



Nagasaki Day 2022

Although we were a small group we did not lack in dedication to act guided by concern and hope for the future. Those who gathered on August 9th at 6:30 pm in Gyro Park in Grand Forks, were a diverse group from young to older to even older representing various cultures and political affiliations yet united to call on ‘the powers that be in the world’ to truly address the danger posed by the nuclear industry to all life on our planet. We also encouraged everyone to take seriously the danger posed by all the conflicts raging today.

Laura Savinkoff, as the coordinator of the Boundary Peace Initiative, the organizing group supported by the USCC Working Groups for Peace and Social Justice and the Kootenay Region United Nations Association in Canada, facilitated the event.

Sadly, I did not take notes nor did anyone else, so the speaker's presentations are very much paraphrased. So, if I have misquoted anyone, please do forgive me. And if possible let me know and this article can be corrected and reposted. Thank you.

Good evening, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It has been a long time since the Boundary Peace Initiative held an in-person event. The last time was certainly one to remember: Peace In! Peace Out! 2019 was a memorable and awesome event. And then Covid struck and the spring 2020 conference was cancelled. Since then we've relied on the Internet to carry on our work and that was great, but I'm sure you missed the support of gathering in person to voice our stance for peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. So, here we are with speakers and entertainers and information tables to honour and commemorate all victims of the nuclear industry.

We acknowledge we are on the un-ceded lands of the First People that lived and thrived here for centuries before white man arrived. It is a testament to the resilience of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, that despite the systemic racism and outright attacks on their culture, traditions and spiritual life, they not only survived but continue to thrive and share with us their faith and understanding and call on us to help create a better world for all.

We are blessed to welcome the Boundary All Nations Council Drummers, known better as BANC. *Victoria Runge explained that they are in fact called the Boundary Heartbeat Drummers*

Thank you our dear friends. Together we will ensure the future is brighter for all humanity. One of the main singers is just getting over a cold so they will not be able to do all the songs they planned. Let's show them our appreciation but save some for later when they share more drumming with us.

(Photo by Iskra Publication)



(Photo by Polya Gagne)



We could not have an event without an official city welcome, right? So, let's give space and our warm welcome to Mayor Brian Taylor.

Brian spoke about his lifetime of concern for the state our world was and is in. He praised the efforts of groups like the Boundary Peace Initiative for keeping alive the need to stop war, eliminate nuclear weapons and give us all hope for a better future. As Mayor it was my privilege to add the voice of the City to the efforts of the BPI, said Mayor Brian Taylor.

Thank you so much, Brian. Since you are not running in the fall civic election, we hope you will grace us with your presence and share your thoughts with us as a concerned citizen at future events. We thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to peace, social justice and environmental integrity. May life be gentle with you after your job as our Mayor is done.

(Photo by Roly Russell)



(Photo by Polya Gagne)



Let's continue with official welcomes and ask our Member of the Legislature, Roly Russell to speak with us. This is the first time he's spoken at one of our events, so let's welcome him with the warmth we are known for. Come on up, Roly, my friend.

Roly spoke of the need to rid the world of the threat of nuclear weapons and the need to care about each other. Part of caring is taking care of the planet and that includes addressing the nuclear issue. I am here to learn as well as share information, he said. He also thanked the organizers for all their work over the years and looks forward to continuing to work together.

Roly, we thank you for taking time to join us today and share your thoughts. We know you are a friend of the Earth and do work to create a sustainable environment. We know we can have a viable and sustainable planet with elected officials that care as much as you do. We entrust you to do all you can to make sure we have that planet for our children and grandchildren.

(Photo by Polya Gagne)



(Photo by Iskra Publicati)



And we older people do need to see that youth is part of our work. This year we are grateful to have a young lady, just graduated from GFSS, join us. Payton Maffioli has been engaged in school with the Global Citizenship Club that has addressed some of the same issues we have and hopefully will continue to work on those issues. We invite this young lady to share her thoughts with us today. Please give Payton a warm and encouraging welcome.

Payton talked about the fear and anxiety of her generation for the future as they look around and see all wars and all the damage climate change is having on our lives. This concern motivated her and others, to get involved in the Global Citizens Club at GFSS. Yet it seemed they were a lonely voice in the wilderness locally until she found out about the Boundary Peace Initiative, just a few short weeks ago. The more she learnt of the work you do, the more hope I have that together we'll be able to make change, she said. I will continue to be involved and since I am taking Environmental Studies it is a good place to begin. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Payton, thank you for giving us hope for the present and the future. We hope that you and your friends will help us establish a connection with the next group of young people at GFSS. Payton will be leaving Grand Forks but not going too far away. She starts Selkirk College in September taking Environmental Studies. So, she will be able to join us here and there to share her insights and lend us her energy.

