



Initiatives of Change
Australia

MARCH 2023 ISSUE

March Newsbriefs



A Word from Our EO

Margaret Hepworth

Dear friends,

Recently I received a message from Nazanin Mazloomi, a member of the Bahai community. Nazanin wrote in reply to our invitation to come to our Iftar Dinner, hosted by the Afghan Australia Initiative and IofCA: 'That is a wonderful initiative to promote community cohesion. Well done IofCA!'



As we observe and celebrate, Ramadan, Passover, Easter and other rituals around the full moon, we can reflect on Nazanin's affirmation to 'promote community cohesion' to play an active role in bringing people together.

On his recent visit to Australia, IofC President Gerald Pillay reminded us to be global citizens - to cast our mind's eye across the world, to understand power and fear, and their inevitable destructive consequences, alongside the constructive values and action we can all take. Love, Honesty, Purity of Intent and Unselfishness. Say them again: Love, Honesty, Purity of Intent and Unselfishness.

What do they mean to each of us as individuals?
What do they mean to our society as a collective?

These values travelled with us as we welcomed the First Nations Canadians and found our way to introducing them to many First Peoples Australians. They travel with us still as we grow in the movement to the Voice to Parliament Referendum. Hold to these and seek clarity and direction from trusted sources.

Cheery blessings to you all over this special time.

Marg

View a clip of our work: [Jan - March 2023](#)

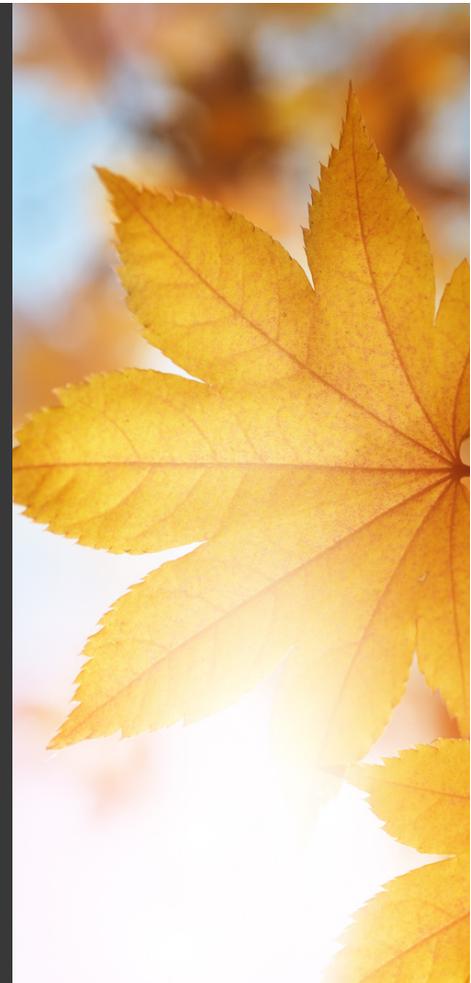
The IofCA annual report for the year 2021 -2022 is out.

Click Here: [Annual Report 2021-2022](#)

The report is a reflection of our community, programs and initiatives.



Through our programs and way of living IofCA helps build bridges of trust between our communities, promote mutual understanding and respect, and foster a sense of shared purpose and common humanity.





Asia Plateau India

The Pain and Joy of a Global Commitment – John Bond

The nine-day Utsav gathering at Asia Plateau, India, brought together 129 people active in IofC from 33 countries. Two-thirds of them were in their twenties and thirties, and they recognised that the future of IofC depends on them. In gatherings large and small participants tackled questions such as how to earn one's living while also working for the change in heart and mind on which solutions depend.

Many participants came from the teaching professions, and they planned an international conference and a handbook on IofC's contribution to education. Numerous spoke of the value of such a handbook, not least those at Asia Plateau who are holding monthly seminars for academics at the request of the Government of Maharashtra – Asia Plateau's state – as part of the state's commitment to heighten the quality of its higher education.

On the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Asia Plateau theatre, we glimpsed the potential which has made theatre such a powerful aspect of IofC's history. A sketch from the Latin American musical *Gente che Avanza*, by Ismar and Fabiana Villavicencio, humorous and profoundly moving, was equalled by the performance by a local group of a Marathi story written hundreds of years ago, whose message was as relevant today as when it was written.

We all learnt much about IofC's work in each other's countries. We felt the pain of colleagues in situations of abuse and conflict, and were stirred by their courage. We shared ideas for each other's initiatives, and for International events such as the Caux Forum this July. We left with a new commitment to support each other across the continents, and to focus particularly on regions of particular need and potential such as Lebanon, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Pic: IofC ETST educators





Reflections

Mohan Bhagwandas **Initiatives of Change Australia**

The reconnecting of about 130 of us from India and the global lofC network has been amazing. It's been a time of rethinking, resetting and rebooting our lives, relationships and work.

As we settle back in our "real" world situations - sustaining the inner listening, clarity of thinking and quality of living, we will take the collective experience of Utsav out there to help change the world. In a fragmenting world, being at Asia Plateau with you all gives a glimpse of the rock solid heritage, the eternal values and the unrelenting resilience within, that gives the needed energy to change things around us. That's my take away.

Daya Bhagwandas **Initiatives of Change Australia**

Personal sharing on panels, even the messages through some classical music performances, were painfully a wake-up call to reflect on values, rigid assumptions and traditions, and honour change through historical moments across the globe. Change needing to be the constant factor. Strong ancient culture and values are enriching, indispensable including the deep traditions of lofC as an intangible part of our expressions. Time for deep conversations, reflections, fun and laughter - a great combination.

