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# Evaluation of *Hands United for Peace*

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## To the reader:

This report is a detailed evaluation of an unusual and creative peace education project for grade 4-5 students. The initiative was planned and delivered in Kingston during the 2015-6 school year, by a partnership consisting of a faith community, a public school and a volunteer-based peace group. The evaluation starts with a brief description of the project.

Readers are invited (and encouraged) to consult a more detailed description of the project -- *Hands United for Peace: Tapping the creativity of grade 4-5 students in community-based education*. It introduces the three partner groups, the gr. 4-5 class and the six project leaders. It provides useful information about the project: planning, teaching/learning methods, partnership operations, challenges, etc. It includes several photos of the project in action.

The Description is an appendix to this document – see Table of Contents. Both documents can also be found at the PeaceQuest-Kingston website: [www.peacequest.ca](http://www.peacequest.ca).

We will greatly appreciate your feedback about either document.



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## **Overview of *Hands United for Peace***

Planning *Hands United for Peace* started in the spring of 2015. David Melhorn-Boe (Minister of Music at Chalmers United Church in Kingston) shared with his colleague, Margaret Moncrieff (Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries at the church and choir director at Mulberry Waldorf School and of Young Choristers Limestone, with the Limestone District School Board), his notion of neighbourhood outreach to Sydenham Public School, across the street from the church. The goal: a shared peace education project. Near the end of that school year, they contacted Sandra Swan, vice-principal at the school, who reacted positively to the concept. They also discussed the idea with church member, Michael Cooke, who is active in PeaceQuest-Kingston, a volunteer-based local group. He saw a role in the project for his organization. Thus was born a three-way partnership of a faith community, a public school (along with the school board of which it is a part) and a local peace-work group. It would translate David's idea into a project for community-based education, lasting from the following February (2016) through the end of April.

Sandra suggested to David and Margaret that Sarah McCourt's grade 4-5 class would be an excellent focus for project activity at the school -- the students' age (9 - 11 years) was appropriate to the education objectives, and the teacher was already committed to community outreach and critical thinking about social issues at the core of her own teaching methods. Sarah was eager to participate.

By late summer, a six-page project proposal had been written. (*Note: the proposal is an appendix to this document.*) Teaching and learning in the project would be based on five creative activities (referred to in the proposal as "project elements"), woven together into an educational tapestry:

- A **banner** would be hung on the church tower, in the school and elsewhere around the community. Originally designed by David (with suggestions made by the planning team) and then outlined onto canvas by a local artist, painting would be done by the students and some youth from the church.
- In Sarah's class, students would read and reflect on a **story** about peace-making and the interdependence of all elements in nature.
- Under David's direction in five 90-minute work-shops, students would create a **soundscape** for the story, to deepen the expression of its meaning. Students would produce vocal, hand and finger sounds to establish atmosphere and convey feelings as the story was being read aloud at the public performance.
- Under Margaret's direction (in those same five workshops), students would learn to sing three **songs** about peace.
- The culmination of the project would be a **public performance** in the church sanctuary by the students -- of the soundscape as the story was being read, and of the songs (joined by some members of the church's choir).

The students were always the main focus of teaching/learning in project planning. It was also anticipated that educational outcomes would be felt within the school, the faith community and the peace group, and would extend beyond them into the neighbourhood and out into the wider community. The preparation of the descriptive report (mentioned above) was specified in the project proposal for possible uses by all three partners -- in particular by PeaceQuest-Kingston to inform other people and groups about ideas they might want to adapt and apply within their own communities.

## **Program evaluation in education**

Education and evaluation go together like the proverbial 'horse and carriage'. [People have varying interpretations of which part is horse and which part is carriage... ;-)] Evaluation of education projects, courses and programs has become a professional field in its own right. I've had considerable experience in the field and am familiar with its potential values -- and also with its challenges and potential shortcomings. My inclination is to do this work seriously and thoroughly, and to keep in mind the caveat that, while it can generate useful insights when it's been carefully done, it is never the final (or the only) 'story' about the education initiative in question.

My role in PeaceQuest-Kingston is music coordinator, and my original reason for wanting to be a part of the planning team was to have some involvement in a peace education project for elementary students which included music as a key teaching/learning ingredient. At my first planning team meeting in late August, however, I learned that both documentation and evaluation of the project would need to be done. *(Note: a planning team consisting of David, Margaret, Michael and myself had five hour-long meetings between August, 2015 and April, 2016.)*

Given my background in social research and education (teaching at various levels, curriculum development, social research, program evaluation, report writing), I quickly volunteered for the joint role of project description and evaluation. This responsibility was given to me, and I immediately began the information-gathering process.

## **Gathering information**

From the start, I was aware of potential conflicts within my dual role. I was a representative of one of the three partner groups, therefore with a 'stake' in the success of the project. At the same time, I was the person responsible for documenting and evaluating the project. I needed to be on the lookout for personal bias. From many years of research experiences using an array of methods in a variety of settings, I had developed substantial respect for the potential power (when carefully done) of the social science tool for research and analysis called 'participant observation'.

By early winter I had developed a 'Documentation and evaluation plan', which I shared with the five key project leaders, and which needed to get approval at the office of the Limestone District School Board. *(Note: the plan is an appendix to this document. Another appendix is the letter seeking school and board approval of the plan.)* It listed sources of information I expected to use -- a few were slightly revised and a few others added during the information-gathering process. *(Note: the list of information sources actually used in my research is an appendix to this document.)*

### **Limits on information-gathering**

- Representatives of the three partner groups never sat down together to identify essential purposes for the evaluation of the project or appropriate research strategies to use to address them. I shared with the project leaders my evaluation plan, based on my reading of the project proposal and my participation in early planning team meetings.
- The incredibly busy work and personal lives of the three teachers (David, Margaret and Sarah) naturally inhibited me from contacting them during the project when questions sometimes occurred to me about additional information that would be useful to have.
- The project was actually an ‘add-on’, fitting within the already substantial work responsibilities of the teachers. They could not be given ‘release time’ to write curriculum which would guide the project’s teaching/learning activities. Informal curriculum was continually being developed and revised as the project unfolded. (*Note: ‘twere ever thus in effective education...*). So I had little to guide my attention during observations – other than the proposal’s six project goals, some curriculum-related elements in the proposal, and occasional teaching-related comments in planning team meetings.
- Most of the guided reflection in the project occurred in Sarah’s class. Because of her busy and challenging teaching responsibilities, it would not have been convenient to her teaching schedule for me to be present to observe any of those ‘reflective’ lessons. She shared with me her journal of teaching/learning activities related to the project – very helpful, indeed.
- One limit came from two related mistakes that I made in information-gathering. I never asked Sarah about the *teaching/learning strategies* she used to facilitate student reflection. And I also forgot to ask her about any *assessment strategies* she used regarding student learning in the project. I’m sure she would have told me, had I remembered to ask. (...o memory, where art thou?...) We can ask: What are effective teaching/learning strategies to use to encourage (and to assess) student reflection about their productive and creative activities?
- My role in the project was basically a volunteer position. I am retired with lots of ‘free time’, yet I needed to put personal limits on the amount of time and energy I was willing and able to devote to an information-gathering process that could easily expand in several directions. In addition, I have hearing-loss and wear hearing aids. Since my observation position for the five workshops was located off to the side, I sometimes experienced difficulty getting all the content of students’ comments (questions, answers, suggestions, concerns, etc.).

### **Evaluation of the attainment of the six major project goals**

The project proposal listed its six goals:

- I) Create an open partnership between PeaceQuest-Kingston, Sydenham Public School through the Limestone District School Board, and Chalmers United Church.
- II) Raise awareness among participating children, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building as core values for Canadians.

*(the six project goals continue on the next page)*

- III) Help children develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world.
- IV) Encourage children to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.
- V) Build concrete relationships between the school and community groups such as PeaceQuest Kingston and Chalmers United Church and other community partners.
- VI) Develop a project template that PeaceQuest Kingston can share and promote with other communities regionally and nationally through its website and its affiliate groups across the country.

### Student learning

**In early May**, two days after the public performance at the end of the project, I came to the gr. 4-5 class to get students' feedback. I gave them a one-page questionnaire to be filled out anonymously. 23 students were enrolled in the class, a few more boys than girls -- 21 students were there this day. (*Note: the complete student feedback data set is an appendix to this document.*)

Their answers to the first question provide information about their general reactions to the project and establish useful context for interpreting what they learned relative to the project's goals.

### **How interesting was the project for you?**

| <i>Please circle<br/>your answer.</i> | not at all<br>interesting | a little bit<br>interesting | < half-way ><br>betw. these | pretty<br>interesting | very<br>interesting |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                       |                           | 6                           | 2                           | 11                    | 2                   |

(*Note: two students put their circles halfway between 'a little bit interesting' and 'pretty interesting'.*)

With the (understandable) limits on time Sarah gave me for gathering the feedback (30 minutes), and the space limits in a one-page questionnaire, I did not ask students to write explanations of their choices. Other questions asked them to write brief answers. One question asked **what they would say about the project to a friend or perhaps a teacher from another school which was considering a project like this one.** Some of these answers are relevant to question #1 (above), about 'how interesting' was the project.

Here is a representative sample of their written answers to that question (in their own words):

### **more positive comments:**

*The banner and the singing were fun! It's a great opportunity to teach others to learn about peace. One thing can make a difference. It's a great way to get your class working together. It was nerve-racking but fun. Do it. It will be useful and very educational. Participating is always good.*

### less positive comments:

*I don't prefer it myself, because I don't like singing, and I didn't remember what to do half the time. It's helping but not that much. A little bit boring. I would say I'm not sure about this project because for peace there has to be war. I think they could have talked more about peace and less about being 'perfect'.*

Without knowing more about how these students (age 9-11 years) would express their answers to feedback questions about their other teaching/learning activities, it is a bit of a challenge to interpret their collective assessment of the project. What is clear, though, is that their reaction was generally favourable.

### Three goals listed in the Project Proposal focused on student learning:

- II) Raise awareness among participating children, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building as core values for Canadians.
- III) Help children develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world.
- IV) Encourage children to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.

**We will look at data concerning the attainment of each goal separately.** The first evaluation section for each goal is presentation of data relevant to the goal (i.e., what happened?); the second section is called “analysis” (i.e., so what?). *(Note: for these three goals, the focus is on student learning. Learning by teachers, parents and community members will be addressed in the section focusing on goals I and V, which are related to the partnership.)*

**Project goal II:**      ***Raise awareness among participating children, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building as core values for Canadians.***

### The introductory lesson

**At the start of the project in mid-February**, David, Margaret and I visited the class for a 20-minute introduction to the project. After introducing themselves and me and mentioning the partner groups, they asked the students three questions: “Do you talk here about peace?” “What is peace?” “How can we build peace?” A few brief answers were given to each question. Unfortunately, because of my hearing loss, I didn’t catch exactly what the students said. One student pointed out that there was a small, wooden creation on top of a shelf at the back of the class: letters of the word, “peace”.

### First reading of the story

The story was *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* -- Douglas Wood, author, and Jon J Muth, artist; Scholastic Press, NY, 2003. (*Note: the book has a website.*)

"In this profoundly moving fable, the earth and all its creatures are suffering, for the people will not share their Truth, which gives them happiness and power, with those who are different from them. Then one brave Little Girl seeks the wisdom of the ancient Old Turtle, who sees that the people's Truth (YOU ARE LOVED) is not a whole truth, but broken. Old Turtle shows the girl the missing part of the Truth, and the Little Girl returns with it to her people. Then the pieces are brought together, and the broken Truth is made whole at last: YOU ARE LOVED...AND SO ARE THEY. Then the people and the earth are healed." (From Scholastic website.)

The book is widely respected and has been recommended for a variety of readers: from primary grades to adults.

**In late February**, the morning the banner-painting sessions started, Sarah read the story to the class for the first time. They talked about the story as a metaphor. Students were surprised that a little girl (after her visit to Old Turtle to get his advice) could put 'the pieces' of the community back together. They liked the connection between people, the earth and animals. They especially liked the central message of the story: "You are loved...and so are they."

### Banner-painting

**In late February** students came to the church hall in three small groups, so that each one could paint one of the hands on the banner. David identified the ingredients of the banner and gave instructions about painting. When the third group arrived, he was still busy preparing the paints, so I introduced the students to the banner. After pointing out its ingredients (a tree with branches, roots and leaves consisting of hands to be painted in rainbow colours and a globe at the top), I asked this small group how each banner ingredient might be part of thinking about peace. A few brief answers were given:

the globe: *all around the world*

hands: *people do it*

tree: *a tree gives us everything*

rainbow colours: (no one was sure of a possible meaning – I suggested 'all kinds of people')

### Making peace flags

**In early March**, the class watched a video about the significance (history, purpose and meaning) of peace flags in Nepal. Students then painted their own individual peace flags, deciding on their own symbols to use: pets, hearts, doves, peace signs, sunsets, trees, sunshine, happy faces, etc.



In class, the second reading of the story

**A few days later in March**, I went to Sarah's class to be there when the students heard the story read for the second time. Afterwards, I asked the class whether or not they thought the story was about peace, since the word ('peace') was never used in the story. Their answers:

Two students thought 'no'. One gave a reason: *It's about people fighting each other.*

The rest thought 'yes': *The little girl wanted people to get along. It's about doing something good for everyone. It's about doing the right thing for everyone. It's about people being happy or people wanting to be happy.*

Information from Sarah, the classroom teacher

In her Cogeco-TV interview at the banner-raising (**early April**) and again in her comments to the audience at the start of the final performance (**end of April**), Sarah stated that she could see effects of the project in student behaviour – especially how they listen to each other and care for each other.

In an interview at the conclusion of the project, she related that, from what they said in conversations and class discussions, she saw that students learned that peace is a choice that people can make. She explained that, at first they thought only that peace is the opposite of war – by the end of the project, they viewed peace as an individual thing, present in personal relationships and situations like classrooms.

In time for the fourth workshop (**late April**), the class had compiled two lists of ideas about peace, both of which would be incorporated (as spoken words) into the third song the students were learning:

> 'Concepts that we embrace':

- *We can build peace by looking for ways to help others in need.*
- *We can build peace by caring for our planet.*
- *We can build peace by looking for compromise.*
- *We can build peace by forgiving.*
- *We can build peace by treating others the way we want to be treated.*
- *We can build peace by showing respect.*

> 'Things accomplished by the class to build peace, **since the start of the school year**'  
(note: *emphasis added*):

- *We can build peace by feeding the hungry.*
- *We can build peace by raising money for cancer research.*
- *We can build peace by gathering resources and welcoming refugees to our city.*
- *We can build peace by planting trees.*
- *We can build peace by joining to make a difference and encouraging each other.*
- *We can build peace by singing and sharing stories.*

On the **morning of the final performance**, after the students heard the story read in class for the third time, Sarah asked them what they had gotten out of the project. Several of their comments were about peace – here are representative examples:

- many different ways of building peace
- unity/together/peace
- peace can be in any situation or circumstance -- more than just countries
- it doesn't have to be big -- peace can happen in small ways
- we change how we see the world
- peace can be shown in different ways including singing to show how much we care about each other

Students comments: from the feedback questionnaire

**What are two valuable things you learned from being part of the project?**

I organized their comments into five categories of meaning: making peace, local community / wider world, attitudes / values, treating others, and ingredients of the project. The 'making peace' category contains the most comments. (*Note: the word, 'peace', does not appear in any question.*)

Here is most of what they said about 'making peace':

*peace can be made in small ways, not just stopping something -- and that's world wide*

*there are thousands of ways to build peace      how to build peace      how to show peace*

*peace happens from just being nice      making somebody smile feels like peace*

*we should be more aware about peace because of the things that are happening in Syria etc.*

*one person can make a difference in peace      you have to be patient and be peaceful*

*we can make peace by entertaining      singing is one of the best ways to build peace*

I led the students through the five questions; it took them fifteen minutes to complete it. (*Note: they did this work seriously and thoughtfully.*) At the end, I asked them to turn their sheet over and on the back to complete the following sentence:

**In our search for peace we need to...**

I organized their answers into four categories of meaning – here are representative comments:

personal relationships with others

*find trust in others      help each other (5)      get together      work together*  
*be kind (5)      stay with a person to find how they act*

actions/relationships in the wider world

*spread the word all around the globe to everyone (2)      not have wars*  
*help the world in small ways, but big ways for who we're helping*  
*always look for different ways to build peace*  
*start paying attention to arguments and things of the sort, and try to make it more positive*

personal learning

*learn about what peace is and why we need peace in our life      use our brains*

general suggestions

*change      never give up      find the wildlife*

Project leaders' post-project comments about student learning about peace

- **Margaret:** *The content of the three songs was related to understanding peace and actions that can be taken to work toward peace. The songs provided students with an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the songs. A major thing learned from the performance (related to peace) was working together with classmates and others to share a message. Preparing the performance (soundscape and songs) deepened the students' understanding of the story.*
- **David:** *Working on the soundscape and the banner enabled the students to learn something of the value of working together, collaborating with others to create a work of beauty which expresses a vision.*
- **Sarah:** *At first, the students understood peace only as the opposite of war – by the end, they saw peace as individual, existing in personal relationships and places like a classroom. In addition, from beginning to end in the project, they learned about taking more risks – for example, in working for peace.*
- **Sandra:** *The 'message' of the project was essentially in line with Sarah's view of teaching/learning.*

*(project leaders' comments continue on next page)*

- **Michael:** *Students developed an ability to articulate specific actions that can contribute to peace-building. They learned about working as a team. They received affirmation that they are leaders and peace-makers.*
- **Jeffrey:** *Students learned about peace-building, by creating public art and a public performance. Their creative talents became a tool to stimulate reflection about peace. There were many examples of students' connection with project activities related to the idea and message of peace.*

## Project Goal II: Analysis

This is a key goal for the project. It focuses on increasing students' "awareness...of peace and peace-building". Clearly, that goal was achieved.

