WILPF

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Aotearoa Section
Newsletter April 2020

In this newsletter

1. Message from WILPF Aotearoa President and executive committee
2. A report on Creating Cultures of Peace workshop in Indonesia
3. Te Tiriti-based Futures and Anti-racism/Maori Crown relationships
4. Ihumaatao update
5. Madeleine Rees addresses the Covid -19 Pandemic
6. WILPF Aotearoa 2020 AGM
7. World Beyond War: Liz Remmerswaal
8. Contact Us

We are living in strange times as I write this. The country is under the Code 4 level of the Covid-19 alert levels and will be so for at least the next two weeks.

For some of us, this is not too great a hardship. For others, living more fragile and tenuous lives, this will be awful. If you can find a way to support others in the community, I hope you will manage to do so. That might just be telephoning a friend more often, offering to pick up groceries, or donating money to food banks and other organisations which work with those who need help. There are some suggestions here: https://thespinoff.co.nz/covid-19/27-03-2020/how-to-help-volunteer-or-donate-to-the-fight-against-covid-19/

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that we will not be able to hold the WILPF Aotearoa annual general meeting in person this year, but it will still take place on Saturday 2 May. We will run the meeting online using Zoom so that you can log in from your computer and join. We will let you know how to do this closer to the date.

Covid-19 also meant that I was unable to meet with Wellington WILPF members as I had been hoping to do in late March. I hope that we may be able to do that online as well and perhaps in person later this year.

In international WILPF news, I recommend that you keep an eye on the website www.wilpf.org where blogs and opinion pieces are often posted. I am on the committee which is helping to organise the next international WILPF Congress which will be held in Brisbane from 28-30 June 2021. This is an opportunity for those of us who have not seen international WILPF in action to take part, so I hope we will have a large number of WILPF Aotearoa women there.

In the meantime, please stay safe, and keep in contact with others and with us: wilpfaotearoa@gmail.com

Megan Hutching and the WILPF Aotearoa executive committee

A South Island WILPFer, reports on her experience in Indonesia, January 11-21 this year, at a Creating Cultures of Peace training workshop.

I wish to convey my deep appreciation to WILPF Aotearoa for providing me with financial support to take part in the International Peace Training run by Friends' Peace Teams at Peace Place, Pati, Indonesia. I found it an impactful, meaningful, and transformative experience; and I felt so lucky to go. Ages ranged from 12 to 80 years old. Peace Place, where the training was held,

provides a safe space where every person is welcomed, listened to, and accepted. They run a pre-school for local children which nurtures the principles of peace cultures and like the children, in our training, we practised different ways of creating peace cultures.

Participants from Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Russia, Korea, the UK, Aotearoa, and the US.

Cultures of peace are 'the living wealth of people with the wisdom and insight to recognize, invest in, and build on simple personal and social foundations, and the foresight and courage to recognize, resist and speak out against greed, oppression, and injustice.' (Nadine Hoover, founder of CCP training). The tools we practised helped us to express and discharge emotion, share and open up to others, listen to others fully, and be good companions for others who may have experienced great violence and trauma in their lives.

For five to six hours a day, over eight days of workshops we did such activities and games as: Big Wind Blows, stories of violence and nonviolence, affirmations, Cooperative Agreements, the Approach to Creating Cultures of Peace, core self, good companion, discharging emotion, journaling, welcome, and reflection as well as going on community visits, sharing food and sharing information about our own home countries each night.

We all chose an affirmation name for ourselves. For the training I was Marvellous Meghan, and it was special to hear all those positive names being exchanged with each greeting and interaction. We changed our seating positions each day so that we could talk with new people and we practised being good companions with each other - in which each person shares equally and

listens fully to their companion. These are the foundations of peace.

I personally learnt so many great ways (big and small) to create cultures of peace within the communities I live in, work in, and study in. The biggest learning moment and transformative moment for me was grasping the importance of listening. Practising listening, developing good listening practice and really seeing how listening plays a central role in creating a peace culture was a key focus of the training. In Moriori, which is the language of the Moriori people of Rēkohu (Chatham Islands) they have they saying or greeting of *me rongo*, which means 'in peace' but has another meaning of 'to listen' (as told to me by Susan Thorpe of Rēkohu) and this really encapsulates the essence of the training for me, which is that peace begins the moment we begin to listen.

I was lucky enough to take part in this training with two other friends from Aotearoa New Zealand, bringing the total number of people in ANZ with this training to five (that I am aware of). I am hopeful about the possibility of running a mini-version of the training in ANZ. We support each other as we continue to apply the tools of Creating Cultures of Peace workshops in the context here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

My experience in Indonesia has given me the confidence and desire to practise these tools in my daily life, in my relationships, and to share it with the communities I live, work, and study in as well as the groups and organisations I am a member of, particularly WILPF Aotearoa NZ. I will be giving a talk on the peace training at my academic home - ANZ's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Te Ao o Rongomaraeroa, about the training and

Caption: Core principals of the approach are explained.

sharing some of the tools I learnt through the peace training and sharing with my colleagues about how these tools can be used in our daily lives and interactions with each other pedagogically, socially and professionally.