[Click here to read the Utsav Journey Report](#)

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My intimacy with God and quiet time has become a covenant. I used to treat quiet time as an art that I can skip at will. However, after these conferences, I made quiet time to be a covenant to reflect on my daily routines and future planning.

One morning, the song team sang a song by Rob Wood. The song title was 'everyone has story'. After we broke into our family groups, we shared our stories. I was moved by how life by default is cruel to all humankind. Despite our different appearance, status quo, colour and nationalities, we immediately realised that we shared the same pain and journey of transformation with each other...Since my return to Australia two weeks ago, I have embarked on human oneness campaign. Further, I have held different engagement series with my family members, close friends and community members. I am linking the campaign to how unity and peace could be restored in South Sudan if the South Sudanese understood this oneness that they shared as South Sudanese nationals. - Anonymous

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Amiel Nubha Initiatives of Change Australia

Just before departing for Asia two days before Australia Day/Invasion Day this year, a time for joy and sorrow in Australia, I took some time to reflect on my life's journey and how far I have come. This was not an easy experience. I reflected on my personal refugee experiences and situations that put my life at risk at such a young age. I reflected on my early childhood dreams and aspirations. I reflected on my identity, and where that sits in the wider-Australian identity. I reflected on my journey to Australia, and what building peace has taught me over the last decade. I reflected on peace and freedom, and further reflected on whether Australia is at peace with itself and neighbours. Through my daily practice of quiet time, I was reminded that my story is a part of the whole, wide Australian story, a story built on pain, hope and resilience. This is what makes Australia unique. Australia is on a journey, and hopefully through my own personal transformation and commitment to live a life of service I will help others find clarity in fulfilment of their calling on this journey.

My journey with Barbara Lawler, globally known as Ibu, started in 2018 at the time when I was going through significant personal transformation while completing my education at a local university in Queensland, Australia. Having had spent 9 years in Australia, at the time I was slowly adjusting to the Australian lifestyle, grounding my feet, looking for belonging, identity crisis, going through cultural and character transformation and redefining my story in the Australian context.

For refugees and migrants, this period can be extremely challenging, and unfortunately many young people and emerging leaders often lose their way.

Finding your place in the wider-Australian story is not an easy journey. Thankfully, my contact with Ibu at the time enabled me to explore my story a little further, and through ongoing mentoring and by challenging my thoughts and ideas, a journey of healing began.

My first encounter with Initiatives of Change and Barbara was at a time when we were both strangers. Little did we know that we would spend many years ahead working together to build peace and trust across divides. In the same year, I was exposed to the film, "Beyond forgiving" which not only challenged my attitudes and views towards leadership, but also, how to let go of the painful past. The journey of healing and forgiveness as expressed by Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphalele in the documentary stirred strong emotions and feelings, and this experience has had profound impact on my journey and my own attitudes towards the past. Through deeper listening and spending time reflecting on my own journey, I was convinced that if Ginn and Letlapa could overcome, so would I. With higher and deeper insights, this documentary invited me to walk a new path, a path of humility and understanding.

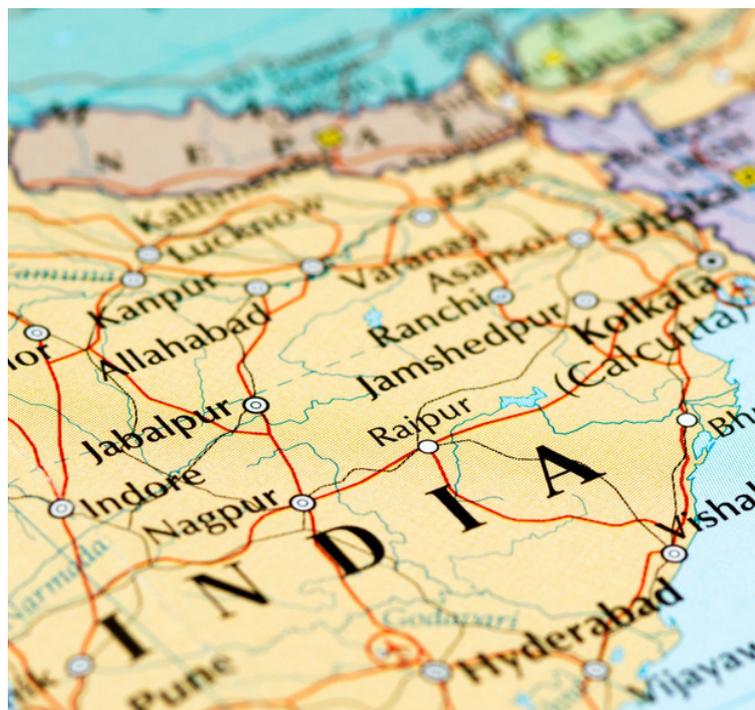
A path to forgive, and in doing so heal the pain of the past. I learnt that one does not have to wait for an apology to accept and forgive what may have happened. The power of forgiving and letting go of the past was liberating and further renewed my purpose and passion to continue advocating for genuine unity and reconciliation. Through this experience I felt freed, at peace and recommitted to live a life of service.

Meeting Letlapa, while at Asia Plateau, I had the privilege to engage, learn and draw so much wisdom from his life's journey and what healing historical pain meant for him and his community. This reaffirmed my commitment and dedication to close divides within my community, particularly when working within heightened situations in community. Through this encounter we reflected on the importance of bravery and they art of effective decision making in peacebuilding. Sustainable peacebuilding takes time and can be costly. Thus, it takes those who are brave and committed to drive a shared vision, even when life is at risk. We reflected on the context and impacts of apartheid, and the sacrifice paid to end it. Letlapa's powerful speech challenged me to reconsider my path and challenges associated with building long-lasting peace.

