loss of his daughters in all the violence. He approached the man, Ayenwatha, showing he could fathom Ayenwatha's pain and that he cared. Eventually they carried the message of the good, healthy mind that naturally seeks peace to the warring nations. The people were able to accept the Gayensra'go:wa (Great Law) and buried their weapons beneath a Great Tree of Peace.

Interesting: the first step was condolence, or the sharing of grief. In his book, *The Smell of Rain on Dust*, Martin Prechtel says, "Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honors what it misses." I'm reminded of a beautiful novel I read, *Apeirogon*. It expands on the true story of an unlikely friendship between Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, an Israeli and a Palestinian, whose grief over their daughters killed in the violence is part of what propels them to become tireless agents for peace.

Aramin once said: "I have no time to hate those who hate me. I am too busy to love those who love me." May our love for all that is being lost or under threat propel us to a great peace that seems beyond what I can conceive of now.

Ukraine and the Myth of War

Brad Wolf

This a reprint of an original article published February 26, 2022 in [Common Dreams](#)

September 21st 2021, in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the International Day of Peace, as U.S. forces withdrew from Afghanistan, our local peace organization emphasized that we would be relentless in saying no to the calls for war, that those calls for war would come again, and soon. It did not take long.

The American military establishment and our domestic war culture must always have a villain, a cause, a war. Great sums of money must be spent, weapons quickly deployed, people killed, cities razed.

Now, Ukraine is the pawn.

Some shrug and say war is in our bones. While aggression may be part of our DNA, the systematic killing of organized warfare is not. That is learned behavior. Governments created it, perfected it to advance their empires, and could not perpetuate it without the support of its citizenry. And so, we the citizens must be duped, fed a story, a myth of rogues and righteous causes. A myth of warfare. We are the "good guys," we do no wrong, killing is noble, evil must be stopped. The story is

always the same. It is only the battlefield and the “evil ones” who change. Sometimes, as with the case of Russia, the “evil ones” are simply recycled and used again. America has bombed a sovereign country every day for the last twenty years, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen. Yet that is never part of the story we tell ourselves.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, we have used NATO to surround Russia. Our military and that of our NATO Allies— tanks and nuclear missiles and fighter jets— have moved up against the Russian border in a provocative and destabilizing way. Despite assurances NATO would not expand to include former Soviet bloc countries, we have done just that. We weaponized Ukraine, minimized diplomatic solutions such as the Minsk Protocol, played a role in the 2014 coup that ousted the government there and installed a pro-Western one.



How would we respond if the Russians were garrisoned in massive numbers along the Canadian border? If the Chinese conducted live-fire war drills off the coast of California? In 1962 when the Soviets installed missiles in Cuba, our outrage was so severe we took the world to the brink of nuclear war.

We have lost the ability to see the world through the eyes of another. We see with the eyes of a soldier, not a citizen. We have allowed military behavior to define our human behavior, and so our outlook becomes hostile, our thinking belligerent, our worldview filled with enemies. And yet a relentless stream of propaganda, a perverse telling of our history, and the glorification of war, create a militaristic mentality in far too many of us. It thus becomes impossible to comprehend the behavior of other nations, to understand their fears, their concerns. We know only our own created story, our own myth, we care only for our own concerns, and so are forever at war. We become provocateurs rather than peacemakers.

Military aggression should be stopped, international lawlessness condemned, territorial boundaries respected, human rights violations prosecuted. To do that we must model the behavior we claim to esteem, do it in a way that it becomes learned in each one of us and in the rest of the world. Only

War is not genetically set in our bones

then will transgressors be few and truly isolated, unable to function in the international arena, thereby prevented from fulfilling their unlawful aims.

Ukraine should not have to suffer invasion by Russia. And Russia should not have had its safety and security threatened by NATO expansion and weaponry. Are we truly incapable of resolving these concerns without slaughtering each other? Is our intellect that limited, our patience that short, our humanity so curdled that we must repeatedly reach for the sword? War is not genetically set in our bones, and these problems are not divinely created. We made them, and the myths surrounding them, and so we can unmake them. We must believe this if we are to survive.

Brad Wolf is a former lawyer, professor, and Community College Dean. He is co-founder of [Peace Action of Lancaster, Pennsylvania](#).

