



# Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Defend the earth. Defund the military!

Œuvrons pour la paix. Défendons la Terre. Définançons l'armée!

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Fall 2024

Number 127

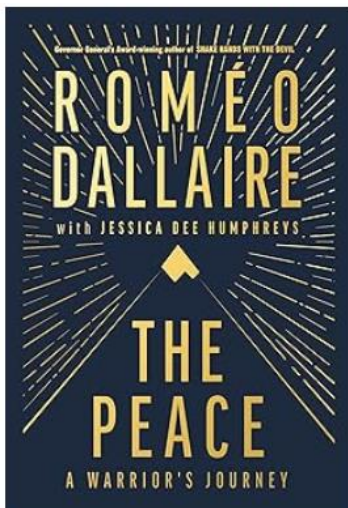
ISSN 1196-9970

## On Being a Warrior for Peace

by Jan Slakov

General Roméo Dallaire was clearly inspired by the WWII war efforts of his father and father-in-law, who risked so much to free Europe of fascism. One can only imagine the depth of betrayal he would have felt when he found himself in Rwanda, trying to prevent, and later to mitigate, the genocide, but decision-makers refused to authorize the assistance that could have turned the situation around.

Instead of becoming cynical and giving up, Dallaire went on to support various efforts such as the [Will to Intervene](#) aimed at preventing and stopping genocide, only to see how the types of power politics and indifference that enabled the Rwandan genocide have prevented these initiatives from making a real difference.



Now he's a strong advocate for the many things that can be done to prevent violence, including investing in development initiatives for young people in war torn nations where they could easily become child soldiers, using intelligence-based policing to prevent violence and ensuring full inclusion of women's civil society and peace-building efforts in governance. As he said in a 2024 interview on CBC's The House, "defence has got so much more to offer than simply waiting for a war to happen".

Conscience Canada members have been inspired by Dallaire's commitment and especially by his emphasis on peace-building, which he lays out in his most recent book: *The Peace: a warrior's journey*. Some of us have followed a very different path from his, only to arrive at similar conclusions: that if we really want peace, we must invest in the many nonviolent, community-building efforts that can prevent violence and war.

For instance, Québec member Maryse Azzaria wonders if the government's commitment to spend more on the military could be turned into something useful; what if the money were used to build capacity for saving lives, properties, ecosystems, in this era of ecological and social breakdown? This would include investing in a competent force of disciplined 'soldiers' specifically trained to act in emergency situations. As she says, "we need an army, but we don't need the bullets!"

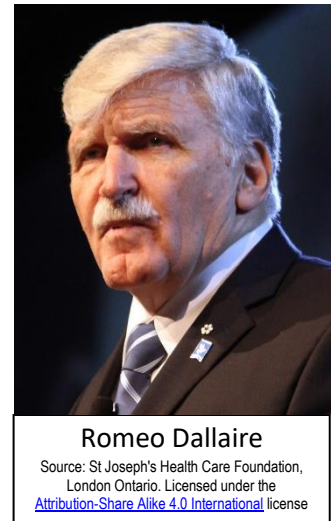
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In replying to a question about whether or not Canada ought to increase its military spending to at least 2% of GDP, as NATO leaders have been pushing, Dallaire explained that we are in an alliance that has set up parameters. You can work to renegotiate such parameters and if that doesn't succeed, you can opt out. But if you opt out you've got to invest in alternative solutions.

Members of Conscience Canada are conscientious objectors; we want to pay taxes for valuable social programs but we cannot, in good conscience, pay for war. Our stance leads us to ask ourselves how to protect what we value, if the commonly accepted means of defence violate our values. We learn that nonviolence is not a rejection of force but a 'force more powerful' that we can learn to use at all levels to improve the relationships we are part of, the relationships that form our world.

In *The Peace*, Dallaire makes the distinction between being 'at peace' when adversaries agree to a 'balance of power' type truce and 'the peace'. A country can be 'at peace' if the bombs are falling somewhere else, but if its government fails to work to resolve underlying conflict, if it undermines efforts to improve justice and peace, it is also undermining 'the peace', where we recognize and value the web of connection of which we are part, and work to build and strengthen it.