If a comparison is made between students' comments about peace early and late in the project, it is easy to see substantial growth in their understanding, articulateness and personal commitment regarding peace and the idea (and the challenge) of working for peace. As well, their later comments about what they learned show a thoughtful variety of interpretations about the significance and implications of peace as a value, and an equally impressive variety of ways it can be sought.

Sarah commented about their learning. At one point early in the project she *...tried to get them to think about how (peace) could relate to themselves but it didn't work. They could think about it in terms of wars and countries, greed, land...but not in relation to fearing others who think differently than ourselves.* But later: *At first, the students understood peace only as the opposite of war – by the end, they saw peace as individual, existing in personal relationships and places like a classroom.*

'Peace' is by no means a simple concept with a straightforward meaning; neither is 'peace-building'. My sense is that Canadians have, in general terms, **two different views of what peace is and how it can be achieved**. The two views are by no means total opposites or contradictions, and there is no implication here that one is more correct than the other.

- One view is that peace is very much a personal characteristic. It is located within the heart, soul and spirit of an individual. It comes from within and affects how a person treats other people. Peace-building, in this view, is all about developing a feeling of self-love and sharing that feeling with others – from the story, "You are loved...and so are they." It starts 'small' and moves outward: from the individual to personal relationships to community interactions to societal arrangements and eventually to world-wide realities.
- The other view is that peace is a characteristic of situations: families, friendships, classrooms, schools, workplaces, communities, societies, economies, international relations. It is based on ingredients of culture, social structure, power relationships and economic arrangements. Peace-building, in this view, is all about counteracting the social forces which generate and sustain the conditions of oppression, hatred, exploitation and war.

The Project Proposal takes no position on this distinction. Indeed, it provides no definition of ‘peace’ (or of ‘peace-building’). Other than this project goal, only one other specific comment is made (in Section 4, “Anticipated impact”): “...peacemaking (is) one of the most critical issues of our time.”

Both views can be seen in three songs the students performed. “Peace is this breath” expresses the first view. “Fly little white dove fly” expresses a mix of the two, and “As we walk along this road” expresses both (especially with the spoken words added by the class for the performance of the song). **Margaret** pointed out *that the content of the songs was related to understanding peace and actions that can be taken toward peace.*

Evidence of both views can be seen in **students’ comments**. In the first view: *Everyone is loved. You should care more about other people. You should love people, no matter how different they are from you.* In the second view: *Don’t get caught up on one thing and make war and hate people who are different – you need to see how everything is special. Everybody is equal. Nobody is better and nobody is worse. You shouldn’t be greedy.*

We can ask: What might have been different if the project proposal had articulated the project’s basic view(s) about the nature of peace and the essential characteristic(s) of peace-building? In particular, what kinds of curricular support might have been given to Sarah, as she navigated the tricky educational waters of these challenging issues?

Related to this first ambiguity is another suggested by the wording of Goal II: “...peace and peace-building **as core values** for Canadians” (my emphasis). The wording of the goal asserts that peace is a ‘core Canadian value’ and that fact is part of what is expected to be learned.

Obviously, ‘core values’ are not to be taken lightly. We can ask: How do Canadians know what are our core values? How do we know that ‘peace’ is one of them? Importantly for the project: How should the idea of ‘core values’, itself, be taught to gr. 4-5 students in a project such as this?

It would have been in Sarah’s class that the ‘core Canadian value’ issue primarily would have been addressed. For example, she showed a video about peace flags in Nepal, thus introducing the notion of *societal context*. This led to the students individually painting peace flags – a few included Canadian symbols (e.g., the maple leaf, the colours red and white, etc.), suggesting some appreciation of the matter of ‘core values’.

The danger in leaving these questions unanswered is that *peace* and *peace-building* (and *core values*) can get presented as something students don’t really need to think much about – that they are self-evidently good and can be accepted at face value. The students in this project clearly showed willingness and ability to do more critical analysis.

Three student comments open the door to a more nuanced consideration of peace and peace-building. In answer to my question about whether or not the story is about peace (since the word is never used in the story), one student said ‘no’, because: *“It’s about people fighting each other.”* On the questionnaire, one student made two comments. About the ‘main lesson learned’ from the project: *I’m not sure – it’s really complex.* About what to say to someone else considering doing a project like this: *I would say I’m not sure about this project, because for peace there has to be war.*

We can ask: Should teaching/learning in the project encourage students to accept certain ideas as *good* (and as *core values*), or should students be encouraged to ask serious questions about them?

**Project goal III:      *Help children develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world.***

The goal has two learning objectives for students: develop ‘deeper understanding of citizenship’ and develop ways to express ‘vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world’. Each is substantial in its own right. Both are developmental – that is, growth is expected. It is easy to presume that citizenship and vision/aspiration for the future are related ideas. We will look at them separately, in terms of data related to their accomplishment.

Deeper understanding of citizenship

‘Citizenship’ has two kinds of meanings: one specific, the other more general. The specific meaning of the word refers to a person’s political relationship to a nation-state, with all its rights and responsibilities. The more general meaning refers again to ‘rights and responsibilities’, but here as members of groups other than the nation-state: families, friendships, classrooms, schools, neighbourhoods, cities and towns, etc. (Example: ‘a good school citizen’.) This second meaning would include such ideas as cooperation, informed participation, respect for differences, obeying the rules, etc.

The **Project Proposal** does not define its meaning of the term. It repeats the vagueness in section 5 (“Beneficiaries”): *The participating youth benefit through the exploration of diverse perspectives and common ground, by developing their understanding of citizenship and by honing their skills in art, music, storytelling and expression.* In section 4 (“Anticipated Impact”) it implies that the second meaning is what is intended: *“Affirm and expand the knowledge, experience, creativity and contribution of Kingston’s youth to nurturing peace in their circles (family, school, community).”*

Neither does the Proposal identify ways in which a ‘deeper understanding of citizenship’ might be accomplished through project activities.

The **banner** – especially when, as originally planned, it was first raised onto the church tower – was a symbol of the connection of the project to the neighbourhood and the wider community. With media documenting the event and an audience present, students saw that it had a spread of respect and interest.

Nothing in the **five workshops and the performance** addressed the matter of ‘citizenship’ in the first (more specific) sense. In the second meaning, however, indirect attention was given.

- **Margaret:**      *Through the performance, students learned to work together with classmates and Chalmers Choir members to share a message.*
- **David:**        *It is my hope that (through the performance) students learned the value of working together with others to create a work of beauty that expresses a shared vision.*
- **Michael:**      *Students learned how to work together as a team (for the performance)....They had to be flexible and they discovered that things don’t always go as planned.*

- **Sarah:** *From beginning to end, they learned to take more risks...This was the first time for them in an inter-generational experience (note: many members of Chalmers Choir were 2-3 generations ahead of the students) – they don't have lots of experience with this....If community connection is an important goal, the performance was valuable for that.*

It was through **lessons and discussions in Sarah's class** that the second meaning of citizenship was given educational relevance in the project. I have no information to indicate that this delegation of responsibility happened intentionally because of project planning. Rather, Sandra's decision to invite Sarah and her students into the project was an incredibly fortunate step in project development (and a wise decision by Sandra), because a major, year-long focus of teaching/learning for Sarah is connecting her students to activities, projects, institutions and social relationships in the community beyond the school. Sarah pointed out that the project happened at a perfect time in the year: *the students were already thinking about these things – the education was holistic – (that is,) how to make a difference in our community.*

Just one of many possible examples from Sarah's course-planning: Adjacent in time to this project was an art-related project initiated by Sarah and local artist, Nancy Douglas. It was called "Neighbours". The artist met regularly with students over a several-week period to produce an art exhibit, presented in late May and early June at Queen's Studio Gallery. Students' artwork included pieces about their homes, the neighbourhood of the school and relationships between the city of Kingston and First Nations people who have lived in this part of Ontario.

For the raising of the banner, the **class compiled a list of ways to build peace**. Students individually spoke the items to the audience from the church steps:

*We listen. We talk. We share our ideas. We try to understand others. We compromise. We come with open minds. We come with open hearts. We can build peace.*

A few weeks later, the class compiled their **list of things accomplished since September to build peace**, for speaking aloud during the third song.

Both lists have relevance to the second (more general) meaning of 'citizenship'. If we look closely at **students' (questionnaire) comments about the course**, we can see the expression of some ideas related to the second (more general) meaning of 'citizenship':

*You should remember that one big thing is part of many little things. Peace takes time. Everyone should be treated the same. Peace can be created in many ways and in many different situations. Help the world in small ways, but big ways for who we're helping. People should care more about other people. (People should) care about the world. With people, look at the things you have in common. (The project is) a great way to get your class working together. Put it (the project or peace?) on the news. We could make the project bigger -- like if we start a petition and send it to City Hall or the Prime Minister. I'm not really sure (how to build peace) -- it's really complex.*

#### Vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world

The wording of this goal is extremely broad. The project, itself, is specifically directed at learning about peace, which is an idea with clear relevance for "the future of the country and the world".

However the goal does not indicate this focus – it leaves the notion of “the future of the country and the world” open – and therefore, essentially vague. It’s difficult to know what kind of information about student learning would pertain to the goal as it is written.

What general **visions and aspirations did the students express**? A few can be found in their answers **on the questionnaire** – these are representative:

*Everyone should be treated the same. You should love people, no matter how different they are from you. We should celebrate that we're different. (People should) care about the world. Always think about being kind and generous.*

Other comments, as we have seen earlier, express visions and aspirations specifically about peace. (*Note: they don't need to be repeated here.*) The project certainly gave to the students *permission* to hold such visions and aspirations, and even *validation* for holding them.

Again, it was **in Sarah's class** where guided reflection about “vision and aspiration” would have taken place. I didn't observe any of her classes, so I have no observation data about this matter.

In her journal she commented about students' understanding of the phrase so vital to the message of the story, “You are loved....and so are they”: *The phrase is really about our concept of us and them, we and they, you and me. This is immediate – in our families, classrooms, schools, neighbourhoods... and our political leaders, our countries and the world.* It would have been a major educational challenge for her and the students to shift this discussion beyond the immediacy of ‘here and now’, into wider contexts of location and into aspirations/visions for future periods of time.

### **Project Goal III: Analysis**

If ‘**citizenship**’ is understood in its more general meaning, the goal to generate a ‘deeper understanding of citizenship’ was clearly attained. The main lesson of the story, the teamwork that was generated in producing the final presentation (including soundscape and songs), the group's satisfaction associated with its successful performance, and the guided reflection that happened in Sarah's class: taken together, all these activities led students to recognize and appreciate how mutual respect and teamwork enable groups of all sorts to function effectively. (*Note: I have no data to show whether or not the term, ‘citizenship’, itself entered into students' considerations.*)

If ‘citizenship’ is considered in its more narrowly political meaning, there is not much evidence to show that the goal was attained.

Regarding “**vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world**”, the data give a mixed picture of accomplishment. Certainly the students were thinking about possibilities for peace in the future – what it might be like, how it might be accomplished in and through personal attitudes and interactions. There is little evidence to show that their visions of the future included a wider array of situations, contexts and challenges – especially pertaining to “the country and the world”. Rather, they addressed *peace* (in its various meanings), and their attention was much closer to home -- the classroom, the school, the local community...in the present day.

The important work of social scientists Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Erik Erikson focused on stages of cognitive and moral development. The implications of such ideas would be useful to keep in



mind as we try to interpret the project's accomplishments – especially because this goal presumes that these 9-, 10- and 11-year-old learners would do some decently complex and abstract interpretive thinking about their experiences of the world...close at hand, farther afield and into the future. We can ask: What would be required in terms of cognitive development for these students to consider “vision(s) and aspiration(s) for the future of the country and the world”?

In her journal, Sarah commented: *The story is beautiful, both in the way it's written and illustrated. It can be read on many different levels. I kind of think the story itself is written for adults, as it seems to be a parallel to world history. I'm not sure really on what level the kids can see that or should see that.* She also wrote: *In our class we are having social undercurrents that are challenging us to do what we say, and have our actions match what we are learning about building peace.*

**Project goal IV:      *Encourage children to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.***

This goal is especially important because it introduces key activities which in combination establish the project as *experiential education*: student creativity, reflection, and engagement in community life. Attention to “reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life” has been given earlier in the evaluation. Data in this part will focus primarily on the role of **student creativity** in teaching/learning.

The Project Proposal identifies five elements of student creativity (in Section 3, “Project Elements”):

- Creation of a Public Art Piece: (Students and youth from Chalmers United Church) will create a **banner** entitled *Hands United for Peace*.
- Storytelling and Musical Composition: A series of workshops for students (in the gr. 4-5 class)...will focus on a...**story** about peace-making and the interdependence of all elements of nature. The children will use the storytelling as an inspiration to create a **soundscape** that expresses key themes (of the story).
- Voice and song: An “intergenerational project choir” (will include) members from the gr. 4-5 class ...and Chalmers choir. They will learn one or more **songs** related to the theme of peace....
- A Public Performance: A **public performance** (will be) the culmination of the project. It will include the story, soundscape and song.

Two additional visual art activities were added in Sarah's class: painting peace flags, and painting scenes from the story.

Student comments about *creativity* ingredients in the project, from the post-project questionnaire:

| <b>The project had 5 parts:</b>                                     | banner    | story    | soundscape<br>for the story | songs    | public<br>presentation |
|---|-----------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| <i>Draw a circle around your<br/>favourite part of the project.</i> | <b>15</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b>                    | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b>               |

*(Note: 7 circled more than one -- I had told students it was ok to circle more than one.)*

Two numbers stand out in students' identification of 'favourite' parts of the project: half the 'favourite' votes were for the banner; and only one was for the presentation. It is difficult to interpret the meaning of either number.

The banner was something of an ongoing 'adventure' in the project, unfolding over time in unexpected ways, visual (and public) in its presence and holding the students' attention -- which might account for some of its popularity. *(Note: the 'adventure of the banner' is described below.)*

The public presentation was, by all accounts I ever heard, notably successful -- especially considering the limited time (five 90-minute workshops plus a dress-rehearsal) available for its preparation. One possible reason for only getting one 'favourite' vote is that it was understandably a source of ongoing nervousness for many students. Another is that in their minds the presentation perhaps 'contained' the other four ingredients and wasn't experienced separately from each of them. At the end, it received strong applause from the audience. At the reception following the performance, students' up-beat energy and good spirits were evident to everyone there. These feelings did not, however, translate into 'favourite' votes for the presentation, itself, on the questionnaire.

**In other questions, students wrote comments** about the five project ingredients, which provide some information to help understand their selections (votes) in question # 2 (above):

**banner:** *There are many different things you can do to bring peace, like raising banners and singing songs. The banner (was valuable). The banner and the singing were fun!*

**story:** *I liked that we did it as a story. Do another book maybe.*

**soundscape:** *How to make new sounds. The soundscape will make you feel like you're part of the story. The songs are fun but the soundscape isn't that fun. Change a few things in the soundscape.*

**songs:** *Singing is one of the best ways to build peace. The songs (were valuable). You can use music to tell a story. Do different songs. Have rock and roll in the music. I would like it if we had more songs.*

**public presentation:** *We can make peace by entertaining. It was really good, but if you're not patient or you don't like standing up, you probably won't like (doing) it. Nerve-wracking but fun. I don't prefer (the performance) myself, because I don't like singing, and I didn't remember what to do half the time. There should be more practices for singing and soundscape because they changed it every time we practiced.*

Project teachers' comments about *creativity* ingredients

- **David:**      Soundscape: *Students were taught and learned a number of principles and elements of musical composition and improvisation, as well as techniques to use these to accompany the narration of a story. They used these understandings to create and perform sounds with their voices and body percussion, and to deliver these sounds and to move in manners appropriate to the story and to the performance space.*

Banner: *It is my hope that students learned something of the value of working together with others to create a work of beauty and that expresses a shared vision. (They created) a two-dimensional work of art that expresses feelings and ideas inspired by their interests and experiences. (They used) elements of design to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings.*
- **Margaret:**      Story: *Main things taught: how to work together to augment the meaning of a story through sounds; performance techniques such as vocal projection and focus. Main things learned: deepened their understanding of the story; ability to create sounds to augment the story; working together in groups.*

Songs: *Main things taught: songs by rote, listening, vocal production and presentation. Content of songs was related to ideas related to understanding peace and actions that can be taken to work toward peace – the content was not “taught” but through the learning of the pieces, children and adults (from the Chalmers choir) had an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the pieces.*

Final performance: *Main things taught: through their performance, they were sharing a message about the importance of peace-building; performance skills. (It was) experiential learning -- to work together with classmates and others (choir members) to share a message....The students were also able to reflect on the idea of peace-building throughout the process of preparing the presentation.*
- **Sarah**      Final performance (story, soundscape and songs): *(From it they learned) more about sound and music than about the topic of peace -- doing (the soundscape and music) with a conductor -- performing music as a choir. They learned about ...taking risks regarding music. The songs were a stretch for some of the students -- they needed more rehearsals...to feel comfortable. The story provided depth to their learning -- the music part was separate. (From David and Margaret they learned) about music, sound, performance.... Both Margaret and David are very good at rehearsing with children. The children are learning how to follow hand signs, and practice traditional choir exercises. The performance came together -- they did something together, produced something together. (The) positive response from audience and their parents (was) important....*

*(Sarah's comments continue on next page)*

*Artwork: The peace-flags and the paintings (about the story) were the two specific activities (related to the project) that were done (in class)....The art aspect of the project should be more significant -- visual art as part of learning.*

### Observations of the *creativity* ingredients

- **Banner**

In late February, students came to the church in three small groups to work on the banner. David briefly explained its design and gave instructions about the painting process, which took each group about twenty minutes to complete. Each student painted one hand.

