

Armagh Community hosts Tennant Creek women

In November eight indigenous women from Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, participated in a week-long cross cultural course in leadership at Armagh, IofC's Australia-Pacific centre in Melbourne.



Hosts and guests in the Armagh garden.

The course was designed to empower women to live as creative change makers and nurturers of community. It was financed by the Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation.

The participants were aged from 15 years to 40. Some had never been in a large city. When Natalie Phillipot and I were approached to put the course together we called it "www" (for "wise and wonderful women").

Each day contained elements of sharing, Creators of Peace Circles, public speaking and physical confidence, exercise and fun.

The physical program included rock climbing, rowing on the Yarra River and long walks through the city. The women were accompanied on their outings by members of the Armagh community, including Lina Ang (Singapore), Chloe Jiang (China), Jiyeon Kim (Korea), Nigel Heywood and myself. The sharing of our humanity across ethnic and religious diversity added an extra dimension to the week.

The community experience was enriching for us all. Sitting at the table over meals, with the women speaking Warumungu, we had a precious glimpse into a very close kinship system, and an engaging sense of humour. Our night of karaoke with just the Armagh community and the women, learning to laugh at ourselves and with each other, broke down many barriers.

Strength of family

There were visits to the Koori Heritage Trust, the Immigration Museum, and to the Margaret Tucker Hostel for young indigenous women at risk. The hostel's founder, Walda Blow, gave the Tennant Creek women an inspiring account of what is required for leadership, such as integrity and a willingness to start with yourself.

Although the women have stories of being unsettled by multiple social problems they were also witness to the strength of family ties and women's perseverance in the face of hardship. At the formal dinner and presentation of certificates Natalie Phillipot spoke about the importance for her of seeing into that world of Central Australian indigenous culture. The whole Armagh community pulled together to make the week possible and, working at its best, created a safe place for these special guests.

Glennis Johnston is spiritual director of the Armagh community.

Architects or gardeners?

The creative transformation of the world around us is what we in Initiatives of Change (IofC) have committed ourselves to.

We have accepted the challenge that change must begin with ourselves through a confronting appraisal of the values that guide our decisions, relationships and lifestyle. We dare to hope that whole communities might embrace a similar vision.

Common to all our endeavours in IofC is the awareness that we do not control the outcomes of our efforts. We are more like gardeners than architects.

Through IofC's work, sometimes strategic outcomes are in evidence, though we are not the planners in individual, community or political terms.

We can be empowered

We do not presume to know who exactly will be the peacemakers of the future or the prophets who will champion a paradigm shift in our relationship with our international neighbours or with the earth itself.

The task we have taken on together is simply to plant the seeds of hope and surround them with the nurturing conditions in which peace, justice, and transformation become possible.

Hope springs from our own experience that the common human tendencies towards blaming, power-seeking and destructive selfish aims are not the only options.

Through inner listening to the deepest voice within the human heart, we have found that we can be empowered to forgive, make a welcoming space for those who are different from ourselves, and choose a lifestyle that takes us beyond the immediate self-interest of my family, my party, my nation.

Glennis Johnston

This editorial is taken from last year's IofC Australia Annual Report 2010-2011. The full Report is available on request.

The reason I return to Caux

For the last four years, somewhere around the final week of June, I've made my way up the mountain from the Swiss city of Montreux, famous for its jazz festival, to the village of Caux.

I'm not the only one to keep coming back. About 100,000 people hours, overwhelmingly from volunteers, are invested each year in the Caux Conferences and in the parallel Caux Scholars and Caux Interns programmes. It's an idyllic setting, but many volunteers spend most of the daylight hours (and often night hours) in a kitchen, or behind a desk somewhere, facilitating all that happens. Perhaps it's something in the spirit of the interactions there that draws people back.

Some of the themes could seem simplistic or obvious: "the new we needs a new me"; human security needs to be understood holistically; trust and integrity are good for business; there's an important link between personal and global change.

