

WFWP Canada Hosts Gender Equality: A Forward Looking Hopeful Perspective

Darlene McKewen

August 15, 2020

A month after WFWP Canada successfully held their first Global Women's Peace Network webinar ([see report](#)), they continued this new online series with a webinar entitled "Gender Equality: A Forward Looking Hopeful Perspective" on August 15th, 2020. This Zoom event, which reached a nationwide audience, included three guest speakers from various governmental and non-governmental agencies, and was adeptly moderated by Eveline Stewart, a longtime member and office holder of WFWP.



Harinder Malhi, former member of Ontario Legislative Assembly

The first speaker, Harinder Malhi, was a former member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly (2014-2018) and parliamentary assistant to the former premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne. During her years as parliamentary assistant, she focused on women's issues and subsequently was promoted to Minister of the Status of Women by this same premier.

Ms. Malhi touched on various issues in her speech, including women's rights, economic inequality, and the unique difficulties women are facing during Covid-19. She advocated for advancing legislation to help combat discrimination, which she believes in turn will advance the cause of women's rights across the nation. Women should not solely focus on fighting against men, which she argued is all too often the center of the Me Too movement, but rather to "remember who we are fighting for and not against."



Arooj Rajput, president of CICC

The second speaker, Arooj A. Rajput, is an artist, broadcaster and author, who was also a clothing designer in her country of birth, Pakistan. Currently she is the director of a Canadian charity, the Human Necessity Foundation - Canada, and the president of an NGO called Creative Initiatives Community Canada (CICC). The nexus of her talk was a proposal to see men and women as complementary to each other, and that their cooperation can solve the bigger problem of human rights, of which gender inequality is a part.

Ms. Rajput highlighted the fact that even though developed countries like Canada have a constitution that protects women's rights, many Canadian women do not know their rights and quietly tolerate abuse (domestic or job related) as a part of their lot in life. She stressed the need for education on a human level -- advocating for the rights of all people -- and that this will have a big impact on women's equality as well. Human rights, she believes, will promote "less misery, less mental health issues, and even rid the business world of a toxic culture that can pervade the workplace".



Daniel Stringer, co-founder of the National Capital Peace Council

The final speaker was Daniel Stringer, co-founder of the National Capital Peace Council, which promotes peace through various community-based initiatives, including collaborations with indigenous people. He began by addressing the history of women's inequality, reminding us that there are still Canadian women who remember a time when they could not vote, including his own mother.

Mr. Stringer then talked about the obstacles women have faced in taking on leadership roles, including in the Christian church, which was haunted by the sin of Eve in the Bible. While there has been great advancement of female leadership in recent decades, there was a dark side to trying to right a wrong. In the 1960s, the goals of the women's movement expanded from getting the vote and equal pay to denigrating traditional feminine roles in the family and society, which has not helped Canada.

He ended his talk with a unique proposal to increase the number of women in government by having both a man and woman elected and then serve the same district together, since currently 75% of the Parliament is composed of men. However, the other speakers did not agree, preferring a system based on merit rather than quota, and they were willing to wait for this to happen. To add to these women's opinions was a participant from Quebec, Pierre Beauregard, who said that in fact the CAQ, a relatively new party in the province of Quebec, was able to elect 40% of women into their legislature.

This hour-long webinar ended with final remarks by the president of WFWP Canada, Lilly Tadin. She said that women need to move forward with the idea that "peace starts with me in the family". The family, she argued, is where all problems start and where they can be solved. Women have an equal position to men and are not put on this earth just to be protected by them, but to realize their own abilities to solve problems. She addressed the importance of education and mentioned some worthwhile programs within WFWP, such as the Leadership of Heart curriculum.

"You should not think that behind every great man is a great woman, but rather beside every great man is a great woman," concluded Ms. Tadin. She was perhaps inspired to say this because the founder of the WFWP, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, indeed spent 54 years never behind but always beside a great man, her husband the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon.



First GWPN webinar in Canada: “The Relevance of a Women’s Peace Movement in Times of Crisis.”

September 3, 2020 · Lilly Tadin

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



WFWP Canada President Lilly Tadin

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.



Nala Moorthy



Bahi Krishnakanthan

“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 pinalist, 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.



Eveline Stewart

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.



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