

UNA-Canada Newsletter - Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2001

December Gala honoured UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette

by Elizabeth Ross, UNA-Canada Public Relations Officer

On Thursday, 7 December 2000, UNA-Canada held a fundraising gala in honour of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Louise Fréchette. The post of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations was created in 1998 to assist the Secretary-General in the discharge of the full range of his responsibilities. This has brought Ms. Fréchette a key-coordinating role, be it with regard to the operations in Kosovo or East Timor, or in the area of economic and social development.

She also spearheads the United Nations internal reform, and is responsible for promoting strategic partnerships, such as with the foundation set up by Ted Turner in support of the UN. Prior to joining the United Nations, Ms. Fréchette was the Deputy Minister of National Defence of

Canada from 1995-1998, and served as Canada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1992-1995. She also has had several diplomatic positions abroad, including as Canada's ambassador to Argentina.

UNA-Canada was very pleased to have the opportunity to recognize and celebrate Ms. Fréchette's global contributions in the reform of the UN and in the key area of peacekeeping.



Alain Gourd, President and CEO of BCE Media Inc., Louise Fréchette and UNA-Canada Executive Director Harry Qualman at the December Gala

The dinner-dance took place at the Hilton Montréal Bonaventure hotel. In attendance were dinner host Alain Gourd, President and CEO of BCE Media Inc., Jacques Joli-Coeur of the Quebec government, Bernard Dussault of Montréal International, and Pierre Pettigrew, Minister for International Trade. Ms. Fréchette spoke on the current challenges facing the United Nations.

Youth Agenda for World Summit 2002 Moves Full Speed Ahead

by Julie Larsen, Sustainable Development Junior Project Officer

Whether it be meeting with intergovernmental panels, designing an attention-grabbing website or connecting and recruiting young leaders committed to sustainable development from across the country, the Youth Agenda for World Summit 2002 is on a fast-track to becoming a youth-powered movement in urgent support of Canada's social and environmental advancement.

Youth Agenda for World Summit 2002 is a project initiated and coordinated by the United Nations Association in Canada with the aim of engaging youth in preparations for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. The project also strives to create a youth network that allows young Canadians to share their experiences and

collaborate on strategies to address Canada's sustainability challenges, far beyond the Summit itself. In December 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations announced that a World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) would take place in Johannesburg, South Africa to undertake, among other things, a ten-year review of Agenda 21.

Last month, an interim planning team of young leaders met with representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to discuss Canadian involvement in Rio+10. Although the government has yet to commence serious preparations for the Summit,

the two-hour consultation left participants with a better understanding of how to begin the development of a youth action plan for World Summit 2002 preparations.

February marked the recruitment and selection of the Youth Summit Team, through an extensive national outreach campaign that included over 100 environmental and youth organizations, select university newspapers from across the country and direct contact with 115 First Nations Friendship Centres. The response from young Canadians has been overwhelmingly positive and the dynamic youth who form the Youth Summit Team are preparing to rise to the challenge of spearheading youth involvement in the Summit. **(continued on page 2)**

To this end, the Team undertook a strategic planning and capacity-building retreat from March 8-11, 2001 and you can look forward to hearing about the outcome of this promising weekend.



Members of the Interim Planning Team Met in January

All of this work is supported by the launch of the Youth Agenda 2002 website, a tool that promotes the work of the Youth Summit Team, its spin-offs and the activities of young people in Canada and around the world. Currently the site contains information about Rio+10, a calendar of related events, past lessons to guide future youth undertakings and news about current youth initiatives. Make sure that you visit the website on a regular basis to avoid missing its continually evolving content at:

www.youth2002jeunesse.unac.org

UNA-Canada has received the support of numerous youth and non-youth organizations including the Sierra Youth Coalition,

Former UNA-Canada President Receives UNIFEM Canada Award

Past president of UNA-Canada, Muriel Smith was the second recipient of a UNIFEM Canada award established to recognize outstanding contributions to the advancement of women's empowerment and human rights.

"Muriel Smith is an extraordinary Canadian," said UNIFEM Canada President Kate White. "She believes in change and has a willingness for that change to begin with her."

Ms. Smith's career has spanned decades of

Youth Round Table on the Environment, Youth Organizing to Understand Conflict and Advocate Non-Violence, Coastal Zone Youth Forum, Youth Coastal Action Network, World Inter-Action Mondial, Young People's Press, Environnement Jeunesse,

Ontario Public Interest Research Group, Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales, Canadian Environmental Network, Action Canada for Population and Development, Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Students on Ice, the Institute On Governance, the National Capital Commission and Youth Action Network. The project is sponsored in part by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

If you know of individual youth or youth organizations that would like to get involved in Youth Agenda 2002, we count on and appreciate your support in spreading the word. This youth initiative is strengthened by the input and involvement of our branches and members.

public and volunteer service. She served



Muriel Smith, former president of UNA-Canada, accepts her award on March 8th, International Women's Day

in the Manitoba legislature as Deputy Premier and Minister Responsible for the

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Status of Women in the 1970s and 80s, and was president of UNA-Canada in the 1990s. She is currently a member of the Coordinating Group in Manitoba for UNPAC (the United Nations Platform for Action Committee). This is in addition to her volunteer involvement with numerous boards and committees.