Weather complications turned raising the banner into an 'adventure'. The first scheduled day (in late March) had bad enough weather to require postponement. It was raised and attached to the church tower two weeks later, on a chilly and very windy April afternoon. The audience included Sarah's class, project planners, a few parents, other interested on-lookers and members of local media. Some students spoke to the crowd about meanings of 'peace'.

The weather got worse over the weekend, with two unfortunate effects: strong winds weakened the banner's attachment to the tower, and rain caused paint to bleed slightly. (David had earlier been advised that the paint was impervious to bleeding.) The 'good news' is that the slight bleeding enhanced the 'look' of the banner. It was moved inside and hung prominently at the front of the church sanctuary, easily visible to all at the workshops, the dress rehearsal and the public performance. The planning team discussed hanging it (inside) at other public locations around the community.

- **Story**

*(Note: The story was read three times in Sarah's class. Earlier in the evaluation, I described the second reading. At each of the 90-minute workshops, Margaret read parts of the story, as context for David's teaching of the soundscape.)*

- **Soundscape**

The first of five 90-minute workshops to prepare for the final performance took place in Sarah's classroom in early April. David introduced students to the idea of a *soundscape* and the plan for the class to provide a soundscape behind Margaret's reading of the story. He compared it to a soundtrack in movies and videos: they would use vocal, hand and finger sounds to create setting and mood which would deepen the audience's connection to the meaning of the story.

David identified nine elements of sound: pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, articulation, tone colour, harmony, texture and space. Students provided familiar examples of each, to indicate possible soundscape applications of the concepts. He led them in practicing elements of sound using their voices, hands and fingers, sometimes produced separately, other times blended together.

He wondered, "Which elements of sound do we want to add to the story?" In particular, he asked them about actions, places and feelings. One example was nature sounds -- a student suggested "the

chirping of birds". David supported the student's answer and pointed out that the answer used words rather than sounds -- the student then made some chirping sounds.

The following workshops involved the creation of the entire soundscape. The class was divided into three small groups, each with its own location around the front of the church and its particular role in sound production. Because of limited time (practicing songs also occurred during the workshops), the soundscape was generated for the story piece by piece. David brought a plan to each day's practice -- it often needed to be revised in process, based sometimes on students' input and other times on his own decisions about ways to improve the sound effects. It didn't get a complete run-through behind the story until the dress-rehearsal, the afternoon of the performance. At the public event, he directed the soundscape from near the back of the centre aisle. When story with soundscape ended, the audience showed genuine appreciation with strong and sustained applause.

- **Songs**

The students performed three songs: "Peace Is This Breath" (joined by women from the Chalmers choir -- composed by Margaret for this project); "As We Walk Along This Road" (joined by women and men from the Chalmers choir -- based on a traditional Japanese melody, with words by Margaret); and "Fly Little White Dove Fly" (joined by women and men from the Chalmers choir -- composed and recorded by the Canadian group, The Bells, in 1971).

Margaret introduced all the songs to the class at the first workshop. After leading a few minutes of breathing and vocal warm-up exercises and with David providing keyboard backup, Margaret taught the words to each song line by line. They were given a first, tentative run-through by the class. (*Note: the students never had sheets with lyrics to the songs -- for this 'gentleman of a certain age', their memory work was impressive.*)

Nearly half the class was already involved in weekly music lessons: piano, cello, violin, guitar, and two were members of a noted local junior choir. Yet, as would be the case in any such collection of junior-elementary students, many in the class were seriously shy about singing, especially in public. Creating a soundscape was one kind of challenge -- building a choir was obviously another. In this first singing rehearsal and throughout the workshops, Margaret used support rather than admonition to encourage the reluctant ones -- several boys and a few girls -- to sing. At times, she directed the singing from farther back in the centre aisle, to encourage a stronger collective sound from the choir. Progress became apparent, slowly but steadily.

Throughout her singing instruction during the workshops, Margaret provided insights and advice about the role of songs in a performance such as this one: singing a song is like telling a story; the importance and joy of singing together; the value of abdominal breathing and open mouths for a strong collective sound; the relevance of the meanings of words in the songs (e.g., "peace is this cry" -- students gave several suggestions: poverty, hunger, etc.).

At the final performance, everyone was obviously singing in all the songs. Applause by the audience was spontaneous and strong after each one.

- **Final performance**

Students connected to the other four project ingredients through their anticipation of a public performance at the end -- in front of family, their teacher and perhaps others from their school,

members of a church and a peace group whom they wouldn't already know, and other strangers from the community. They would not be able to stand back and watch -- they knew they would be the focus of the audience's attention.

Part of teaching and learning during project workshops was about how to do a public presentation: how to stand for long periods of time, where to be at different parts of the performance and how to move there, how to express the sounds of the soundscape and the words and melodies of the songs with strength and clarity, how to follow the director's lead in each case (eyes on the director, attention to cues) and in general how to use rehearsal time effectively.

Beneath it all was students' understandable need to handle the nervousness that can grow over time in an extended project. Right after the dress-rehearsal, just a few hours before the performance, students asked David several 'what-if' questions, revealing how they were feeling. David's answers were reassuring: "We'll get through it." Indeed, David's and Margaret's interactions with them throughout the project was based on genuine respect, treating them as learners rather than as children, as partners in this initiative, never talking down to them.

The audience (of ninety or so, seated in the two centre sections -- a fine turnout) showed obvious enjoyment and appreciation for the songs and story with soundscape, by their careful attention and enthusiastic applause. At the end David thanked the students "...for all we have learned from you."

The event was followed by a well-attended reception in the church hall. Equally impressive to the number of people there (which was substantial) were the obvious positive energy, high spirits and sense of personal accomplishment felt by the students. It was a feeling shared by everyone.

- **Sarah's comments about students' behaviour during the workshops**

*This is our 4th rehearsal in the church. The kids have behaved very well in this space. I think it's easier, as they have only been in this space for watching a performance, attending a service (maybe) or being part of this project. They are quiet and attentive. They are putting themselves fully into learning the songs, focusing on following instructions, and taking risks in creating the soundscape. (Written the day before the final performance. Note: I observed the same behaviour during all the workshops.)*

#### **Project Goal IV: Analysis**

- **Experiential education**

Several kinds of education occurred during the project -- for example: values clarification, memorization, skill development, story analysis, practice. What made this project different from many other examples of peace education, however, was that it featured *experiential education* at its core.

Experiential education has two essential characteristics: *productive activity* and *ongoing, guided reflection about that activity*.

Experiential education (with ongoing alternation of productive action and guided reflection about that action) is usually considered appropriate for teaching/learning among adults or adolescents. We can ask: How can experiential education be effective with junior-elementary students?

Much of what the students were doing was certainly productive, creative activity. Their voices (and hands and chests) created the soundscape and musical content for a public performance that was enjoyed by many people. They produced artwork: the banner and their peace flags were hung behind the singers on the stage at Chalmers; their water-colour paintings of meaningful episodes in the story were displayed at the back of the church sanctuary.

On-going, guided reflection is needed in experiential education, so that learners can actively *make sense* of their experiences – rather than passively *receive sense* from an instructor. The five 90-minute workshops were filled with so many important things to do to prepare the soundscape and songs that little time was left for guided reflection within that context. (*Note: the first workshop was an exception – when David introduced the idea of ‘qualities of sound’, he invited the class into active reflection about meanings and examples of each.*)

It was in Sarah's class that guided reflection about students' project experiences had time and space to occur. Early in the project, the class watched a video showing the significance of peace flags in Nepal -- then students each painted a peace flag. During the period of the workshops, her discussions with the class revealed that students' work on the soundscape behind the story, along with songs about the meaning of peace, were challenging students to do what they say, matching their actions to what they were learning about building peace.

- Using creativity in teaching and learning

The content focus for the project was peace education. Student creativity was a key teaching method: *visual artwork* (banner, peace flags, paintings of scenes from the story); *music* (songs learned and performed by the students, along with members of the Chalmers choir); *soundscape* (students' creation of sounds to deepen the audience's experience of hearing the story read); the *public presentation* (including all the aspects of performance that the students needed to learn).

Education researcher, Howard Gardner, wrote *Multiple Intelligences* in 1993. Rather than think of intelligence as a unitary (or perhaps binary) characteristic (which individuals have more or less of), he identified several different kinds of intelligence. Much of our system of education for youth has relied strongly on two kinds of intelligence: *linguistic* and *logical-mathematical*. By identifying an array of kinds of intelligence, he reminded us that there are various ways for learners to approach and understand an educational topic (like peace) – and by extension, for educators to teach it.

We can ask: What are the most effective ways to integrate various kinds of intelligence (and, by implication, various learning styles) into an educational project with a focus as challenging and many-sided as peace education? The project assumed that several kinds of intelligence can be accessed in peace education, with positive effects on learning outcomes: visual artistic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, performance intelligence – all this in addition to linguistic intelligence (including its conceptual and analytic aspects).

This assumption, along with the educational project it helped to generate, distinguishes *Hands United for Peace* from many other peace education initiatives, which rely mainly or entirely on linguistic intelligence. Available project data don't permit thorough analysis of the validity of the assumption. They do, however, indicate that creativity did indeed play a valuable role in student learning in this case – with particular creative activities touching various students in different ways.

- Dialogue

Goal # IV identifies both 'reflection' and 'dialogue' as key educational ingredients and outcomes of student learning. The proposal doesn't clarify the distinction between the two. We can presume that 'reflection' refers to a shared process of educational interactions within the class, and that 'dialogue' refers to communication with people and groups beyond the class.

Reflection was ongoing. Dialogue didn't really happen. Because of the necessarily tight limits of the project's schedule, no situations existed that would have effectively supported external dialogue. For example, the banner-raising occurred at the front of the church on a chilly, windy day. The minister, Rev. Drew Strickland, was there, along with other members and employees of the church. Yet the context of the event didn't encourage dialogue between the students and these Chalmers people. (Or with several PeaceQuest-Kingston people who were also at the event.)

Another example is the performance of the songs by the students and members of the Chalmers choir. The first time they were together was the dress-rehearsal, a few hours before the performance. Each group was briefly introduced to the other from where they were seated on different sides of the front of the sanctuary. Soon they were on the stage (students in front rows, adults behind them), singing together for the first time. This was truly an inter-generational aspect of the project, however without the occasion for inter-generational communication among the groups of performers.

Sarah commented later that members of the Chalmers choir wanted to get to know the students better, but there wasn't a convenient time for it to happen. At the reception, she chatted with a Chalmers congregant who said he was the oldest living Sydenham Public School graduate. She thought it might have been good for the students to hear his story.

We can ask: If there had been time to plan and schedule short *situations* conducive to dialogue between students and the two groups partnering with the school, or between students and Chalmers choir members, what learning outcomes beyond those generated by productive creativity and reflection might have been accomplished?

- Engagement in community life

Goal # III addresses the idea of *awareness* of community life, especially related to a more general definition of "citizenship". *Engagement* is a different idea, because it includes a sense of *active involvement*. Indeed there were three ways in which students were actively engaged in their community, through the project – albeit in limited ways.

The **raising of the banner** was a public event outside the front of Chalmers United Church. Students were active participants – they had helped to paint the banner, and some of them spoke to the audience about peace from the church steps. People from the church, the peace group and the school were in the audience. Media were present – indeed, one student was interviewed along with Sarah by local cable TV.

Students spent **considerable time at the church**. Painting the banner happened in the church hall; four of the five workshops, the dress-rehearsal and the final performance were in the sanctuary; the reception after was in the church hall. David and Margaret hold ministerial positions at Chalmers. During the project, students heard church minister, Rev. Stickland, speak twice. The students became familiar and reasonably comfortable with the church facility.



The **performance** itself was a community-wide event. Posters were distributed in the neighbourhood (including the Central Branch of the public library), several downtown locations and other places around town. Local media announced the event. Ninety people were in the audience – many were associated with one or another of the three partner groups, and others were local residents who came just because of personal interest.

I have no information about learning outcomes which came directly from these instances of active engagement in community life.

**Project goal I:**            ***Create an open partnership between PeaceQuest-Kingston, Sydenham Public School (through the Limestone District School Board) and Chalmers United Church***

**Project goal V:**            ***Build concrete relationships between the school and community groups such as PeaceQuest-Kingston and Chalmers United Church and other community partners.***

These two goals are similar enough for their outcomes to be evaluated together. The difference is that *partnership* was a key characteristic of the format for planning and implementing the project, and the idea of *concrete relationships* has implications for future collaboration.

### The Project Proposal

In addition to these two project goals, the proposal mentions the *partnership* idea in other places:

- In “Project description”: *This project will work with children, teachers and families at Sydenham Public School and neighbourhood groups to learn about peace-building through a series of creative workshops and a public performance.*
- In “Project elements – Creation of a Public Art Piece – Activity”: *A collaborative, intergenerational art project where members of Sydenham Public School, PeaceQuest and Chalmers (including children, youth and adults) will create a banner entitled ‘Hands United for Peace’.*
- In “Project elements – Voice and Song – Activity”: *We will create an ‘intergenerational project choir’ that includes members from Sydenham Public School, PeaceQuest and Chalmers. They will learn one or more songs related to the theme of peace making and living harmoniously in community that will be part of the public performance....*
- In “Project elements”: *We intend to invite our children and youth to play a central role in the design and execution of each element of the project so they will have many opportunities to develop their creative and leadership talents.*

- In “Anticipated Impact”: *Nurture increased tolerance and empathy by providing participants opportunities to discuss differing perspectives and to collaborate on a shared project.*
- In “Anticipated Impact”: *Strengthen an open partnership with PeaceQuest for our community.*
- In “Beneficiaries”: *Participating children and adults from Sydenham School, PeaceQuest and Chalmers. The three partnering organizations will foster deeper relationships with each other and the Kingston community through shared vision and creative endeavours.*
- In “Evaluation”: *The project partners will jointly document the processes and products of Hands United for Peace.*
- In “Demonstrated Need”: *Sydenham Public School and Chalmers United Church are among Kingston’s oldest institutions. They are anchors in their neighbourhood and yet they have little direct interaction. Discussions between the two have demonstrated a strong interest in sharing resources with a view to strengthening open community relations and demonstrating a common commitment to peace-building in Kingston through collaborative learning, creative production and modelling and open partnership.*
- In “Organizational Capacity”: *Each of the three partners brings significant expertise in curriculum development and delivery for young children. David Melhorn-Boe and Margaret Moncrieff have been recognized locally and nationally as exceptional teachers, musicians and community builders. Sydenham Public School has the infrastructure, program framework and experience to provide the required support for this project. Chalmers has a strong and longstanding reputation for excellence in music and has many talented educators and community activists among its members. PeaceQuest has a diverse talent pool with backgrounds in education, policy-making, the arts, small business, program design and spirituality. Its members have deep roots in Kingston and a track record of community engagement, organization effectiveness and successful fund-raising.*

#### Characteristics of the three partner groups

*(Note: I did not collect systematic data about the three partner groups. General points about them are based on long-time, occasionally close, often anecdotal information about each one.)*

These are three different kinds of social organization: an old and respected United Church with a medium-size congregation; a similarly old, equally respected, likewise medium-size elementary school within a large, regional public school board; and a three-year-old, essentially volunteer-based, small though very active local peace group. Because the groups are so different from each other in social organization, substantial variations are apparent in the formal and informal rules and procedures which guide the operations of each.

In social and cultural terms, however (and certainly with some exceptions), people associated with the three groups have major similarities: socio-economic status; ethnic and racial ancestry; comfort using the English language; cultural tastes and styles; educational background; ideological inclinations. People associated with any of the groups (whatever their roles) can easily find familiarity within the basic outlines of the lives of people associated with the other two groups.

The school and the church are located at the intersection of an historic residential neighbourhood, tending toward higher status, located on the edge of downtown Kingston, Queen's University and a major downtown park -- three blocks from the lake, the same distance from busy Princess St. The peace group operates out of people's homes and has no central location.