(Photo by Polya Gagne)



(Photo by Iskra Publication)



As you are aware, there will be civic elections in the fall, but we are not yet aware of all the candidates running for mayor, council, regional district and school board. This is important to know and to find out where all of them stand on issues of concern to the BPI. To date there is only one declared candidate for Mayor, Everett Baker. Everett has been a supporter of the BPI since his family arrived in Grand Forks and for that we are grateful. I count him as a good friend and a great community member. Please welcome Everett to share his thoughts on the issue that we are here to voice our concern about, because one nuclear bomb can annihilate and infect the world within a few moments, not hours, moments.

Everett expressed his gratitude to the organizers of the BPI for always keeping us informed and working for a better world. He explained that today he is not speaking as a City Councillor or a candidate for Mayor, but as a concerned person who wants a world free of the nuclear threat that hangs over all of us and a world at peace. It is vital that we leave a better world for our grandchildren. Together we can create a world of peace by working together as a community.

(Photo Iskra Publications)



(Photo Polya Gagne)



Thank you, Everett for caring enough to join us today. Whichever way the race goes, the BPI welcomes you as a person who cares about the world.

Our next speaker is someone we have all come to rely on to provide us with much food for thought. This man gives his life and energy to build community and to improve our world. At times his words infuse us with hard hitting truths and leave us wondering what we can do to change the world and at others his words help us bolster our own spirits with hope so we can change the world. Which will it be today? Or will it be both? Let's listen carefully to JJ Verigin's message.

JJ delivered an impassioned speech full of hard hitting facts and a call to action so as to rid the world of war, violence and the weapons of war and violence, such as nuclear weapons. He took a few moments to pass on greetings from the gathering on August 6th, Hiroshima Day held in Castlegar, another successful event with dedicated people. He went back a bit in history and reminded us of those days when hundreds travelled to Vancouver for the Kootenay/Boundary to say NO To Nukes. Sadly, the time of large protests has somehow passed and that started before Covid. He asked us if we realized that Canada is at war and has been since the War of Terror was announced back in the 1990s; he outlined some of the conflicts since 1991 and how this area stood up and said we do not support the acts of war perpetrated by or supported by Canada. He reminded us that Grand Forks was declared a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone back in the 1980s and a member of the Mayors for Peace initiated by the Mayor of Hiroshima. We need to take seriously and work seriously to stop the destruction, violence and war that continue to encircle the world. Thank you for organizing this event, Laura, he said, and thank you everyone for coming out and thank you to the speakers and drummers as well.

(Photo by Polya Gagne)



(Photo by Iskra Publications)



Thank you my dear friend and colleague. This man just does not stop in his quest for a better world for all humanity that comes from his ancestors who stood firm for hundreds of years to

bring peace, social justice, equality, and love of all Creation. There are a few others here who share these ancestors with JJ and we will continue to work with our surrounding communities for a safe and peaceful world. JJ must leave for another important meeting, so we wish you well JJ and thank you again for taking time to be here.

So let's give ourselves a bit of time to absorb JJ's and others words while we hear the drums once again.

(Photo by Polya Gagne)



Thank you, our spiritual family, for sharing your time and energy and songs. Drumming helps us to connect with our inner being, our spirit, because the drum, to me at least, represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth. We look forward to working with you in the future as together we travel the path to harmony and creating a place for love and joy, respect and honour, dignity and integrity to live and flourish.

More words, you say! Well, we need words to learn from and words to pass on messages and words to support those who support our work. Our next presenter has travelled to join us and for that we are grateful. Our Member of Parliament has joined us when he can and consistently speaks to his colleagues on issues we are concerned about. Let's welcome Richard Cannings with the enthusiasm he deserves for all the years he has put in on our behalf.

Richard thanked the organizers for consistently doing all they can to bring the message of peace forward. I am so proud to represent this riding in Parliament because of the level of commitment to peace, social justice and environmental issues our region represents and brings forward. It is sad that Canada has not signed onto to the Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons but the NDP caucus continues to work on that file along with the Parliamentary Network Against Nuclear Weapons. The Kootenay/Boundary is known and respected for our consistent stance on

peaceful resolutions to conflict and we must continue to stay firm and committed to that. I will do my best to bring forward your commitment as your representative. Thank you for your support and thank you to Laura for keeping me informed on these issues.

(Photo by Roly Russell)



(Photo by Polya Gagne)



Richard, our brother in spirit for peaceful living, thank you. We always welcome your words of support and encouragement. We want to assure you the BPI looks forward to continuing to work with you in the future and will continue to inform you of our stance and thoughts so you can continue to speak with your colleagues in Ottawa and beyond on our behalf.