While in Asia Plateau, I was also humbled to meet Professor Rajmohan Gandhi, a mentor, and a friend.

Through this encounter, I reflected on the importance of intergenerational legacy, particularly when planting the seeds of hope that will feed many generations to come. When responding to ongoing pain in the community, sometimes it is easy to just focus on providing immediate relief. Unfortunately, this process only bandages the pain and suffering rather than addressing contributing factors to the conflict. The world is craving for leaders whose ideals and solution transcend many generations. Thinking transnationally and remaining committed to a shared future remains my ongoing struggle and I look forward to how this will inform and impact the work I do moving forward.

My trip to Indonesia and India has impacted me profoundly, and I look forward to continuing the exploration of our shared vision. I was truly moved by the hospitality, and how IofC networks in both countries ensured a smooth stay. I am eternally grateful to Initiatives of Change for the opportunity to learn, grow and share. And for Initiatives of Change Indonesia, I will take my ambassadorial role very seriously, and I cannot wait to return. Thank you for making me feel at home, and I promise to do the same next time you visit our beautiful Australia.





SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2023

Joy Of Global Harmony

Beginning on the old tennis court, with a cleansing smoking ceremony, Fan dancing, Tai Chi and the New World choir, we were treated to an event both spectacular and meaningful. We moved through Dylan Charles playing the didgeridoo and on into the Ballroom for the magic to grow. Performances from First Nations, Ash Dargan, the Tongji alumni, Warren Wills and the Young World Choir and our own IofCA choir singing a medley of songs drawn from five different nations; all framed by words of wisdom on the joys of diversity, culture of acceptance, and increasing our capacity to help everyone feel they belong, by Bwe Thay Deputy Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.



Joy of Global Harmony was organised by IofCA and the Tongji Melbourne Alumni Association.

Joy of Global Harmony



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I love seeing people moved by performance...This was a demonstration of Global Harmony! - Alison Whiting”



“

It was a wonderful afternoon. All our members were so happy!' - Bob Xu - Tongji University Alumni Association”





The Global Indigenous Dialogue – Broadening our Worldview

It was my privilege to be able to accompany our Canadian friends for the duration of their visit. The timing of their visit was perfect as the referendum on the Voice moved into a higher gear. They brought a depth of spirit and vision that resonated with those they met. They spoke of their own historic struggle to protect their treaties, and as Lewis Cardinal said more than once, to ensure those treaties are about relationship rather than merely transactional. In Canadian First Nations tradition it is about adopting each other in a covenantal way. This resonates with the inclusive way we were welcomed throughout the journey by First Peoples here.

The context of their visit was the Global Indigenous Dialogue – to bring together those who are engaged and with much to share about moving forward inclusively and effectively, both First Peoples and their allies. During this ten day visit to Australia and a brief two days in Aotearoa (New Zealand) the dialogue has started. It will continue in Caux on 17–22 July this year concurrently with the session, "Healing the Wounds of the Past".

Ideas about an ongoing exchange program of young people between Australia and Canada emerged in Wagga Wagga and Sydney. Uncle Hewitt Whyman spoke of it at the Mayoral reception in Wagga Wagga when the local First Nations community came out in force and there was a rich exchange with the Canadians – bush tucker, art exhibition, dancing, and gifts. On the following day the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation provided a bus and driver to take them to the Tirkandi Inaburra (Learning to Dream) – Boys to Men centre two hours west of Wagga Wagga for a rich exchange with the boys, staff and the Chairperson. It was good to have Margaret Hepworth and Dylan Charles travelling with us there.

For their last event in Australia, in Brisbane, Uncle Eric and Auntie Shirley Law drove three hours from Cherbourg especially to meet Chief Lee Crowchild in particular because his grandfather visited that Aboriginal community with a delegation of Canadian First Nations Chiefs in 1960 bringing the message of IofC (MRA). Uncle Eric was 12 and his father told him to take notice of the Chiefs because their experience is "just like ours". Chief Lee had visited Cherbourg in 1977. He said that our grandchildren should get to know each other, which may connect to the vision of an exchange program.

Chief Lee Crowchild spoke highly of the quality of engagement of Australian IofC with First Peoples here. I believe this reflected the reality of the encounters they had with First Peoples and their allies from Melbourne to Nhulunbuy. It built on relationships many of us have had walking beside First Peoples and their allies, sometimes over many years.

Ron Lawler



First Nations Wisdom for Regenerative Futures

Exceeding expectations, *First Nations Wisdom for Regenerative Futures* made its mark as a memorable Melbourne event at the iconic Capitol Theatre on Sunday 19 February. The event was organised by IofCA in partnership with the Sustainable Architecture Forum at the Australian Institute of Architects.

In front of a packed audience, we learnt of the need for sacred space to be found in urban areas in Canada, with 75% of Indigenous Canadians living in urban settings; 'How do we enable the spirit of place?' 'How do we create ready access for ceremony, for young people to learn and celebrate their culture?' 'We weren't just creating a space for ourselves; we were entering into a healing process for our whole city and everyone in that city.'

Resonating vibrations of the yidaki filled the theatre, First Nation Australians: Ash Dargan, Dylan Charles, Uncle Shane Charles, grounded us to a sacred space for deep listening. Imaginations sparked transporting us to a place of possibility guided by the wisdom of First Nations Canadians: Lewis Cardinal, Chief Lee Crowchild and Rainbow Cardinal.

The question on the lips of many changemakers who gathered - how might we learn from the experience of creating Canada's first urban ceremonial grounds in Edmonton, and create such a place in Melbourne?