What if we took to heart what societies that have endured over millennia exemplify in their teachings about ubuntu, respect, reciprocity? As Sitting Bull said, "Let us put our minds together and see what life we can create for our children."

## Campaign Nonviolence & White Poppies

by Jan Slakov, CC president

If you're wondering how to add some fun to your white poppy efforts, here's an idea former board member Dwyer Sullivan shared, about what happened at his place for Hallowe'en:

For another candy:

- 1) what symbol am I wearing?
- 2) what does it stand for
- 3) what will you tell your class Nov 11th?

As a teacher, I excel with a captive audience – so hopefully many children, parents and classes know about what the white poppy stands for.

Good use of Halloween.

Peace Dwyer

Francophones (and francophiles!) will really appreciate the resources available through Échec à la guerre, including their 2023 white poppy image, which reads: "Russia, Ukraine, NATO - negotiate!" and in the centre "no one can win". And we have resources too. You can order wallet cards and sample poppies from Bruna Nota: [b.nota@icloud.com](mailto:b.nota@icloud.com) or call Jan (604) 223-9328.





*Clockwise from top:*

Bruna Nota and one of the many poppies she and friends have been making and distributing; Jan Slakov sporting her "To Remember is to End All War T-shirt with a homemade white poppy; Doug Hewitt-White with a button (not homemade, but it won't wilt in the rain)!; Terri Sleeva, also wearing a World Beyond War blue scarf (which originated among peace activists in Afghanistan); Local businesses or institutions have offered to host white poppy boxes like these, so people can easily pick one up.

On our website, we have information on how to make your own poppies: [Homemade Poppies](#) as well as a statement groups can sign on to: [White Poppy Campaign](#). And of course we're interested to hear about your ideas too! Did you get a letter into a local publication? Or maybe you set up a display at a friendly location.

It turns out that our white poppy campaign (from the International Day of Peace till the International Day of Human Rights, Sept. 21 - Dec. 10) overlaps with Campaign Nonviolence Action Days (Sept. 21 to Oct. 2, the International Day of Nonviolence). Last year people organized over 5000 events across the US and in 20 other countries. Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service has a treasure trove of resources to help organizers, including online trainings, some of which are free. Check it out at: [paceebene.org](http://paceebene.org).



Jan asked her local library to put out a display of books and other resources on the theme of peace and nonviolence.

Also, Parfaite Nhatuba, a Quaker peace organizer from Burundi who is involved in Unarmed Civilian Protection will be on a speaking/fundraising tour in western Canada right around the "Campaign Nonviolence Action Days". Board member Madelyn Mackay is one of the key organizers of this tour.

Bruna Nota is working with the Toronto Public Library (TPL) to organize peace book displays. With over 110 branches this requires a long lead time. It's gratifying that staff seem keen on the idea, which should roll out in time for next year's campaign.

So, if you'd like to get your community involved, now is a good time to start planning.



Parfaite Ntahuba and Janine Gagnier in front of the Victoria Quaker Meeting House

## Communicate! Connect! Collaborate!

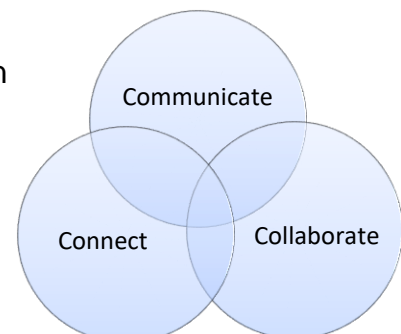
That was the message coming out of Conscience Canada's 2024 Annual General Meeting. Coming together in April via Zoom's virtual teleconferencing some 25 or so CC members from across the country discussed future plans and actions. Working in small breakout groups and then in a full plenary session we worked at finding answers to questions such as these:

- What kinds of actions might you like to organize or participate in?
- How can we use nonviolence as a tool to build trust & cooperation?
- How can we move beyond misinformed opinions & competitiveness towards understanding and empathy?
- In peace advocacy, is there a danger of making things worse; how can we work for peace most effectively?
- With our focus on withdrawing our complicity in war and militarism; how can we empower more people to act as conscientious objectors?

