

## IAPP Launched in Ottawa, Canada on Parliament Hill

Robert Duffy  
October 31, 2017



Ottawa, Canada—The Canadian chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was inaugurated on October 31, 2017 at the Sir John A. MacDonald Building on Parliament Hill in the capital, Ottawa. The event was attended by 21 parliamentarians, representing all the political parties in Canada, as well as by 150 leaders of civil society, religion and various organizations from across the country.

The one-day conference, entitled “Reaching Indigenous Youth,” focused on an urgent social and political issue in Canada: indigenous youth at very high risk for drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. The event was held in a magnificent chamber in the Sir John A. MacDonald Building thanks to the gracious sponsorship of Hon. Anita Vandenberg, a member of Canada’s Parliament. Hon. Vandenberg greeted the audience and read a message from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who referred to the primacy of relations between the Canadian government and the indigenous population. Prime Minister Trudeau addressed this issue at the UN General Assembly in September 2017 and a month before, in August 2017, announced two new departments would be established within the Canadian government: a Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and a Department of Indigenous Services.



The master of ceremonies was one of Canada’s most well-known and respected former parliamentarians, Hon. Jean Augustine. A long-time Ambassador for Peace, Hon. Augustine was the first woman of color elected to the Parliament of Canada. She is known as a champion of equality, diversity and inclusion

throughout Canada and around the world, bringing various parties and participants together with her dignity, charm, humor and sensitivity.

The meeting opened with a traditional Anishinaabe welcome and prayer by indigenous drummer, Barbara Hill and Elder Albert Dumont (“South Wind”). It is now an established tradition at many government meetings in Canada to begin with an acknowledgement of the indigenous people, on whose traditional territories Canadians live and work.



Hon. Robert-Falcon Ouellette, an indigenous member of parliament from Winnipeg, served as moderator of the panel, which included youth leaders of the indigenous community. The panel addressed the question: “Is Cultural Genocide to Blame for the Situation of Indigenous Youth?” The panelists were Mr. Michael Swinwood, legal counsel to Elders Without Borders; Ms. Gabrielle Fayant, an indigenous activist and a radio talk show host; Mr. Mitch Huguenin, a graduate of Trent University; and Mr. Phillip Comeau, who is originally from Nunavut in northern Canada and serves as the education coordinator for Tungasuvvingat Inuit, an Inuit support center in the Ottawa region.

Dr. Thomas Walsh, chair of UPF International, gave a presentation on the IAPP, an initiative that was inspired by the founders of UPF. The signing of the declaration launching the IAPP-Canada by parliamentarians and other participants followed.

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, a member of the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments, scholar and past president of the Native Women's Association of Canada. Her impassioned presentation on how to solve the plight of the indigenous people of Canada moved the audience to tears.

With the leadership of Dr. Moonshik Kim, chair of UPF-Canada, and with the strong collaboration between the Canadian UPF team and the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), the event was a tremendous success.