I hope you are still up to hearing a few more words Brothers and Sisters. I also have some things to share with you. But before I launch into my personal views I would like to once again thank all who came out, for without your support, the BPI would not exist and without you the presenters would be talking to ourselves—so THANK YOU. To all those who help move the BPI every forward and do the work we do—THANK YOU. And to every presenter the BPI is very, very grateful for you donating your time and energy, your thoughts and ideas on this very important issue that literally means life or death for all life on Earth—THANK YOU.

{The following 6 photos below are by Polya Gagne and give a small glimpse into the people gathered on August 9, 2022 in Gyro Park, Grand Forks, B.C. to honour all the victims of the full nuclear industry}



I know you want to leave now and if you really need to go, it's okay. I leave myself to the end because as the facilitator my role is to give the opportunity for others to share their voice. So now, that our presenters are done, my hat as the facilitator is off, so it is my turn to share my thoughts that I hope you will have the patience to hear.

This event, Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day, has always evoked great emotion for me. As I learnt about the suffering of innocent victims of man's ultimate inhumanity to all living beings by the development a weapon of mass destruction and an industry that keeps on giving death forever-- my soul cries out in pain. And the fact that somehow humanity cannot seem to give up the power that uranium and the process creating atomic and nuclear holocaust makes me cringe in horror. My heart aches for those who suffered and continue to suffer from the testing of nuclear bombs back in the 1940s and 1950s and even into the 1970s. My spirit writhes in agony for those who on August 6th and 9th, 1945, were so cruelly vaporized, for those whose flesh burned off their bones as they walked and jumped into the river that continued to irradiate and strip the flesh off their bones. My heart aches for those who lived their lives riddled with cancer and other radiation related illnesses. My heart aches for those who stood in the rain that covered them with radiated black ash. My heart aches for those who gave birth to children crippled, disfigured, infected and even now children are born with the effects of those bombs and the testing.

I hope there are many who are also afflicted with this pain of the heart and spirit and soul. But I often wonder if enough of us exist or are willing to do something to stop the threat of total annihilation of all living things on our planet?

Why do these weapons still exist? How come even more powerful nuclear and atomic weapons are being developed? How come the mining of uranium that emitting radiation still goes on? How come radioactive waste is still piling up and continues to spew radiation into the air, land and water with no end in sight and no safe way to store? How come this radioactive waste is being used to tip bullets and missiles and line tanks that have spread radiation from Bosnia to Iraq to Afghanistan and who knows where else? How come, even after major reactor accidents in power plants, there is a push to continue to produce electricity with such a dangerous product from beginning to end?

I do not have the answers to these questions. I do know that many believe there is a safe level of use for nuclear products, be it for weapons, electricity or health care. I do know many believe that 'Mutually Assured Destruction', the acronym being MAD, will prevent someone from being the first to push the button that will launch the bombs and missiles within 15 minutes. Those missiles will destroy all life within a large radius within 30 minutes but the rest of us will die either from radiation sickness or starvation for nothing will be able to grow when we go into what is being called 'nuclear winter', where the sun is blocked out from the debris clouds and the radiation. When there is no electricity to run communications or hospitals or dispatch emergency aid what will we do? Yes, this is scaring and I mean for it to be scary because

somehow just quoting facts and figures does seem to awaken people to the depth of the danger, the depth of the horror that the nuclear industry delivers.

I know many believe it is safe to produce electricity and store the leftovers called Depleted Uranium, because there have been very few ‘accidents’. Well, we don’t hear about most of those ‘accidents’ and we don’t hear of most of the leaking barrels of DU into the close by water ways and surrounding lands and the radiation carried by the wind. The lid is closed pretty tightly on that information.

Do you hear of the results of all those tests from the 50s, 60s and 70s in the Marshall Islands, in Bikini Atoll, New Mexico, the UK, Russia, France, China, Israel and other sites we don’t even know about? Sometimes mention is made but the level of destruction and infection is hard to find unless you search very diligently and even then the information is limited. Did you know that whole islands were radiated when bombs were detonated just a few miles off their shores and the people were not warned and after the fact little was done to help them? There were no precautions truly taken in tests in New Mexico and so many other places and after the fact the effects were minimized and the people suffered and continue to suffer. Why? Because they were human experiments on what the effects of radiation will be and how to treat the illnesses. And yet, despite the horror of those effects and the lack of effective treatment the industry survives and in many place flourishes.

How much do we know about the after effects of Three Mile Island or Chernobyl or Fukushima or all those ‘little accidents and spills’ at power plants? And what about Hanford along the Columbia River where the barrels storing radiated waste have been leaking for years?