There was lively discussion that touched on many topics, campaigns and strategies: social media, spreading the word, climate emergency corps, peace in Gaza, No to CANSEC, On to Ottawa Peace Caravan, eco justice, military versus humanitarian spending, military impact on climate and environment, attracting and involving younger people, transforming culture and changing peoples' perspective.

And there were three strong themes that ran through all the talk, brainstorming and reflection.

- We need to **communicate** more and better through multiple channels;
- We have to **connect** to more people of diverse ages, cultures and viewpoints;
- We must try and **collaborate** with other peace, justice and environment groups.



So there it is. The three Cs. Our challenge (another C!) is finding willing people with the time and energy to get involved, focus on one or two of the 3Cs, and get down to work. In the last few months we have heard from some people wanting to learn more about CO and tax resistance as they are devastated by the ongoing genocide in Gaza. What they have told us is that CC is not well known, our website looks old and information is not easy to find. This is important feedback and brings into focus how critical the 3Cs are for advancing CC's cause.

Readers and supporters – please step up to the plate and assist CC in becoming more innovative. Join in and help by: developing new ways to creatively touch and influence readers of web and social media; connecting broadly with more people with diverse experiences; reaching out to other groups.

With luck at our next AGM we will be reporting on changes and improvements on all of the 3Cs.

To get in touch : [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) [janslavkov@proton.me](mailto:janslavkov@proton.me) [hwdoug@gmail.com](mailto:hwdoug@gmail.com)

## Join Conscience Canada

Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.  
*No membership fee (donations welcome!)*

Visit: [www.consciencecanada.ca/membership](http://www.consciencecanada.ca/membership)

Let us know if you can help out as a volunteer.  
We need website and social media contributors.  
New thinking & viewpoints are always welcome.

Email : [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca)



## CC BOARD

Doug Hewitt-White,  
Madelyn Mackay,  
Renée Nunan-Rappard,  
Jan Slavkov,  
Terri Sleevea,  
Charles Small,  
Linda Thyer

## Thanking retiring board members

A few board members stepped down this year, and we'd like to thank them for their service. Jan wrote to them, inviting them to share ideas for groups we might want to support in their honour. She adds, some of them aren't exactly "retiring" as they still help in many ways, such as mailing out the newsletter or white poppy cards or other tasks.

**Bruna Nota's** response reminds us that, especially for people who do not need tax receipts, often making a donation to an individual who has incurred costs because of their work is a great way to strengthen our web of creation and resistance.

Bruna writes:

"I am so very grateful that there are innumerable people who work tirelessly to make our world a better place. They help each one of us become more conscious of our joint humanity and of our profound debt to the Land, the Air, the Water and all the beings they hold. Some of those people work individually, others are part of organizations who take on specific areas of our society that need remediation. The needs are limitless. We all contribute what we can out of deep respect and humility. The organizations I am particularly grateful to, in no particular order, are:

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Their publications, blogs and policy analysis, provide food for thought and for action towards alternative ways of societal organization to the dominant one. You can sign up for various publications through their website: [policyalternatives.ca](http://policyalternatives.ca)

I am immensely grateful for the work of Environmental Defence [environmentaldefence.ca](http://environmentaldefence.ca) and Eco Justice [ecojustice.ca](http://ecojustice.ca), separately and together. As well as the work of Oxfam in the international realm [oxfam.ca](http://oxfam.ca) and of RAVEN Trust [raventrust.com](http://raventrust.com) helping Indigenous Peoples to hold our governments to account.

**Dwyer Sullivan** served on the Conscience Canada board for many years, bringing us a wealth of connections and insight.