CONSCIENCE CANADA 2023 Annual General Meeting

Saturday April 29, 2023, 3:30 p.m., EDT – virtual meeting via ZOOM conferencing

Agenda

1. **Business section:**

Approval of minutes of the 2022 AGM (available upon request); Confirmation of board members standing for re-election; appeal for and election of new board members; Presentation and approval of 2022 financial statements (available upon request); Appointment of auditors for 2023

2. **Review of activities in 2022**

3. **Discussion of future plans and actions:**

CC's proposed new mission/purpose statement. Discussion in breakout rooms, with 4 or 5 people in each. Return to plenary for an idea roundtable on how CC can help with the struggles for a better world

NOTE: This constitutes the official annual meeting notice required by the Conscience Canada by-laws.

To attend the AGM please send an email to info@consciencecanada.ca . (you will receive an email reply with instructions for how to set up and register for the AGM Zoom meeting on April 29).

If you cannot personally attend this year's AGM —

please send your proxy (see form below) for your vote

either **BY POST** to: Conscience Canada, c/o D. Hewitt-White, 57 Malcolm St., Almonte ON K0A 1A0
or **BY E-MAIL** to: info@consciencecanada.ca (please copy and complete form below)

Proxy for Annual General Meeting April 29, 2023

I, (please print) _____, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby appoint:

_____ (please print) as my proxyholder for the 2023 AGM of Conscience Canada.

NOTE: Your proxyholder is not required to be a member of Conscience Canada.

OR ☐ I appoint the current Chair of the Board of Conscience Canada (Jan Slakov) as my proxyholder

This person identified above is to act on my behalf as my proxy and is to vote:

☐ as they see fit on all matters identified in the Notice of Meeting and on any amendments to these matters or on any new matters arising

OR

☐ only in accordance with the following specific voting directions on matters identified in the AGM agenda:

This proxy has been completed and confirmed by me on:

_____ **date**

_____ **signature** (if proxy sent by post, not required if sent by email)

Book Review

by Bruna Nota

"Restoring the Kinship Worldview: Indigenous Voices Introduce 28 Precepts for Rebalancing Life on Planet Earth" by Wakinkpe Topa (Four Arrows) and Darcia Narvaez, PhD. – North Atlantic Books (2022)

Moving from a scarcity to an abundance worldview; from a mercenary to a gift economy; from hierarchical to egalitarian societies; from exploitation to reciprocity with all beings; from punitive to restorative justice.



Wakinkpe Topa

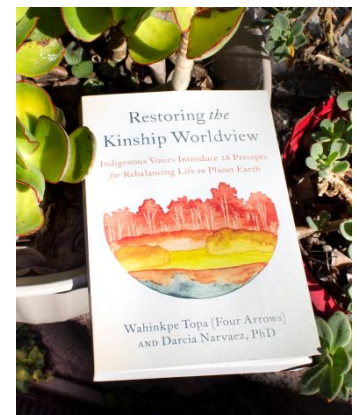
These are just some of the paradigm shifts Four Arrows and Darcia Narvaez invite us to consider in these 300 or so pages. Each one of the precepts is introduced by an Indigenous person reflecting on the subject and then expanded by a dialogue between the two authors, each bringing their cultural and scholarship background to the subject. For instance, precept 8: "Nonmaterialistic Barter, Gift, and Kinship Economics" is introduced by an extract based on a 2000 talk by Cherokee Rebecca Adamson.



Darcia Narvaez

Precept 18: "Conflict Resolution as Return to Community" begins with an extract from Wanda D. McCaslin (Métis) that concludes "... offenders help the community by drawing attention to imbalances ... Instead of placing all the blame on the offender, our traditions acknowledge that everyone in the community has played some role in the patterns that culminated in hurtful actions. The responsibility for harms is distributed and shared." What would have been the outcome if the leaders in the international community had taken such an approach to the 9/11 actions or to the build-up towards the present Russian invasion of Ukraine?

One element that strikes me as extraordinarily hopeful, is the degree of consonance between the worldview presented in this book and the thinking of some of the most progressive economists and environmentalists working in the mainstream culture who also have observed Indigenous ways and learned from them. For instance, Vincent Ostrom, in the chapter on the "Progressive State" of the book by Tim Jackson *"Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow"* (2017), talks about design principles used by Indigenous Peoples leading to successful management of the commons and their resources. Each Nation, each tribe, each 'totem', each community exerted effective, intense observation of their commons. They used — and if given the chance today, still do — appropriate, humane, efficient and effective dispute resolutions processes and progressive sanctions schemes. On p. 191 he says: "These principles also include an appeal to what Vincent Ostrom called 'polycentric governance' —a set of nested levels of governance from the most local to the most interconnected, each level taking some responsibility for the overall management of the system."



