

# Recipe for a Peace Camp

*by*  
Carolyn Pogue

## You need:

- 15 to 30 children who are curious about the arts and peace (we mean peace inside, peace with family and community, with the environment and in the world)
- 3 artists (we had an actor, musician, writer) who care about peace and children
- 2 adults or teens who care about peace and children to assist
- 1 adult or teen who will prepare and serve snacks and drinks
- 1 advertising wizard who knows how to reach children, parents and grandparents
- a meeting place that carries insurance (our church provided this)
- a group that will lend its name to the camp, issue receipts and support you (our church and Women in Black peace group did this for us)
- a group that will give you a little start up money so that you can buy art supplies, pay for advertising and buy healthy snacks and drinks for the children

## It is nice to have:

- A kindly person who will offer a scholarship for a child who can't afford to pay
- Someone who can help figure out finances. We kept it simple. The children paid \$50 for the week (half days). With a gift from an inter-faith women's group, donations from individuals and donated art supplies, we managed to pay for snacks and some art supplies, provide a small honorarium to the artists, and give a small donation to the church.
- A display of books about peace, violence-free schools and homes, pesticide-free lawns, clean environment, how to avoid violent entertainment and so on, for both parents and children.
- Peace decorations around the meeting area, such as large colourful posters, large doves, peaceful images of children and so on.

The following is the report of what happened at the first peace camp we ran in Calgary, Alberta. We can hardly wait until next year!

What Happened at  
**The Art of  
Peace Camp**

July 2006

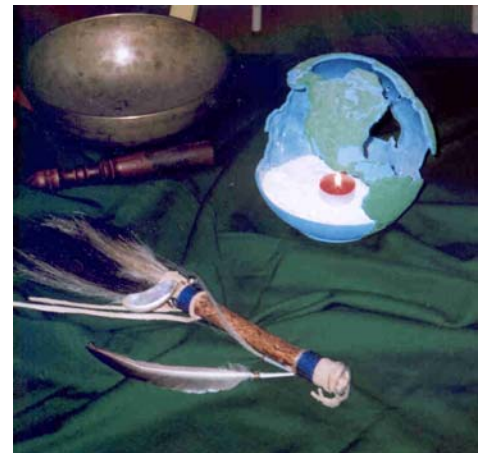
*Our hope is that others will explore the art of running a peace camp, too. These few pages will give you an idea of what we did and how we did it. If you have questions, please write to us.*

**Doors opened at 8:45 am**

Isabelle greeted all campers and parents every morning. Campers picked up their name tags, then visited the book display tables or began making art with Anna. Anna had a new peace art project each day.

**9:00 – 9:15 Opening Circle**

The children were called to the circle by the sound of the Tibetan prayer bowl. Seated on floor cushions, we began by lighting a candle for the children of the world. The children were introduced to the Indigenous use of the “talking stick.” Passing it in the circle, we shared news, ideas or reflections, and sometimes a joke.



**9:15** Half the peacemakers stayed in the gym with Fif for the Art of Drama (improv), the other half went elsewhere with Carolyn for the Art of Writing (freefall) using peace themes.

**10:25** Isabelle presented the Art of Snacking – beautiful trays of healthy food every day. When finished, the peacemakers made Art with Anna; some ran off a little extra energy with physical exercise. One camper offered juggling lessons, especially popular with boys.

**10: 40 – 11:10** The whole group sang and composed peace songs with Mélanie in The Art of Music.

**11:10 – 11:50** Half the peacemakers went to the Art of Writing, the rest to the Art of Drama.



**11:50 – 12:00 Closing Circle**

Using the “talking stick” we all offered comments, asked questions and made suggestions. When children handed in their name tags they received some peace-related souvenir to take home – stickers about saving water, Sierra Club pamphlet and stickers, peace pencils, bracelets bearing a dove symbol etc.

## Displays

We had book displays covering 3 large tables - some for parents and some for children. Some parents and children brought in books to share.

## Handouts

We made available information about Puppets for Peace by Project Ploughshares, The Sierra Club and pesticide-free lawns, Family pledge of nonviolence from Physicians for Global Survival, bullying prevention, Kids Can Free the Children, Peaceful Schools International organizations, effects of violent “entertainment,” war toys, and more...



In addition, a twelve year old girl brought handouts and anti-racism pins, and made a presentation about racism.

Another child shared information about a girls' school in Kenya which has few books or supplies. He asked us all to bring in books we could send to the school. He collected a full box to send with his brother who was flying to Kenya that week.

Another child composed, sang and taught the group to sing a song called “Peace in the World.” He is nine years old.



## Themes

Our daily themes were:

1. What is Peace?
2. Peace in Me
3. Peace in our Families and Communities
4. Peace with Nature
5. Peace in the World

## The CD

On Wednesday and Thursday, the children went alone or in small groups to Mélanie's office to record a piece that they had written or dramatized. This was all voluntary. They also recorded the song composed by the group. We were unconcerned about polishing or editing and saw this as a process art camp, with acceptance, exploration and peace overriding artistic excellence (although there certainly were excellent pieces.) The CD cover consisted of a collage of camp photos.

On Friday, these CDs were purchased by parents for \$1.00. Also, each child received a peace camp certificate as a souvenir of the week.