Do you know that these power plants and bomb making facilities need to be by fresh water sources in order to cool the reactors so they don’t melt down and release their gift on an unsuspecting population? Do you know that all the soil and water surrounding these power plants and nuclear weapons facilities are dangerously high in radiation? So what happens if a plant is decommissioned? Well, it takes years and years to gather the radiated soil and water and store it since most of this ‘waste’ has a half-life of 4. 5 billion years? That means it reaches half its radiation potency in those years. Do you know how far the particles of radiation can travel on the wind? Well, during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan particles of DU from the bunker buster bombs and the uranium tipped bullets were discovered in Los Angeles 6 months later and 3 months after the fact in the UK?

So the question then is—how safe is the mining, the processing, the use of uranium in all its facets? Can anyone guarantee there will not be radiation sickness because of these activities? To date that is not possible. Scientists have not been able to give this guarantee and many hold to the understanding that there is no safe level for humanity, for our planet.

So, who then promotes the use and tries to convince us that the use of uranium, of all branches of the nuclear industry, of fusion and fission, are safe? I have my opinion but no concrete facts

other than the industry itself promotes itself and inspects itself and is supported by governments. I encourage you, all of us, to keep asking the question and exploring before deciding to agree that it is safe or not.

Locally, in Trail, testing is ongoing for lead poisoning. Do you realize that lead is the final product of uranium? So, lead poisoning is related to radiation poisoning and until a few decades ago this was not acknowledged. The results of lead poisoning are devastating and long term and in many cases take many, many years to show up. In the 1970s, exploration for Uranium was rampant in the Kootenay Boundary and there is a lot of it surrounding us. It is a fact that once disturbed, uranium emissions keep on coming no matter how much packing is put in the exploration holes, radiation still leaks and infects all that surrounds it. That is why in the early 2000s a group of B.C. activists, under the banner of Uranium Free B.C. of which Uranium Free Kootenay Boundary along with the Boundary Peace Initiative, were able to secure a Legislated Ban on Uranium Mining in B.C. We were able to prove that any exploration or disturbance of uranium deposits, large or small, do not stop poisoning our air, water and land and therefore us and that it was unsafe to mine uranium on Big White or anywhere in B.C. We did try to institute a program that testing for uranium become standard practice before any digging, any construction happened in B.C. but I cannot verify we were successful with that for I don't know if that testing happens. So, there is still work to be done on these issues but sadly, too many do not have the knowledge or mainly the will to push the need further.

Although the focus of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days is on nuclear weapons the BPI and some other groups have expanded the call to action to include the full spectrum of the industry, from exploration, to mining, to processing, to electricity, to weapons. The whole chain is dangerous and must stop.

In January 2021 the United Nations made nuclear weapons illegal after 50 nations not only signed but ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, dubbed the TPNW. More have ratified since. A significant number signed the treaty but it can take years to pass through individual governments. Sadly, Canada is not one of the signatories so it will certainly not ratify the treaty. The structure of the UN is such that only those who sign and ratify a treaty or resolution are required to comply. Not one NATO country or any permanent UN Security Council member has signed or plans on signing this pivotal treaty. The excuse is that we have the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty that is still being worked on to fulfill. Well, after decades and decades, not one nuclear weapons state has lessen their arsenal, never mind considered eliminating their nukes. So why won't they sign the TPNW? Because every permanent UN Security Council member is a nuclear weapons state. And every NATO member must agree with the doctrine of 'nuclear first strike' that NATO reserves for itself. Although Canada does not have nuclear weapons it does supply material for their production through mining and processing as well as major supplies of DU for those bunker buster bombs and missiles. Canada is also a member of NATO, therefore can be considered a nuclear nation. And now, with the

purchase of 88 F-35 stealth bombers for the start up cost of \$19 billion, we will have the capacity to transport nuclear bombs in compliance with and under the command of NATO.

This is why my heart continues to ache and my spirit cries out in anguish. When will humanity stop the slide to our own destruction? When will we stop creating weapons to kill ourselves? When will we, the people, stand up and say this must end? Are you ready, my friends to join me and say NO MORE NUCLEAR WEAPONS! NO MORE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY! And finally---NO MORE WAR FOR ANY REASON AT ANY TIME!

Will you join me in calling for peaceful living in harmony with all Creation? Will you join me in calling on our elected officials to stand up in parliament, in the legislature in the council chambers and deliver our message? Will our elected officials give us their word that they will do what they can to deliver our message and work with us to move Canada to sign the TPNW, to uphold UN treaties and resolutions that value humanity and life over death and destruction?

Thank you everyone for coming out today, for willing to stand up, raise our collective voice to live in peace and harmony, to live in community locally and globally. As we leave here today, know that we are not alone in our little part of the world. Many are calling for the same thing and are working to bring peaceful living into reality. Let's have the courage to continue to stand up and be counted as peaceniks of the Boundary!

In Universal Kinship and Loving Peace,

Laura Savinkoff

