BAHÁ'Í CANADA



A youth's representation of a group of friends at a regional camp.

Insights into creating an environment of mutual support

FALL 2014, SPEECH • 171 B.E.
VOL. 27, NO. 1
PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT No. 40050758

From the Writings and guidance

"O servant of God! Turn thou away from the stranger, that thou mayest recognize the Friend. He indeed is a stranger who leadeth you away from the Friend." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity,* p. 72)

"Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship."

(Bahá'u'lláh, qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 65)

"…when any souls grow to be true believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this world. They will, all of them, become elated from a draught of divine love, and that union of theirs, that connection, will also abide forever. Souls, that is, who will consign their own selves to oblivion, strip from themselves the defects of humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage, will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splendours of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the world that dieth not." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 84, pp. 117-118)

"If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid."

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 39, p. 81)

". . . In accordance with the divine teachings in this glorious dispensation we should not belittle anyone and call him ignorant, saying: "You know not, but I know." Rather, we should look upon others with respect, and when attempting to explain and demonstrate, we should speak as if we are investigating the truth, saying: "Here these things are before us. Let us investigate to determine where and in what form the truth can be found." The teacher should not consider himself as learned and others ignorant. Such a thought breedeth pride, and pride is not conducive to influence. The teacher should not see in himself any superiority; he should speak with the utmost kindliness, lowliness and humility, for such speech exerteth influence and educateth the souls." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 15, p. 30)

"That the Bahá'í world has succeeded in developing a culture which promotes a way of thinking, studying, and acting, in which all consider themselves as treading a common path of service – supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of the knowledge that each one possesses at any given moment and avoiding the tendency to divide the believers into categories such as deepened and uninformed – is an accomplishment of enormous proportions." (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

"Learning as a mode of operation requires that all assume a posture of humility, a condition in which one becomes forgetful of self, placing complete trust in God, reliant on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing assistance, knowing that He, and He alone, can change the gnat into an eagle, the drop into a boundless sea. And in such a state souls labour together ceaselessly, delighting not so much in their own accomplishments but in the progress and services of others. So it is that their thoughts are centred at all times on helping one another scale the heights of service to His Cause and soar in the heaven of His knowledge. This is what we see in the present pattern of activity unfolding across the globe, propagated by young and old, by veteran and newly enrolled, working side by side." (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

"To follow a path of service, whatever form one's activity assumes, requires faith and tenacity. In this connection, the benefit of walking that path in the company of others is immense. Loving fellowship, mutual encouragement, and willingness to learn together are natural properties of any group of youth sincerely striving for the same ends, and should also characterize those essential relationships that bind together the components of society." (The Universal House of Justice to the participants in the 114 youth conferences around the world, 1 July 2013)

"In more and more clusters, the programme of growth is increasing in scope and complexity, commensurate with the rising capacity of the Plan's three protagonists – the individual, the community, and the institutions of the Faith – to create a mutually supportive environment." (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2014)

November 2014
Speech 171 B.E.
Vol. 27, No. 1
Published for the Bahá'ís of Canada

INSIDE BAHÁ'Í CANADA

ON THE COVER



This drawing by Adrian Brulé of Val-D'Or, in Abitibi, Que., is of 20 youth between the ages of 14 to 16 who studied the junior youth text *Power of the Holy Spirit* during a regional camp in Quebec in January.

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Publications Mail Agreement
No. 40050758

ISSN 1199-1682

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
Records Department
7200 Leslie St., Thornhill On L3T 6L8
email: records@cdnbnc.org

Bahá'í Canada is published 3 times a year - April /May/June/July, August/September/October/November, December/January/February/March - by the
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada
7200 Leslie Street
Thornhill, ON L3T 6L8
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Mutual support and assistance: A community in a learning mode

There has been a delay in publishing this hard copy edition of *Bahá'í Canada*, while a more dynamic online version has been taking shape. It is our hope that the combination of these two forms will allow quick access to news, including messages of the Universal House of Justice, and also provide a more leisurely opportunity to read a magazine focused on certain themes. This issue is devoted to a subject that has not only been a thread throughout messages of the Universal House of Justice in recent years, but was also studied in depth at the youth conferences in 2013, and again this year – fostering mutual support and assistance.

In the section dedicated to this theme, the youth conference materials provided by the Bahá'í World Centre last year state: "To counteract the powerful social forces that threaten to sap their powers and distort their purpose, youth can rely on God's unfailing assistance. They also have to enhance the ability to create an atmosphere of mutual support and assistance among themselves and in their communities in which their powers to transform society are multiplied." In an imaginary conversation, three friends – Rayen, Sanjiv and Caroline – discuss the notion of walking a path of service together:

> But Rayen, we also have to be careful that it is not just about a few very good friends serving together but also inspiring and inviting those not yet on the path to join us," says Caroline. "If Sanjiv had not invited me, I would not be here. There are many youth out there who really want to contribute to society, but they do not know how. We have to learn to form true and lasting friendships with others who also want to better society.

This summer, over 1,600 youth attended the 10 youth conferences in Canada, with over 30 percent coming from the wider community. To look out at the participants during the plenary sessions was to rejoice in the diversity represented – a true sign of the increase in capacity to open wide the doors of welcome. Each conference had its story, built on what was achieved last year. Of special note was the increase in youth of Aboriginal backgrounds: 13 participants from Nunavut attended the Toronto conference, joining in planning how they would serve their communities upon their return. Two conferences – Victoria and Saskatoon – were held in First Nations facilities and along with other conferences attracted an unprecedented number of youth of Aboriginal backgrounds.

As the House of Justice noted in its 5 December 2013 message, these victories were not those of youth alone: "And while we acknowledge that the youth are at the forefront of this advance, its distinguishing feature is that the community rose as one to support, encourage, and champion this phenomenon, and now rejoices to see itself progress as an interdependent, organic whole, readier to meet the imperatives of this day."

Teaching projects, institute campaigns and summer schools across the country radiated the same spirit of loving welcome and earnest attention to fostering an environment of mutual support and assistance. In one community, the increase in the attendance and diversity of participants in the Nineteen Day Feast was thus described: "The quality of consultation was rich, a spirit of community reigned, and truly, it was a transformed gathering compared to two short springs ago!"

This progress has come through conscious effort to identify and practise elements that lead to mutual support and true friendship: building on strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses, encouraging rather than criticizing, collaborating instead of acting alone or competing, including rather than excluding. The daily discipline and effort these practices require is bearing wonderful fruit among young and old in communities large and small, as together they learn new patterns of life.