Yet it seems some of these points aren't sinking in. People seem strangely incapable of grasping

the keys to collective prosperity. Those saying "we can't" have often convinced those saying "we can" that we can't! We treat most challenges as problems to be solved within a flawed paradigm, accepting limitations of the status quo.

Transformative change

Transformative change demands people who can catapult us beyond the old linear parameters. Nelson Mandela didn't accept the parameters of apartheid. Jean Monnet did not accept that Europe would always be governed by a crude win-lose mentality.

What gets in the way of a new paradigm? Perhaps our hypocrisy. Although the unexamined life may not be worth living, many of us give it a red hot go. I generally have an excuse, while the other's indiscretions are unforgivable.

Caux offers examples of the opposite.

Kim Beazley Snr served in the Australian parliament for 32 years. In Caux in 1953 he was challenged

to examine his life "with nothing to prove, nothing to justify and nothing to gain" for himself. The fruit of his response is documented in his memoirs.

He said that "if you do not accept the importance of conscience, you accept only the importance of power".

The Caux approach means a change in people. People don't like to change. If I'm not prepared to start with myself, I can't fairly expect anyone else to change.

And somewhere in this is the reason I return each year to Caux. Seeing people, especially younger people, glimpsing the possibility of community built on the deepening of relationships and trust. The challenging illumination of areas where I need to improve, particularly in extending the same compassion and care to the people I don't like as to the people I do.

Rob Lancaster from Canberra is Director of the Caux Interns Programme and co-directed the 2012 Caux Forum for Human Security

'It is Christ-like to cross boundaries'

In his tribute at David Mills's funeral on 8 Sept Matthew Wale, Solomon Islands MP and former Minister, recalled David's work to support reconciliation and "winds of change" in Solomon Islands. This is an edited extract:

I met Dave in Sydney toward the end of 2002. Solomon Islands was still going through the pains of conflict and I was part of a search for a just and peaceful solution.

He introduced himself as working with MRA, now Initiatives of Change, for reconciliation across boundaries, faiths and so forth. I had heard of some of the work that the late Alan Weeks and others were doing in Bougainville. So he caught my attention. He invited me to attend a conference in Collaroy in 2003.

With others in IofC Dave organised for civil society leaders from the Solomons to visit Canberra and speak directly to federal MPs about the situation. I was part of that team. Dave was able to make the contacts, secure time slots in Canberra and make the introductions. He never gave up any opportunity to make a strong case for Solomon Islands.

Dave has had a disproportionate impact on the reconciliation process in the Solomons. He and Jane made a number of visits and, with others, organised two major conferences in Honiara, the second of which was the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. Through these conferences and other initiatives they were able to touch many scarred lives. The leaders who had the opportunity to meet Dave all remarked about his sincerity and passion – quite disarming, non-judgmental yet challenging.

Support leaders

Dave and I spent many hours in conversation about the Solomon Islands, Melanesia and the Pacific Islands - about the many issues and challenges and how we can be a part of the search for solutions. Even up to two weeks ago he was still part of organising the visit of Pacific leaders to Canberra. He had hoped to be able to facilitate a standing leadership retreat process that would serve to support leaders in their personal lives.

I have struggled with the inter-faith aspect of IofC. My faith is centred on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ to offer salvation to humanity. Dave was clear that often how we lived our lives, and our relationships, communicated Christ more effectively than shouting out our beliefs as an obstacle to meaningful relationships with those of other faiths. He has taught me the humility to accept that there is much I don't know. That it is Christ-like to cross boundaries.

He has left us a clear and strong legacy and an example.

A full transcript is available on request.

Obituaries of David Mills appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald (30 Oct) and The Age, Melbourne (21 Nov).

www.smh.com.au/national/obituaries/humble-life-that-made-a-difference-20121029-28feq.html

www.theage.com.au/national/obituaries/singer-strove-to-build-bridges-20121120-29ohu.html

Australian South Sea Islanders - 150 years on

In 2005 as I was beginning to uncover details of my Samoan heritage, I met several Pacific delegates at the IofC conference in Brisbane who not only saw me as Samoan but knew my Samoan family – a family unknown to me, separated from my Australian family by the South Pacific Ocean for over a century!

