

# Sixth Annual Ottawa Peace Festival Promotes Peace and Harmony

By Bill Bhaneja, Peter Stockdale, and Daniel Mauro

The Canadian Department of Peace Initiative (CDPI) together with Ottawa's peace and justice groups will be holding its annual Peace Festival from September 21st to October 2nd marking the UN's two International Days of Peace and Nonviolence. This will be the sixth year of this popular festival celebrating Ottawans' activism in building a culture of nonviolent peace in the nation's capital. Over 15 groups are planning activities this year.

Highlights of the Festival include a special photo exhibit exhibit on the late Algonquin leader Grandfather William Commanda who passed away last year. The photo exhibit, which will be mounted at the Ottawa Public Library during the full month of September, is being organized by Circle of All Nations (CAN). This group together with the City of Peace Ottawa and CDPI, will hold a special Peace Walk and Paddle for Peace ceremony at Victoria Island on September 22.

The festival will be thus inaugurated with prayers in reverence for Mother Earth, communal harmony, social justice and peace, and indigenous wisdom. This is a theme that will be reverberating throughout the 12-day festival. The wind-up gala finale at the City Hall where the Friends for Peace [www.friendsforpeace.ca](http://www.friendsforpeace.ca) will host a day-long program of festivities. This year's special Friends for Peace Award is being posthumously awarded to the late NDP visionary leader Jack Layton, to be received by his wife MP Olivia Chow on Saturday, September 29 at the Ottawa City Hall.

Other festival events include: proclamation of Ottawa as a City of Peace, photo and art exhibits; a multi-performance peace concert; panel discussions, and much more. For further details, please watch the community calendar closer to the festival period on the following websites: [www.departmentofpeace.ca](http://www.departmentofpeace.ca), [www.civilianpeaceservice.ca](http://www.civilianpeaceservice.ca), [www.SpeakingVisionaries.com](http://www.SpeakingVisionaries.com)

"With a different kind of peace event every day throughout the 12 day festival period, every citizen has an opportunity to get out and participate, and to reflect on how peace, unity, and harmony can be achieved in today's world." The festival convenors, Bill Bhaneja and Peter Stockdale say, "We hope these fun and friendly events will give folks a chance to know what's happening in Ottawa to build community peace and be convinced that there are alternatives to violence and war in Canada and abroad."

Over the past five years, the festival organizers - without any funding from government sources - have offered an extensive program because of community groups' involvement, building it with their passion and conviction for peace and justice. Its expansion over the previous five festivals shows that there is a longing in the public for increased citizen participation in nonviolent peace building at home and abroad.

The Festival fits well with the inclusive vision of the two coordinating civil society organizers: Canadian Department of Peace Initiative (CDPI) and the City of Peace Ottawa. In their role as facilitators, the two groups aspire to involve communities and citizens to work towards building cities of peace, to enhance women and youth participation in peace-building, to promote inter-faith dialogue, and explore ways of resolving conflicts through nonviolent means.

For more on CDPI or City of Peace Ottawa, please visit: [departmentofpeace.ca](http://departmentofpeace.ca) and [mycityofpeace.com](http://mycityofpeace.com) (respectively).

**For further information about the peace festival, please contact Peter Stockdale: 613.852.4527 or Bill Bhaneja: 613.244.1979. All events are free and open to the public.**

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