



## CRIC – President’s Annual Report – 2016

This is my first annual report as our president. As I write this CBC is reporting on a study that was released in the province of Quebec which states that, contrary to popular belief, and contrary to the expected outcome, religious people, that is people who are devout, are more likely to be resilient in the face of life crisis, and less likely to be involved in radicalization. (CBC on October 26<sup>th</sup>.) To those of us who are members of CRIC this will come as no surprise. We know that our religious faith is a source of strength and peace in the face of life’s sometimes traumatic realities. We also know that at the centre of most of our faiths is the call to be a people who live, we might even say ‘wage’ peace. The problem is that many in our society have come to be suspicious of religious people and the religious systems of which they are a part. Karen Armstrong comments in her book “fields of blood” that our religious systems have become convenient scape goats for our culture. This means that in expressing and explaining ourselves, we have a long and uphill road ahead of us and much work to do. It also means that the more we can be present for good in the public arena the better our chances of reversing this common misperception.

Because of this the work of this year’s annual general meeting is very important. Last year we set about reviewing our mission and objectives. We did this for several reasons: First, every organization should do this from time to time in order to be sure that they are still on track, and that the wordings of the mission and objectives (defining legal documents for the status of an organization) are still relevant to the circumstances in which the organization dwells. In the meeting last spring where we undertook this review we found some important things.

1. The wording of our mission statement is not the unifying statement it was intended to be at our inception.
2. At least three of our faith groups, do not necessarily hold as central the belief in a supreme creator, or indeed a supreme being of any sort. They are still major world religions and still have an important voice in interfaith dialogue.

How do we articulate our mission in a way which is faithful to our intent, and inclusive of these major groups but, which does not raise a stumbling block for other of our members? The reworking of our mission and objectives in the two drafts below is for conversation to help us to work this question through. I look forward to the suggestions and ideas of others. (Unfortunately, our sub-committee on mission was unable to arrange meetings. In consultation with the notes from the original consultation meeting, and through a few email dialogues I cobbled the proposed drafts together.)

The second thing we noticed after reviewing our objectives is that while we have been engaged in interfaith dialogue on common topics this work has not been made available to the public. This was due in part to our inability to update and make use of our web page. As a result, while our conversations are interesting and informative we were not living up to objectives 3 and 4. I am deeply grateful to Frances for getting this started again with a new and revised Web page. If you have not taken a look at it please do as it is a good start to returning to our objectives to be a resource for people curious about world religions. This opens up other opportunities to live up to objectives 3 and 4 as well. We discussed running events to promote awareness and dialogue, and engaging with other searching groups in order to exchange learnings.

The third area of conversation is based around objectives 2 and 5: “To foster action on common interests and concerns; and “To support and develop interfaith activities, including work for peace, justice, and care or the planet earth.” respectively. Our cleaning the capital represents our most successful effort toward these objectives. Taking action to give voice to protests against defamation of one another’s faiths has been

more difficult. In my experience, when we have tried to find some level of solidarity on a point of justice or peace work, we have backed away when there is a dissenting voice among us. This has on at least one occasion been accompanied by threats to resign membership. This behaviour is deeply unfortunate, because some amount of action and some degree of solidarity on difficult social issues is one of the voices the world needs, and it is one of the things our youth look to as a sign of whether we walk the talk.

I would like to suggest that when an issue comes before us, we do the best we can to get solidarity on it. If there is not a general consensus, allow the majority to sign off on a document with a phrase such as “this motion/policy/action is supported by the undersigned of the Capital Region Interfaith Council, followed by the signatures of the supporting traditions. It feels to me to be disrespectful of our mission, objectives, code of conduct and bylaws for one or two groups to silence the majority in an action the majority feel moved to undertake. We discussed this earlier this year. I would like to invite us to continue this reflection and conversation to seek a policy we can all support.

As we head into the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Country, with all of the attendant celebrations which will surround us, I pray that our voice may be a useful part of the conversations which shape the future of our country. I commend to you the work Frances has taken on of arranging a larger and more involved ‘Joy of Faith’ celebration to mark this occasion and I give thanks for her diligent work, support and friendship as our vice president this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

John Wilker-Blakley  
President

## **Original CRIC Mission and Objectives**

### **The Mission**

To enhance awareness of the existence in Canada of the many faiths which are based on the supremacy of the Creator, and to encourage within these faiths and others the development of a living and dynamic expression of our pluralistic spiritual community.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide a forum for a dialogue among the faith communities to enhance mutual understanding.
2. To foster action on common interests and concerns.
3. To develop respect for and understanding of religious practices of all faiths.
4. To act as a referral resource for matters related to religious issues.
5. To support and develop interfaith activities, including work for peace, justice, and care for the planet earth.
6. To pursue the mission of enhancing awareness of the existence in Canada of the many faiths which are based on the supremacy of the Creator, and to encourage within these faiths and others the development of a living and dynamic expression of our pluralistic spiritual community.

## **Draft-1 Proposed Mission and Objectives**

### **The Mission**

To enhance awareness of the existence, in the National Capital Region, of the many faiths which are based on the belief in a single Supreme Being, and to encourage within these faiths and others the development of a living and dynamic expression of our pluralistic spiritual community.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide a forum for a dialogue among the faith communities to enhance mutual understanding.
2. To foster action on common interests and concerns.
3. To develop respect for and understanding of religious practices of all faiths.
4. To act as a referral resource for matters related to religious issues.
5. To support and develop interfaith activities, including work for peace, justice, and care for the planet earth.
6. To develop ways and means to fulfill our mission

## **Draft-2 Proposed Mission and Objectives**

### **The Mission**

To enhance awareness of the existence, in the National Capital Region, of many faith traditions, and to encourage within these faiths and others the development of a living and dynamic expression of our pluralistic spiritual community.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide a forum for a dialogue among the faith communities to enhance mutual understanding.
2. To foster action on common interests and concerns.
3. To develop respect for and understanding of religious practices of all faiths.
4. To act as a referral resource for matters related to religious issues.
5. To support and develop interfaith activities, including work for peace, justice, and care for the planet earth.
6. To develop ways and means to fulfill our mission.