

The Seeds of Change Exhibit Opens In Edmonton



“The Seeds of Change-The Earth Charter and Human Potential” exhibition, co-sponsored by the United Nations Association, Edmonton Branch, and SGI Canada, opened at Grant MacEwan College Campus, on February 10. In attendance for the ribbon cutting ceremony was the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Her Honour, Lois Hole; Edmonton City Councilor, Michael Phair; President of the United Nations Association Edmonton Branch, Mr. Chaldeans Mensah; and SGI Western Region Coordinator, Mr. Harry Miyazaki. The documentary film “The Quiet Revolution” and its message that “there is hope, and

it rests with individual people” to make positive changes in our world, set the tone for the remainder of the ceremonies.

On behalf of the City of Edmonton, Councilor Phair extended a message of congratulations to SGI Canada, “On Education for a Sustainable Future,” SGI’s 3rd exhibit in Edmonton, which was accepted by SGI Edmonton Area Coordinator, Paula Reich. The message said that the “SGI has a valuable role to play in promoting education for ecological integrity, social economic justice, as well as democracy, non violence, and peace.”

Next, Councilor Phair introduced Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois Hole. As keynote speaker she said, “As the Charter’s Preamble states: ‘To move forward, we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. It is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.’” Her Honour believes, “that the Earth Charter is one of the most important historical documents of the modern era, for it embodies principles that we must embrace if we hope to build a global society, one based on mutual trust, respect, and compassion.” As she continued, she spoke of what can be achieved through public education, public libraries, and the fine arts, and that so much human potential is lost, as people throughout the world struggle daily to survive.

Her heartfelt speech inspired everyone, and conveyed her personal commitment to education, and the role that it plays in changing the world. In conclusion she thanked “Dr. Daisaku Ikeda for his tireless promotion of peace, culture and education.. Dr. Ikeda’s warmth, humility, intelligence, and passion have shown thousands of people that a better world is possible, and that individual contributions can and do make a difference. They’ve planted many seeds of change, and I have no doubt that they will germinate, take root, and grow into something wonderful.”

The exhibit which continued to February 16th was then officially open for viewing and refreshments were served.

*Lorna Sutherland,
Edmonton*



General Director Tony Meers Visits Alberta Foothills



Photo caption: Ian Matheson, Sue Anderson, Judy Anderson-Hansen, Chris Eddy, Charles Hansen, Jack MacLeod, Tony Meers, Marie-Jöelle Driard, Daniel, Janet MacLeod, Steve Hansen.

On February 26, on the heels of some nasty weather, Tony Meers recently visited Calgary, Canmore, and Banff, Alberta. During the four-day visit Tony was able to meet in Calgary with Sharon Hamilton of the Gorbachev Foundation at the University of Calgary, Susan Coombes from Alberta Community Development, and friends from the United Nations Association of Canada Calgary Branch. Discussions centred on possible partnerships in the future. Two public lectures were held, one in Calgary and one in Canmore.

Canmore

Tony Meers arrived in Canmore on February 27, escorted by Chris Eddy and Ian Mattinson from Calgary. They visited with the members of Bow Valley district, Canmore mayor Glen Craig, and Ted Hart, the director of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

The day ended with a well-attended seminar at the CAAG Art Gallery in the Canmore Public Library that included 36 guests. Many people expressed interest in learning more about SGI.

The Bow Valley members were delighted with Tony's visit and with the unexpectedly good turnout for the seminar. This was the district's second successful community presentation.

Calgary

Calgary welcomed more newcomers to our community than ever before – nearly 100 guests in one month. The youth enjoyed their time with Tony and took advantage of the opportunity to ask questions and hear what other SGI Canada youth are up to across the country.

The highlight was the Sunday morning gathering at the SGI Canada Calgary Community Centre. The newly formed chorus, "Daimoku Divas and the Boys," wowed the crowd with their first public performance. Many new leadership appointments were announced, and two very moving experiences of the practice were shared.

Tony encouraged us to reflect on the Kansai model, where SGI President Ikeda worked side by side with everyone to achieve victory. Tony said President Ikeda trusted and believed in everyone's ability and had full confidence in the people. In this type of atmosphere, people are not afraid to speak up and be heard, because everyone feels like a stakeholder. The challenge, as Tony pointed out, is to make this organizational model the culture of our Canadian organization.

Our time with Tony went by all too quickly: there was so much to treasure and pray about. After his departure, we were buried under a fresh layer of snow and temperatures dropped back down to the minus teens, but with Tony's visit warming our spirits, spring definitely came early to the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

Steve Hansen and Chris Eddy, Calgary

SGI Canada Supports Classroom Connections

Classroom Connections is an organization which creates teaching materials available free of charge to teachers, school administrators and curriculum supervisors across Canada.

Having seen the film *A Quiet Revolution* and the “Seeds of Change” exhibition materials created by SGI and the Earth Council for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa in 2002, *Classroom Connections* expressed a strong desire to incorporate these materials into the upcoming second installment of their program, “Cultivating Peace in the 21st Century”, due for release in April this year. The first set of materials has been extensively used in high schools for Social Studies classes and has been highly praised by educators, students, the United Nations, and other organizations.

In addition to very widespread use in Canada, over 100 educational institutions and NGOs in other countries also requested the *Cultivating Peace* resources, from Afghanistan to the USA, China and India.

*... the root of
the interlocking crises
of our times
...will not be solved
without a
human transformation
—human revolution.
Education
is our best hope.*

Daisaku Ikeda,
President of Soka Gakkai International
Quote from “Cultivating Peace”

Ottawa’s 7th Soka Students Exchange

Twelve students from Soka University in Japan had dinner with the SGI Ottawa youth groups on February 27th. President Ikeda sent his regards to all who helped out with the event and treated them all for the meal. This was the 7th such exchange with Ottawa’s Carleton University. Later at the SGI Ottawa Centre, the members and students shared songs, dances and conversation in high spirits and gratitude for President Ikeda’s support.

Dwight Rudisuela, Ottawa

Peace Organizations Plan for the Future

On February 23, Carroll Holland, SGI Ottawa’s Bytown Chapter co-ordinator, participated in an evening of dialogue entitled “An Inclusive Vision of Peace.” Organized by the Ottawa chapter of the World Conference on Religion for Peace, the conference brought together 100 participants who shared ideas and put forth initiatives to further the peace agenda. Presenters included Alexa McDonough, MP (NDP Peace Advocate), Murray Thomson (Project Ploughshares) and Debbie Grisdale, Director of Physicians for Global Survival. Rabbi David Powell, the event facilitator, encouraged everyone to read Senator Douglas Roche’s book *The Human Right to Peace*. Penny Sanger (Education for Peace) said that the University of Ottawa has started teaching a component on peace education at the Faculty of Education. A new petition to abolish war was promoted and preparations for the Celebration of Global Peace were initiated. Sharing a strong sense of purpose to further peace in the world, the organizers promised to meet again soon for further dialogue.

Carroll Holland, Ottawa