**We don't meet
in the middle
of the bridge;
we cross over
it to each
others' side, to
meet, talk and
understand
their
perspective**

**-Lewis
Cardinal**



Resonating vibrations of the yidaki filled the theatre and grounded us to a sacred space for deep listening... Imaginations sparked transporting us to a place of possibility...



Dylan Charles



Ash Dargan



Uncle Shane Charles



Lewis Cardinal

CANADIAN TOUR



Monday 20 February: Community Yarning at Armagh.

A Community Yarning at Armagh, led by Uncle Shane Charles, allowed space for First Nations people to share what is on their hearts and minds, without interruption. Guests included Uncle Glenn Loughery, Major Sumner Mooghi from Adelaide and Dylan Charles. Non-indigenous guests sat in an outer circle, practicing deep listening. Mooghi shared on teaching children and grand children, 'once you 'get it' the ancestors will come and help you. Everyone of us has it - first nations or otherwise - that gut feeling, your spirit.'

Visit to the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria.

The visit to the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria, to meet Tracey Evans - Co-Chair, Aunty Geraldine Atkinson, and other Members, opened a deep dive into the process of Treaty. We were told, 'you will begin Treaty and it will need to be constantly worked on. 'Treaty is a sacred covenant. You do not lose sovereignty through Treaty - it is one sovereign nation forming a relationship with another. The framework will open the door for how it is going to be. We must take into consideration seven generations from now and the impact of our decisions and choices on them. We must begin to make these changes and important steps in the journey now.'



Panel Discussion: The Voice to Parliament at St Paul's Cathedral

A moving dialogue took place on Voice to Parliament and its significance ahead of the upcoming national referendum. The panel featured the Canadian First Nations Leaders Lewis Cardinal, Chief Lee Crowchild and Rainbow Cardinal, as well as the Cathedral's First Nations Canon, Uncle Glenn Loughrey, Uncle Shane Charles and Marg Hepworth.

You can access the recording at this link: [Panel Discussion: The Voice to Parliament](#)

Wagga Wagga - 21 February

Wagga Wagga City Council welcomed the delegation of First Nations representatives from Canada to their city. A Mayoral event was held to mark the visit in Council's E3 art space, providing the delegation with the opportunity to meet local Wiradjuri/Wiradyuri and First Nation Elders and community members.

'The event encouraged knowledge sharing relating to Canadian First Nations treaties and governance, with the event's timing connecting well with Australia's Uluru Statement from the Heart - Voice to Parliament process.' Council's Aboriginal Community Development Officer Bernard Higgins

'Coming together to listen and learn together makes us stronger and helps us all to grow and heal as a community,' Aunty Isabel Reid

'The opportunity to listen and exchange lived experiences with the delegation has been an enriching learning and healing opportunity for our Elders and community,' Uncle Hewitt said.

Tirkandi Youth Centre

'The visit to Tirkandi was extra special. Talking with the dedicated staff and Chair of the Board, Aunty Trish, revealed the depth of the work there for these young Aboriginal boys growing into manhood... Tirkandi seems an exemplary model for teaching academics, self-confidence and the importance of identity through learning culture. Should be studied by many.'

Chief Lee Crowchild and Dylan Charles shared their life journeys - both journeys of change, offering the Tirkandi boys guidance in life direction and life choices.

We were treated to an outstanding display of cultural pride and cultural identity by boys becoming men.' Watch a clip [here](#)

- Margaret Hepworth



The deep wisdom...carried and shared so freely everywhere has had an impact. What I personally learned from you all was the importance of patience - we are playing the long game and need to always be thinking seven generations ahead. Now we are planting seeds that will take decades, if not longer to come to fruition. The other thing I learned was the importance of building and sustaining relationships because that is the right way to do things. - Mike Lowe ”

CANADIAN TOUR



Sydney visit

The delegation respectfully participated in a Chassidic Sabbath at Newtown Synagogue. Messages from Chief Crowchild, Lewis Cardinal and Rainbow Cardinal of Love, Respect and Listening to one another transported us to a true sense of 'we are all one human family' - Tanya Fox

Arnhem Land

In Nhulunbuy Lewis, Rainbow and Chief Lee met with Mark Yingiya, 1st independent Aboriginal member of the NT Assembly and a colleague. Great conversations were also had with Richard Trudgen and his son Kendall.

Cherbourg

'Beautiful moment with Chief Lee Crowchild and Uncle Eric Law from Cherbourg presenting Chief with a gift from Cherbourg where Eric met Chief David Crowchild, Lee's grandfather, as a 12 year old .

Wonderful to have quite a few Indigenous Elders together in one place at the lovely home of Kerrie Collings-Silvey on the Brisbane River.' - Barbara Lawler

“

The visit has inspired us all, deepened our knowledge and understanding of many things, including conflict resolution, environmental solutions and ceremonial connectedness. - Marg Hepworth”

“

I admire them for the work they have put in this far. If we had their knowledge when we entered into Treaty we would have been so much further along... People are passionate about this and it fits into a Global Indigenous Dialogue...Words are hard to explain what the last ten days have been, but it has been very deep in meaning, dialogue, reflection and the ability to step back and think again about the real important things such as 'as long as the sun shines, the water flows and the grass grows, this land will always belong to the people of the land. - Chief Lee Crowchild

My heart is forever touched...ending with a life changing journey in Arnhem Land was good medicine...It will take me time to process just how many beautiful people I have met and how they touched my life in ways you cannot imagine. - Rainbow Cardinal”



Our Programs

WISDOM LEADERSHIP

**MELBOURNE
10 – 13 MARCH 2023**

Another Life Matters course ran over the Melbourne long weekend of 10-13 March, making a life-changing impact on those who took part. A large team of past participants supported the course by helping facilitate sessions and small "family groups" and working behind the scenes in the kitchen, contributing to a palpable feeling of love, care, service, listening and belonging. As usual it was a diverse group of participants including a young Aboriginal woman and participants from Afghan, Burundian, Chinese, French, Indonesian and Vietnamese backgrounds.