Broadcast journalist Pamela Wallin, the first recipient of the UNIFEM Canada award, introduced Ms. Smith during the breakfast ceremony at the National Press Club.



2001: International Year of Volunteers

by Elizabeth Ross, UNA-Canada Public Relations Officer

There has never been a better time to volunteer than 2001, declared by the United Nations as International Year of Volunteers. The idea for an International Year of Volunteers (IYV) to be proclaimed as the world enters the 21st Century, to facilitate the vital contributions of volunteers and to recognize their achievements, arose from deliberations between several major international NGOs in the early 1990s. The concept first emerged within the United Nations system at a Policy Forum in Japan in 1996 of the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) and the United Nations University (UNU). The premise underlying IYV 2001 is that voluntary service is called for more than ever before to tackle areas of priority concern in the social, economic, cultural, humanitarian and peace-building fields and that more people are needed to offer their services as volunteers. For this to happen, there is a greater need for recognition and facilitation of volunteer work, drawing upon the best initia-

tives and efforts- the “best practice”- of volunteers networked to the greatest effect. There is a strong feeling also that the designation of an International Year of Volunteers by the UN General Assembly provides a valuable framework and establishes a favourable environment for the growth and yet more strategic use of volunteer contributions.

The concept of volunteering includes local and national efforts, as well as bilateral and international programmes. Volunteers have contributed significantly to the welfare and progress of industrialized and developing countries and within national and United Nations programmes of humanitarian assistance, technical cooperation and promotion of human rights, as well as democratization and peace. Voluntary service features prominently in the activities of NGOs, professional associations, trade unions and civic organiza-

tions. Many campaigns in areas such as literacy, immunization, and protection of the environment are crucially dependent on volunteer effort.

Many organizations have already begun to celebrate the International Year of Volunteers in a variety of ways. Benefit concerts, brick-laying ceremonies and volunteer appreciation evenings are just a few examples of ways in which to mark this unique occasion. If you are interested in volunteering in your community, contact your local volunteer office or community centre. For more information on the International Year of Volunteers and ways to get involved, contact Volunteer Canada at 1-800-670-0401 ext. 228 or visit their website at www.iyv.org or the United Nations Volunteers website at www.iyv2001.org.

What Kind of World...? Programme Teaches Students About Global Issues and UN Basics From a Canadian Perspective

by Joe Hooper, Educational Projects Junior Project Officer

If you were to walk in to Room 302 in Toronto's Metro Hall last month, you would have been in for a surprise. Picture this: 35 people talking and laughing, groups of them trying to untwist themselves from “human knots” (with varying and hilarious degrees of success), others acting in a small skit - pretending to be farmers tending their crops, and even more, discussing the difficulties of quickly passing pens, phones, oranges, wallets, and cups around a large circle (without dropping anything). Now if you had been there, and if you had looked carefully, you would have seen one person smiling and nodding approvingly at the level of energy and excitement. This person was Steve Mason, the Director of Educational Projects at United Nations Association's National Office in Ottawa, and the seemingly chaotic atmosphere was a volunteer training session for the “*What Kind of World...?*” programme.

“*What Kind of World...?*” is an educational programme for youth between the ages of 10 and 15. The project was built upon an idea originally developed by UNA-Canada volunteers Shane Roberts and Ilona Varjassy. The basis of the programme is a belief that educating youth about the UN and global issues is an important step in furthering Canada's ability to engage in successful international relations and projects. At the heart of the “*What Kind of World...?*” programme are three workshops that aim to teach students the basics of the UN system and a number of critical global issues from a Canadian perspective. Each one-hour session draws links between local and global issues, and highlights the role of Canada in the UN and the UN in daily life. Interactive learning is the key – activities, such as the “Human Knot” let youth learn about the UN system and foster

understanding of issues such as cooperation, communication and problem solving. “*What Kind of World...?*” is not only innovative in regards to its subject matter, but also in the way that it is brought to the youth.

Educators have traditionally been overworked, but today they are feeling the pressure of an increased workload more than ever. “*What Kind of World...?*” recognizes this and works to alleviate the pressure of teachers through the use of volunteers. People interested in the programme attend a volunteer training session, like the one in Toronto, and are given a brief background of the United Nations, Canada's role and history within the UN system, and the purposes of the “*What Kind of World...?*”

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programme. Groups are then given one of the three workshops and facilitate the lessons and activities, using the other groups as mock-students. This method allows the volunteers a chance to view how each activity actually works in a classroom setting and makes them aware of some issues that may arise.

