

Building bridges into the future



What distinguished this weekend from IofC conferences in recent years was the significantly larger number of younger people, and their intention to step out and assume responsibility for the leadership of IofC Canada into the future. The presentations, by several people under the age of 40, were ample evidence that this transition is already taking place. Through a series of exercises (including one which had all delegates standing in straight lines on the conference floor,

responding to 27 different requests to “step forward if”; you have a Facebook account; you have faced discrimination; and so on), facilitators Sonja Bergen and Alex Ramirez helped participants discover what will be needed in order to build better links between the generations. By recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of our own and the other generation, we can move towards greater understanding and each will emerge a winner.

Finding Home

Jessie Sutherland (below) from Vancouver, who founded and directs *Worldview Strategies*, conducted a brief reflection on the theme of one of her workshops, “Finding Home”. She used the exercise to explore what the different generations required in order to find a sense of belonging within the IofC network.



While many points were common to all generations, those in their sixties and older saw their contribution including such elements as: mentoring, sharing of values, being custodians of history and heritage. Those forty and younger stressed the importance of: being respected for their ideas and values, having their qualities and abilities recognized, being trusted on financial matters, being given space, being listened to and welcomed.

Among qualities that younger people brought to IofC, in the opinion of the older generation, were: a fresh approach, creativity and a high level of competence. Qualities and approaches that younger people brought, in their own opinion, included: overcoming fear of ‘the other’ and living well in cultural diversity.



Communities praying together

A hundred delegates gathered on Sunday morning, in a semi-circle, in the beautiful meeting hall, as Paule Charbonneau presided over an inter-religious celebration which she and Nathalie Roberge had planned. It began with a recording of “Ce pays” (This Land), a song of haunting beauty by the *Famille Myriam* Community. A single stroke of a small gong preceded each new prayer or reflection by representatives of the different faith groups. The presence of God the Creator, and the prayers being offered up, seemed as tangible as the smoke which rose gently and silently from the incense created specially for the occasion.



Paule Charbonneau



Zeke Reich



Rachid Raffa



Nathalie Roberge