The two buildings, across the street from each other, are classic landmarks in the neighbourhood -- the church for its dramatic limestone architecture, the school for the image it presents of one of Ontario's oldest continuing schools. Some -- though not a lot of -- families live in the school's catchment area; its reputation for educational excellence attracts students from across the city.

Six individuals -- two from each partner group -- were essentially the project's leaders: David and Margaret from Chalmers, Sandra and Sarah from Sydenham Public School, and Michael and myself from PeaceQuest-Kingston. Although we six never met together, effective communication needed to flow among us and the groups we represented.

#### Project leaders' comments about outcomes from the partnership

- **Michael:** *My personal role was limited to participating in the planning team meetings. In that role, I had an opportunity to comment on proposed activities and to make suggestions. I made a number of suggestions about the banner design, but had little to say about the actual work with the students, the creation of the soundscape or the final concert.*
- **Jeffry:** *Working relationships between the partners (the three groups and the people who were major project participants) grew during the project. The three groups established mutual respect, understanding and empathy through their collaboration.*
- **Sandra:** *The partnership format was great for everyone. It worked really well. (Sandra, David and Margaret have started talking about how to move this partnership forward into other projects/activities in the future.) Having PeaceQuest-Kingston as part of the format brought great value. It was very important to have a supportive and skilled classroom teacher. Margaret is a valuable resource for singing, (especially because) some kids don't like to sing. The people-resources were key. So was planning ahead (i.e., work done in September and October). Through Sarah, the school was involved in the planning, which was valuable.*
- **Sarah:** *Students learned a lot from David and Margaret about music, sound and performance. The school's proximity to Chalmers was very important, enabling the students to actually be in the space (of the church) for the banner-painting and the rehearsals leading up to the performance -- that gave the students a personal connection to the space and to the church and to the project. The art aspect might have worked better if the students would have collaborated with youth from the church. (In terms of the partnership) it might have been better if there would have been a dress rehearsal for the school -- kids at the school don't go to school things after school.*

- **Margaret:** *Sydenham Public School had reached out to Chalmers the year before the concept of this particular project was developed, in order to gain a greater understanding of the place that they saw outside of their classroom window each day. The grade 4-5 class had come to Chalmers to have a tour of the building and the organ. After this experience, we at Chalmers began to talk about possibilities of collaborating with our neighbours, so that we could enrich the relationship with those in our immediate community. The overall concept of the project was for neighbours to work together toward a common goal of building peace and on the development of an arts project which would then be shared with the larger community. 'Peace begins at home', so getting to know and understand our neighbours is a good step toward peace-building. The partnership provided initiative and support in taking the next step(s) -- communication about purpose, organization, logistics, timing. One challenge was everyone being on the same page with the ideas -- it was addressed through communication.*
  
- **David:** *I believe that this partnership has represented a transformative ministry for Chalmers. One of the project's main goals was to foster deeper relationships between the congregation and the neighbouring elementary school. The project appears to have generated positive outcomes in this regard. Although new ways of envisioning and practising collaborative ministries in community take a good deal of effort, I hope that the tilling of common ground and the nourishment of good soil and seeds will yield abundance in time.*
  
- In an interview shortly after the project ended, **Rev. Strickland** commented:  
  
*(He was pleased with the wonderful response of the school -- principal, vice-principal, classroom teacher -- to the early contact from David and Margaret.) The school did realize that we take this neighbourhood seriously, and that we have competence and good energy to bring to such a project. The partnership format is an example of how to do things: fellowship means integrating with and supporting each other. We learned how to do peace-building: don't be afraid to go across the street and talk with the school. (Similarly, he also mentioned that the partnership had led him to attend a PeaceQuest-Kingston plenary gathering.) Hands United for Peace was a major educator for us about how we need to be as a church. (Some parents of students in the gr. 4-5 class who had been at the performance now wave at him when they see him outside; some students who were in the project do the same.) For education in inter-faith relations, we need to be in each other's spaces. Your own credibility is important. The legalities are also important (e.g., CPIC) -- we need to share the safety -- we must make it clear that the project is a safe environment (for the kids) -- for example, it's not about proselytizing for our particular faith.*

#### Student comments

It's not clear to me whether -- and if so, with what meanings and implications -- students were aware of the project's partnership format. David and Margaret mentioned to them the three partner groups twice: at the start of the introductory lesson in mid-February, and again at the start of the first

workshop, in early April. It was mentioned publicly at the banner-raising in early April. As representatives of Chalmers, those two were present at all project activities, except for Sarah's 'regular' in-school classes (where reflection, artwork and other project-related matters would have been taken up). Representing PeaceQuest-Kingston, I attended the same activities as David and Margaret (as observer), and Michael attended and spoke at the banner-raising and the final performance.

Because of Sarah's teaching style and strategy, her students had considerable experience with visitors coming to the class, and also with taking field trips to various locations around the community. I have no information about which of those experiences might be characterized as 'partnerships' -- or about what the idea of 'educational partnerships' might mean to the students.

A few **student answers on the questionnaire** had some relevance to the *partnership* idea:

*It is a team project, but there are some parts that is more one person.*  
(Note: How to describe it?)

*Peace can be created in many ways and in many different situations.*

*I would like the makers to actually use the (students') suggestions so everybody is into the project.*

*It's a great opportunity to teach others to learn about peace.*

*I don't think we needed the (Chalmers) choir.*

*Put it on the news.*

*We could make the project bigger -- like if we start a petition and send it to City Hall or the Prime Minister.*

*Enjoy your work.* (Note: 'Valuable things' learned from the project?)

*I learned about PeaceQuest -- I didn't know about it before.*

### Communication among the partners

David, Margaret, Michael and I met together five times as a '**planning team**': in August, October, December, January and April. The hour-long meetings focused on specific planning tasks: communicating with the school (and school board) and gaining necessary approvals at both levels; writing a project proposal; identifying the specific teacher and class that would participate; setting a budget and seeking funding; preparing a schedule of project activities; making decisions about production of the banner; establishing bookkeeping responsibilities; specifying the roles of documentation and evaluation (and again getting school and board approval); clarifying procedures for including singing in the project; addressing issues related to the possibility of taking photos of students; etc.

Communication **between the planning team and the school** was essentially the responsibility of David and Margaret, although after information-gathering got underway, I also had a role to play in this

aspect. For nearly all planning tasks through the life of the project, email contact was essential -- it often included cc's to relevant participants.

Each **partner group's two representatives were responsible for communication within their group**. Because banner-painting, four of the five workshops, the dress rehearsal, the public presentation and the reception all took place at Chalmers, David and Margaret had significant responsibility in this regard. Once project activity got underway, Sarah had major responsibility for communication within her school. There were three times when Jolene Simko, PeaceQuest-Kingston's administrative coordinator, took an active role: preparation of the poster and informing the media about the banner-raising and about the final presentation. Her main project contact for these tasks was David.

I have little information about **communication among the three teachers**, regarding the delivery of the project's curriculum. They met together (likely with Sandra) early in the fall, to discuss the project. They exchanged some emails – for example, about getting Board-level approvals and scheduling the banner-raising and the workshops. I saw the three chatting briefly after both visits to Sarah's class and after most of the workshops in the sanctuary, but I have no information about the content of those conversations. Sarah attended all sessions that the students were at and knew what happened there. David and Margaret didn't attend any of the reflection sessions in Sarah's class; I have no information about what they knew about those sessions.

In particular, I have no information that there was discussion between the three about the purpose and process of reflection about students' experiences of project activity. Fortunately, reflection about student experience was a teaching/learning strategy with which Sarah was already familiar and to which she was committed – as were the students in her class.

What perhaps **enabled such a complicated communication network to function effectively** was the strong commitment each partner group brought to the success of the project. That plus the insights the six major leaders and others brought to the challenge of respecting the working contexts of their partner participants.

### Outcomes for the partner groups

Because of the many challenges of information-gathering during the project and serious limits on participants' time, I was not able to gather much information to document learning taking place within the three partner groups based on their participation in the project.

- Sydenham Public School

The Monday after the final performance, the May 2 issue of the student newspaper (*SYDENHAM Chronicle*) was distributed at the school. Most students and teachers see the publication and read it regularly. It also goes home to many parents. The feature story in this issue was about *Hands United for Peace*.

In an interview not long after the end of the project, Sandra reported that she, David and Margaret had started talking about how to move the partnership forward into other activities in the future.

- Chalmers United Church

David, Margaret and Rev. Strickland all pointed out that a major goal for the church was to "...foster deeper relationships between the congregation and the neighbouring elementary school". They acknowledged that community outreach ("...to connect with what others in the community are doing...") can be difficult to accomplish, because it requires "...new ways of envisioning and practicing collaborative ministry."

During April, the project's most active period, the church bulletin featured the banner: "...a fantastic metaphor for building peace." Rev. Strickland said, "For us, (the project) was a major educator about how we need to be as a church."

One Sunday morning service that month focused specifically on the project and its meaning and implications. Chalmers staff composed three questions for a panel (David, Margaret and Michael) to answer, followed by discussion with the congregation: *Why do this project now? Do we need war to understand peace? How do we build peace?* (The second question came from one student's comments during in-class reflection.) The presentation had originally been scheduled to take fifteen minutes and actually lasted more than thirty minutes.

- PeaceQuest-Kingston

This was the group's first opportunity to participate directly in the delivery of peace education in a local school. Indeed, one person active in the group suggested that this was a major reason for its decision to be an active partner in this particular project. It is also true that, through the leadership of Ann Boniferno, its education coordinator, the group has been working long and effectively to encourage and facilitate peace education in many area schools.

During the period of project planning and implementation, there was no real opportunity for the group as a whole to learn from its participation. Michael and I gave regular reports to monthly steering committee meetings -- these were well received but didn't generate much discussion. Its anticipation from the start was that the descriptive report and the evaluation would be valuable resources for the group's future consideration of effective ways to support -- and to participate in -- peace education in schools.

## **Project Goal I:          Analysis          Creation of a partnership to plan and deliver the project**

This goal was clearly achieved. The partnership was established early in project planning, and it functioned effectively throughout the project's implementation.

It is important to recall several limits within which the partnership needed to operate. They presented an array of substantial challenges. The partner groups are three different kinds of social organization -- each has its own characteristic rules and procedures of operation, some of which are qualitatively different from those of the other two groups. The project, itself, was essentially an *add-on* to the three teachers' already substantial work-related responsibilities -- paid 'release time' from normal work roles was not available to any of them, to develop and refine curricula for all that needed to be taught and learned. The final project activity would be a free public presentation, where major outcomes of teaching/learning would become apparent to everyone there (including students' parents, others from all three groups and people from the wider community).

One other limiting characteristic of the partnership was pointed out to me by two different people familiar with the project: *it had “many moving parts”*. (Note: *the phrase I used for myself to describe this aspect of the project was: ‘deceptively complicated.’*) The parts needed to fit together smoothly.

The work did get done. Communication functioned well. Challenges were addressed. Student participation remained exemplary. Teaching and learning happened in most of the ways intended. And the presentation was very well-received.

Michael used a word to explain the success of partnership operations: *“opportunistic”*. His meaning was complimentary. He was pointing out the fortunate and productive intersection of skills, experiences and resources that the three partner groups together brought to the project. Sandra was making the same analysis when she stressed the value for the partnership of the “people resources”.

- **If it ain’t broke...**

...why evaluate it?

In a lifetime of experience with education (student, teacher, researcher, curriculum developer, program evaluator, teacher of teachers), I can’t recall ever coming across an education initiative that got it all right. Especially when the education is as complicated, challenging and potentially significant as this project. Most especially when the format for the education is a partnership. That, I take it, is why we do evaluation.

The project proposal is comprehensive, detailed and well-organized. By listing goals, elements and teaching activities, it provides curriculum for the project. I have no information about the extent to which, and the ways in which, it was actually used by project leaders and others. My sense is that its level of generality might have been a problem for the teachers. We can ask: Could more attention usefully have been given to the distinction between *general goals* and *specific goals*? To the specification of *knowledge, attitudes and skills* which were intended to be learned? And to *characteristics of students as learners*?

The three partner groups (represented by the six project leaders) never met together to discuss the project. The obvious reason is that the three teachers were too busy to find time to meet. However, if the potential values of meeting had been articulated, time could have been found. Two such meetings would have been useful – one early in planning, one just after the project had been completed. For the first: to share and clarify expectations for how the partnership would need to operate. For the second: to share and explore (and celebrate...with the students) what was learned – from the project and from the partnership.

- **The students’ role in the partnership**

One thing that I seldom heard discussed was what role the students had within the partnership. We can ask: Were they, like students in most classes, considered to be the learners, the people at whom the teaching was directed? or were they seen as having a different role -- somehow more active, with genuine agency?

At the public performance, just before the final song at the end, David said two things to the audience about the students: he called the students “our leaders right now”, and he thanked them for “all we have learned from you”. He later told me that he was referring a goal he shared with Margaret and



Sarah: *Children and youth participants would be at all times and to the largest degree feasible co-creators, whose ideas and insights would be respected and valued.*

The proposal states (in “Project elements”): *We intend to invite our children and youth to play a central role in the design and execution of each element of the project so they will have many opportunities to develop their creative and leadership talents.*

This intention was accomplished in some ways (in particular, ‘execution of each element’), and less so in other ways (especially, ‘design’). For example, students’ suggestions to David about sounds for the soundscape were easier for him to incorporate into the script in earlier workshops than in later ones, as the performance deadline came ever closer. They had no input into the design of the banner, or the selection of songs they would sing.

In the days leading up to the final performance, I realized that soon I would soon need to finish gathering information about the project and start to write about it -- first the project description, then this evaluation. I wondered what term I should use to refer to the people in Sarah’s class.

I chatted about my dilemma with someone who is active in PeaceQuest-Kingston, mentioning my sense of three possible choices. (1) *children* – this is the word used in the Project Proposal, and I heard it used regularly by the five other project leaders. (2) I could ask the people in the class which term I should use to describe them – I was fairly certain they would say *kids*. (*Note: At the top of one anonymous questionnaire, one person in Sarah’s class wrote, “Some kid”.*) (3) I could use *students*.

The PeaceQuest-Kingston person suggested asking them. I chose *students*. Certainly they are children – in the sense that they are clearly in the stage of life we would call *childhood*. For me, *children* can carry some extra baggage of meaning -- as in, ‘After all, they are only children’...and ‘don’t be childish’. I also think that *kids* can carry some extra baggage of meaning -- as in, ‘Kidstuff’. I do believe that *students* best describes their role in the project -- especially if we keep in mind two related concepts pertaining to roles in education: *learner/teachers* and *teacher/learners*. Perhaps this is what David was referring to, in his closing comments at the performance.

## • “Safety”

The word is not used here to refer to the safety of the students as project participants, which was substantial – in the meanings mentioned by Rev. Strickland (above), as well as how respectfully students treated each other and were treated by the project’s teachers (and treated them...).

The meaning of “safety” here is in the sense used by someone active in PeaceQuest-Kingston, a person knowledgeable about the project (processes and outcomes) and enthusiastic about it and the group’s role in it. The comment made to me was that it was a “safe” education project for the peace group to be a partner in. That is: the social, economic, cultural, ethnic and behavioural characteristics and qualities of people associated with the school and the faith community are close in so many ways to the people associated with PeaceQuest-Kingston. The group’s partnership was with two social organizations whose *ways of life* were already familiar and congenial. The same point about “safety” could be made about the partnership arrangement entered into by both of the other partners.

I need to quickly point out that the original reason for Chalmers (through David and Margaret) wanting to partner with Sydenham Public School was to strengthen a relationship of neighbourliness with the elementary school across the street – selecting that school had everything to do with neighbourly outreach and nothing directly to do with “safety”. Similarly, because Michael was a member of

Chalmers and already well known to David and Margaret as a leader of PeaceQuest-Kingston, and because they intended the project be about peace education at the school, it was natural for them to ask him to invite the group into the partnership – again, nothing necessarily to do with “safety”. And because of the peace group’s long-standing commitment to facilitate and support peace education, it was natural for it to decide to join the partnership – without any overt concern about “safety”.

And yet the comment remains valid. It was a relatively “safe” project for all three partner groups. We can ask: What (if anything) would have been different if the project had included partner groups whose participants differed substantially in background and behavioural characteristics and qualities? What would need to happen to encourage groups like this faith community, this public school and this peace group to seek educational partnerships less “safe” than this one seemed to be?