It is certain, too, that the prayers promised by the House of Justice in its 2014 Ridván message surround these efforts and increase their power:

> So much in the Writings of our Faith describes the relationship between effort exerted and the heavenly aid vouchsafed in response: "If only ye exert the effort," is the Master's reassurance in one of His Tablets, "it is certain that these splendours will shine out, these clouds of mercy will shed down their rain, these life-giving winds will rise and blow, this sweet-smelling musk will be scattered far and wide." In our frequent visits to the Holy Shrines, we earnestly entreat the Almighty on your behalf that He may sustain and strengthen you, that your endeavours to reach out to those yet unacquainted with the divine teachings and confirm them in His Cause may be richly blessed, and that your reliance on His limitless favours may be unwavering."

With abiding love,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF CANADA

Editorial note

There have been significant changes this past year for *Bahá'í Canada* which include the launching of a new website and a new print publication. The website <bahaicanada.bahai.ca>, was launched in March 2014 to facilitate the more timely flow of news and guidance. Previously, the print publication was published six times per year and the magazine focused on news of the development of the Faith in Canada. It will now be published two to three times per year and will explore in greater depth and breadth specific themes that are relevant to the progress of the Five Year Plan in Canada. It is envisioned that the publication will be shared with both members of the Bahá'í community as well as friends participating in community building efforts across the country.

As mentioned in the National Spiritual Assembly message, this issue of *Bahá'í Canada* focuses on the theme of "creating an environment of mutual support and assistance." People of all ages and backgrounds across the country are participating in a conversation about how to support each other and expand "the circle of intimate friends"[1] working together for the betterment of the world.

The context for the exploration of this theme is the field of service. When an individual arises to serve God, he or she needs to learn to rely on God's unfailing assistance, as well as on others for support. Serving together gives us courage. We also rely on the support of our friends in other areas of life, as touched on by some of the accounts in this issue.

Unity is an important element of creating an environment of mutual support and assistance. This means that we are united in our objective and that we move in the same direction, while still appreciating that the path of service "accommodates different paces and strides."[2] Some of the stories in this issue discuss how friends with different talents and capacities can work together and support each other.

Mutual support and assistance should not only characterize relationships between individuals, but also those with communities and institutions. Some stories look at mutual support and assistance in the context of a community, and others at how it enriches relationships between individuals and institutions. We are also pleased to include an article on the law of Huqúqu'lláh, the Right of God, which is a means of fostering unity and justice among the peoples of the world.

Many of the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith shed light on fostering mutual support and assistance, and many accounts in the history of the Faith describe friendships founded on the love of God that allowed individuals to achieve together what they never would have been able to accomplish alone.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of *Bahá'í Canada* and we look forward to hearing from you at: <bcanada@cdnbnc.org>.

1 'Abdu'l-Bahá, A Compilation on Bahá'í Education, #97.
2 Universal House of Justice, 12 December 2011.

Upcoming issue

The theme for the next issue of the publication will be "strengthening the devotional character of a community." If you wish to submit content connected to this theme, which include news, stories, pictures and reflections, please email *Bahá'í Canada* at <bcanada@cdnbnc.org>.

Bahá'í Canada survey

We are excited to announce that it has been more than half a year since the launch of the *Bahá'í Canada* website.

Thanks to your interaction with it, experience has been gained about this method of news delivery. To continue to learn and help us enhance our online presence, you are lovingly encouraged to participate in a survey that can be accessed via the following web address. https://bahaicanada.bahai.ca/bahai-canada-survey/

Please note, that to access the survey, you must be registered for the *Bahá'í Canada* website. To do this, you will need to provide your Bahá'í ID number as well as your name as it appears on your Bahá'í ID card. If you need assistance registering, please do not hesitate to contact *Bahá'í Canada* at <bcanada@cdnbnc.org> or by phone at 905-889-8168.

The Right of God: Promoting cooperation

Huqúqu'lláh, which translates as "the Right of God", is a law that Bahá'ís are enjoined upon to observe – one whose implications for the individual and society cannot be exhaustively delineated. This is a brief exploration of this mighty law, and how it promotes a spirit of reciprocity and contributes to the progress and prosperity of humankind.

This sacred law requires everyone "to render payment unto God of a specific portion of their material assets"[1] thereby enabling "each one to express his or her personal sense of devotion to God in a profoundly private act of conscience that promotes the common good, which directly connects the individual believer with the Central Institution of the Faith, and which, above all, ensures to the obedient and the sincere the ineffable grace and abundant blessings of Providence."[2] The Right of God is an evolutionary process that will, "in the centuries ahead, give rise to a transformation of society far beyond our present capacity to comprehend,"[3] providing as it will the "material resources essential for the advancement of the human race."[4]

The Bahá'í Writings remind us that spiritual development does not exist unsupported: "the progress and promotion of the Cause of God depend on material means."[5] Observance of the law of huqúqu'lláh, by "placing funds at the disposal of the Universal House of Justice", allows "the transfer of material resources in ways that promote the welfare of society."[6] The Universal House of Justice assures us that "during the course of this Dispensation," the Right of God will "contribute to the spiritualization of humanity through the promotion of a new attitude to the acquisition and use of material resources."[7]

A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, states that ". . . it should be acknowledged plainly that poverty cannot be alleviated without a just distribution of material wealth among the peoples of the world."[8]

It goes on to state that "the institution of huqúqu'lláh provides a powerful means for fostering the prosperity of humankind. As they observe the law of huqúqu'lláh, which requires them to offer a percentage of their excess wealth, Bahá'ís across the globe understand that, by placing funds at the disposal of the Universal House of Justice, they are facilitating the transfer of material resources in ways that promote the welfare of society. At this point, the amounts available fall far short of the needs of the vast regions of the planet that lack the requisite financial means. Nevertheless, the observance of this law makes it possible for the House of Justice to provide funds to development projects under way in all continents."[9]

***

When reflecting on the condition of modern society, it is clear that a fundamental problem is the unjust distribution of wealth—a small percentage exercises power over the majority of the world's material wealth and resources.