Together with his late wife Sheila, Dwyer accomplished a great number of peace & justice work and adventures! He wrote, "One of the opportunities for youth we initiated was Camp Micah: Leadership



Sheila and Dwyer Sullivan, delighting in plotting, playing, praying for peace with justice

for Peace and Justice in 2009. We are extremely grateful for all the efforts contributed by staff, participants and funders over the years. I know each of us who have contributed to Camp Micah in any way have benefited, and for that I am very proud and thankful."

The camp's director, Katie Goerzen-Sheard, adds: Camp is grounded in the words of the prophet Micah: 'What does God require of you but to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God', and strives to be an intergenerational, multi-racial, and inclusive community of peacemakers, educators, and activists committed to the liberation of every human being from every kind of bondage.

You can send donations via e-transfer to [campmicahmail@gmail.com](mailto:campmicahmail@gmail.com) or through their website: [campmicah.ca](http://campmicah.ca).

Both **Mary Groh** and **Scott Albrecht** support Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) <https://cpt.org/>. Mary writes:

An organization that I am happy to support is Community Peacemaker Teams. It is about 35 years old now, and it aims to transform violence and oppression by training and supporting small teams of four to six people to be present, observe, document, accompany, intervene non-violently in places such as Hebron, Iraq/Kurdistan, Lesbos, Colombia, Turtle Island. It operates on a budget of a little over a million dollars. It does not have charitable status with CRA because of restrictions that would put on CPT. The Canadian address for donations is 103 Bellevue Ave. Toronto, ON M5T 2N8.

And Scott Albrecht, like previous board member Murray Lumley, has participated in CPT missions:

Community Peacemaker Teams (Christian Peacemaker Teams when I was actively involved in it) has violence-reduction teams in Canada and other places around the world. For me it was a way to put my Christian faith, including pacifist convictions, into action by offering myself in potentially risky non-violent responses to violence (both active and structural). I continue to admire and support their ability to demonstrate these alternatives and how they lead us to imagine a more just and non-violent world. I served with CPT from 2002-2006 in Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows, Ontario), Colombia, and in the Toronto office.

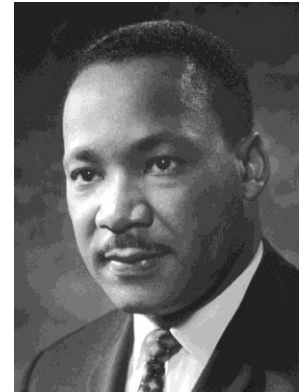
Mary also suggested supporting Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) [doctorswithoutborders.ca](https://doctorswithoutborders.ca) who have been doing amazing humanitarian work on behalf of sick and vulnerable people who are in some of the most hard-to-reach places on earth. MSF penetrates war-ravaged regions and bears witness to the violence and oppression that is being inflicted on innocent people by the powerful and their military forces.

Interesting to note that board member Renée Nunan-Rappard's daughter is a doctor who has participated in MSF work, notably in Palestine.

## Worth Repeating

"all life is inter-related. All [people] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be".

Martin Luther King:



Maria Ressa

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Democracy has become a woman-to-woman, man-to-man defense of our values. We're at a sliding door moment, where we can continue down the path we're on and descend further into fascism, or we can each choose to fight for a better world. To do that, you have to ask yourself: what are YOU willing to sacrifice for the truth?

I didn't know if I was going to be here today. Every day, I live with the real threat of spending the rest of my life in jail just because I'm a journalist. When I go home, I have no idea what the future holds, but it's worth the risk.

The destruction has happened. Now it's time to build – to create the world we want. Imagine the world as it should be. A world of peace, trust and empathy, bringing out the best that we can be. Now let's go and make it happen. Let's hold the line. Together.