Postscript — Jan Slakov

I think it's fair to say this book has played a key role in helping some board members come to the decision to continue on with Conscience Canada. Conscientious objection is predicated on the conviction that engaging in war is not an inherent part of what it means to be human, that "another world is possible". Given the reality of war and injustice in which we live, it can be a challenge to access that "other world". Sharing learning from this book, also from other sources, we nourish our

connection to that "other world" and see the value of being able to connect with each other, in living out our commitment to nonviolence.

How interesting to learn that the authors of *Restoring the Kinship Worldview* were both marked by the 2003 war on Iraq; it was a kind of turning point, that made them question "how can people be so immoral" as to support that war based on such flimsy excuses? Wahinkpe Topa speaks of "the synchronicity of the Iraq war" and how, up until then, all the books he had written were under his Irish name, but then, he needed to claim his Indigenous identity more visibly.¹

This book, and one might say this of Conscience Canada as well, arises out of a sense that our society has gone terribly astray in our collective embrace of war. Knowing that war culture is immoral, we are called to find some moral grounding for our lives, our culture. *Restoring the Kinship Worldview* reminds us that that moral strength is grounded in connection to nature, which leads us to that "kinship worldview" – it's a book that is useful medicine for our time.

1. Youtube: CIIS Public Programs "On Indigenous Voices & Restoring the Kinship Worldview" with Four Arrows and Darcia Narvaez, April 20, 2022. (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45ni36NRTkM> at about 1:03:20.)

Worth Repeating

Arundhati Roy, Indian author, activist, and champion for human rights and the environment:

"Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe.

The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling – their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them.

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

Source: [Confronting Empire](#), Arundhati Roy, Global Policy Forum, January 28 2003



Photo by: [Augustus Binu](#)

Mustafa Shawkay Samha describing his experiences and feelings resisting the Israeli occupation:

"We, Palestinians and Israelis, are as if we are in a boat in the middle of the sea. So we have the responsibility to protect this boat, to reach the beach. And we cannot reach this beach by hating each other, by killing each other. We can reach this beach if we feel deeply our humanity, if we believe that we have to live together and we both have the same right to be alive."

Source: *Refusing to be Enemies*, M. Kaufman-Lacusta, p.9

Enlist — Join Conscience Canada

Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.

No membership fee (donations welcome!)

Visit: www.consciencecanada.ca/membership

Email : info@consciencecanada.ca

Let us know if you can help out as a volunteer. We need **website** and **social media contributors**. New thinking and viewpoints are always welcome.

Letter to the Editor

Wednesday 12 October 2022

Just a note to say how much I appreciated the thought that went into the Fall 2022 newsletter, so realistically and clearly reviewing the options for moving Conscience Canada into the future, or for not doing so. I do believe that closing down the Peace Trust Fund, but continuing with advocacy and education, is the way to go. Special thanks to all former and current CC board members for their dedication to the cause. We need this organization now more than ever before!

Daphne Davey
Prince Edward Island

CC BOARD

Scott Albrecht,
Dave Bechtel,
Doug Hewitt-White,
Bruna Nota
Jan Slakov,
Terri Sleeva,
Dwyer Sullivan,
Linda Thyer

F-35s — Yet Another Outrage

Conscience Canada can be seen as a "place" where peace activists can get beyond just reacting to the latest military-industrial complex outrage, to stand on firmer ground for true peace-building.



[Montréalers protest our money going to war profiteer Lockheed Martin](#)

However, we still oppose each "latest outrage"! The Canadian government is poised to spend billions on F35 fighter jets, despite many strong reasons why such a purchase is ill-advised. Check out the website [nofighterjets](#) and also the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [Monitor](#) for more information. Also opposing the purchase is parliamentary [petition e-4217](#). Sign it now — petition closes March 6!



Contact janslakov@proton.me for sample letters and more information.

ABOUT

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, an NGO working since 1978 to:

- increase Canadians' awareness of the connection between taxes and war;
- divert taxes away from war and to peace work;
- support creative non-violent conflict prevention and resolution;
- press for military tax re-direction legislation in Canada.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Conscience Canada. This newsletter is available on-line at www.consciencecanada.ca. If you are receiving a printed copy, let us know if you would prefer the on-line e-version (in colour, less expensive to produce!).