The peoples of the planet comprise one "great human family."[10] 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes clear that, unless family members who live in comfort are "senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, [and] unkind,"[11] the current economic extremes would not exist. These extremes make it "impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God"[12] because they are "contrary to justice, to humanity, to equity. . . [and] the opposite to what causes divine satisfaction."[13] 'Abdu'l-Bahá specifies that such "utter indifference in the human family is due to lack of control, to lack of a working law, to lack of kindness in its midst."[14] He also states that the "supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity."[15] These attitudes are the basic principles upon which huqúqu'lláh is based and without them, "the individual member of human society remains self-centred, uninspired by altruistic purposes, limited and solitary in development like the animal and plant organisms of the lower kingdom."[16] Like all Divine religions, the Baha'i Faith and its laws, are "intended to be the means of true human cooperation . . . united in the purpose of making humanity one family."[17]

". . . Every true and sincere believer will offer huqúq to be expended for the relief of the poor, the disabled, the needy, and the orphans, and for other vital needs of the Cause of God, even as Christ did establish a Fund for benevolent purposes."[18]

1 Universal House of Justice, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #97.
2 Universal House of Justice, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #28.
3 Universal House of Justice, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #99.
4 Universal House of Justice, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #97.
5 Bahá'u'lláh, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #4.
6 "Social Action." A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.
7 Universal House of Justice, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #31.
8 "Social Action." A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.
9 "Social Action." A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.
10 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 230.
11 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 39.
12 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41.
13 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 280.
14 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 39.
15 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 338.
16 'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 338.
17 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 338.
18 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Huqúqu'lláh - The Right of God*, c. 2007, #26.

Stories of mutual support and assistance from history of the Bahá'í Faith

The loving environment fostered by the early Bahá'ís in Paris

The following is a description of the loving environment created among the members of the Bahá'í community in Paris from 1899 to 1902, written by May Maxwell, an early Western believer who was instrumental to the development of the Cause in Canada. More than 25 people embraced the infant Faith during those years, and many went on to the serve the Cause with distinction.



From the day that this beautiful spiritual child received the Message we loved one another with a love that surpassed all earthly attachments and lifted us both into the realm of God. When we met it was perfect joy, sweetness, and harmony – and thro' the years this bond has never been clouded or broken. This love became the nucleus of the Cause in Paris – for as each beloved soul entered the light this love enveloped them until all of our little group of believers found shelter, strength, and life in this wonderful, all-compassing love of God.

We were like children in the Truth – we lived in it – thought of it by day – dreamed of it by night, and loved it with an intensity that really belongs to little children.

When we met we were so happy, so joyous – our hearts seemed to rush together – our faces shone – we smiled and laughed – and beneath it all was a deep tremor of such love for the Master – such adoration of Bahá'u'lláh – such profound earnestness and devotion that I thrill and tremble as I write of it. The atmosphere of love was the very breath of our existence and we almost unconsciously guarded it jealously. If one of the believers became disturbed or displeased we exerted our utmost endeavour to dispel the shadow, and as I look back to those most wonderful and blessed years, I realize that we sacrificed everything to this end – no sacrifice of our personal wishes, feelings, habits or opinions was too great to make to enable us to live and to breathe only in that atmosphere of love . . . . Our egos were laid on the altar of sacrifice in order to maintain this burning fire of love.

Those were the early days of the Cause, and we had so few Utterances and Tablets translated – but we lived on these – they were our food, our life – and at the meetings we read them over, gaining ever deeper insight and understanding of their unfathomable meanings and significances. A Tablet from Acca was like a new Springtime in our midst – quickening and strengthening us with our ever-unfolding spiritual life . . . .[1]

The self-renunciation of the early believers of Iran

This excerpt describes the atmosphere among a group of early Bahá'ís of Iran whose hearts were emptied of everything but the love of God:

"Many a night," continues Nabíl, depicting the lives of those self-oblivious companions, "no less than ten persons subsisted on no more than a pennyworth of dates. No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the cloaks, or the robes that were to be found in their houses. Whoever went to the bazaar could claim that the shoes upon his feet were his own, and each one who entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh could affirm that the cloak and robe he then wore belonged to him. Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were emptied of aught else except adoration for their Beloved . . . O, for the joy of those days, and the gladness and wonder of those hours!"[2]

A friendship based on love of God: the relationship between Mullá Husayn and Quddús

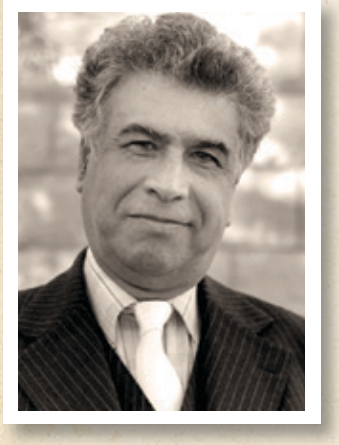
This description of the relationship between Mullá Husayn and Quddús – two of the Letters of the Living – the first 19 followers of the Báb – provides insight into the nature of true friendship and how different talents and capacities can be harmonized in unified action.

"Upon his arrival in that city [Barfurúsh], Mullá Husayn went directly to the home of Quddús and was affectionately received by him. Quddús himself waited upon his guest, and did his utmost to provide

whatever seemed necessary for his comfort. With his own hands he removed the dust, and washed the blistered skin of his feet. He offered him the seat of honour in the company of his assembled friends, and introduced, with extreme reverence, each of the believers who had gathered to meet him. . . . "[3]

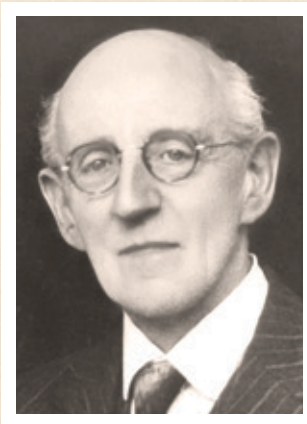
The all-observing vigilance with which Mullá Husayn laboured to diffuse the knowledge of the new Revelation and the masterly manner in which Quddús edified its ever-increasing adherents, gave rise to a wave of enthusiasm which swept over the entire city of Mashhad, and the effects of which spread rapidly beyond the confines of Khurásan. The house of Bábíyyih was soon converted into a rallying centre for a multitude of devotees who were fired with an inflexible resolve to demonstrate, by every means in their power, the great inherent energies of their Faith.[4]

Adib Taherzadeh and George Townshend: A friendship that transcended culture and age



Adib Taherzadeh, former member of the Universal House of Justice and author of many books on the history of the Faith, describes his friendship with George Townshend, a Hand of the Cause of God. During the time of his account, Mr. Taherzadeh was a young man who had recently arrived from Iran, and Mr. Townshend was an elderly Irishman who had become a Bahá'í after serving as an Anglican Church minister for many years. Mr. Townshend, out of his respect for the sacrifices of his wife, who had supported his desire to become a Bahá'í, and his decision to leave his profession and means of livelihood, tried to help out as much as possible with the household chores and to be careful about how much time he spent with the Bahá'í community, lest his wife feel neglected. However, he found that the spiritual companionship offered by Mr. Taherzadeh was irresistible.