I reconnected with my Samoan family in Fiji, where my grandfather was born, and in Samoa, from where his mother had been sent on an “affair of state” to marry a high chiefly Fijian in the 1880s. She was disowned when she married my Cornish great grandfather instead! Now my mother is proud of her Samoan heritage which she zealously hid for over 80 years because she feared being treated as a “Kanaka”.

Seeing how significant this was in my mother’s life, and considering what change I needed to make myself, led me to connecting with descendants of “Kanakas” or South Sea Islander labourers in Tweed Heads near where I live, and in Fiji where some had ended up after the deportations due to the White Australia Policy adopted with the Federation of Australia.

Over 60,000 of these labourers worked in Queensland between 1863 and 1904, first to grow cotton at

“Townsvale” (now Veresdale, 60 km due south of Brisbane) but soon after mostly to grow sugar. Fewer than 2000 were allowed to remain. They were forbidden to take whitemen’s work but somehow survived. Their descendants were finally recognised in 1994 as “Australian South Sea Islanders” (ASSIs), a unique group of immigrants to Australia.

In my quiet times, I realised ASSI history is being forgotten – not in the Pacific but in Australia, even in Queensland – so I began to plan to have it honoured. I have managed to engage with others, particularly ASSI and cultural groups in and around Brisbane and in Fiji; ultimately the “ASSI 150 SEQ” Committee was formed and I am one of the members.

Buzzing with the news

A special 150 anniversary event is to be held at “Townsvale”; the planning journey will be as important as the event. Stakeholders include ASSIs and related Pacific Islanders, Aboriginal traditional owners, descendants of cotton plantation owners, descendants of those who worked for and against this labour trade, academics, members of the local and wider Australian community. The ASSI grapevine is buzzing with the news of the approaching

anniversary. Where many were unaware of the significance of August 2013, now commemorative events are being planned by the sizeable ASSI communities living in sugar growing centres along the Queensland coast. “Wantok 2013”, now an annual gathering of ASSIs, will be hosted by Queensland State Library on the banks of the Brisbane River near where the first group landed.

Queensland State Archives and the State Library are already hosting workshops presenting their ASSI holdings to help people find and document their stories in preparation for 2013. I have seen participants moved to tears at seeing the name of an ancestor or for the first time exploring their ASSI heritage.

In my own journey “towards 2013” I have met wonderful people and heard amazing stories of disadvantage and survival. The ASSI story is an Australian and Pacific story which is still unfolding.

Lesley Bryant, Gold Coast, Queensland

The ASSI 150 SEQ Newsletter can be read online at: <http://blueskyview.createsend1.com/t/ViewEmail/j/F3993B21FDD0C9C/65B68874C77E06AED9767B6002735221>)

CAUX 2013

29 June-3 July: Just Governance - exploring the personal qualities needed for effective governance, and structures which promote integrity and cooperation
3-7 July: Healing History - overcoming racism, seeking equity, building community
7-11 July: Dialogue on Land and Security - sharing experience and building partnerships to restore land, lives and peace
13-19 July: Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy - towards economic justice and environmental sustainability
24-30 July: Children as Actors for Transforming Society - the role of children and youth as active global citizens
1-6 August: Learning to Live in a Multicultural World - co-creating a future through intergenerational and intercultural dialogue
7-12 August: Seeds of inspiration - people sharing the inspiration that shapes their lives

Initiatives for Human Security – a People-Centred Approach

South Sudan reconciliation campaign

The online newspaper “Sudan Tribune” which covers events in South Sudan reported on 25 and 30 November about the “first ever” national reconciliation conference to be held in the 15-month-old nation.

See: www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44627 and www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44688

The conference, to be held in Juba in April 2013, has the support of South Sudan’s President and Vice-President who come from different ethnic groups. In August 2012 they sent two South Sudanese to IofC’s Global Assembly in Caux, requesting IofC International to be a partner in the new nation’s reconciliation

campaign. A framework proposal, drafted by Africans at the Assembly, emerged as IofC International’s first agreed Common Action.