For example, in Toronto, one of the groups that was doing the 'Human Knot' activity was unable to untwist themselves. After getting more hopelessly intertwined than they originally were, the facilitators for the lesson stopped the activity; what is interesting, however, is that even though the group was unable to work through the problem, valuable lessons were still drawn from the activity – such as the importance of cooperation, leadership, flexibility, and

communication.

After a training session, volunteers agree to go into a school and lead a workshop. Many volunteers find the process so enjoyable that they continue to work with the programme. As one volunteer writes, "What can I say, it was a joy to deliver this course and to see the students respond in such a positive manner. The principal has asked me to come in next September to the two grade five classes and the other grade six classes. The teacher also said she will deliver this material herself and is thrilled to hear it is translated in French!" Educators welcome the energy and knowledge of the volunteers as well as the easy integration of the workshops into their existing curriculums.

"*What Kind of World...?*" has been

extremely successful thus far with over 100 people attending ten cross-country training sessions. If you are interested in the programme, or perhaps wish to be a volunteer, please contact: Steve Mason, Director of Educational Projects, at steve@unac.org (t: 232-5751 x248) or visit our website at www.unac.org/learn

Annual General Meeting 2001

Where: Quebec City (at L'Hôtel Québec in Ste- Foy)

When: The week-end of June 8 to 10

Who: Voting delegates will be designated by the branches across the country, but any member in good standing is welcomed- indeed encouraged- to participate in the discussions.

For further information please contact Joan Broughton at (613) 232-5751 ext 230 or joan@unac.org

Youth International Internship Programme Renewed for 2001

UNA-Canada is pleased to announce the renewal of funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for its Junior Professional Consultant Programme (JPC) as part of the Youth International Internship Programme (YIIP). This employment programme is financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Federal government's Youth Employment Strategy. The programme, implemented and coordinated by the United Nations Association in Canada, offers Canadian university and college graduates valuable first paid career-related work experience in a United Nations (or UN-related) setting. There is a stipend allocated per intern to cover budgetary expenses for travel, medical insurance, training and orientation, and living allowance. This year's deadline is May 28, 2001. For further information, visit the UNA-Canada website at www.unac.org.

The following is an example of a current JPC placement. We strongly believe in the incredible impact the programme is having on young Canadians who are developing new skills and knowledge while contributing to organizations and communities around the world.

Profile of Junior Professional Consultant Sarah Bondy

Sarah Bondy was placed with the Water Resources, Development and Management Service Land and Water Development Division (AGLW) of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Rome. Given her educational background in water management and evaluation, Sarah is quite an asset to this division. Her main function is to develop water policy initiatives within AGLW with particular attention to the political economy and socio-economic aspects of water management for agricultural production. Sarah is currently researching and developing a proposal for a Water Demand Management Network for the Central Asian region. This project will be in conjunction with a regional training course to be held in Kazakhstan in September 2001.

Sarah is providing research and analysis to programmes which include rural groundwater and food production, natural resource valuation and integrated land and water management; providing substantive technical support to implementation of GEF international waters projects (Okavango and Maputo basins) and supporting capacity building work in water policy development and

implementation. In February, Sarah was given the opportunity of joining her FAO colleagues on mission to Cairo. Sarah writes, "I am exceedingly pleased with my placement with the AGLW in FAO. The placement builds directly upon my undergraduate and graduate training and research. It also allows me to experience and contribute to the realities of water resource management and projects which are developed through the United Nations system...I am still enough of a student to be embarrassingly impressed and excited to be meeting the very people I referenced so extensively in university papers!"

Changes in *Liaison*

For a variety of reasons we are changing both the timing and format of our newsletter. **As of this issue, *Liaison* is a quarterly publication** (rather than a bi-monthly). Please be assured that any subscriber who originally paid for six issues will still get those six issues, but future subscriptions/renewals will only cover four issues. The alternative was to increase the annual cost. We will shortly simplify its presentation. This will not affect the content but it will decrease layout-related costs and allow us greater flexibility with respect to the number of pages of any single issue. Do contact us with any questions.

The Story of a Congolese Refugee: “Courage, you said?”

by Cathy Senay, Communications Officer, UNA-Canada

M.T., co-founder and former Executive Director of the United Nations Association in Congo, arrived in Canada on December 7, 1998. But the 41 year-old father of four children aged 4 to 14 did not come here just to spend a white Christmas in Canada!