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|------------------------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Project Goal V:</b> | <b>Analysis</b> | <b>Build concrete relationships between the school and community groups such as PeaceQuest-Kingston and Chalmers United Church</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------|--|

Since the end of the project, there have already been a few examples of *concrete relationships* built during the project which are expected to operate in the future:

- Sandra, David and Margaret have started to discuss how the two neighbours, the school and the faith community, can continue to work together on other joint projects.
- PeaceQuest-Kingston has supported noted local children’s writer, Wallace Edwards, in his creation of a new book about peace (*What is Peace?*, Scholastic Press, to be released this fall). With funding from the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area (which also funded this project), the group is organizing some school visits by Mr. Edwards, to talk with students and teachers about the book. Sandra has taken steps to make Sydenham Public School be included in the schools he will visit.
- Margaret is director of the choir at the Mulberry Waldorf School in Kingston. PeaceQuest-Kingston has invited that choir to perform at a major community event, co-sponsored by itself, Cantabile Choirs of Kingston and the Isabel. “The World Remembers: An evening for peace” will be presented at the Isabel the evening of Nov. 11, 2016. Michael is on the program committee for the event.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <b><u>Project goal VI:</u></b> | <b><i>Develop a project template that PeaceQuest Kingston can share and promote with other communities regionally and nationally through its website and its affiliate groups across the country.</i></b> |
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### Learning from the experience of doing the project

The project description is intended to be useful in sharing and promoting ideas from *Hands United for Peace*. This evaluation is intended to help PeaceQuest-Kingston (and perhaps others) to consider – in greater detail than the description could do – the goals of the project, its structure and ingredients, its educational processes and learning outcomes, the challenges it faced and how it attempted to address them... and what the group can learn about peace education from having been a project partner.

The goal itself does not distinguish between the project description and the project evaluation. My own view is that both can contribute to this *sharing and promoting*, albeit in different ways.

Elsewhere, **the project proposal** addresses this matter further:

- In Section 4, “Anticipated Impact”: Result in a **prototype and a resource kit** that can be adopted by other groups in Kingston and other cities across the country. As a result, it will have a multiplier effect that will likely engage several thousand participants over the next two years. PeaceQuest Kingston will actively promote through its website and its affiliates. The school will promote through the school board. Chalmers will promote through the United Church education networks.
- In Section 5, “Beneficiaries”: Other communities and organizations benefit from PeaceQuest Kingston’s production and distribution of a **prototype and a resource template** for the project.
- In Section 7, “Evaluation”: The project partners will **jointly document** the processes and products of *Hands United for Peace*. Text and photos (where permission has been granted for their creation and release) will constitute the primary media. **Assessments** will be based, quantitatively, on the numbers of youth workshop participants and attendees at the performance, and, qualitatively, on such factors as enthusiasm exhibited, community networks enhanced, and understandings gained. Throughout the project, summaries and news of upcoming events will be posted on their respective websites. PeaceQuest will prepare a **resource template**, which will be available through their own networks for others to use or adapt.
- In Section 8, “Demonstrated Need”: Since establishing PeaceQuest in 2013, our leaders have met with teachers, parents and school board officials, all of whom have validated the need for **more peace-related educational activities in the curriculum and for resources to support teachers** in this work.

*(Note: emphasis added in these four items.)*

In the **documentation and evaluation plan** that I prepared last winter, the two concepts are given definition:

**documentation:**

The project has considerable potential value for peace education in schools and other educational settings, especially where the 'community partnership' idea is of particular interest. It will therefore be important to be able to inform others about the project: how the original idea was formulated, and how it got translated into a program of educational activity. The final document will be used to achieve this objective. It will also help each of the three partner groups to review and consider the planning and implementation of the project and its implications for their future activities.

**evaluation:**

This element will address the following questions: How well have project goals been accomplished? What challenges did the project face in planning and implementation, how were these addressed and with what outcomes? How well did the partnership function, and what effects did it have for project implementation? Answers to these questions will be valuable for each project partner in various ways. Funding sources expect project evaluation to be done. Its content will be useful for other groups and communities who wish to initiate similar projects.

The planning team needed to send a **letter to Sandra about documentation and evaluation**; she would forward it to the Limestone District School Board office for approval there. The letter was sent in late January; neither Sandra nor the Board office had objections to its contents. From that letter:

**Re Documentation**

This element would include the project goals, the planning process, project implementation and major outcomes. We think this particular project is innovative and creative. We believe it has substantial value for peace education in schools and other educational settings, especially where the 'community partnership' idea is of special interest. The document will be made available in Kingston and elsewhere, in print form and on-line through the group's website. As well, the document will be made available to Sydenham Public School, the Limestone Board and Chalmers United Church for their own uses, and to groups providing funding for the project.

**Re Evaluation**

This document will address the following questions: How well have project goals been accomplished? What challenges did the project face in planning and implementation and how were these addressed? How well did the partnership function and what benefits did it generate for project outcomes?

## “Template”

The goal specifies that, for sharing and promoting the project with others, a “project template” will be prepared. (*Note: The proposal also refers to a “prototype and a resource template”.*)

In my dictionary (Funk & Wagnalls *Canadian College Dictionary*, Toronto, 1989 edition), the first definition of *template* is: “A pattern or gauge, as of wood or metal, used as a guide in shaping something accurately, as in woodworking.” (*Note: the other two definitions pertain to weight distribution in construction.*)

The word has seen considerable usage in recent times, in contexts far beyond building trades, crafts and manufacturing – so much so that it has even worked its way into information technology, by generating software to help people to exchange patterns of all sorts – including patterns of social interaction processes such as education.

In thinking how to share its ideas and activities with its affiliates and other like-minded peace-groups across Canada, PeaceQuest-Kingston regularly uses templates. It has created several brochure-sized, two-sided ‘postcards’ presenting templates in such areas as its *White Square Activity*, *Becoming a PeaceQuest School* and *Becoming a PeaceQuest Faith Community*. Its comprehensive, on-line collection of education activities contains templates for education activities at various levels. (Find those resources [here](#) – in the Education “*stream*” and in the “*Resources*” section.)

The project description is not a template. In a helpful discussion I had with Michael just prior to starting to write the description, he commented: “This is not cookie-cutter stuff”. I totally agree. The project description makes a few recommendations for others who might consider doing a project like *Hands United for Peace*.

- **The first of the project description’s three recommendations:**

*Context may not be ‘everything’ (as some would have us believe), but it is extremely important -- and it surely had profound effects on the processes and outcomes of this project. Consider a few examples of the context-specific resources here present: David’s knowledge about soundscape production; Margaret’s experience doing music education with children; Michael’s familiarity with project design and planning; Chalmers’ and PeaceQuest-Kingston’s fund-raising networks; Sarah’s commitment to the educational power of reflective learning. The list of available resources could be much longer.*

*It would be difficult to replicate this specific model for peace education in other contexts. More valid is the possibility of identifying valuable ideas and ingredients in this project and applying them in new ways and combinations, in formats appropriate to resources and opportunities existing in each particular location and readily available to be tapped.*

- **The second recommendation in the project description:**

*Make careful decisions about which project ingredients to adopt. The following ingredients were key to the operation of this project:*

- Feature a story as major input into education about peace.
- Locate student creativity at the core of teaching/learning.
- Incorporate on-going, guided reflection as part of experiential education.
- Connect project activity to the wider community.
- Establish respect for differences of opinion and background.
- Focus project outcomes on a final public performance.
- Operate the project within a partnership format.

It goes without saying that this evaluation is not a template – that was never its purpose.

Neither has a “**resource kit**” yet been produced. (*Note: the appendices to the evaluation might be considered to be one, albeit not in the sense of being a “prototype” or “template”. In addition, near the end of the project description is a list of links to several on-line items from local media describing the project.*) I have no clear idea at this point what such a “resource kit” for *Hands United for Peace* might include. For example, teaching/learning proceeded effectively without the use of handouts.

## **Project Goal VI: Analysis**

**In specific terms**, the goal focuses on production of a “project template”. Strictly speaking, that has not been done. (*Note: it is possible that PeaceQuest-Kingston might decide to produce one eventually, itself*).

The project cannot be replicated exactly in the ways it was planned and delivered. However, its core ideas can certainly be discussed by other groups in other places and, if considered to be valuable and relevant, applied in ways consistent with local contexts, needs and available resources.

The “template” focus of the goal is understandable. It is a term in widespread use these days. PeaceQuest-Kingston regularly uses the concept in its outreach strategies. The combination of Michael’s experience as a committed and skilled leader of that group with his major role in drafting the project proposal brought the term into the proposal.

I well remember, from many years ago when I was a B. Ed. student at Queen’s Faculty of Education and some years later a teacher there, a bit of *folk wisdom* in the field of education: “**teachers love recipes**”. I’ve seen examples of the validity of that nugget countless times: *Show us the unit. Show us the lesson plans. Should I organize the students into groups? What teaching resources should I use? What questions should I ask? What activities should I include? What assignments should I make? What questions should I expect students to ask? What comments should I expect them to make? How should I reply?*

This is by no means a universal view of how teachers prefer to do education. Neither is it a criticism of trying to provide teachers with curricular assistance and support.

Many factors can contribute to good teaching. It is one of the most difficult and challenging professions anywhere. I believe that, among many other characteristics of effective teaching, the teacher's own reflection within and about her/his work is of central importance. Especially so in peace education – with all its contradictions, contextual dependencies, nuances among learners and personal hesitations among teachers.

The description of *Hands United for Peace* can be a valuable tool for introducing innovative and significant ways of doing peace education to a variety of peace groups, faith communities, schools and other interested organizations all across Canada. We can ask: What are good ways to make that happen?

Thinking of the goal **in more general terms**, we can also ask: What might interested groups and individuals learn from the experiences of the project? and how might they accomplish that learning? This would include the partner groups along with many others.

Having spent so much time over so many months gathering information for a project description and then a project evaluation, you'd think I could easily start listing answers to those two questions. I'm doubtful that I can...or perhaps even should. Making a virtue of necessity, my own belief is that would put the cart before the horse.

It is up to each partner group to ask itself, *What kinds of things would be helpful for us to learn from this experience?* Once each has identified its own *need(s) to know*, it will find its interrogation of the experience to be straightforward. For PeaceQuest-Kingston, reflection leading to interrogation will help it to clarify what it wants to tell other peace groups across Canada about the project, and how best to spread the word.

Here is a brief example from one partner group about how such interrogation might proceed:

**Rev. Strickland:** *The rationale for Chalmers' participation in the project was that we have been entering a process of attitude change about being located in the neighbourhood we are in: does the neighbourhood even know we exist? This was a step in a different direction: looking and acting outside the church itself. In the context of the idea of 'peace', tolerance is a passive idea. David, Margaret and Michael have been leaders in this kind of renewal for us. It will involve an attitude change at Chalmers: working actively for peace in a public way -- to connect with what others in the community are doing, share efforts and expertise. That is what is required in working for peace: the idea of something to do rather than the church as just a place to go and listen. Chalmers has already learned a lot.*

## Changes in project goals and plans

A few weeks ago I had a very helpful discussion with Lyn Shulha about processes and purposes for program evaluation in education – specifically, about my evaluation of *Hands United for Peace*, which I

was just starting to write. She had recently retired from Queen's Faculty of Education, as the long-time head of its program evaluation area. She shared some valuable ideas about the role of learning objectives in planning and delivering education:

*There is a difference between a project in theory and a project in action. Goals become real in process. Unanticipated changes in goals can have a variety of consequences, many of them positive. Sometimes goals and key concepts are presented and defined too broadly. When a goal is too broad, the teaching/learning context can give it more specific focus. Often education planners need help in stating learning objectives realistically and defining key concepts clearly.*

In a brief email interchange just before project activities got underway, David also commented to me about the inevitable evolution of project objectives in the delivery of education.

### **Some of the goals for teaching and learning which changed during the life of the project:**

- *Raise awareness among participating children, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building...*

This is perhaps the central learning objective of the project. It didn't so much get *changed* during the project as *defined* (or *focused*). The project proposal, itself, doesn't give a definition of 'peace'. In terms of the distinction between *peace as a product of the heart, spirit and soul of individuals* and *peace as a product of social situations (from friendships all the way to regions of the world)*, the project's activities emphasized the first concept. The story, the songs, the topics which were addressed in in-class reflection – these activities directed students' awareness toward decisions that individual people make, actions that individual people take, and feelings individuals have about people they interact with. Also, the proposal doesn't identify opposites of peace – for example: waging war, fighting, bullying, oppressing, hurting, hating, othering, etc. Students' comments and feedback provide good information about the nature of *awareness about peace and peace-building* generated within the project.

- *Help children develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world. (Project Goal #3)*

This item has been addressed earlier in the evaluation. Key issues are the proposal's vague definition of 'citizenship', and the extent to which (and ways in which) gr. 4-5 students can be expected to take up the matter of "vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world". In both cases, adjustments needed to be made in Sarah's in-class reflection sessions -- based especially on her strategy of connecting the students to institutions, groups, activities and contexts in the surrounding community and beyond.

- *We expect that the high visibility of the banner will generate opportunities for both the promotion of the project and broader community engagement with its central issues. (Part 3-a, "Project Elements, Creation of a Public Art Piece")*



Mother Nature provided the impediment to the achievement of this plan, by making it impossible to keep the banner attached to the church tower. The original raising of the banner was well-covered by local media, which did enable some 'community engagement'. It was moved inside the church where it hung on the front wall of the sanctuary for the month of April, easily visible to everyone who came there, including the audience for the final performance.

As well, the banner itself provided a graphic which the church used on the cover of several of its monthly bulletins, and which the project featured on its poster for the final performance. The planning team discussed the possibility of hanging it in other public locations around the community. I saw it hanging at another Kingston United Church, for a gathering in mid-May of Four Winds Presbytery (a regional group interested in the project) – David, Margaret & son Douglas made a presentation (w/ song, 'Fly little white dove fly') about the project.

- *The workshops will focus on an Aboriginal story about peace-making and the interdependence of all elements of nature. (Part 3-b, "Project Elements, Storytelling and Musical Composition")*

The story chosen was indeed 'about peace-making and the interdependence of all elements of nature' -- but it was not an Aboriginal story, at least from what I was able to learn from considerable on-line research about the story, its background and its reception (widely favourable). Neither the author's nor the artist's webpage indicate any Aboriginal ancestry. One on-line source did refer to it as an Aboriginal story, without confirmatory details. Project leaders had hoped to find a suitable Aboriginal story, but given the limits on time available to do the search, nothing was found. Without much expertise in the field, I can say that the story does have Aboriginal overtones. The artwork presents both people and wildlife. Clear racial and ethnic characteristics of the people are not portrayed. Although one picture of the little girl is somewhat detailed, her racial characteristics are decidedly ambiguous. The story certainly served the project's pedagogic purposes well.

- *The students will be invited to reflect on the lessons learned from WW1, current conflicts around the globe and Canada's role in peacemaking as it prepares to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. (Part 3-b, "Project Elements, Storytelling and Musical Composition")*

This plan ingredient relates closely to a major reason for starting PeaceQuest-Kingston just over two years ago. With particular attention to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of W. W. I, the previous Conservative government's recent allocation of considerable money to a 'celebration' of the War of 1812, and especially that government's ongoing attempts to redefine Canada as a 'warrior nation', the new peace group committed itself to "*opening conversations about Canada, peace and war*". So it is not surprising that the historical focus made its way into the project proposal. In fact, the elements of this ingredient were not implemented in the project. Given all the educational work that needed to happen (regarding the banner, the story, the soundscape, the songs and the final presentation), and the limits on available class time and teacher time, there was no opportunity to address any of it. On reflection, it can be seen that some history and current affairs teaching and learning would have needed to occur, even to begin to address this ingredient. On the questionnaire, one student did make a relevant comment: *We should be more aware about peace because of the things that are happening in Syria, etc.* Recall that this was a time when considerable public attention was given to the arrival of Syrian refugees in Canada, including in Kingston. We can ask: What kinds of history-based education would need to occur for these students to be able to consider historical and geopolitical contexts?

- *We intend to invite our children and youth to play a central role in the design and execution of each element of the project so they will have many opportunities to develop their creative and leadership talents. (Part 3, "Project Elements")*

This intention was addressed in the analysis of Goal # 1, in the section on "Students' role in the partnership". The point made there was that students did play a central role in the execution of the project, but not in its design. One implication of this may be that students did indeed have many opportunities to "develop their creative...talents", but not so much their "leadership talents". The notion of involving students in the design of education is related to the challenge of increasing their *agency* in the teaching/learning process – enabling them to be *active in the production of their own learning*. Two students' comments on the questionnaire pertain directly to this issue: *I would like the makers to actually use the suggestions (of students) so everybody is into the project, and Do different songs.*

*(Note: my guess is the first comment refers to the soundscape workshops – in earlier ones, David found ways to invite and incorporate students' suggestions; in later ones, as the performance drew nearer, that didn't happen so much.)*

Involving students in the design of their own learning is sound educationally, and challenging procedurally. Whenever a curriculum (like the project proposal) is written ahead of a course, the design work is finished so it excludes student involvement – unless attention is given to when, where and how such involvement will actually happen, and space is left within the curriculum to incorporate students' ideas and suggestions. That only occurred to a limited extent here. *(Note: this observation does not contradict the students' high degree of creative engagement with the themes and processes of the project.)*

We can ask: How are gr. 4-5 students able to participate effectively in the design of their own education?

- *The project will: Engage 300+ children and adults in series of relevant and creative activities over a three-to-four month period. (Part 4, "Anticipated Impact")*

The proposal was drafted during the summer, including its estimate of numbers. That can be compared with a more detailed calculation shared at the first planning team meeting, in late August: 25 gr. 4-5 students; 10 additional students from the school who would participate in the project choir; 20 singers from the Chalmers choir; a few youth from Chalmers who would help to paint the banner; 90 attendees at the final performance; plus the six project leaders – to a total of about 150.