Australians Mike and Jean Brown, who have visited South Sudan three times in the past two years, will return for three months from February to help prepare the conference, together with Nyok and Kathryn Gor from Melbourne (see Nyok’s article in October *Newsbriefs*).

Future developments will be reported in *Newsbriefs* and on IofC websites.

Postcard from Asia Plateau

Panchgani, India. A slight hush has fallen over Asia Plateau, as a particularly busy patch has come to a close...

Since I arrived on the 8 November, just two and a half weeks ago, there have been non-stop programs running for the Indian Army, Village Women, Mumbai Local Government and Indian Administrative Officers.

During this time *Diwali*, the Hindu Festival of the Lights, blessed the space and the Asia Plateau international community came together in prayer and joy, accompanied by a feast of Indian sweets.

The team climbed up to the tableland that sits just behind Asia Plateau and then descended into a large cave tucked below the ledge top.

It was a symbolic descent into the unknown of our souls - taking time out of the bustle.

Inner development

The Asia Plateau Internship Program (APIP) continues, combining inner development sessions with the practicalities of supporting Asia Plateau through service.

The current group includes Jisun Jung from Korea and her husband



At the cave - time out from the bustle.

Jayang from Tibet, Venny from Indonesia, Nupur and Sumi from India, Sher from Afghanistan*, Jiyhe from Korea and Corrin from the United States.

Two batches of college students are due to arrive soon. The interns will support the program, sharing their stories, experiences, and some of the messages IofC has to offer through songs like 'The Boulder Song' (by Kathleen Johnson - the story of North and South coming together), 'Images' (Rob Wood) or 'Walk a Mile in Another Man's Moccasins' (David Mills).

It is inspiring to see the work of Grampari, the Rural Centre at Asia Plateau. It assists surrounding villages with a sanitation program, maintenance of water supply pipes,

sewing classes, building solar lamps and more.

We are looking forward to the arrival of Sallie and Graeme Cordiner from Sydney to join the support team.

The IofC spirit of truth and depth of experience is alive and kicking.

Clara Cheong from Australia is a volunteer assisting with the Asia Plateau Interns Program.

** The interns from Afghanistan are chosen by Mahboba Rawi of the Australian-Afghan charity "Mahboba's Promise", and financed by donations from Australia and New Zealand. Please contact Caroline Edwards: cedwards@tpg.com.au*

Book Talk

The Fullness of Life: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer for today's world, by **Michael Smith**, British journalist, editor and author.

Published by Initiatives of Change UK, 2012. 91 pp. Now available from Grosvenor Books, \$10 plus p&p.

"There was a time when every child was taught the Lord's Prayer and what it meant. It is, in short, the best preparation for life itself. I wish this book was in every school library."

From the Foreword by Ann Widdecombe, former UK Government Minister.

"The author uses illustrations from his own experience. He draws upon the thinking of well-known Biblical scholars William Barclay, Billy Graham, and Philip Yancey. At the end of each section there are questions for discussion either in a group or for personal reflection. A well informed and inspiring book."

Rev Lindsay Cartwright, Perth.

Off key or on song?

You can learn many lessons singing in a choir, especially a small one.

There is the fascination of the musical parts weaving in and out, meshing and dividing. There is the tension and hope beforehand that one will get it right and remember all the instructions and dynamics. There is the mental stimulus in rehearsal.

You can also learn about relationships. Who sits in the most prominent seat in the soprano section? (Can I be seen?) Who wants to be heard and sings too loudly? Who relies on others rather than putting in the work? Who takes TOO much responsibility and feels indispensable?

Who doesn't watch the conductor and leads others astray? Who thinks she/he knows and likes to correct others? Mutter, mutter.

I can have all these feelings. But as Christmas approaches I remember: We are trying to sing for the glory of God in this little church. Ah! Then it's not about *me* at all? At last I get it!

Rosemary Thwaites

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