Themes covered included Identity and Belonging, Story-Sharing, Exploring Change, Relationships and Relationship Repair. A keynote talk by Desh Balasubramanian wonderfully wove together the personal and the global, drawing on his own life experiences from growing up in war-torn Sri Lanka to founding and running Ondru, a humanitarian organisation working towards a more connected, compassionate and equitable society, where art is the instrument of choice to provoke thought, evoke feeling and inspire change on issues of social justice. Each day started with a time of inner reflection introducing participants to the IofC practice of the quiet time with input on how to do it and illustrated by personal examples of how it leads to positive change.

Life Matters





QUOTES & PICS



My experience of Life Matters was like a river suddenly becoming clear - Life Matters Participant, 2023

Life Matters changed my life without teaching me, but it facilitated me to grow and finding meaning in my life. - Life Matters Participant March 2023



First Peoples Pathway

THE VOICE CAMPAIGN STEPS TO THE REFERENDUM

Initiatives of Change Australia (IofCA) responded to the Uluru Statement from the Heart invitation, set out in 2017, and to this day remain committed to, in tangible ways, playing its part in our national response.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for a process of truth-telling, where experiences about the history of First Nations Peoples are heard. It forms a vital part of the 'Makarrata' agenda - Voice, Treaty, Truth - which 'captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.' The Uluru statement concludes, 'in 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard... We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.'

The relationship with Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man Thomas Mayo strengthened as he delivered a talk at an intimate gathering in February 2022, speaking with the group on how to engage their support with the first phase the Uluru Statement from the Heart, calling for a Voice enshrined in the constitution.

The momentous support from IofCA was harnessed and the idea to bring awareness to the wider community around the Voice to Parliament was birthed. In January this year IofCA hosted both Thomas Mayo and Emily Holm for the first "Steps to the Referendum" forum. An event that drew a crowd of 65 participants from diverse backgrounds including church and interfaith groups, Reconciliation groups, teachers, journalists, political representatives and more, and kick started the conversation around what actions these groups and their constituents can take to further raise awareness around the Voice to Parliament.

IofCA understands that we are in a generational legacy moment, with the opportunity to create powerful change in Australia's history. Imagine how we will feel as a nation the day after the Yes vote gets in. Let's walk beside First Peoples in a movement with all Australian people for a better future.



The Voice Campaign, IofCA - Armagh, January 2023



Meeting Linda Burney, Minister for Indigenous Australians and Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah at the Higgins launch to the Voice Campaign, with Uncle Shane Charles speaking on the panel.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE WORKSHOP

DECEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023



LORETO MANDEVILLE HALL

Two workshops were held in December 2022 and January 2023 for staff members from Loreto Mandeville Hall.

Participants experienced a smoking ceremony, some for the first time, and worked together through workshops generating a deep understanding of what makes a healthy community.

Uncle Shane generously shared with the group his community cultural wheel and explained the ways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life, and how life exists within that system.

Participants were inspired to connect with nature, acknowledging the interconnectedness between their own health and that of the land.





TURRUK SESSION WOODS BAGOT

In March 2023, Turruk was tailored to suit the needs for esteemed architecture practice Woods Bagot, which employs more than 1000 people across six offices in Australia and in 11 different countries, in cities including New York, Hong Kong and Dubai. Co-creators Uncle Shane Charles and social impact designer and architect Sarah Naarden identified the areas of potential development. By crafting the initial meeting as cultural audits, the program was developed around the top eight questions asked by participants that specifically related to designing with First Peoples' perspectives in the built environment.

This was illustrated by examples of best-practise, protocols, procurement, processes, and grassroots lived experiences of unconscious bias and healing historical wounds. Contributions were made by Turruk guest speakers: Wiradjuri man Uncle Glenn Loughrey; Meriam woman Torres Strait Islander, Alana Marsh and Yorta Yorta Wurundjeri Boon Wurrung emerging leader, Dylan Charles.

Read full report - [The Turruk Effect](#)



“

Over the period of the Turruk Workshops at Woods Bagot, it has been a privilege to learn from Sarah Naarden, Uncle Shane Charles, Uncle Glen Loughrey and Alannah Marsh. The history, stories and knowledge that we as a studio have begun to learn during this course will greatly assist in the development of each individual's journey and the studio's cultural intelligence in our reconciliation journey together.

Turruk creates a space for safe learning and discussion. A key moment over the 5 weeks of Turruk have been the discussions following each session. The ideas that have been sparked along the way of how these learnings could assist in our design approach hold great opportunity and it's exciting to see those discussions occurring beyond Turruk and questions being asked. I look forward to further collaboration with Initiatives of Change in the future and to continue my learning journey -