It turned out not to be feasible to include other Sydenham Public School students in the student choir. There were indeed nearly 20 singers from the Chalmers choir (12 women and six men). The prediction of 90 at the final performance was, by my quick count at the event, right on. *(Note: the outside two sections of the sanctuary had been roped-off, so people sat in the two middle sections – it looked to me like a fine turnout.)*

Not included in the proposal's estimate were the perhaps 12 additional adults (from the three groups) who played various roles in the production of the project. Or the perhaps 40 adults (and one youth) who attended the banner-raising at the church. Which would give a total active participation of about 200.

This is in no way indicative of a 'failure' of project operations. It is mainly an indication of the difficulty of predicting numbers in a project as complicated as this one. Because the number of active participants conceals the number of people in various situations who were aware of and connected to the project, the actual spread of participation and involvement is impressive.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Every program evaluation worthy of the name should have conclusions and recommendations...right?

Recall my situation: evaluator + participant. And recall something else: the other five leaders (David, Margaret, Sandra, Sarah and Michael) all need to approve this document before it can go forward. Which is appropriate in a partnership – and also because it's very much their story that is being presented here. (*Note: 'approval' does not necessarily indicate agreement with all points made in the evaluation.*) So my stating conclusions and recommendations takes a bit of *chutzpah*, we might agree. Some of each can already be found in the 'analysis' sections of the evaluation. (*Note: approval is in place, as of late Aug., 2016.*)

The following are in no particular order. C = conclusion. R = recommendation.

C 1     *Hands United for Peace* was an ambitious, creative and effective project in peace education.

C 2     The partnership format operated well – especially given its complicated and challenging dynamics. (*Note: 'many moving parts'.*)

R 2     It would have been helpful for project planning and coordination if representatives of the three partner groups had met together early in the planning process, to share expectations about partner roles and communication strategies, and to identify potential challenges and consider ways to address them.

C 3     The project proposal needed to accomplish several different things: (i) Provide a clear overview of the project for its leaders and the partner groups, indicating its rationale, goals and ingredient parts. (ii) Satisfy the possible concerns of the partner groups – including the Limestone District Board of Education. (iii) Solicit funding for the project budget. (iv) Outline the project's curriculum for teaching and learning. Each of those tasks was essentially accomplished.

R 3     The curriculum function of the proposal was the one of the four that was least well accomplished. True, curriculum development is itself complicated and time-consuming, and limited time was available for this during project planning. Steps might usefully have been taken to improve the proposal's attention to curriculum: clarification of key terms and concepts; careful consideration of which learning objectives could reasonably be achieved within the framework of the project; specification of learning ingredients

related to the final performance as a major project goal (since they would understandably need to take up a major portion of workshop teaching/learning).

- C 4 The array of skills, talents, experiences and insights available to the project through the partnership was essential to the achievement of valuable learning outcomes – by the students and by the partner groups.
- C 5 Including student creativity as a basis for teaching/learning in the project contributed substantially to student involvement, motivation and learning.
- C 6 The action/reflection praxis that happened during project activity was a major factor in the production of student learning.
- R 6 This was such a key ingredient for teaching/learning that it would have benefited from shared discussion by the three teachers during planning: to clarify roles that each would play in making it happen; to identify and clarify major concepts worthy of attention during reflection; to consider characteristics of students as learners which might affect the reflection process.
- C 7 It isn't yet possible to know what each partner group learned from its participation in the project. The potential for such learning is substantial. Each group will need to pursue its own reflective path, in this regard.
- R 7 It might well have been useful for representatives of the partner groups to gather soon after the completion of the project, to share ideas: about what they learned, about what was accomplished, and about what could be done to inject these ideas into considerations of peace education happening within the groups and elsewhere. It is by no means too late to initiate such shared reflection. (*Note: participation in it by the students would be instructive.*)
- C 8 Likewise, it isn't yet possible to know whether – and if so, how – the project description and this evaluation can contribute to useful developments in the field of peace education (as specified in project goal VI).
- R 8 PeaceQuest-Kingston can contribute to this process -- especially because of substantial familiarity it has already gained concerning the challenges and potential benefits of supporting effective peace education, and also because of its partnership experiences in other projects in which it has already participated.

**A personal note:**

My sincere thanks to everyone who assisted me to gather information used in the evaluation of *Hands United for Peace*. Especially the other five project leaders: David, Margaret, Sandra, Sarah and Michael. Plus key individuals in the partner groups: Holly Reichstein (office administrator) at Sydenham Public School; Rev. Strickland and Carol Sleeth (church administrator) at Chalmers; Jolene Simko (administrative coordinator) and Ann Boniferro (education coordinator) at Peace-Quest-Kingston; and others from the partner groups (including school principal Jennifer Lawless and superintendents Krishna Burra and Barbara Fraser-Stiff at the Limestone District Board of Education office) whose names should have been listed. Special thanks to the students, who accepted without apparent distraction the ongoing presence of this old duffer sitting off to the side taking notes about what was happening – and who also answered my spoken and written questions so seriously and thoughtfully.

I am totally responsible for errors or omissions of information and analysis (including conclusions and recommendations) presented in this document.

**Appendix #1:** Project Proposal – Version # 5 (final) – slightly reformatted for this appendix

## **Project proposal**

**Chalmers United Church**  
partnering with  
**Sydenham Public School and PeaceQuest Kingston**

09 September 2015

### **1. Project Description**

PeaceQuest Kingston was launched in 2013 with the planting of an oak tree and commemorative stone in City Park. The inscription (in both official languages) reads: *Grieving the tragedy of war, committed to the promise of peace*. PeaceQuest's goal is to engage our community in asking how we build a more peaceful society locally, nationally and internationally. This project will work with children, teachers and families at Sydenham Public School and neighbourhood groups to learn about peace-building through a series of creative workshops and a public performance. The children will create a piece of public art and a musical production on key themes/issues. It will provide the children a concrete opportunity to consider the lessons of WW1 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “war to end all wars”, to reflect on wars today and to express their views on Canada's role as a peacemaker.

### **2. Project Goals**

- To create an open partnership between PeaceQuest Kingston, the Limestone District School Board and Chalmers United Church.
- To raise awareness among participating children, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building as core values for Canadians.
- To help children develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world.
- To encourage children to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.
- To build concrete relationships between the school and community groups such as PeaceQuest Kingston and Chalmers United Church and other community partners.
- To develop a project template that PeaceQuest Kingston can share and promote with other communities regionally and nationally through its website and its affiliate groups across the country.

### 3. Project Elements

The project will achieve these goals through a series of learning activities woven into the school and Sunday school curricula as follows:

a) *Creation of a public art piece*

Activity: A collaborative, intergenerational art project where members of both the Chalmers United Church and Sydenham Public School communities, including children, youth and adults will create a banner entitled “Hands United for Peace”. The banner will depict a Tree of Peace formed of handprints (roots and branches), with two hands at the crown of the tree cradling the Earth. Members of the Sydenham Public School and Chalmers United Church communities will make the handprints collaboratively. If possible, the banner would be erected to coincide with Remembrance Day observances. The design will evolve with the creative ideas of the artists. The banner will be hung from the Chalmers tower, which faces both Sydenham Public School (across Clergy Street) and Barrie Street, a major artery which flanks the campus of Queen’s University on one side and downtown Kingston’s residential and business districts on the other. We expect that the high visibility of the banner will generate opportunities for both the promotion of the project and broader community engagement with its central issues.

Number of Participants: 40

b) *Storytelling and Soundscape*

Activity: A series of workshops for the grade 4-5 class (and possibly others) at Sydenham Public School, which will be facilitated by Margaret Moncrieff (Chalmers’ Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries) and David Melhorn-Boe (Chalmers’ Minister of Music) in partnership with the classroom teachers. The workshops will focus on an Aboriginal story about peace making and the interdependence of all elements of Creation. The children will use the storytelling as an inspiration to create a soundscape that expresses the key themes and values they identify.

Number of Participants: 40

c) *Voice and Song*

Activity: We will create a “project choir” that includes representation of the Chalmers United Church and Sydenham Public School communities including children, youth and adults. They will learn a song related to the theme of peace making and living harmoniously in community that will be part of the public performance described below.

Number of Participants: 60

d) *Public Performance*

Activity: A public performance as the culmination of the project. It will include the story-soundscape and song, along with a presentation by PeaceQuest Kingston related to its educational and artistic initiatives for peace.

Number of Participants: 200

We intend to invite our children and youth to play a central role in the design and execution of each element of the project so they will have many opportunities to develop their creative and leadership talents.

Environmental responsibility and sustainability will be central to *Hands United for Peace*. The banner will be made from biodegradable materials, printed with 100% odourless, solvent-free latex inks, and sealed for outdoor protection from the elements with a water-based liquid laminate. The soundscape will be created using primarily the participants' own voices, as well as body percussion and "found" instruments (safely repurposed objects or design elements from the workshop and performance spaces).

Because of the project's emphasis on what people can do together using their own ingenuity and resources at hand, as well as the close physical proximity of the headquarters of the three partnering organizations, our collective environmental footprint should be relatively small.

#### **4. Anticipated Impact**

The project will:

- Engage 300+ children and adults in series of relevant and creative activities over a three-to-four month period.
- Affirm and expand the knowledge, experience, creativity and contribution of Kingston's youth to nurturing peace in their circles (family, school, community).
- Nurture increased tolerance and empathy by providing participants opportunities to discuss differing perspectives and to collaborate on a shared project.
- Strengthen an open partnership with PeaceQuest for our community.
- Engage our youth in reflection and action on peacemaking – one of the most crucial issues of our time
- Increase public awareness and engage public dialogue on issues related to peace-making – a topic of central importance to Greater Kingston given that the military, correctional services and education are at the heart of who we are.



- Result in a prototype and a resource kit that can be adopted by other groups in Kingston and other cities across the country. As a result, it will have a multiplier effect that will likely engage several thousand participants over the next two years. PeaceQuest Kingston will actively promote through its website and its affiliates. The school will promote through the school board. Chalmers will promote through the United Church education networks.

## 5. Beneficiaries

- PeaceQuest is a “made-in-Kingston” initiative, which has already engaged thousands of Kingston youth and adults through its activities and is a catalyst for similar engagement in six other communities across Canada.
- Participating children and adults from Sydenham School, PeaceQuest and Chalmers. The three partnering organizations will foster deeper relationships with each other and the Kingston community through shared vision and creative endeavours.
- The participating youth benefit through the exploration of diverse perspectives and common ground, by developing their understanding of citizenship and by honing their skills in art, music, storytelling and expression.
- The Kingston community benefits through exposure to innovative education of its citizens, and by being challenged to consider new approaches to resolving conflict in our families, our communities and our world.
- Other communities and organizations benefit from PeaceQuest Kingston’s production and distribution of a prototype and a resource template for the project.

## 6. Evaluation

The project partners will jointly document the processes and products of *Hands United for Peace*. Text and photos (where permission has been granted for their creation and release) will constitute the primary media. Assessments will be based, quantitatively, on the numbers of youth workshop participants and attendees at the performance, and, qualitatively, on such factors as enthusiasm exhibited, community networks enhanced, and understandings gained. Throughout the project, summaries and news of upcoming events will be posted on their respective websites. PeaceQuest will prepare a resource template, which will be available through their own networks for others to use or adapt.

## 7. Demonstrated Need

- Sydenham Public School and Chalmers United Church are among Kingston’s oldest institutions. They are anchors in their neighbourhood and yet they have little direct interaction. Discussions between the two have demonstrated a strong interest in sharing resources with a view to strengthening open community relations and demonstrating a common commitment to

peace-building in Kingston through collaborative learning, creative production and modelling and open partnership.

- Children are confronted with many examples of conflict in their lives from bullying among peers to violence in the community to war on the world stage. This is especially true of our children in Kingston who have strong connections to the military, to correctional services and to the global community through immigration and international exchanges. Teachers recognize the importance of building peace-building in the curriculum and associating this with creative acts of art, music and performance.
- Since establishing PeaceQuest in 2013, our leaders have met with teachers, parents and school board officials, all of whom have validated the need for more peace-related educational activities in the curriculum and for resources to support teachers in this work.

### **8. Organizational Capacity**

- Each of the three partners brings significant expertise in curriculum development and delivery for young children.
- David Melhorn-Boe and Margaret Moncrieff have been recognized locally and nationally as exceptional teachers, musicians and community builders.
- Sydenham Public School has the infrastructure, program framework and experience to provide the required support for this project.
- Chalmers has a strong and longstanding reputation for excellence in music and has many talented educators and community activists among its members.
- PeaceQuest has a diverse talent pool with backgrounds in education, policy-making, the arts, small business, program design and spirituality. Its members have deep roots in Kingston and a track record of community engagement, organization effectiveness and successful fundraising.

## **Appendix #2: Documentation and evaluation plan**

### **Hands United for Peace: Documentation and Evaluation Plans**

(draft, 25 January 2016)

#### Introduction

This is a combined 'documentation' and 'evaluation' plan. With considerable overlap, there are many similarities and some differences in the two plans: responsibilities, purposes and objectives, focus questions, information sources and information-gathering steps, and report production and distribution. The two final reports (documentation and evaluation) will be written separately.

The two plans are combined here because that seemed like a straight-forward way to proceed. In this combined plan, 'documentation' may be called 'doc' and 'evaluation' may be called 'eval'.

#### Who is responsible for doc and eval?

PeaceQuest (P/Q) is one of three partners in this project, along with Chalmers United Church (CUC) and Sydenham Public School (SPS). P/Q has primary responsibility for doc and eval. Planning for both elements is discussed and approved by the project's planning team (David Melhorn-Boe and Margaret Moncrief from CUC, Michael Cooke and Jeff Piker from P/Q) -- at the team's monthly meetings and through emails. Key aspects of the plan require (and will benefit from) feedback and approval at SPS. Jeff Piker is mainly responsible for drafting and implementing the plan.

#### Purposes and objectives

##### **documentation:**

The project has considerable potential value for peace education in schools and other educational settings, especially where the 'community partnership' idea is of particular interest. It will therefore be important to be able to inform others about the project: how the original idea was formulated, and how it got translated into a program of educational activity. The final document will be used to achieve this objective. It will also help each of the three partner groups to review and consider the planning and implementation of the project and its implications for their future activities.

##### **evaluation:**

This element will address the following questions: How well have project goals been accomplished? What challenges did the project face in planning and implementation, how were these addressed and with what outcomes? How well did the partnership function, and what effects did it have for project implementation? Answers to these questions will be valuable for each project partner in various ways. Funding sources expect project evaluation to be done. Its content will be useful for other groups and communities who wish to initiate similar projects.

Focus questions**documentation:**

1. What was the original concept of the project and how it would function? How did that concept evolve over time?
2. What was the original concept for the project partnership? How did that concept evolve over time?
3. What were the original goals for the project: for the project's leaders, David and Margaret? for CUC? for SPS? for P/Q? How did those goals evolve over time?
4. What were the major steps in project planning: by the planning team? at SPS? at CUC? at P/Q?
5. How did communication take place between major project participants?
6. What were the major teaching/learning ingredients in the project? What was each ingredient expected to contribute to project outcomes?
7. What was the schedule for the implementation of major project ingredients?
8. What were the major elements of the teaching/learning process for SPS students? Who was responsible for planning and implementing those elements? How was each of the elements delivered?
9. What were the major learning outcomes for S.P.S students?
10. What was the financial cost of the project? Where did funding come from? How was it obtained? How did revenues compare with costs?
11. What were the major challenges faced in project planning and implementation? How were these addressed?

**evaluation:**

note: These focus questions for eval are essentially the same as for doc. Since eval is in some ways different from doc, there are additions here -- they are in *italics*.