I hope to continue to be in this CCP space and will continue practicing my good companionship and the CCP tools in my peace education work with the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, with WILPF and in my personal relationships. We, as women of peace, know how to encourage cultures of peace, we just need to invest in creating them and

that is something that WILPF does already. Cultures of peace are possible.

HEI KANOHI MATAARA, HEI RINGA WHITI EYES WIDE OPEN, READY FOR ACTION

Te Tiriti-based futures & anti-racism 2020

This was an innovative (inter)national, online and offline, Tiriti-based, anti-racism and. decolonisation event in Aotearoa. It started with a one-day hui March 21, Race Relations Day 2020, hosted by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua in Tāmaki Makaurau, and then ran virtually for 10 days.

Webinar topics included institutional racism and anti-racism, decolonisation, building Tiriti-based futures and transforming our constitution. The open-access webinars will be posted on-line, where they will become permanent resources for anti-racist activism and Tiriti education.

The organisers are a group of Pākehā and Māori with experience in activism, research and community development. We hope this event will become annual calendar fixture.
https://www.stirnz.org/tetiritibasedfutures

RACE RELATIONS DAY

The United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21st March. This international day marks the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre when 69 black South African citizens – including 10 children – were shot to death by their own Police for protesting against racial apartheid laws. The day aims to remind people of racial discrimination's negative consequences. It also encourages people to remember their obligation and determination to combat racial discrimination.

Madeleine Rees, WILPF International CEO, writes:

2020. A bad start got worse! Who would have thought that the world would enter into lockdown by the end of March because of a virus? Predicted, predictable, perhaps but the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically exposed the fault lines that WILPF has been drawing attention to throughout our history. Without overstating it, people are paying attention to structures, to economics, to policies, to human rights and – indeed, to music – in ways that were unimaginable before the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

We should learn from history.

"Inequalities between people and between nations. Militarism as a way of thought."

Familiar? It has been the way we at WILPF have framed the analysis since our initial Congress and it has stood us in good stead as we have contextualised and analysed conflict, the impact on the environment, and now the pandemic.

We need to address: how we got here, how we organise, how we respond as individuals and as communities, and what will change when we are finally through this crisis.

In our article What has COVID-19 Taught Us about Neoliberalism?, we seek to answer one of those questions: "how we got here?", by looking at the political economy and how capitalism and the ideology of neoliberalism has devastated the structures which should ensure cooperation and solidarity. We then in the article Organise or Militarise look into how militarisation as a way of thought has diverted resources away from where they should have been directed, and the inevitable impact that has had on the ability to address the crisis.

Then, we look at the possibilities. In situations of crisis, we have two default positions: we either react with fear and aggression or we cooperate, show solidarity and compassion, and deal with the crisis as a collective. At the moment, both positions are appearing in the way governments and individuals are responding to COVID-19. Response no. 1 encourages militarisation, response no. 2 should not, but we must – as feminist writer, theorist, and professor known for her work on gender and militarism Cynthia Enloe exposes in her article "Waging War" Against a Virus is NOT What We Need to Be Doing – resist the co-option of solidarity into a romanticised story of war and how war makes us "stick together" for the common good. It does not.

COVID-19 will not stop all the other work WILPF is engaged in; wars continue and advantage will be sought whilst attentions are distracted and the implications are, as always, highly gendered. The environment has been given a break, a small one, from our polluting abusive ways, so we must use that break to rethink our way of being.

Flattening the curve is a useful metaphor we will be exploring, as we continue to build our analysis and ways of effecting the structural changes we need.

Update from Ihumaatao from Dr Frances Hancock

The whanau on the whenua are in lockdown too. The negotiations are on pause while all attention goes on the virus. Maybe a pause is a good thing - gives people a well- earned rest. The road is still closed and Fletcher is long gone so it's pretty peaceful at Ihumaatao.

WILPF Aotearoa activities

We have written letters to NZ First MPs about the Arms Amendment Act, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the so-called 'peace plan' for Palestine and Israel and signed on to an open letter to the Prime Minister regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and Palestine. We also wrote expressing our opposition to the introduction of armed Police patrols and made a submission on the APEC Bill.

WILPF Aotearoa 2020 AGM: Saturday May 2, 2-4pm on Zoom. More details by email.

Contact us

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And see us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/wilpfaotearoa.newzealand

Young WILPF – YWILPF
https://www.wilpf.org/our-members/#young

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WILPFer Liz Remmerswaal has been travelling in her role with World Beyond War. Her report follows as an appendix.

WORLD BEYOND WAR TRIP- LIZ REMMERSWAAL, SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2019.

With special thanks to Donnal Walters and World Beyond War and everyone who helped me along the way.

Dear friends
As I left for my big trip recently, I told myself and my friends/critics that it was ironic to be burning carbon to go to a peace conference or three on the other side of the world, just as the youth-led climate strike is happening. As someone who led advocacy for climate action while I was in politics, I took this very seriously.