June 5, 1997 marked the beginning of the civil conflict in Congo-Brazzaville: “conflict” on the face of it, but a “coup” in reality. This period of intense political and economic instability, the second in only five years, destroyed the capital and took between 4 000 and 10 000 lives. In October of the same year, the conflict ended with the military victory of former President Denis Sassou Nguesso (1979-1992), made possible with the support of the Angolan Armed Forces, and with the defeat of outgoing President Pascal Lissouba, in the last national elections.

As an officer at the Department of Democratic Culture and Human Rights under the former president, M.T. was not spared the witch-hunt launched by Nguesso to do away with human rights advocates. Many, including M.T., were imprisoned. Described as partisans of the former regime by the national media, few of these people are still alive today.

Fearing for M.T.’s safety, a very close friend helped organize his escape. M.T. fled his country, leaving behind his wife and children. When he reached Paris, he decided to come to Canada. The Edmonton Human Rights Conference seemed like the perfect rationale.

In Canada, M.T. received assistance from UNA-Canada and from a former Association

project officer with whom he had worked in the early 1990s. He was given warm clothing, a place to live, and the necessary steps were undertaken within the proper Canadian institutions to grant him refugee status. M.T. not only had to struggle every day for his own survival, but live day and night haunted by the thought that his family continues to live in unsafe conditions somewhere in the south of his native country: “I felt as though I was going crazy because I had very little news about my wife during the first few months. I wanted to go home. It’s just as painful now that I know they are still alive, thinking that the people I love the most in this world are unable to get in touch with me”. M.T.’s patience is being put to the test because it takes six weeks for a letter to reach its destination. What’s more, the information

that circulates in Congo-Brazzaville is strictly monitored. Indeed, in this country, anything that is either written or uttered is systematically verified. For this reason, M.T. does not know exactly where his family has been living since his departure.

M.T. was granted refugee status April 26. His request was handled as an urgent case. Since then, he has been working in a fruit and vegetable store to save enough money to send for his wife and children. Once again, he will have to be patient because family reunification will not be possible for one year: “This is living hell. Every day I hope and pray that they are still alive. It’s very difficult and I feel powerless.” In fact, most family reunification cases take at least eight months. **(Please see M.T., P.6)**

REFUGEES

Apology

**I apologize for an oversight in my letter to our supporters. The letter should have recognized Ilona Varjassy, who had the initial idea and developed the vital school contacts to enable the “What Kind of World” project to get off the ground. Sorry, Ilona!
--Harry Qualman, Executive Director**

KOSOVO (con't)

UNHCR, for humanitarian issues. However, the UN coordinates all activities related to the overall civilian presence.

Security is not a UN concern even though it is under its auspices. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo should work closely with the military force command. On the field, the United States, through NATO International Security Forces (KFOR), head the military forces.

Who benefits from the peace agreement: NATO or the UN?

Some believe that the peace agreement drafted as part of the United Nations Organization strengthens the UN's role in resolving this conflict. In fact, if NATO was able to take military action without

the UN's consent, longer term civilian action was impossible. For this reason, the peace agreement was signed through the Security Council and not NATO. In fact, the case of Kosovo proves not only that the UN remains the only international agency capable of managing conflict resolutions and of helping the rebuilding of the countries concerned, but also that Council members are able to overcome their own personal interests in the name of international security.

However, we should not forget that this peace agreement was originally drafted by the G-8 member countries. Does this mean that the G-8 will replace the Security Council in international crisis management? Or will UN actions be submitted to the G-8, NATO, or other regional agencies? Furthermore, it should

be pointed out that the UN is responsible only for the civilian facet of this agreement. Does this mean that the future role of the Council will limit itself to humanitarian aid management and that international security issues will be handled by regional military organizations? What's more, the heads of state of the seven most highly industrialized nations and Russia agreed on humanitarian aid as part of the G-8 meeting, and not the Security Council, nor the UN General Assembly.

In conclusion, the UN seems to be at a crossroads and the Balkan crisis may be the catalyst for changes to come. Either the UN will come out a winner and profit from this crisis to improve its effectiveness, or this crisis may lead to an even greater marginalization of the UN as an international force.

HAP (con't)

M.T. (con't)

But in this instance, the insecurity and the ongoing war in Congo-Brazzaville prevent agents at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from doing their work. M.T. may have to wait longer, maybe a lot longer.

Losing one's nationality, job, worldly possessions, home, and especially family members, are only some of the obstacles that refugees and displaced persons have to face around the world. The goal is to start a new life, surrounded by loved-ones, if you're lucky.

Please note that M.T.'s name is kept confidential for his own safety.



Angus Archer in Hospital

Angus Archer, our past Executive Director and current Director of Development is in hospital suffering from some subsidiary effects of the stroke he had last October. Persons wishing to send him get-well greetings may do so by writing him at the National Office. We'll make sure he gets your wishes.

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