1. What was the original concept of the project and how it would function? How did that concept evolve over time? *What accounts for major changes (if any) in the original concept during the life of the project?*
2. What was the original concept for the project partnership? How did that concept evolve over time? *What were major values and challenges in the functioning of the partnership?*
3. What were the original goals for the project: on the part of project's leaders, David and Margaret? of CUC? of SPS? of P/Q? How did those goals evolve over time? *What were similarities and differences in each of the participants' views of project goals?*
4. What were the major steps in project planning: by the planning team? at SPS? at CUC? at P/Q? *What were major strengths and challenges in project planning?*
5. How did communication take place among major project participants? *What were major strengths and challenges in communication among project participants?*
6. What were the major teaching/learning ingredients in the project? What was each ingredient expected to contribute to project outcomes? *How effective was each ingredient for the accomplishment of project goals?*
7. What was the schedule for the implementation of project ingredients? *What were major challenges in the development of the schedule for eaching/learning? How were these addressed? With what outcomes?*
8. What were the major elements of the teaching/learning process for SPS students? Who was responsible for planning and implementing those elements? How was each of the elements delivered?
9. What were the major learning outcomes for S.P.S students? *How did these outcomes compare with project goals for student learning?*
10. What was the financial cost of the project? Where did funding come from? How was it obtained? How did revenues compare with costs? *How effective was fund-raising and budgeting for project operations?*
11. What were the major challenges faced in project planning and implementation? How were these addressed? *What were the effects of these challenges on project operations? How effectively were they addressed?*

### Sources and steps of information-gathering

- > Minutes of planning team meetings.
- > Funding applications for the project (submitted to granting agencies).
- > Jeff's observation notes/minutes of project-related meetings and discussions he attended.
- > Any other project-related 'documents' that can be obtained (including notes and minutes of meetings Jeff did not attend and which can be made available)
- > Pre-project interviews or questionnaires with 'key informants':
  - David and Margaret -- project leaders
  - SPS staff: Sandra Swan Presnell (V-P), Sarah McCourt (class teacher)
  - Michael Cooke, Jeff Piker, Ann Boniferro (P/Q)
- > Jeff's observations of teaching/learning process:
  - Banner preparation at CUC
  - Class sessions at SPS
  - Public presentation: dress rehearsal, pizza supper, warm-up rehearsal, performance
- > review of doc and/or eval items used by Sarah McCourt regarding student work in the project (formative, summative or both)
- > Post-project information from student participants:
  - Brief individual questionnaires (approx. 10 minutes of class time)
  - In-class discussion/comments about the project and what they learned (approx 20-30 minutes of class time)
- > Post-project interviews with 'key informants':
  - David and Margaret
  - Lise Melhorn-Boe (banner designer)
  - SPS staff: Sandra Swan-Presnell (V-P), Sarah McCourt (class teacher)
  - CUC: one or two church leaders
  - Michael Cooke and Jeff Piker (P/Q)
- > Project bookkeeping

## Production and distribution of the two reports

### **Documentation:**

Within a few weeks after the end of the project, Jeff will prepare a first 'draft' of the doc report. It will be vetted to: the project planning team and SPS (through Sandra Swan-Presnell -- V-P). It will be presumed that CUC 'feedback' will be given by David and Margaret, and that P/Q feedback will be given by Michael and Jeff. Suggested changes will be considered and incorporated. A final 'draft' of the report will be shown to the planning team and Sandra Swan-Presnell, prior to distribution. Attention in the final report will be given to the matter of copyright for curriculum materials developed specifically for this project.

Distribution of the doc report will include:

- SPS and the Limestone Board of Education: through Sandra and Sarah
- CUC: through David and Margaret
- P/Q: through Michael and Jeff (as well as Ann Boniferro -- P/Q education coordinator)
- project funders

Further distribution might include:

- posting on the P/Q website
- emailed distribution to: P/Q affiliates in other cities; educators (local and elsewhere) with interest in the project; faith groups (local and elsewhere) with interest in the project; peace-work groups (local and elsewhere) with interest in the project; etc.

### **Evaluation:**

Within a few weeks after the end of the project and the preparation of the doc report, Jeff will prepare a first 'draft' of the eval report. It will be vetted to: the project planning team and SPS through Sandra Swan-Presnell (V-P). It will be presumed that CUC 'feedback' will be given by David and Margaret, and that P/Q feedback will be given by Michael and Jeff. Suggested changes will be considered and incorporated. A final 'draft' of the report will be shown to the planning team and Sandra Swan-Presnell, prior to distribution. Attention in the final report will be given to the matter of copyright for curriculum materials developed specifically for this project.

Distribution of the eval report will include:

- SPS: through Sandra and Sarah
- CUC: through David and Margaret
- P/Q: through Michael and Jeff (as well as Ann Boniferro -- P/Q education coordinator)
- project funders who requested that evaluation of the project be done.

Further distribution might include:

- education, peace-work and faith groups with specific interest in this kind of project

### **Appendix #3: Letter to V-P Sandra Swan outlining the projects plans for documentation and evaluation**

Jan. 22, 2016

Dear Ms. Swan-Presnell:

We are delighted to be collaborating with Sydenham Public School on the innovative and exciting *Hands United for Peace* project. We are writing now to outline our plans for documenting and evaluating the project, to invite your comments on our proposed approach and to seek your advice on how to secure any required permissions from the school and/or the school board.

PeaceQuest is keen to document this process for use by other schools in our network in Kingston and across the country. As well, we have an obligation to our funders to provide a substantive evaluation of the project. Our planning team (David Melhorn-Boe, Margaret Moncrieff, Jeff Piker and Michael Cooke) has developed a draft outline for your feedback and approval. We have designated Jeff Piker, who has significant expertise in this area, to be responsible for the work.

#### Re Documentation

This element would include the project goals, the planning process, project implementation and major outcomes. We think this particular project is innovative and creative. We believe it has substantial value for peace education in schools and other educational settings, especially where the 'community partnership' idea is of special interest. The document will be made available in Kingston and elsewhere, in print form and on-line through the group's website. As well, the document will be made available to Sydenham Public School, the Limestone Board and Chalmers United Church for their own uses, and to groups providing funding for the project.

#### Re Evaluation

This document will address the following questions: How well have project goals been accomplished? What challenges did the project face in planning and implementation and how were these addressed? How well did the partnership function and what benefits did it generate for project outcomes?

#### The Process

We envisage the following steps in the process:

1. Observation of students' work on the banner on February 22 to 24 (at Chalmers United Church).
2. Observation at some (or perhaps all) in-class sessions at Sydenham Public School. They are currently scheduled for April 11, 18, 19, 25 and 26. We'd like Jeff to observe at least three of these classes.
3. Observation of the dress rehearsal scheduled for early Friday afternoon April 29, and the public performance scheduled for later that same afternoon.



4. A meeting with students (during regular class time) shortly after the public performance to seek their feedback on the project: lessons learned and comments on their experience of the project. Ideally, two forms of information gathering would be used: (a) a simple and anonymous evaluation form and (b) a short in-class discussion about the project. These two activities would take a maximum of 30 minutes.
5. Pre- and post-interviews with you and, if recommended with your Principal, and with Sarah McCourt. Each interview would last 30 minutes or less. The pre-interview will focus on expectations, goals, anticipated challenges and initial perception of the partnership. The post-interview would focus on project outcomes, how well project goals were accomplished, perceived learning outcomes, challenges and how well they were addressed, post-perceptions of the partnership and recommendations for future activities of this kind.

We're delighted to have Jeff's leadership on this task. He has extensive experience in social research, program and curriculum development, program evaluation, report preparation and scholarly research. He's done pioneer work on co-operative education in the Frontenac and Limestone boards and elsewhere in Ontario. We want to underline that Jeff has lots of experience in doing classroom observation and would remain unobtrusive. He can be introduced to the students so they know why he is there. He may wish to ask a student a question from time to time where that is not disruptive to the work in progress. No photos of students will be taken and no student will be identified by name in any document. Jeff has a current CPIC for this specific project and can provide a police-stamped copy for the school.

We will present drafts of both documents to you for comment and approval before finalizing. We would be pleased to provide you with electronic and hard copies of the final documents for your records. We're hoping Jeff can begin interviews the week of February 8 and be present for the banner painting session on February 22. We'd appreciate your comments on this outline and your guidance about any permissions required at the Board as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your attention to our letter, and for your active involvement in this innovative project.

Sincerely,

Michael Cooke PhD  
Co-Chair  
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416-209-6156

Jeff Piker  
Project Evaluator  
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613-545-1441

cc: David Melhorn-Boe  
Margaret Moncrieff

#### Appendix #4: Sources of information for this evaluation

- **Project proposal:** submitted to potential funding sources, partner group participants and the School Board; it lists the six project goals and describes the five project activities (“elements”).
- Any **other project-related 'documents'** that I could obtain: mainly, emails between project leaders and others involved in the project, when copies came to me.
- **Pre-project questionnaires** filled-out by key project leaders (and one other PeaceQuest-Kingston key informant): about goals for learning and for partnership operations.
- On-line **research about the story and its authors:** Old Turtle and the Broken Truth, story by Douglas Wood, art by John J Muth, Scholastic Press, 2003.
- Information from Margaret and David about **the three songs performed by the students** (along with members of the Chalmers choir): “Peace is this breath”, composed by Margaret; “As we walk along this road”, traditional Japanese melody, lyrics by Margaret; “Fly little white dove fly” (composed and recorded by Canadian group, The Bells, 1971).
- **Observations of teaching/learning process** (with notes): David and Margaret’s 20-minute introduction of the project to students in Sarah’s class. Students working on banner-painting in small groups. Students participating in five 90-minute workshops (led by David and Margaret) and the dress-rehearsal, to prepare the soundscape and songs for the final performance.
- **Sarah’s ‘journal’** of her in-class lessons related to the project.
- **Observations of public events** (with notes): The banner-raising at the church. The final performance. The reception in the church hall after the performance.
- **Participant observation** (with notes): Participation in five hour-long ‘planning team’ meetings with David, Margaret and Michael (August, October, December, January, April), taking detailed minutes. Delivery of brief introductory comments to the third small group of students at banner-painting, followed by quick discussion with them about its ingredients (David did the previous two introductions, but this time he was busy preparing the paints). Brief discussion of the story with students in Sarah’s classroom after the second reading of it. Leading the 30-minute session where students provided their evaluation feedback two days after the project ended.
- **Post-project evaluation feedback from the students.** (*Note: The student questionnaire and complete data set can be found in an appendix to this document.*)
- **Post-project questionnaires and/or interviews** with all five project leaders and two other key informants (one from Chalmers United Church and one from PeaceQuest-Kingston).
- Observation notes of a few **other project-related meetings** I attended.

## Appendix #5: Students' feedback about the project

### a. Information gathered by Sarah one week before the final performance – from her journal.

*"We will incorporate this script into one of the songs. The first list is the concepts that we embrace. The second list are some of things that we have accomplished since September with this class to build peace."*

#### 1st list

- We can build peace by looking for ways to help others in need.
- We can build peace by caring for our planet.
- We can build peace by looking for compromise.
- We can build peace by forgiving.
- We can build peace by treating others the way we want to be treated.
- We can build peace by showing respect.

#### 2nd list:

- We can build peace by feeding the hungry.
- We can build peace by raising money for cancer research.
- We can build peace by gathering resources and welcoming refugees to our city.
- We can build peace by planting trees.
- We can build peace by joining to make a difference and encouraging each other.
- We can build peace by singing and sharing stories.

### b. On the *morning of the final performance*, after the students heard the story read in class for the third time, Sarah asked them what they had gotten out of the project. Several of their comments were about peace – here are representative examples:

- *many different ways of building peace*
- *unity/together/peace*
- *peace can be in any situation or circumstance -- more than just countries*
- *it doesn't have to be big -- peace can happen in small ways*
- *we change how we see the world*
- *peace can be shown in different ways including singing to show how much we care about each other*

**b. Feedback information I gathered in a 30-minute session with the students – first thing on the Monday morning following the final performance.**

I made some brief comments to start: their information on the questionnaire will be anonymous; anything they'd like to say about the project will be very useful – there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers; they don't need to worry about spelling (actually, their spelling was excellent); and their information will be most valuable to help other people to know what they thought about the project and what they learned from it.

**(total students today = 21                      Monday, 2 May 2016)**

Notes: In questions 1 and 2 the answers are *quantitative*.

The other questions produced *qualitative* information. Students wrote their answers. For each of those questions: (i) I have divided their answers into what seem to me to be *categories of meaning*; (ii) and following the *categorized* lists of answers can be found all the (*uncategorized*) answers given by the students.

In no question on the questionnaire itself did I use the word 'peace'.

**Student comments about Hands United for Peace**

**Please do not write your name.**

**1. How interesting was the project for you?**

|                                       |                           |                             |                             |                       |                     |  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| <i>Please circle<br/>your answer.</i> | not at all<br>interesting | a little bit<br>interesting | < half-way ><br>betw. these | pretty<br>interesting | very<br>interesting |  |
|                                       |                           | <b>6</b>                    | <b>2</b>                    | <b>11</b>             | <b>2</b>            |  |

Note: Two students put their circles halfway between 'a little bit interesting' and 'pretty interesting'

**2. The project had 5 parts:**

|   |           |          |                             |          |                        |
|---|-----------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|------------------------|
|   | banner    | story    | soundscape<br>for the story | songs    | public<br>presentation |
| <i>Draw a circle around your<br/>favourite part of the project.</i> | <b>15</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b>                    | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b>               |

Note: 7 circled more than one // I had told students it was ok to circle more than one

Note: The rest of the questions ask students to write their answers.

### 3. What is the main lesson that you learned from the story (*Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*)?

Note: some answers have been put in more than one category

#### everyone

- > to include everyone                    XX
- > everyone is loved
- > everybody is equal                    XXX                    (note: one added, 'in a good way')
- > everyone should be treated the same
- > nobody is better and nobody is worse

#### making peace

- > to include everyone
- > to share with others
- > even war can be cured by the smallest, shortest or loneliest person in the world who depends on peace
- > everyone should be treated the same
- > you should care more about other people
- > you should remember that one big thing is part of many little things
- > you shouldn't look at the differences between you and a person -- look at the things you have in common
- > anyone can make peace, like the little girl who brought peace by bringing the other half of the truth to the tower
- > the lesson is don't get caught up on one thing and make war and hate people who are different -- you need to see how everything is special
- > peace takes time

#### values // attitudes

- > to share with others
- > everyone is loved
- > everybody is equal                    XXX                    (note: one added, 'in a good way')
- > it doesn't matter if you're different
- > nobody is better and nobody is worse
- > you shouldn't be greedy
- > you shouldn't judge people
- > everyone should be treated the same
- > that you should love people, no matter how different they are from you

*(categories continue on next page)*

### thinking about others // treating others

- > everyone is loved
- > everybody is equal XXX (note: one added, 'in a good way')
- > it doesn't matter if you're different
- > nobody is better and nobody is worse
- > you shouldn't judge people
- > everyone should be treated the same
- > you shouldn't look at the differences between you and a person -- look at the things you have in common
- > that you should love people, no matter how different they are from you
- > everyone should love each other

### general analysis

- > you should remember that one big thing is part of many little things
- > even war can be cured by the smallest, shortest or loneliest person in the world who depends on peace
- > I learned more about peace
- > I'm not really sure -- it's really complex
- > anyone can make peace, like the little girl who brought peace by bringing the other half of the truth to the tower
- > the lesson is don't get caught up on one thing and make war and hate people who are different -- you need to see how everything is special
- > peace takes time

### all answers

- > to include everyone // to share with others
- > even war can be cured by the smallest, shortest or loneliest person in the world who depends on peace
- > everyone is loved
- > everybody is equal
- > it doesn't matter if you're different // nobody is better and nobody is worse
- > you shouldn't be greedy // you shouldn't judge people
- > everyone should be treated the same
- > you should care more about other people
- > you should remember that one big thing is part of many little things
- > include everyone
- > you shouldn't look at the differences between you and a person -- look at the things you have in common
- > everyone is equal
- > everybody is the same (in a good way)
- > I learned more about peace
- > I'm not really sure -- it's really complex
- > that it takes a practice or two -- it will probably be a good performance
- > anyone can make peace, like the little girl who brought peace by bringing the other half of the truth to the tower
- > that you should love people, no matter how different they are from you
- > everyone should love each other
- > the lesson is don't get caught up on one thing and make war and hate people who are different -- you need to see how everything is special
- > peace takes time

#### 4. What are two valuable things you learned from being part of the project?

Note: some answers have been put in more than one category

##### making peace

- > peace can be made in small ways, not just stopping something -- and that's world wide
- > how to build peace
- > how to show peace
- > we should make peace, not war
- > you can make peace by doing small things
- > there are many different things you can do to bring peace, like raising banners and singing songs
- > we should be more aware about peace because of the things that are happening in Syria etc.
- > one person can make a difference in peace
- > you have to be patient and be peaceful
- > always try to build peace
- > there are thousands of ways to build peace
- > singing is one of the best ways to build peace
- > peace can be created in many ways and in many different situations
- > how important peace is
- > how we can make the world more peaceful
- > peace can be anywhere
- > peace happens from just being nice
- > we can make peace by entertaining
- > (we can make peace by...) making somebody smile -- feels like peace
- > peace is important

##### local community // wider world

- > I learned about PeaceQuest -- I didn't know about it before
- > we should be more aware about peace because of the things that are happening in Syria etc.
- > elders are leaders and not always older than you
- > how we can make the world more peaceful
- > peace can be anywhere
- > we should make peace, not war
- > peace can be made in small ways, not just stopping something -- and that's world wide
- > peace can be created in many ways and in many different situations
- > the smallest idea can change the world
- > enjoy your work

##### attitudes // values

- > we should celebrate that we're different
- > always be nice
- > people should care more about other people
- > (people should) care about the world
- > no one is better than anyone
- > you must have trust

*(categories continue on next page)*

### treating others

- > we should celebrate that we're different
- > with people, look at the things you have in common
- > always be nice
- > people should care more about other people
- > peace happens from just being nice
- > (we can make peace by...) making somebody smile -- feels like peace
- > listen to what other people have to say
- > you must have trust

### ingredients of the project

- > there are many different things you can do to bring peace, like raising banners and singing songs
- > the banner
- > the songs
- > you can use music to tell a story
- > singing is one of the best ways to build peace
- > how to make new sounds
- > different ways to tell a message
- > I liked that we did it as a story
- > in stead of doing one thing, we worked on multiple things
- > *that it takes a practice or two -- it will probably be a good performance* (from q. #3 -- fits here better)