I remember the day we arrived and the boat docked in Dublin very early in the morning. The tall figure of George Townshend, distinguished in his black suit and a very nice hat and one could see a man of great character, standing there ready with his car, to drive us to our boarding house which he had himself booked for us, and he was so delighted I can see his face now, the great joy to see somebody coming with whom he could have some Bahá'í companionship. This was the whole essence of that meeting because he really was radiant with joy. . . . He took me to see his wife and family and from then on he took a very special interest in our affairs. He used to come every day to see whether we were all right at the guest house, and we quickly formed a very wonderful Bahá'í companionship . . . .



George used to bring out all sort of papers and letters, and his writings and we would discuss them . . . So when at the end of the evening I was going to catch the bus to go home, he would insist, whether it was raining or whether it was not, and whether it was cold or warm, on accompanying me all the way to the bus stop, which was quite a distance away. And quite often his wife did not want him to go out, but he insisted that he wanted to accompany me and he would then quietly say, "I love this Bahá'í companionship. Let me come with you." He even made me sometimes ask him to come with me because he wanted to get out and come to the bus stop. And sometimes I would miss the bus and he would stand there for maybe half an hour till the next one came. He wouldn't go home and we would talk 'Bahá'í.' He was filled with such love for the Faith.

When he became handicapped and couldn't come to town to meet me so often, he would ask me to drop in in the evenings, and if I didn't turn up one night, the next day he would pick up the telephone, quietly when there was nobody around, and ring me up in the office, and all I could hear from the other side was this: "Come tonight," and he would put the telephone down! And of course I would go there and he would say "Don't say that I telephoned you."[5]

1 Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal*, p. 95-96.
2 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 137.
3 *The Dawnbreakers*, p. 261-262.
4 Ibid, p. 267.
5 David Hofman, *George Townshend*, p. 337-399.

"One thing that I absolutely love about these conferences is that . . . you have all of these feelings inside of you, all of these thoughts . . . and you go to these conferences and you meet all these like-minded people, and everybody is bouncing ideas off each other and the energy is vibrant and everything is amplified between you and all of these people and it's magnificent, because there's nowhere that that many people with that kind of thinking all come together to create something special like that."

– Ottawa youth conference participant, from Kingston



A small group session at the Calgary, Alta. youth conference, held in July. Photo: Dacia Caney



Participants at the Ottawa, Ont. youth conference, held in August. Photo: Louis Brunet



A regional junior youth camp in Quebec, held in January.



Presenting a map of their area created collectively at the Halifax, N.S. youth conference. Photo: Anthony Power



Youth play a game at the Maritime Bahá'í seasonal school during a break.



Montreal, Que. youth conference participants.



A community gathering hosted by youth and junior youth from a neighbourhood in south east Victoria, B.C.



Ottawa, Ont. participants during a large group session at Ottawa youth conference. Photo: Louis Brunet

Stories about mutual support from across Canada

Mutual support in a study circle

This is an account of Janice Mackintosh, a participant in a group that studied Book 1 – Reflections on the Life of the Spirit *– in Toronto. She describes the spiritual journey that led to her participation in the study circle and discusses how the members of the group support each other; for example, how each group member shares in the pleasure and sense of accomplishment enjoyed by the person who memorizes a passage from the Bahá'í writings.*

> *"We need to learn as a group to serve, not alone. It is very easy to break one twig, but very difficult to break many twigs. There is a difference between one drop, and many drops which can become a pool, a river or a mighty sea."*
>
> *– Calgary youth conference participant*

May I introduce myself? I was baptized in the Protestant faith and from an early age, I attended Sunday school, where we studied stories from the Bible. I formally joined the Protestant church when I turned 13. As I grew older, I attended university, became submerged in my professional career and my family life, and I drifted away from the Protestant faith and religious thought.

As my children matured and became more independent, I had more time to think about my multiple roles and responsibilities as a manager and colleague in my workplace, as a friend to my neighbours, and as a support to relatives and friends who were coping with illness or times of sorrow and loss. In these situations I would sometimes feel uncertain about how best to comfort them or contribute to their wellbeing. When I encountered heartbreaking sorrow of my own, despite my friends' best efforts to comfort me, I felt very much alone and found it difficult to carry on. I realized that there was no spirituality in my life, and for the first time in many years, I thought about God and wished I knew how to better understand His Divine Wisdom. I live near the Bahá'í Centre in downtown Toronto and decided to drop in to learn more about it. Today, I



Maritime Bahá'í seasonal school participants during a breakout session.

feel very fortunate to have become a member of a Bahá'í study group that meets once a week, at our various homes, to study Book 1 together.

Our meetings often begin with members who volunteer to recite a passage or prayer from the Bahá'í writings that they have memorized. The whole group shares in the pleasure and sense of accomplishment enjoyed by the person who recites the passage. From time to time, a member may ask the group to send their thoughts and prayers on behalf of a friend or family member who is struggling in life. The members of the group take time to formulate a silent prayer and some may offer a prayer aloud, on behalf of the friend or family member.

The group then moves on to our Ruhi workbook and each member takes a turn reading a passage from the Bahá'í Writings aloud. Our group has found that reading the Bahá'í Writings aloud assists the group members to better understand the basic meaning of the words and sentences of the passage. There may be discussion concerning the meaning of the passage but the group generally reaches a shared consensus. The group discussion then considers how the passage applies to our everyday lives and to our society as a whole.

As a result of our study together, the group members have developed strong bonds of friendship, respect, and mutual concern for one another's wellbeing. We reach out to offer our support and assistance. In this small way, we contribute to the betterment of the world "through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct."[1]

– Janice Mackintosh

1 Bahá'u'lláh qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 24-25

"We need to learn to draw thousands into the conversation, onto the path. People will progress at different paces and strides, but that doesn't matter, the path just needs to become more open, enriched by more people. Everyone can contribute to the building of a new civilization."

– Calgary youth conference participant



A youth reads a story to children at the Saskatchewan summer school.

Travelling to other cities to assist friends in their service

The series of 114 youth conferences – welcoming a broad array of participants including high school students, young professionals, and married couples – galvanized thousands of souls to dedicate themselves to the betterment of society. The study materials prepared for these historic gatherings explored themes such as the development of a culture of mutual support and the contribution that each person can make to the advancement of civilization. The desire sparked in many attendees to return home and serve their communities was supported by teams of travelling teachers.

