



**Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPSC) Conference:
"Women Building Peace"
February 15 to 17, 2009, Saint Paul's University, 223
Main Street, Ottawa**



This conference followed from the very successful dinner hosted by the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative (CDPI) held in September, honoring the contribution of women to peace. The conference is developed in cooperation with the CDPI, Saint Paul University, the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (CICR), the Rideau Institute, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, and One World Inc. Organizers acknowledge, with appreciation, the PSAC Social Justice Fund contribution to the conference. Xxxinsert others

**Deborah Chansonneuve
February 17, 2009**

Biography:

Deborah Chansonneuve has over 25 years experience in gender equality and human rights issues. She served on the first violence against women advisory committees in two provinces and participated actively with the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, the national consultation on reproductive technologies and a provincial task force on pornography. Deborah initiated the first study on rural and remote abused women titled '*Cultivating Courage*' and has facilitated two national roundtables on the health of Aboriginal women and girls and the impact of violence. Drawing from the practical wisdom and teachings of Elders and frontline workers she has developed conflict resolution training programs that approach relationships constructively and creatively. Recently, she has worked with urban Inuit, Métis and First Nation youth in the Province of Ontario to produce culture-based peer education tools about equality and respect and a leadership training curriculum. These innovative materials can be seen online at www.loveyougive.org. She is an Honoured Fellow and former member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution. For the past 3 years she has assisted the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa in their cultural competency initiative to address the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in care. Deborah's specific interest is bridging the disconnect between policy making and frontline realities by promoting participatory community-based research as a vehicle for better outcomes in policy development. Deborah is an active member of Ottawa's urban Aboriginal community. She is the author of '*Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People* (2005) and '*Addictive Behaviours Among Aboriginal People in Canada* (2007) published by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Presentation:

The most sacred place in this territory are the Chaudiere Falls, and the message for that sacred place is to listen.

What we know is that prior to colonization there was gender equality and there is less now. It is interesting to read that after the Jesuits removed boys from home to educate them in the ways of civilization, they realized that they needed to educate the girls too, because ours was a matriarchal society.

It is important to know where we have come from. When you say that Canada has much to offer in peace, I hope you are saying that in terms of lessons learned from its very brutal tribal history.

1984/85 met with political leaders that charges about wife beating should be raised, with reasonable and probable grounds. In Nova Scotia, the position was that charges could only be laid after a beating had taken place. We asked, does that mean men get one free beating before charges are laid?

Public education as a way of trying to prevent violence: An RCMP officer tried to go out with me. He had no idea that his wife was one of our clients. So was the wife of the judge who was hearing the case. The judge's wife finally became strong enough to charge him and he was removed from the bench.

Regarding sexual orientation: Women are stopped at the border, strip searched, and sent back at the border for being lesbians. No corrective steps are taken.

Regarding aboriginal women: From 1988-1995, 32 women went missing on what became known as the Highway of Tears. There was no investigation. Then one white woman went missing, and there was a great hue and cry from media.

Regarding the struggle of women as a human right: It has been a long struggle to place the struggle of women into the context of human rights, as well as connecting grass roots violence internationally. Rape is only recently acknowledged as an act of war, as an act of genocide.

What we are still dealing with:

Women's Shelters: In Ottawa we have six shelters for women. They are all full, all the time. All the shelters everywhere are all full. The children of women who were previously in the shelters are coming in now

Women with disabilities: The record is dismal. Aboriginal women: The record is dismal. Youth in schools: Youth are bombarded with messages of violence and sexism like we

have never seen before. We need boys and girls to feel what gender respect feels like; not just to receive the negative messages.

Accreditation: We have done all this work around violence, human rights, without any formal accreditation. The question is, what will formal accreditation benefit? Who will that benefit? Until Amnesty International became involved, no other group came to us. There was a terrible stigma attached to our work. Studying psychology at the University of Waterloo, and looking into whether antidepressants might have something to do with violence, they looked at me as though I was biased. Having the field professionalized: When I look at what we have done without that, I really question the concept. Without a strong role for women, I am not optimistic.

What Canadians have to offer: Aboriginals did not get the vote in Canada till 1960. In the past, the Canadian system and reserves were studied by South Africa. It is important to teach this history. It is shameful that we don't know that. Girls were put into typing and home economics. Guys were put into shop or carpentry. Support jobs were advertised for women. Management for men.... It has been a long struggle around violence against women and we are not there yet. In Ottawa, 27% of the homeless are women. You would be shocked at the violence against them. The outreach workers know. The rest have no idea.

Barriers to leadership:

Gender: I hear comments like: "She only works with women. Oh well, I'm not a feminist. I'm for human rights." The Status of Women has been decimated. Women's funding has been gutted. Yet there is no hue and cry from human rights groups. Aboriginal treaties are not passed. They have lost their lands. I am very concerned about the downsizing of the health system, about the reduction of social services. The cost to women is phenomenal. I do so much work with front line workers. They are very concerned about the disconnect between policy and participatory outreach.

Child protection: There is strong child protection. Unfortunately it comes with over-surveillance of aboriginal people. In a situation where a parent is involved with addiction, when identified, they apprehend the children; or, if you don't have children, you lose your housing, you have no address, and without an address you lose your job, you have no income. Then comes prostitution, and the violence is unbelievable.

How to lower violence: Therefore, how do we change the conditions that promote conditions to lower violence? Have addiction treatment centres for women. There are now more children in Children's Aid: 1 in 10 of them are Aboriginal, as opposed to 1 in 200 for the rest of the population.

We need women to do something about that. There is a direct relationship between policy that was not well thought out and the violence and death of women. We need to expand the notion of human rights; what we are asking the women. We need to talk to

key informants and then bring women together. We've been saying this for 25 years. What we need now is some action.

Regarding The Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPS): The outcomes of what you are trying to do here through the CPSC. Do all the partners to that discussion have a gender analysis perspective? We need to situate gender in the mandate; in the objective; in the issues; also, how to engage youth; how to include both in the CPSC notion of accreditation. Our youth are not being challenged. So they are finding ways to challenge themselves. Use rap and hip hop as a way of giving them a message. Open up our minds. Open up. Get more creative.