From Nobel Lecture given by Nobel Peace Prize laureate 2021 Maria Ressa, Oslo, 10 December 2021

## Books that resonate

by Doug Hewitt-White

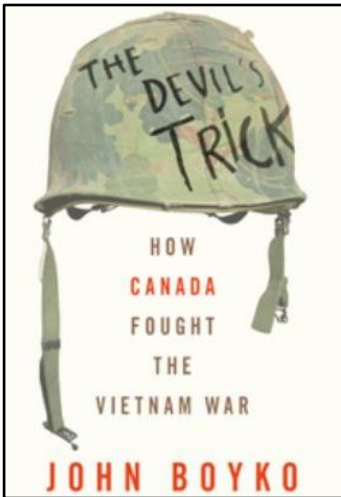
I have recently read two fascinating books: *The Devil's Trick – How Canada Fought the Vietnam War* by John Boyko and Maria Ressa's *How to Stand Up to a Dictator – the Fight for our Future* (2022).

The Devil's Trick recounts the history of Canada's involvement in Vietnam from the mid-fifties to the early eighties. Ressa's book narrates her personal history as a young child in the Philippines, then her school years in the US – all as a prelude to a career in international journalism and her founding in 2021 of [Rappler](https://rappler.com), an on-line Philippine news website.



Seemingly very different stories that for me rhyme. Boyko recounts the horrors unleashed in Vietnam. Ressa's book talks about journalism, its mission to challenge abuses of power and how vital it is for democracy.

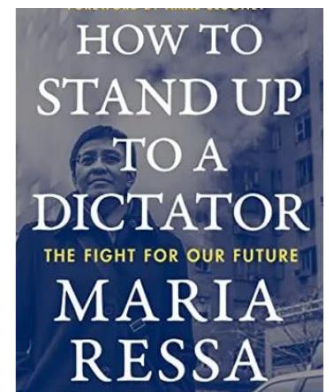
*The Devil's Trick* focusses on six stories of people caught up in Canada's involvement in Vietnam. Diplomats, medics, dodgers, deserters, volunteers, soldiers and immigrants – their lives weave



through the war and years after. These people and many other Canadians trying to make a difference and secure peace and justice for a war torn land: they all fail. Some reach peace within themselves. Some are haunted by their experiences. This book documents a rich and terrible history that brought me new insights along with rekindled memories of anger, marches, and protests – all that outrage that slowly but inevitably trickled away into shirking acquiescence and comfortable forgetfulness.

*How to Stand Up to a Dictator* describes corruption and corrosive group violence against targeted communities in Indonesia and the Philippines. For her efforts to report these truths Ressa was subject to 10 arrest warrants by the Philippine government. *Rappler* journalists and Ressa herself become victims of massive unrelenting on-line abuse and had to work to exhaustion

to survive. In seeking to understand the sources of these attacks and their methods Ressa and her team unearthed how social media algorithms were used to mobilize hateful disinformation – lies often generated by bots and relentlessly spread via automated sharing. All facilitated through methodical design in online platforms by the giants of surveillance capitalism.



So what rhymes? Boyko's book is about past history and is written for Canadians. Ressa speaks about the fight for our future and is reaching out to a global audience. Separately, but in parallel, both examine the power of disinformation, of lies that confuse, obscure, breed hate and anger. Both speak about the collapse of clear rational thinking when people get caught up in the hysteria of the manipulative mob, of frenzied gangs. Both detail the impact of traumatic stress from being under violent attack (military attack, attacks on reason and truth). And both books stress how essential it is to speak truth to power – openly, for all to hear. Finally both emphasize the power of sharing our humanity. Ressa's last concluding words: "collaborate, collaborate, collaborate"!

## ABOUT

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, an NGO working since 1978 to empower our members and all of society:

- to assert their conscientious objection to having their money conscripted, and earth's resources exploited, to pay for war and preparation for war;
- to champion the peace and well-being of all humankind; and
- to demand an end to all complicity and support for war and militarism

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Conscience Canada. This newsletter is available on-line at [www.consciencecanada.ca](http://www.consciencecanada.ca). If you are receiving a printed copy, let us know if you would prefer the on-line e-version (in colour, less expensive to produce!).