### Follow-up

1. Children will be mailed a “Happy International Peace Day” card for September 21<sup>st</sup>.
2. This report will be given to the Official Board at Scarboro United Church, which supported the idea and ensured that we had insurance in place for the children and leaders. A copy will be placed in the church library, another will be made available to Women in Black and an electronic copy will be posted at [www.carolynpogue.ca](http://www.carolynpogue.ca) so that anyone can download it as an outline for running their own peace camp.
3. The leaders will discuss holding a day-long spring peace camp when teachers have a Professional Development Day.



### From the Children’s Evaluations:

“I loved the idea of a peace camp. Every subject was fun.”

“I was able to speak what I wanted to.”

“Make it longer - we could bring lunch.”

“I liked the food, songs and crafts.”

“I liked how we got to write, act and sing and that we didn’t have to bring a snack. I also liked the art activities.”

“I liked drama with Fif.”

“I’d like to be a junior leader next year.”

“The banana bread was really good.”

“I liked the activities and the teachers.”



### **From the Parent's Evaluations:**

“The camp was incredibly well organized and staffed by highly skilled leaders – welcoming atmosphere, phone calls immediately returned, met on the church steps each morning... our daughter is learning about important world issues and asking for more information when she gets home. ... I think what you are doing is important and well thought out. Thank you.”

“Have one next year! I have been so pleased and impressed with my child's *joy*.”

“My son has already asked to go again next year.”

“Thank you for the healthy snacks.”



### **Three Little Bumps in the Road:**

1. On Tuesday morning a parent told me that her daughter had lice. I phoned public health, then wrote a quick note to parents which they received at noon. The children were checked on site by a volunteer and that ended the matter.
2. On Tuesday at noon a mother said that her son was to excuse himself during music time and go to a quiet place to pray. This request, made on religious grounds, was a surprise. She herself hadn't known that her husband would object to the music component.
3. On Wednesday a television reporter phoned to ask if he could film the camp. I sent home notes asking permission from children and parents; most consented. We prepared and waited but the reporter did not arrive or phone to cancel. This was disruptive and disappointing.

### **Current Events**

During the week of the Peace Camp, bombs were being dropped in Lebanon and Israel. Women in Black, one of the supporting groups for the Peace Camp, was active in Israel (and worldwide) in calling for an end to this violence. The children at the camp, aware of the news on television and in the newspapers, sent a message of solidarity and their hope for peace to two Women in Black – Vanessa in Lebanon and Gila in Jerusalem.



## Results:

Whenever we plant seeds of peace, we do not really know what fruits will grow. However, during the week we saw great leadership from children in small and big ways, including:

1. the presentation on racism made to 25 of us;
2. the presentation on the school in Kenya and the resulting collection of books;
3. the poem “Will Someone Teach Me Peace, Please?” recorded by an 11 year old was heard by the minister at Scarboro United Church. He invited her to read the poem at a joint worship service the following Sunday. The poem is published on the church website.
4. each peacemaker received a CD to remember the week;
5. tools for peace were explored and shared;
6. friendships developed;
7. resources for peace were exchanged.

## The People:

The 21 children ranged in age from 9 to 13. There were 10 girls.

Two volunteers with a passion for peace made the camp possible:

- o Isobelle Klaiber was our hostess and provided nutritious snacks
- o Anne Jessop, 16, has served as camp counselor at a residential camp in the Rockies
- o Three professional artists with a passion for peace held work/playshops each day:
- o Fif Fernandes, puppeteer & member of ACTRA
- o Carolyn Pogue, workshop facilitator & author
- o Mélanie Hartshorn-Walton, performer & teacher



## Finally,

I am grateful to the leadership provided by professional artists Fif Fernandes and Mélanie Hartshorn-Walton. I am also grateful for Anna Jessop for leading the children in art and in being generally *there* for the children. Isobelle Klaiber volunteered to help the moment she heard about the camp. She lent grace and beauty to the “the Art of Snacking” and to the whole camp. Isobelle, Fif and I are members of the peace group, Women in Black. Anna, Mélanie and I are members of Scarboro United Church. We are all grateful to have had the support of these organizations.

Special thanks to the finance and the outreach committees of Scarboro United Church for supporting us, to Claire McMordie, a camper’s grandmother and a member of Women in Black who made a financial contribution toward the camp for next year, helped promote the camp and who came every day to help with cleanup. The church custodian remarked that there was “nothing to do” after we left.

Maggi Montgomery-Heersink helped direct traffic and saved us by examining the children for lice. Thankfully, she didn’t find any! Women in Black received a donation from a multi-faith group in Calgary called Women in Spirituality. A part of these funds was used for the camp, too so that we could keep the costs to families low while still offering a small honorarium to the leaders. We are grateful to Scarboro United Church for allowing us the use of the gym and a meeting room free of charge.

**Next Year:**

We can follow the same general pattern, with the same or different arts offered.

It would be best if we can have a male artist and/or counselor (We were surprised by the number of boys who came.)

It would be best if the person who organizes and runs the details of the camp is not also one of the people running a workshop.



*It has been an honour to work and play with these children and leaders. Thank you to everyone, including the parents and grandparents who trusted us to establish this oasis of peace in our city.*

*May Peace Prevail.*

*Carolyn Pogue  
Calgary, Alberta  
2006*