Tahlia Landrigan
Interior Designer
Woods Bagot

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Healing and Reconciliation

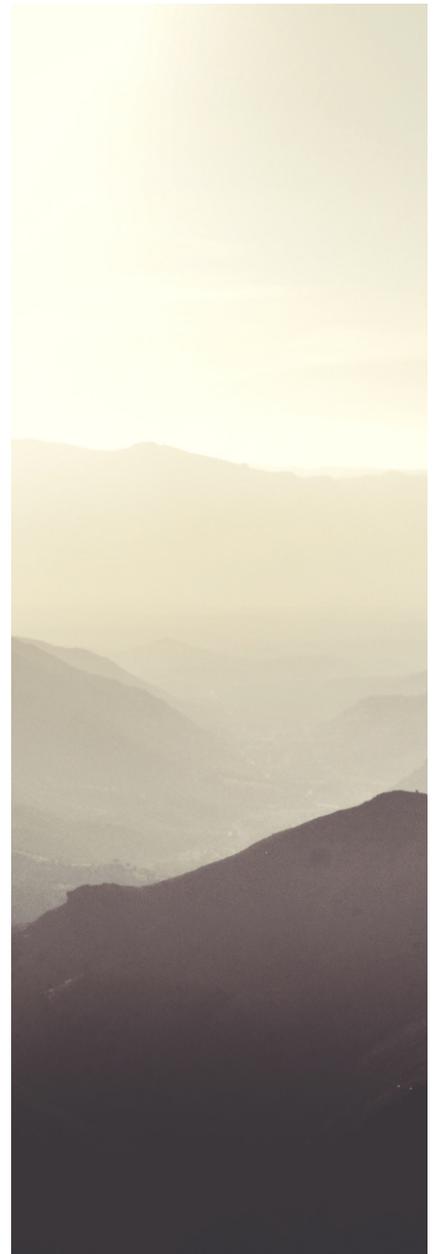
Creating Space

Creating space is an opportunity for the community to gather each month to deepen their own spiritual practice and renew their sense of purpose in the world. It is a joyful, fresh and loving space for reflection, inner listening and sharing. Creating Space is held on the first Monday of every month on Zoom.

Soul Care

Soul Care runs every second and fourth Wednesday of each month 7.30 - 9 pm at Armagh.

Each session will have some inspiring "soul food" on a prepared theme, followed by discussion and then a time of inner searching and connecting to the inner voice of wisdom within each one of us, followed by a sharing of what we learned.



CREATORS OF PEACE RETREAT



Thanks to coordinators Bek, Zohra, Prasanthi and Shoshana, the CoP retreat in Wilton NSW was home for three magical and reflective days in the bush. 15 CoP facilitators came together to reconnect, and also connect in-person with those from interstate.

The weekend was a great opportunity to get to know each other more personally and to build on the CoP Community of Practice.

“

There was a strong desire to connect and reflect over the weekend at the retreat and to that end it was a resounding success. Very quickly a safe space to BE was established and each and everyone contributed in their own unique way with sincerity and love in their heart. Thank you from every corner of my heart to you all for your warm and friendly participation.- Wendy Oughton

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Our Community



PROFESSOR GERALD PILLAY

lofC International President Professor Gerald Pillay visited Australia and New Zealand in March 2023 and had a series of meetings and public events in different cities.

Sydney

The lofCA/CoPA Sydney team hosted *An Evening in Conversation* with Gerald Pillay, the President of lofC International, on Wednesday 15 March, at the SGI Soka Gakkai International Buddhist Centre, Sydney Olympic Park.

The evening was a great opportunity for the Sydney teams to reflect on our history, work and achievements over the years, and to proudly share it with our International President.

Professor Gerald Pillay spoke to the gathering on his vision for a world that needs us, and what part we can play as a grass root organisation.

Brisbane

In Brisbane the lofCA network met in the home of Kerrie Collings-Silvey and her husband Dr Bill Silvey for an inspiring evening with Professor Pillay.

Amiel Nubaha: 'So thankful to have spent an evening full of remarkable inspiration from Professor Gerald Pillay.'

Melbourne

In Melbourne on Wednesday 29 March at an intimate gathering at Armagh some lofCA network members met with Prof Pillay for dinner and conversations

On Friday 31 March Professor Gerald Pillay spoke at a public gathering at Armagh, on the topic *The Link Between Personal Integrity and Public Change - Getting Back To Basics*. There were over 60 people present in person and another 60 joined in online to listen.

A recording of Professor Pillay's talk will be shared soon.

'There was something magical in that room last night. So many threads of thought woven into a profound narrative. Many came up to him afterwards saying, "this is one of the best talks I have been at."'
- Mohan Bhagwandas



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The organisation is like the shell of an egg, and the movement is the life inside, we must keep the shell strong enough to protect, and light enough for life to emerge.

We must always remain a grassroots movement committed to creating peace in the world, and not underestimate the power of our movement,
- Professor Pillay