A young indigenous Innu couple, who have a baby, have been actively serving the Faith in the Innu community of Uashat, in the Côte Nord cluster in Quebec. Some years ago, the husband completed some institute courses, including Ruhi Book 5. He attended the Montreal youth conference, which had a profound effect on him. There, he made many new friends, including those from remote places in northern Canada and young Bahá'ís serving in Montreal.

The husband made plans at the conference to start a junior youth group in his own community and had the support of friends he met in Montreal. He spent time in Montreal after the conference assisting with a junior youth group there. A few months later, a team of two friends went to visit him and his family. Together they started the first junior youth group in Uashat with 5 Innu participants.

In January, the two friends from Montreal, along with an Auxiliary Board member, visited the community again for several days. During one of many home visits, someone expressed the desire to start a devotional meeting. A few community gatherings took place–one with 20 people–and the community felt a sense of commitment to support the junior youth group. The Colombia segment of the film Frontiers of Learning was shown, and the friends shared some quiet and profound reflections after watching it.

During the team's time there, many spoke of hope for their children and junior youth, and some gave support to the group in a variety of ways. The team from Montreal is prepared to make monthly visits to Uashat, staying for a week each time to support their friends in efforts to create an environment where all can become active agents of their own learning. The friends in Uashat feel that the new junior youth group is a ray of light. More recently, a children's class has started. The cluster is making its way towards the first milestone. There is now a trained Innu animator of the junior youth group who is well known and widely respected by the wider community of Uashat.

– *Reflections on Growth*, No. 32, August 2014

"This has been the very first teaching project I have had the blessing to be a part of. Something that has really touched my heart throughout this project is the unity amongst the participants, a feeling of unity I have recently had the bounty of experiencing a few weeks ago at the Victoria conference. Despite the difference of experience and age amongst the friends at this project, similarly at the conference, it is the love we share for our Creator and our desire to serve that binds us together both spiritually and intellectually. The joy, laughter and confirmations experienced throughout these past few days, along with a love for service we share is what has kept me motivated and will continue to do so, not just in the concluding days of this project, but in the service I will contribute to my own community as well as in many other aspects of my life."

– Victoria teaching project participant, Nanaimo, B.C.

A group of mothers strengthen their friendship through service

This story describes how a group of mothers in Vancouver, B.C. are strengthening their friendship by studying and serving together.

In my neighbourhood, there is a group of mothers who, although only recently introduced to vision of Bahá'u'lláh, are now actively trying to translate His vision into reality. There is one mother in particular who has been gradually taking ownership of expanding the children's class and planning community gatherings. I first met this mother through her daughter. Her daughter was with some of her friends, singing some of their favourite songs, so we began a conversation about the lyrics. We talked about true friendship and wrote our own song about what makes a great friend.

After sharing that I was helping form a group in the neighbourhood for children her age and inviting them to participate, I asked her for her mom's phone number. I was nervous, but said prayers and soon made the call. I shared that we were forming a group for children, emphasizing empowerment and spiritual education. She was interested in hearing more and so we planned for her to come to my house for a visit. During that visit, we continued the conversation and [looked at a children's class lesson and] also spoke of the role of prayer, which caused her to reflect on the habits she would like to establish in her family. Through becoming friends with this mother, I met more children and families in the neighbourhood. We began having regular gatherings at my home, gatherings that began with food and uplifting conversation and naturally became a regular devotional gathering. The first time they came to my home, we spoke of true friendship and the material and spiritual needs of the area, and this conversation gave shape to our friendship and activities together. While this began to unfold, the children's class had its first lesson.

While our regular devotional meeting stopped, a study circle began with the mother and her friends. The participants are close to finishing Book 1 and are consulting on how they can begin a regular devotional gathering.

Through becoming involved in each others' lives during the children's class, study circle, and various other times during the week, I have become a closer friend to these mothers and have been able to see what their talents and strengths are. Gradually capacity has been built and the moms have taken more ownership of the activities. They are now actively involved in making plans for expansion, such as planning for an upcoming community gathering and consulting on how to expand the children's class.

– *Learning and Growth in Vancouver* [Newsletter]



A group of junior youth in Vancouver, B.C. show art inspired by concepts from the junior youth text *Breezes of Confirmation*.



Children in Central Okanagan, B.C., learn to play songs from Book 3: Grade 1.



A children's class in Ottawa, Ont.

Intergenerational collaboration in the Maizerets neighbourhood

This account, written by Sophie Turbide of Quebec City, Que. describes how mutual support, collaboration, and consultation among different generations can help advance the activities aimed at bettering the material and spiritual conditions of a community.

In the Maizerets neighbourhood in Quebec City, an environment of mutual assistance and support is gradually developing between people of various ages. I recently moved to this neighbourhood and I am happy to share a few observations.

For several years, a devoted pioneer has been living in the Maizerets neighbourhood, supporting the existing core activities and nurturing friendships with several local families. She is a loving grandmother who hosts devotional gatherings and children's classes in her home. She supports several youth who are facilitating core activities by being in touch with the families involved in a manner that can be described as natural and systematic.

> *"Solid foundations are being built through cooperation and tearing down the barriers of peer pressure, low self-esteem and materialism through selfless acts of kindness, being a true friend and being inclusive rather than exclusive."*
>
> *– Halifax youth conference participant*

In the fall of 2013, three friends who were part of a junior youth group in the Québec-Chaudières-Appalaches cluster and who have begun the sequence of courses, arose to serve as teachers of children's classes for children between the ages of 5 to 7. The classes take place every other week in the pioneer's house in the Maizerets neighbourhood. I accompany three young girls during their classes and help them plan and reflect. Since I am in my early twenties, the collaboration between me, the teachers, and the host, includes several generations. Despite the age difference, we are able to advance, impelled by our common desire to contribute to the wellbeing of our community. Sharing this desire has forged our friendship – a friendship based on service.

In Maizerets, two mothers teach a second group for children between the ages of 8 to 10. In addition, a few youth from the Maizerets neighbourhood recently attended the nationally organized youth conference held in Montreal this past summer. Moved by the friendly atmosphere present at the conference and by the lofty ideals explored, these youth decided to contribute to the process of community development in their own neighbourhood. We received beautiful confirmations, including the fact that another grandmother moved to Maizerets. She hosts children's classes and accompanies three other youth who have decided to serve as teachers.



Quebec seasonal school participants.

