



FEBRUARY 2018

KAIROS CANADA

A FEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2017



Kitchi Blanket Exercise, June 2, Parliament Hill

The KAIROS Blanket Exercise continued to grow by leaps and bounds

'Kitchi' means 'really big' in the Anishinaabemowin language and that's an apt description of the KAIROS Blanket Exercise that took place on June 2, the second anniversary of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Eight hundred enthusiastic people of all ages gathered on Parliament Hill for this act of reclaiming the land for truth and reconciliation.

You can see in the picture above the huge circle of participants that formed on the lawn of Parliament Hill for a circle dance at the end. Somewhere in there are Lilian Marleny Bolvito Gonzalez and Luis Fernando Garcia Monroy, two Guatemalan youth who came to Canada to participate in the *Kitchi* Blanket Exercise and learn about the KAIROS Blanket Exercise in preparation for creating a Guatemalan version.

Thousands of other people in settings ranging from churches, schools and universities to government ministries experienced the KAIROS Blanket Exercise in 2017.

One particular achievement stands out for me: as of December 2017, every RCMP cadet in Canada will participate in the Blanket Exercise as an element of their training. The expectation is that officers who complete the Blanket Exercise will gain a deeper understanding of the devastating impact of colonization on Indigenous people in Canada and be subsequently better prepared to address the issues facing Indigenous communities today.

Our Land, our Rights, our Peace

In March, KAIROS welcomed a five-member delegation from the Philippines that included two Indigenous women leaders from mining affected communities in Mindanao. One of them was a Subanen leader, Nenita Andes Condez, a mother of three young children, and a courageous advocate for her people in the face of human rights violations and ecological damage caused by the actions of Canadian mining companies.



“We are calling for respect for Indigenous peoples rights,” Nenita told the Canadians she met. “We hope our efforts to expose what is happening in the Philippines will touch people’s hearts and minds and lead to support for the global struggle for mining justice and Indigenous rights.”

The tour took the delegates to Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto where they met with political representatives, including civil servants at Global Affairs Canada, the media, and members of the KAIROS community.

Along with sharing their stories and experiences, Nenita and the others voiced support for *Open for Justice*, a campaign calling for the establishment of an extractive sector ombudsperson to monitor Canadian overseas mining operations that KAIROS has been part of for years. On January 17, 2018, KAIROS and many other civil society groups welcomed an announcement by the Minister of International Trade that such an office had been created. It took a lot of dedicated work to make this happen, with advocacy campaigns going back 10 years – evidence that persistence, unflagging faith in a cause, and effective collaboration can bring about great results!

***No Más II* tour: “The role of women in peace-making in South Sudan is crucial.”**

Agnes Wasuk Petia and Awak Deng (right) from the South Sudan Council of Churches’ National Women’s Programme, a long time KAIROS partner, came to Canada in the fall for the *No Más II* tour, which took them to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. At public events and church services, in meetings with MPs and the media, they shared powerful stories about living their whole lives in situations of conflict.



They described the women-led peace-making efforts underway in South Sudan and delivered a heart-felt message to the Canadian government: women-based grassroots organizations that have proven themselves to be effective peace-building agents in conflict zones, including South Sudan, need sustained support. KAIROS is committed to journeying with women such as Agnes and Awak and we hope that you join us!

Reconciliation in the Watershed

Nibi, Gizaagi-igo

Water, we love you

Gimiigwechiwenimigo

We thank you

Gizhawenimigo

We respect you



These are the words of Doreen Day's Water Song and it came up again and again as KAIROS' Reconciliation in the Watershed program unfolded over the course of 2017.

The program focused on building relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and movements, and building connections with the work that Indigenous communities are undertaking to prevent destruction of their local watersheds. It also aimed at connecting local ecological issues with Indigenous rights, and identifying ways to renew relationships with Indigenous peoples.

KAIROS hosted five one-day Reconciliation in the Watershed workshops in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan, and supported additional community events involving Indigenous elders and speakers, as well as public speaking events with visiting KAIROS International partners.

As well, KAIROS launched the *New Economy Trailblazers* blog, an online space showcasing leading initiatives and champions for a clean energy economy. We were proud to bring attention to the Lubicon Solar project and its founder Melina Laboucan-Massimo as the first of many *Trailblazers*.

Migrant Justice

In March, KAIROS helped organize a public forum in Charlottetown focused on advancing the rights of migrant workers. Community organizations, migrant workers, faith groups, and provincial representatives spent a day building capacity for action, policy and solidarity on migrant worker rights.

In September, in Yellowknife, KAIROS hosted migrant justice conversations that broke new ground in reaching out to migrant workers and educating faith groups and civil society organizations on the plight of these workers and the shifts in Canada's immigration policy.

The first of five *Indigenous and Newcomer Friendships for a Just and Inclusive Canada* events took place in Fredericton in October. The event was well attended by more than 120 diverse and inter-generational participants who spoke at the end of a deepened commitment to learn each other's stories and work together to build more just communities.



Alma Brooks, KAIROS partner, and Connie Sorio, KAIROS staff, resting after the Kitchi Blanket Exercise on Parliament Hill, June 2.

The members of KAIROS are: The Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and The United Church of Canada.