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A Personal Note

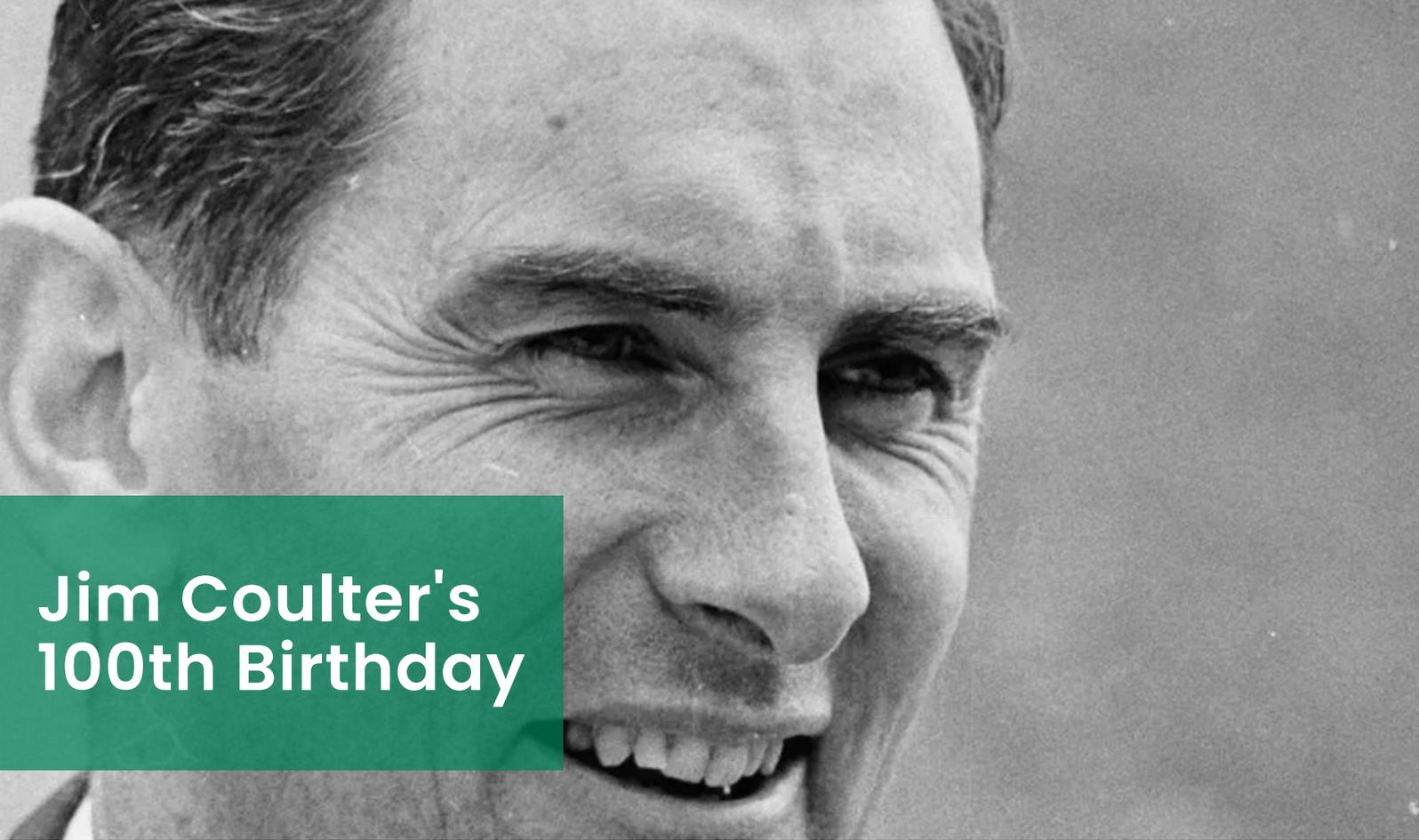
It has been a privilege to be the contact person for Gerald Pillay's program in Australia and New Zealand, liaising with Wellington, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, to ensure the detailed arrangements all fell into place. This has enabled me to reconnect with the lofC network in both countries at a very personal level.

The key take-aways from the talks and conversations with Gerald Pillay have been as follows:

- Local lofC teams across the world are the foundation on which this movement is built and has ensured its hundred year legacy
- From its very inception, 'changing the world' has been central to lofC
- Integrity and authenticity in public life is directly linked to integrity in private life
- lofC's standards of honesty, selflessness, purity of intention and love remain the one common thread for the entire global lofC community

Mohan Bhagwandas
Former Vice President and Acting President
lofC International





Jim Coulter's 100th Birthday

The Initiatives of Change community came together to celebrate the momentous occasion of Jim Coulter turning 100 in 2022. Jim is a beloved and respected member of our community and it was a great moment to share with friends and family.



Begin

4 Core Values

A summary of humanity's moral heritage as experienced through Initiatives of Change

Absolute honesty: a commitment to seek and speak the truth – and to not deceive others, or ourselves, in any way.

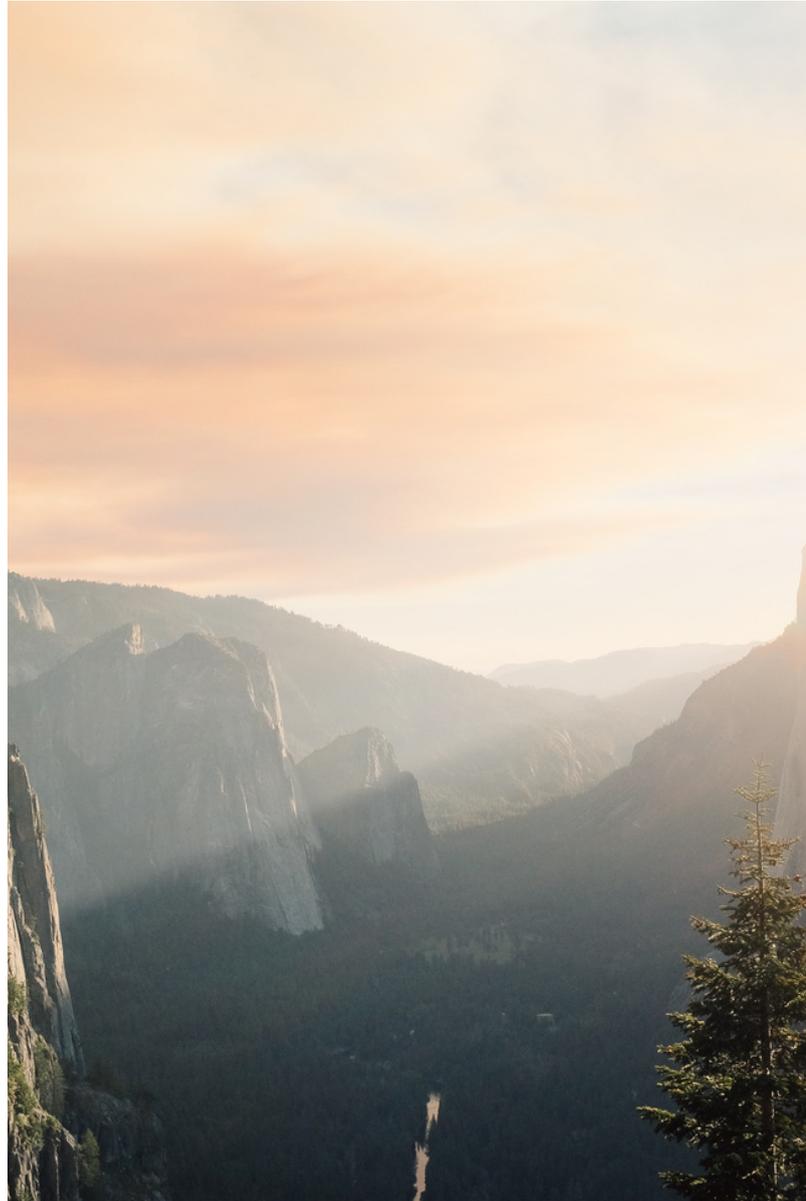
Absolute purity: purity of intent: freedom from being controlled by our desires, addictions, fears or insecurities.