In the absence of a structure of coordination in our cluster, our small group meets regularly to consult about the activities in the neighbourhood and how to improve them. This intergenerational cooperation has led to rich discussions regarding the needs of the children's classes. These discussions have helped us to coordinate our efforts more effectively. For example, many of the families have more than one child, each of whom attends a different children's class, depending on their age. First, we realized that it would be best to schedule the classes at the same time. Then, we observed that the same home was being visited twice to pick up different children. We decided that it would make more sense for one teacher to pick up all of the children from the house and then meet in a central place to separate into the two classes.

Together, we have been able to identify what we have learned so far, which includes the fact that constant communication among those facilitating the activities, as well as with the families involved in the process of community development, contributes greatly to the advancement of the efforts in the neighbourhood. Indeed, consultation is a key element for creating an environment of mutual support.

Although there are still many challenges and many things to learn to improve our actions, what contributes to the continuity of our efforts is the friendship that is strengthened by a united vision of how to move forward together on this path of service.

– Sophie Turbide

Supporting each other in all areas of life

Mutual support is not only related to helping one another carry out acts of service, but also to progressing in other aspects of life. This account describes how a tutor assisted a mother to begin a children's class, which required supporting her in numerous other aspects of life.

"Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!' Note that He saith 'in serried lines' – meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows."[1]

In reflecting on our community, it is clear that advances in the community-building process can be attributed to an environment of mutual support and assistance. It permeates every relationship, every action. Here is just one example.

A Bahá'í mother was taking her children to another neighbourhood for children's classes. She had wanted to do Book 3: *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1* "for ages" and one day at a Feast she re-expressed this desire. A friend standing nearby said, "I can do that." The mother replied, "Well, I only have time during the day." The friend responded, "That's fine," and suggested they get started right away. The mother suggested that perhaps they should wait until other friends could join, but the tutor said, "Let's get started." Two other friends did join the study circle but were often unable to come. Each time, the mother would ask if they should cancel the class, but the tutor would respond, "Let's continue."



Calgary, Alta youth conference. Photo: Dacia Caney.

On one occasion, the mother had a paper due and was too busy and was feeling too tired to have the study circle. To support the mother and to keep the weekly rhythm of the study circle going, the tutor offered to come over and look after the children while the mother worked on her paper. "She was always helping me remember what it was I wanted in the first place, to have my own children's class," the mother said.

They completed Book 3 and the time came for the new class to begin. The mother said to the tutor, "Shouldn't I find other children first? The tutor replied, "Let's just start." The class was planned for Friday afternoons and the tutor came over every Tuesday (their usual study circle time) to help with planning. She came to the classes again on Fridays to care for the youngest child while the mother taught her two older children.

Soon after the first couple of classes with just her own children, the mother wanted her neighbour's children to join. The tutor encouraged her to talk to her neighbour about the classes and said she would be there to support her. They went to the neighbour's home, and the mother tried to talk, but she didn't know what to say. The tutor gave her lots of space to talk but then she casually began asking the neighbour questions about what she wanted for her children. After listening to her responses, the tutor naturally weaved in the words of Bahá'u'lláh, saying "Oh! Like we are all "the fruits of one tree, and leaves of one branch."[2]

"Exactly," replied the neighbour. The tutor then explained that she's been coming over on Fridays to help with a children's class that reflects those values and asked her if she would like to bring her children? "That sounds good," said the mother.

Her children began attending the class and the theme of their first class was justice. The neighbour later shared that one day her children had been arguing and one of the children said: "That's not justice." The mother was so impressed.

The tutor continues to support the class and the teacher, both inside and outside the class. She joyfully helps her with cleaning the house, saying she "likes to clean." One day, she dropped what she was doing, without hesitation, to take care of the children until the father got home from work, so the mother could fulfill her offer to be a doula at the birth of a friend's baby.

This is friendship. This is accompanying and support. Through selfless effort and loving encouragement – a new class "to nurture the tender hearts and minds of children" began in a new neighbourhood.

– Susan Mottahedeh

[1] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 207, p. 260.
[2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 1, p. 1.



A children's class in Richmond, B.C.

Mutual support and encouragement at the level of culture

This account, written by a youth who recently offered a period of service in Sudbury, describes the spirit of mutual support and encouragement that she feels characterizes the culture of that community, which is reflected in the relationships between individuals, and with the community, organizations, and institutions.

When we heard the news that we would spend our period of service in Sudbury, we had a few days to prepare and pack. Many people, who had only briefly passed through or had never been there, had a lot of ideas about what it would be like:

"I hear it's not very nice."

"There's acid rain because of the mining."

"There are hardly any trees."

"But it's in the middle of nowhere . . . ."

A quick online search confirmed some of these points.

Yet, when we arrived, it immediately became clear that Sudbury was much more than this. There were gems there, gems which someone who is quickly passing through would not see – similar to how one would not know what precious metals gleamed beneath Sudbury's earth without penetrating the surface.

Our first few weeks in Sudbury were gloriously challenging. And – as seemed to be the case throughout our time there – just as we would begin to feel disheartened, a lifeline would be thrown at us. The first lifeline was the friendship of a beautiful soul living in the neighbourhood in which we spent most of our time serving.

"I heard about you guys. I've been looking for you." These were the first words that greeted us when we met her at a neighbour's house. She quickly led us over to her home. There, she offered us refreshments and shared that she had been running weekly

> *"The unity between different communities was noticeable. People are willing to travel to other communities to help them in their endeavours."*
>
> *– Vancouver Island youth conference participant*



A group of youth in Sudbury, Ont. take a break from their study of Book 1.



Two friends decorate the venue for the Ridván celebration in Sudbury, Ont.



Some of the friends enjoying a group activity at the Ridván celebration in Sudbury.



The friends in Sudbury gather in a circle to do some folk dancing at the Ridván celebration.

activities for children and junior youth but could not sustain them any longer due to limited resources and declining health. She recognized that there needed to be something for this age group and had poured her own resources into sustaining the activities for several years. She generously offered to assist in any way, even inviting us to stay in her house in case we missed our evening buses home. The friendship of this dear woman – her endless support, her unbroken resolve to help her neighbours, her joyous face that was ever present in the neighbourhood – was one of the many gifts we received during our time in Sudbury and would consistently help uplift us when our spirits were low.

One day, while returning the key to a community room in the neighbourhood, we bumped into Christine Lafortune, the project coordinator for NOAH's Space, a local organization whose vision is "empowering the community to reach its full potential." Ms. Lafortune was quick to offer support in any way possible as she began to understand the vision of community transformation that informed both of our efforts.

"NOAH's Space began as a police-led initiative due to the fact that this specific neighbourhood had the highest calls for service to the police," Ms. Lafortune said in a recent interview.

Ms. Lafortune explained that NOAH's Space operates with an understanding that there are many elements to individual and community support.

