

Canadian International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace launched

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October 31, 2017



The launching of the Canadian Chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) took place in the Sir John A. McDonald Building in Ottawa, Canada on October 31, 2017. 21 parliamentarians from all Canadian political parties and 150 leaders of civil society, religion and other organizations from across the country attended the inauguration.

The one-day conference focused on an urgent and political issue in Canada: Reaching Indigenous Youth. With the gracious sponsorship of the Honorable Anita Vandenberg, the conference was held in a magnificent chamber on Parliament Hill. Honorable Vandenberg also greeted the audience, read a message from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who referred to the primacy of relations between the Canadian government and the Indigenous population. Prime Minister Trudeau addressed this issue at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017.



Master of Ceremonies for the day was one of the most respected former parliamentarians, the Honorable Jean Augustine. A long-time Ambassador for Peace, Hon. Augustine was the first woman of color elected to the Federal Parliament of Canada. She is known as a champion of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Canada and around the world, bringing various parties and participants together with her dignity, charm, humor and sensitivity.

The meeting opened with a traditional Anishinaabe welcome and prayer by Indigenous Drummer, Barbara Hill and Elder Albert Dumont (South Wind). It is now an established tradition at many government meetings in Canada to begin with an acknowledgement of the Indigenous people, on whose traditional territories Canadians live and work.

Hon. Robert-Falcon Ouellette, an indigenous member of Parliament from Winnipeg, served as moderator of the panel which included youth leaders of the indigenous community. The panel was charged with the question: “Is Cultural Genocide to Blame for the Situation of Indigenous Youth?” Panelists included Michael Swinwood, legal counsel to Elders without Borders, Gabrielle Fayant, an Indigenous activist and Radio Talk Show host, Mitch Huguenin, a graduate of Trent University and Phillip Comeau, originally from Nunavut in Northern Canada who serves as the Education Coordinator for Tungasuvvingat Inuit, an Inuit support center in the Ottawa region.

Dr. Thomas Walsh, Chair of Universal Peace Federation International, provided the IAPP presentation which highlighted the world-wide network of Parliamentarians for Peace inspired by the Founders. The signing of the Declaration by parliamentarians and other participants followed.

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, a scholar and past president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada. Her impassioned presentation on how to solve the plight of the indigenous people of Canada moved the audience to tears.

With the leadership of Dr. Moonshik Kim, the National Chairman of FFWPU Canada, and with the strong collaboration between the Canadian Universal Peace Federation team and the Women’s Federation for World Peace, the event was a tremendous success.