However what is more telling is that the military does a great deal of harm. As we all know, the United States military is the world's largest consumer of carbon and causes more pollution than 140 countries combined. Furthermore 64% of the US discretionary budget is siphoned off to the Pentagon every year, and to private weapons profit. New Zealand is supporting the US and increasing military spending.

Funding endless war is a threat to human life and a leading cause of climate change, and I challenge this, working with others all over to divest from weapons and use nonviolent means of dealing with conflict.

As it fitted in with the World Beyond War conference in Limerick, Ireland, I signed up for a 'Code Pink Peace Tour' of Iran, but it was cancelled at the last moment because of visas not being issued to the USA tourists in time. A local United Nations Association contact arranged for a contact of his to take over as my guide and introduce me to some useful contacts.

IRAN
I arrived in Tehran in time to celebrate International Day of Peace, 21 September, which was held at the Islamic Revolution and Holy Defence Museum, with the very timely theme of 'Climate Action for Peace. There were speeches, a drum orchestra of children playing traditional music and demonstrations of writing ancient script.

The next day we visited the poignant Tehran Peace Museum and spent several hours talking to staff and viewing the exhibits. It has links with the Hiroshima Peace Museum and was started by victims of the Iraq Iran War. The focus is that eight-year war, started by Saddam Hussein, and the consequences of the use of chemical and nuclear weapons.

Next stop, after Shiraz, was Esfehan which is the second largest city of Iran. Here we met up with some staff members from the Islamic Azad University. They are very interested in the work of Nadine Hoover from The Conscience Studio on Creating Peaceful Communities.

We also visited the local newspaper where I did an interview about World Beyond War. We exchanged photos and social media accounts - mostly Instagram as Facebook is banned in Iran because it is American.

I felt perfectly safe in the country despite the millions of cars on the roads and crazy road rules (there are none, just watch out for all the traffic and pedestrians around you!) However, the economic sanctions are starting to bite and local commentators say they are weakening the economy and government. As usual it is the most vulnerable who are harder hit.

IRELAND
Next stop was Ireland and while in Dublin for a few days before the Limerick conference, I happened to meet former president Mary Robinson, who is now heading her Foundation for Climate Justice. The WBW conference in Limerick was a great success and a wonderful time. One highlight was meeting the lovely Mairead Corrigan McGuire who was on the Peace Boat to Gaza with NZ Green MP Marama Davidson several years ago.

PRAGUE
Next stop was Prague, the very walkable and unspoilt heart of the Czech Republic, for the Bertha von Suttner conference organised by Prague Vision, and sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation for Social Democracy. Bertha von Suttner was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace prize.

The conference included commentary of the legacy of Bertha von Suttner from Peter van

Dungen, Colin Archer and Eva Quistorp and a presentation on the Global Peace Index, followed by a discussion re alternatives to using force in international relations with a variety of speakers from government and civil society.

Finally, we took part in the Prague Trail for Peace and Non-Violent Resistance, something which every city should look at having, and WBW put on a screening of the New Zealand film, 'Soldiers Without Guns' which was attended by about 20 people.

VIENNA

In Vienna I put on another screening there of 'Soldiers Without Guns' attended by about 15 people. People are so touched and amazed by the true story of this documentary film it gives hope and is a good discussion starter.

LONDON

Next stop was London and meetings all over the city with Campaign Against the Arms Trade, War Resisters International and No Faith in War coordinator/ clerk of Quaker London meeting. They were particularly interested in New Zealand activists' successful stopping of the arms fair this year, which they are also working hard on doing.

The International Peace Bureau's triennial meeting took place at St Thomas' Hospital. It was unusual to be hosted in a working hospital, with patients on beds being wheeled past. Equally poignant was a video link with a Kurdish Mayor Keder Kareem in the north of Iraq pleading for help for his people and for us to make a stand against the Turkish treatment of them.

Planning is afoot for a big meeting headed by Joseph Gerson from the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security for a World Conference, Rally and March for Disarmament, Peace, Climate & Justice taking place from April 24-26, 2020 at Riverside Church, NYC.
https://www.cpdcs.org/announcement-world-conference-2020/
In the evening 90-year-old veteran activist, Bruce Kent was presented with the Sean McBride Peace Prize for his decades of work leading Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Pax Christi and Movement for the Abolition of War and many other activities.

The next day was the CND conference with some top speakers and topics. My highlight was hearing Angie Zelter from new group 'XR Peace' (Extinction Rebellion) talking about how finally the peace movement is getting together with environmentalists and taking action together, as well as seeing new scientific info re how the military contributes to climate change from Scientists for Social Responsibility.
https://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-07/SGR_Military-carbon-bootprint_London19.pdf

The day finished with a discussion on the future and the challenges of working together.

NZWELLINGTON/CHRISTCHURCH/ HAWKE'S BAY

Upon arriving back in New Zealand, I immediately went to an event at Parliament in Wellington that I had been involved with planning - the 'Count the Nuclear Weapons Money' global event hosted by Labour MP Louisa Wall. I attended a United Nations Day reception the same day before heading home to rest.