"There is a diversity of people and needs in Sudbury and a lot of agencies see the benefit of working together," she said.

Many local organizations whose focuses differ come together and collaborate, all recognizing that their ultimate aim is to improve the quality of life for community members, and thus, the condition of the community. And this collaboration extends beyond the organizations.

"When we started full force in that community along with community members, they saw a huge decrease in crime," she explained. "The police have a new policing model: mobilizing residents to take back their neighbourhood along with the supports put in place."

The effect of the action taken was apparent in the reduction of police calls, which went from 12 a day to just one in a single month. Sudbury has always been one of those great cities in which residents like to work together, said Ms. Lafortune.

This suggests that this spirit of mutual support exists at the level of culture. The Bahá'í community and the Local Spiritual Assembly also displayed this spirit. When calling to mind their spirit of fellowship and support, I am reminded of a condition that the Master had asked the believers in North America to strive to attain:

> The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved.[1]

A spirit of ardent love and sincere friendship vivified every interaction with the Assembly and community. Their support was boundless, wholehearted, and in no way marred by expectation. It inspired a standard that we would then strive to mirror in our new friendships in the neighbourhood.

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Only so much can be uncovered in such a short space of time and only so much of it can be relayed in words. Those months in Sudbury exposed a reality that would not otherwise have been known, and of which so much still remains unknown. What became clear, however, is that there is a spirit of fellowship, support and cooperation there that is worthy of consideration – that there are gems worth unearthing.

1 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 52.

"What could replace criticism is a reflection on failure, looking for solutions and searching for the cause of challenges."

– Calgary youth conference participant



Youth perform a skit about true friendship at the Toronto, Ont. conference. Photo: Laura Mostmand



Participants gathered together at the Saskatchewan summer school.



A group performs a skit at the Toronto, Ont. youth conference.
Photo: Laura Mostmand



Participants at the Halifax, N.S. youth conference.
Photo: Anthony Power



A cluster reflection meeting in Nothern Gates cluster, Alta.

Interreligious youth forum aims for cooperation for common good

This article describes the interactions among a group of 19 youth with experience in grassroots social action who attended the Interreligious Youth Pre-forum (IYF) in Kaub, Germany in mid-July. This article provides insight into how people of different religions who are looking to create a world characterized by justice and unity are learning to not only collaborate together, but to see each other "as one soul."

Youth delegates arrived with a commitment to interfaith and social action that contributed to the positive spirit of the Pre-forum. Delegates interacted with such sincere kindliness and friendship that they said at the end of Forum that they felt like "a family," "one soul," "all reflecting the light of one God."

Reflecting on the impact of the Pre-forum, Andrea Salguero from Canada said, "[The pre-forum] felt like looking at a glimpse of the future, where people from different faiths will look to each other and work as the fingers of one hand to find solutions to the world's problems. It was so encouraging to see."

Moved by the positive atmosphere of the Pre-forum, participants came to see the group as a budding global interfaith partnership, the spirit of which could be shared with greater numbers of young people around the world.

The participants represented 18 countries and six of the world's major religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Bahá'í Faith. At a time when religious differences often cause division and conflict, the IYF provided a space to learn about how relationships between young people of different faiths can be animated by a spirit of cooperation and dedication to the common good. The group consulted about how collaboration between faith groups can further the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The pre-forum's focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was intended to build on commitments made by the international community to support the achievement of eight UN Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. These goals seek to fight poverty, hunger and disease; achieve universal education; promote equality and environmental sustainability; and enhance global partnerships for development. Within the framework of the SDGs, participants were invited to reflect on the progress of the goals in their home countries and made local plans to further them upon return to their home countries. Local plans, as diverse as the group of participants, included projects on labour rights (Indonesia), child literacy (Argentina), rural health (India), and other initiatives to promote peace through the creation of spaces for interfaith dialogue.

With this vision, in addition to implementing local projects, youth delegates will extend the conversation on faith and social action to other youth in their home communities. In May 2015, the interfaith global partnership created through the Pre-forum will be further strengthened when delegates return as facilitators for the Interreligious Youth Forum in Stuttgart, Germany, accompanied by three additional delegates from their home countries.

– Canadian Bahá'í News Service



Youth delegates at the Interreligious Youth Preforum in Kaub, Germany. Photo: Joe Malta

Comparing humanity to a garden

This is a reflection from a group of youth in the Mid-Island area of British Columbia. They have devoted a period of their lives to contributing to the development of communities in their region. This passage, using an analogy of a garden, describes how the youth learned to work with a diverse group of people who move at different paces and strides.

> Be like a well-cultivated garden wherein the roses and variegated flowers of heaven are growing in fragrance and beauty. It is my hope that your hearts may become as ready ground, carefully tilled and prepared, upon which the divine showers of the bounties of the Blessed Perfection may descend and the zephyrs of this divine springtime may blow with quickening breath. Then will the garden of your hearts bring forth its flowers of delightful fragrance to refresh the nostril of the heavenly Gardener. Let your hearts reflect the glories of the Sun of Truth in their many colors to gladden the eye of the divine Cultivator Who has nourished them. Day by day become more closely attracted in order that the love of God may illumine all those with whom you come in contact. Be as one spirit, one soul, leaves of one tree, flowers of one garden, waves of one ocean.
>
> As difference in degree of capacity exists among human souls, as difference in capability is found, therefore, individualities will differ one from another. But in reality this is a reason for unity and not for discord and enmity. If the flowers of a garden were all of one color, the effect would be monotonous to the eye; but if the colors are variegated, it is most pleasing and wonderful. The difference in adornment of color and capacity of reflection among the flowers gives the garden its beauty and charm. Therefore, although we are of different individualities, different in ideas and of various fragrances, let us strive like flowers of the same divine garden to live together in harmony. Even though each soul has its own individual perfume and color, all are reflecting the same light, all contributing fragrance to the same breeze which blows through the garden, all continuing to grow in complete harmony and accord. Become as waves of one sea, trees of one forest, growing in the utmost love, agreement and unity.[1]

This world is filled with many kinds of plants that grow in many different gardens. These gardens are affected by many challenging forces. Some of the garden's inhabitants have stopped growing, while others struggle. The flowers that need special attention are taken into a greenhouse where they can be nurtured.

The greenhouse creates the ideal conditions for growth: intense heat and an abundance of nutrients that allow plants to flower quickly. The flowers eventually grow strong and the time comes for them to leave the greenhouse and be planted in gardens. There is one flower in particular who, after leaving the greenhouse, feels great eagerness and excitement to continue to bloom in a new and unfamiliar garden.