Absolute unselfishness: a commitment to fairness, justice and generosity: a willingness to share.

Absolute love: a quality of the heart which lies at the root of all the core values. A readiness to let go of hatred and jealousy.

Why “Absolute”? - because it is too easy to compare ourselves with others and say “I am at least as honest as him and more unselfish than her. Without this quality of “absolute” these values lose their ability to challenge us and speak the truth to us.

But it's too hard – I will never reach those standards! That is right. None of us will ever be perfect. So there is always room for a little humility. Remember that when you are next tempted to judge someone else (or condemn yourself)!





WELCOME TO COUNTRY



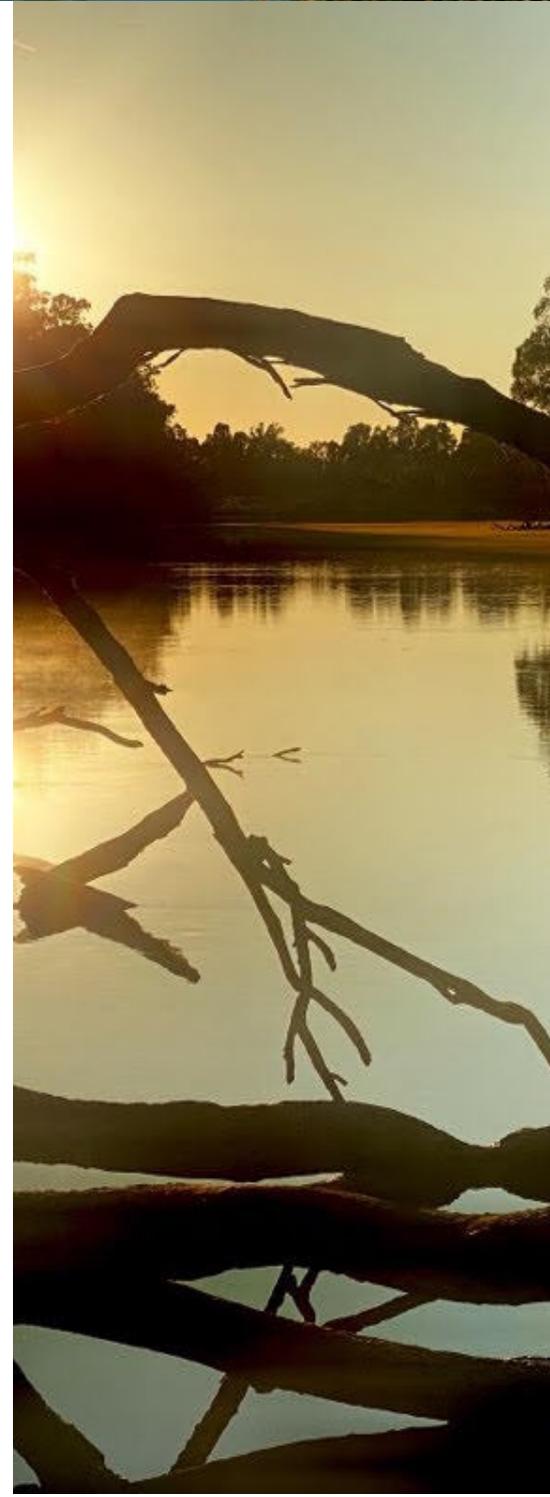
At Armagh, the IofC centre in Naarm (Melbourne), we are blessed to have Uncle Shane Charles and Dylan Charles living with us and offering Welcome to Country when we do events.

When we do Welcome to Country what it means is we are welcoming you into our home. As Aboriginal people, custodians of the land, country is our home. We live inside of nature. We welcome you with a smoking ceremony to remove any negative energy or bad spirits that attach themselves to your spirit and cleanse the area for business before we sit and talk. This is a part of our lore and tradition. It must be done in order to do ceremony or cultural practices or trade. We cleanse you before we sit with you and the smoke provides you with safe passage and protection. We smoke you before you enter and before you leave the space. It is cultural protocol and spiritually sacred for me, and for you the oldest form of spiritual cleansing on the planet.

Dylan 'djunda' Charles
Yorta Yorta Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung man

Alongside Welcome to Country, we start our events by acknowledging the First People's relationship with the land we are on. As Uncle Glen Loughrey reminds us, the First Peoples are "continuing custodians" of the land. Part of that acknowledgement involves paying our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging.

These protocols are important in promoting reconciliation and building positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. By acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and showing respect for Indigenous culture and traditions, non-Indigenous people can demonstrate their commitment to working towards a more inclusive and equitable society.





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