Participants sing together at a junior youth camp in Saskatchewan.

The moss, bushes, trees and other flowering plants welcome the new resident and are eager to know how they might grow as well. In an attempt to share with them the fullness of its learning, the flower unintentionally stands above the rest, demonstrating its beautiful leaves. Seeing these large leaves makes the other flowers feel discouraged by their small ones. "We will never have such large leaves," they say and turn away, discouraged.

Not knowing what to do, yet desperately desiring to feel the same warmth it felt in the greenhouse, the flower turns towards the Sun: "We need the warmth of the sun to grow," thinks the flower, "But we do not have the greenhouse here. How can I do this?" The flower is overwhelmed as it tries to draw connections between its experience in the greenhouse and the reality it faces now. In a moment of quiet reflection, the flower stops thinking and looks around. He wonders, "How do others receive a portion of this warmth ? How do they grow?"

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As year of service youth, we are those flowering plants. We are uprooted from the familiar gardens in which we have grown, have entered the protective "greenhouse" structure of campaigns and other learning opportunities, and have set off to contribute to community building. The intense environments provided by campaigns have allowed us to grow through collective experience and learning. But the true tests emerge when we are immersed in the communities to which we are assigned and begin the process of learning how to work with the already devoted, rooted community. We must not see distinctions between the experience of the greenhouse flowers and flowers that have not had time in a greenhouse.

We need to learn from the community how to adapt to the reality of the place and never fall into the mindset that we are "in the know." If the flowers unite under Bahá'u'lláh's vision for humanity, then, regardless of differing circumstances and experience, they will find a way to contribute to the vision of the Gardener.

1 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 24

"In my community, I think we need this mutual support to extend beyond our small meetings, to create a community spirit and make it grow."

– Montreal youth conference participant



An artistic presentation at the Calgary, Alta. youth conference.
Photo: Dacia Caney



Junior youth and youth during a breakout session at the Maritime Bahá'í seasonal school.

" A group characterized by true friendship can really advance things in their neighbourhood."

– Montreal youth conference participant



Children perform a skit at the Quebec summer school.



Participants at the Toronto, Ont. youth conference explore the materials in their small group. Photo: Laura Mostmand



A devotional gathering in Cariboo cluster, B.C.



Ottawa, Ont. youth conference participants. Photo: Louis Brunet



Youth sing during a plenary gathering at the Calgary, Alta. youth conference. Photo: Dacia Caney



Participants at a Saskatchewan junior youth camp.



Toronto, Ont. youth conference participants. Photo: Laura Mostmand

"…and if we're all helping each other and lifting each other up, that's when we truly start to progress."

– Ottawa youth conference participant



Junior youth showing their artwork made during a camp in Saskatchewan.



Junior youth make a map of their neighbourhood in Vancouver, B.C. in preparation for a community gathering.



Youth and junior youth gather together at a camp held in Saskatchewan.

"My mom has cancer and my friend of 10 years was there for me. Just the fact that she was listening to me helped. I do that for her too . . . Mutual support is understanding and comforting each other."

– Montreal youth conference participant



Youth discussing the themes in the conference materials at the Ottawa, Ont. youth conference. Photo: Louis Brunet



Sharing a song at the Waterloo, Ont. youth conference. Photo: Martharoot Malunga and Lua Eghanian

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National Spiritual Assembly: secretariat@cdnbnc.org

Treasury: treasury@cdnbnc.org

Bahá'í Canada Committee: bcanada@cdnbnc.org

International Pioneer Department: pioneer@cdnbnc.org
youthservices@cdnbnc.org

National and Unit Conventions: eventcoordinator@cdnbnc.org

National External Affairs Department: externalaffairs@cdnbnc.org

Records Department: records@cdnbnc.org

If you are not sure to which department you should be directing your email, please use <secretariat@cdnbnc.org> and your email will be forwarded to the correct department.

Get international travel credentials

Request international credentials from the Bahá'í National Centre when planning to visit countries other than the United States. Contact the Records Department at <records@cdnbnc.org>. International travelling teachers are asked to contact the International Pioneer Department at <pioneer@cdnbnc.org>, or at 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8.

Change your address

Moving? Please notify your Spiritual Assembly or Group so it can notify the Records Department of the National Spiritual Assembly, or notify the Records Department directly, by sending a note containing your name, old address, new address and your Bahá'í ID number to: Records Department, Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; fax: 905-889-8184; email: <records@cdnbnc.org>.

Apply for pilgrimage

All pilgrimage requests (nine-day pilgrimage or three-day visit) are to be made directly to the Bahá'í World Centre. Applications are in writing only; telephoned requests cannot be accepted. The Bahá'í Pilgrimage Web site <http://pilgrimage.bahai.org> offers information and an online pilgrimage application form. Those without access to the Internet may send their applications for pilgrimage by post or fax: Office of Pilgrimage, PO Box 155, 3100101, Haifa, Israel; fax: 011-972-4-835-8507.

Plan a Bahá'í wedding

When you are planning to get married please contact, without delay, the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held. A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place without the authorization of the Local Assembly.

Submit items to *Bahá'í Canada*

Send news, photos, etc. to , 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; email: <bcanada@cdnbnc.org>.

Find "Bahá'í" on the Internet

The Bahá'í World: <www.bahai.org/>

Bahá'í Reference Library: <http://reference.bahai.org/>

Bahá'í Topics: An Information Resource: <http://info.bahai.org>

Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Statement Library: <www.bic-un.bahai.org/>

Bahá'í World News Service: <www.bahaiworldnews.org/>

Bahá'í Community of Canada: <www.ca.bahai.org>

Canadian Bahá'í News: <bahainews.ca>
[<nouvellesbahaies.ca>]

Transforming Neighbourhoods: <www.transformingneighbourhoods.org>

Bahá'í Distribution Service: <www.bds-canada.com>

Le Service de distribution bahá'í - Québec (For an English language catalogue on French books)
<www.ca.bahai.org/files/catalogue.ENGLISH.pdf>

One Country: <http://onecountry.org>

Bahá'í Media Bank: <http://media.bahai.org/>

Life of Bahá'u'lláh: <www.bahaullah.org>

Travel-teach and pioneer within Canada

"The institutions, in turn, will have to exercise sound judgement to ensure that such friends are strategically placed. Priority should be given to settling short-term and long-term pioneers in those clusters that are the focus of systematic attention . . ."

Contact the National Spiritual Assembly <secretariat@cdnbnc.org> or 905-889-8168 for where to direct your offer of service within Canada.