### all answers

- > peace can be made in small ways, not just stopping something, and that's world wide // I learned about PeaceQuest -- I didn't know about it before
- > how to build peace // how to show peace
- > we should make peace, not war // we should celebrate that we're different
- > you can make peace by doing small things // there are many different things you can do to bring peace, like raising banners and singing songs
- > the 1st was the banner // the 2nd was the songs
- > we should be more aware about peace because of the things that are happening in Syria etc.
- > one person can make a difference in peace // elders are leaders and not always older than you
- > ? // ? (2 question marks were written)
- > you can use music to tell a story
- > you have to be patient and be peaceful // with people, look at the things you have in common
- > always try to build peace // always be nice
- > there are thousands of ways to build peace // singing is one of the best ways to build peace
- > people should care more about other people // ...and care about the world
- > how to make new sounds // different ways to tell a message
- > I liked that we did it as a story // in stead of doing one thing, we worked on multiple things
- > no one is better than anyone // peace can be created in many ways and in many different situations
- > how important peace is // how we can make the world more peaceful
- > peace can be anywhere // peace happens from just being nice
- > the smallest idea can change the world // we can make peace by entertaining / making somebody smile -- feels like peace
- > listen to what other people have to say // enjoy your work
- > peace is important // you must have trust



## 5. What would you say to another school that was thinking about doing this project?

Note: some answers have been put in more than one category

### ingredients of the project

- > the banner and the singing were fun!
- > the soundscape will make you feel like you're part of the story
- > make sure you have the right paints for the banner
- > it was really good, but if you're not patient or you don't like standing up, you probably won't like it
- > don't hang a banner on a windy day
- > the songs are fun but the soundscape isn't that fun
- > I don't prefer it myself, because I don't like singing, and I didn't remember what to do half the time
- > *it takes a practice or two -- it will probably be a good performance* (from q. #3 -- fits here better)

### likely outcomes

- > it's a great opportunity to teach others to learn about peace
- > you should always be yourself and don't be anyone else
- > always think about being kind and generous
- > you can sing with us
- > I would say they should try out this project if they were not having much peace, so this project would be more effective
- > it's helping but not that much
- > 1 thing can make a difference
- > they should try to build peace in their school (to see how peace can change the community)
- > it's a great way to get your class working together

### personal assessments -- general

- > it was nerve-wracking but fun
- > it was really fun XXXX
- > a little bit boring
- > do it XX
- > it will be useful and very educational
- > it is a team project, but there are some parts that is more one person
- > good luck!
- > I would say I'm not sure about this project because for peace there has to be war
- > it's helping but not that much
- > they should try to build peace in their school (to see how peace can change the community)

### personal assessments -- specific

- > participating is always good
- > be peaceful
- > it was really good, but if you're not patient or you don't like standing up, you probably won't like it
- > I think they could have talked more about peace and less about being 'perfect'
- > I don't prefer it myself, because I don't like singing, and I didn't remember what to do half the time

all answers

- > it was nerve-wracking but fun
- > it was really fun // a little bit boring // the banner and the singing were fun!
- > it's a great opportunity to teach others to learn about peace
- > participating is always good // and be peaceful
- > do it // it will be useful and very educational
- > you should always be yourself and don't be anyone else // always think about being kind and generous
- > it is a team project, but there are some parts that is more one person
- > it is a very fun project
- > it's very fun
- > it's really fun // the soundscape will make you feel like you're part of the story
- > good luck! // make sure you have the right paints for the banner
- > it was really good, but if you're not patient or you don't like standing up, you probably won't like it // I think they could have talked more about peace and less about being 'perfect'
- > don't hang a banner on a windy day
- > do it
- > the songs are fun but the soundscape isn't that fun
- > I would say I'm not sure about this project because for peace there has to be war
- > you can sing with us
- > I would say they should try out this project if they were not having much peace, so this project would be more effective
- > it's helping but not that much // but 1 thing can make a difference
- > they should try to build peace in their school (to see how peace can change the community)
- > it's a great way to get your class working together // but I don't prefer it myself, because I don't like singing, and I didn't remember what to do half the time

*(question # 5 continues on next page)*

## >> What changes in the project would you tell them to make?

Note: some answers have been put in more than one category

### ingredients of the project

- > they should have more practices for the singing and soundscape, because they changed it every time we practised
- > stop stopping in the middle of the soundscape and changing it
- > change a few things in the soundscape
- > some kids are shy -- don't force kids to go on stage and do the soundscape!
- > some kids don't like singing either, so don't make them sing!
- > more practices
- > use chairs for us to sit on
- > do another book maybe?
- > look at the weather on internet for the next days
- > nothing -- but don't put up the banner on a bad day
- > use fabric paint for the banner
- > while raising the banner, we could have sung songs about being together
- > more songs
- > do different songs
- > have rock and roll in the music
- > I would like it if we had more songs
- > I don't think we needed the choir
- > do all of the singing before the story and soundscape
- > no more adult choir

### process of teaching and learning

- > they should have more practices for the singing and soundscape, because they changed it every time we practised
- > I felt very pressured and unsure about what to do
- > ask their students what to do
- > stop stopping in the middle of the soundscape and changing it
- > they could have talked more about what peace is and why we need peace, and less about being perfect
- > I would like the makers to actually use the suggestions so everybody is into the project
- > not to change things so much
- > some kids are shy -- don't force kids to go on stage and do the soundscape!
- > some kids don't like singing either, so don't make them sing!

### outreach to wider community

- > put it on the news
- > we could make the project bigger -- like if we start a petition and send it to City Hall or the Prime Minister

*(categories continue on next page)*

general comments about making 'changes'

- > ask their students what to do -- but not the same things we did
- > nothing! the project was great!
- > change everything, because you don't want to do everything over and over again
- > nothing -- but don't put up the banner on a bad day

all answers

- > they should have more practices for the singing and soundscape, because they changed it every time we practised -- and I felt very pressured and unsure about what to do
- > change a few things in the soundscape // look at the weather on internet for the next days
- > put it on the news
- > ask their students what to do // but not the same things we did
- > more songs
- > we could make the project bigger -- like if we start a petition and send it to City Hall or the Prime Minister
- > stop stopping in the middle of the soundscape and changing it
- > do different songs
- > have rock and roll in the music
- > they could have talked more about what peace is and why we need peace, and less about being perfect  
// I don't think we needed the choir
- > nothing! the project was great!
- > do all of the singing before the story and soundscape
- > change everything, because you don't want to do everything over and over again
- > more practices
- > I would like it if we had more songs
- > I would like the makers to actually use the suggestions so everybody is into the project
- > nothing -- but don't put up the banner on a bad day
- > not to change things so much // use chairs for us to sit on
- > while raising the banner, we could have sung songs about being together
- > some kids are shy -- don't force kids to go on stage and do the soundscape! // some kids don't like singing either, so don't make them sing! // do another book maybe? // use fabric paint for the banner
- > no more adult choir

After they finished filling-out the questionnaire, I asked them to write (on the back of their sheet of paper) how they would complete the following sentence:

***In our search for peace we need to....***

Note: some answers have been put in more than one category

personal relationships with others

- > find trust in others
- > help each other XXXXX
- > get together
- > work together
- > be kind // make acts of kindness XXX
- > be nice
- > start paying attention to arguments and things of the sort, and try to make it more positive
- > stay with a person to find how they act

actions/relationships in the wider world

- > get together
- > work together
- > spread the world all around the globe to everyone XX
- > make peace wherever we go
- > help the world in small ways, but big ways for who we're helping
- > not have wars
- > be kind // make acts of kindness XXX
- > be nice
- > find the wildlife
- > start paying attention to arguments and things of the sort, and try to make it more positive

personal learning

- > learn about what peace is and why we need peace in our life
- > stay with a person to find how they act
- > be more aware of peace
- > use our brains

general suggestions

- > change
- > never give up
- > always look for different ways to build peace

(all answers found on next page)

all answers

- > find trust in others
- > help each other // and not have wars
- > get together
- > help each other
- > spread the word all around the globe to everyone
- > work together
- > make acts of kindness
- > change
- > be kind, never give up and always look for different ways to build peace
- > be nice
- > learn about what peace is and why we need peace in our life
- > stay with a person to find how they act
- > help each other
- > be kind
- > be more aware of peace and make peace wherever we go
- > find the wildlife
- > start paying attention to arguments and things of the sort, and try to make it more positive // spread the word about peace and the need for it
- > help each other
- > use our brains // help others
- > help the world in small ways, but big ways for who we're helping

(note: one student didn't do this part)

- - - - -

**With ten minutes left, I asked people to answer this question:**

**What is something very important you learned about peace, during the project?**

(I explained: 'something' = information, idea, new way of thinking about peace //  
'important' = valuable, interesting, important to you)

7 students raised hands and said the following:

- > Peace is hard to make.
- > It doesn't have to be in giant ways.
- > Helping each other.
- > You must have trust.
- > I didn't know there was so much war in other continents.
- > There are many songs about peace.
- > It can be created in many ways.

## ***Hands United for Peace:***

### **Tapping the creativity of grade 4-5 students in community-based education**

**by Jeffry Piker (PeaceQuest-Kingston)**

#### To the reader:

This report describes an unusual and creative peace education project for grade 4-5 students. The initiative was planned and delivered in Kingston during 2015-6, by a partnership consisting of a faith community (Chalmers United Church), a public school (Sydenham Public School of the Limestone District School Board) and a volunteer-based peace group (PeaceQuest-Kingston).

The description introduces the three partner groups, the gr. 4-5 class and the six project leaders. It provides useful information about the project: planning, teaching/learning methods, partnership operations, learning outcomes, challenges, funding sources, etc. It includes several photos of the project in action.



There is also another document about HUFPP: an evaluation of the project – details and analysis about how well the project's six goals were achieved and with what effects. The Evaluation can be found at the PeaceQuest-Kingston website: [www.peacequest.ca](http://www.peacequest.ca) -- this description is also there. We will greatly appreciate your feedback about either document.



## *Hands United for Peace:*

### **Tapping the creativity of grade 4-5 students in community-based education**

#### **Students' comments about the project**

A few days after *Hands United for Peace* ended with a public performance of their work, students in the grade 4-5 class which had been at the centre of the project were asked what they had learned from their three months of active participation. Here are some of their comments, in their own words:

"There are many different things you can do to bring peace, like raising banners and singing songs." "The smallest idea can change the world". "We should celebrate that we're different." "Different ways to tell a message." "You must have trust." "Peace can be made in small ways, not just stopping something -- and that's world wide." "Elders are leaders and not always older than you."

(Their collective feedback will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.)



*At one of five project workshops, students rehearse a song for the performance, under Margaret Moncrieff's direction. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*

#### **Overview of the project**

Planning *Hands United for Peace* took many months. It started in the spring of 2015. David Melhorn-Boe (Minister of Music at Chalmers United Church in Kingston) shared with his colleague, Margaret Moncrieff (Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries at the church), his earlier dream of a tree of peace and his notion of its educational possibilities for neighbourhood outreach to Sydenham Public School, across the street from the church. Near the end of that school year, they contacted Sandra Swan, vice-principal at the school, who reacted to the concept with enthusiasm. They also discussed



the idea with church member, Michael Cooke, who was active in PeaceQuest-Kingston, a volunteer-based local group. He was enthusiastic about a possible role in the project for his organization. Thus was born a three-way partnership of a faith community, a public school and a local peacework group. Working together would help translate David's germ of an idea into a full-scale project for community-based education, lasting from the following February through the end of April.

Sandra suggested to David and Margaret that Sarah McCourt's grade 4-5 class would be an excellent focus for project activity at the school -- the students' age (9 - 11 years) was appropriate to the education objectives, and the teacher was already experienced with and strongly committed to community outreach and critical thinking about social issues at the core of her own teaching methods.

Teaching and learning in the project would be based on **five creative activities** woven together into an educational tapestry.

- A **banner** would be hung on the church tower, in the school and elsewhere around the community. Designed by a local artist, painting would be done by the students and some youth from the church.
- In Sarah's class, students would read and reflect on a **story** about peace-making and the inter-dependence of all elements in nature.
- Under David's direction in five 90-minute workshops, students would create a **soundscape** for the story, to deepen the expression of its meaning. Students would produce vocal, hand and finger sounds to establish atmosphere and convey feelings as the story was being read aloud at the public performance.
- Under Margaret's direction (in those same five workshops), students would learn to sing some **songs** about peace.
- The culmination of the project would be a **public performance** in the church sanctuary by the students -- of the soundscape as the story was being read, and of the songs (joined by some members of the church's choir).



*The banner in process of being painted by the students and some church youth. (Photo by Jackie, parent-volunteer in Sarah's class.)*

The students were always the main focus of teaching/learning in project planning. It was also anticipated that educational outcomes would be felt within the school, the faith community and the peace group, and would extend beyond them into the neighbourhood and out into the wider community. The preparation of this descriptive report was specified in the project proposal -- for possible uses by all three partners, in particular by PeaceQuest-Kingston to inform other people and groups about ideas they might want to adapt and apply within the contexts of their own communities.

## Project goals

- Create an open partnership among Chalmers United Church, Limestone District School Board (specifically, Sydenham Public School) and PeaceQuest-Kingston.
- Raise awareness among participating students, teachers, parents and community members about peace and peace-building as core values for Canadians.
- Help participating students develop a deeper understanding of citizenship and ways they can express their vision and aspiration for the future of the country and the world.
- Encourage participating students to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.
- Build concrete relationships between the school and community groups such as PeaceQuest-Kingston and Chalmers United Church, as well as other community partners.
- Develop a project description that PeaceQuest-Kingston can share and promote with other communities regionally and nationally through its website and its affiliate groups across the country.

*(The list is copied, with minor wording changes for this document, from the project's proposal, which was approved by the Limestone District School Board and submitted to funding sources.)*

## Project participants

The roles of six individuals and one group (the grade 4-5 class) were essential to everything that happened during planning and implementation of *Hands United for Peace*. Each is associated with one of the three project partners.

- *Chalmers United Church*

From the church's website: [chalmersunitedchurch.org](http://chalmersunitedchurch.org)

"We're a congregation of The United Church of Canada – about 350 family groups of different shapes and sizes – with a worshipping history in Kingston, Ontario since 1847. Numerous volunteers provide leadership along with our devoted ministerial and music staff....Chalmers is on the thoughtful, liberal edge of the United Church. We honour the Judeo-Christian traditions, interpret the Bible using the best scholarship and insights we can, and try to offer weekly worship that brings some meaning to the world in which we live."

*The church is seen here just after the banner-raising, in a photo Sarah took from her 2nd-floor classroom in the school across the street.*



David Melhorn-Boe, Minister of Music at Chalmers, was (along with Margaret) a leader in every aspect of the project: planning from the start; identification of learning objectives; fund-raising; ongoing communication with Sandra and Sarah at the school; preparation and hanging of the banner; developing, teaching and directing the soundscape; informing the community about the public performance and then hosting the event; providing piano accompaniment for the songs...and much more.



*David provides assistance to students gathered on Chalmers' front steps, as they speak some words about peace to the people gathered for the public raising of the banner on a chilly, windy April afternoon. (Photo by snapd Kingston.)*

Margaret Moncrieff is Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries at Chalmers, and is also choir director at Mulberry Waldorf School and of Young Choristers Limestone (with Limestone District School Board). She shared David's leadership of the project, focusing especially on ways to integrate student creativity into the teaching/learning process. She selected the songs the students would sing (composing two herself); instructed them about ways to prepare for singing (breathing exercises, vocal warm-up, posture, etc.); directed rehearsals by the student choir; and encouraged students who seemed 'shy' about singing.



*Everything the students needed to learn about the soundscape they would perform at the public event and the three songs they would sing there was accomplished in five 90-minute workshops (plus the 'dress rehearsal' on the afternoon of the performance). Here Margaret talks with them about joys and challenges of singing, and about how, through song, to express to an audience their ideas and feelings about peace. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*



•*Sydenham Public School (in association with the Limestone District School Board)*

From the school's website: [sydenhamps.limestone.on.ca](http://sydenhamps.limestone.on.ca)

"Nestled close to Kingston's downtown, Queen's University and beautiful Lake Ontario, Sydenham Public School is one of Ontario's oldest continuing schools. Opened in 1853 (as the then Kingston County Grammar School), our school is an intimate and vibrant community of students, staff, families, and an active and supportive Parent Council. We host students from kindergarten (full-day) to grade eight, including a core French program which begins in grade 1."



Sydenham Public School. (Photo from school's website.)

Sandra Swan is vice-principal of the school. When David and Margaret approached the school about *Hands United for Peace*, principal Jennifer Lawless (who also has administrative responsibility at another, larger school) delegated Sandra as main school contact and coordinator of its involvement. Sandra facilitated approval of the project's proposal by the Limestone District School Board. She readily suggested that Sarah's grade 4-5 class would provide an excellent focus for the school's participation.

Sarah McCourt is an experienced junior-elementary teacher at Sydenham Public School. When contacted by Sandra about her class' possible involvement in the project, she was enthusiastic in her response. Sarah's teaching strategies and ideas about education correspond well with the project's goals: contact with groups, initiatives and institutions in the community is valuable for student learning, especially when it is coupled with shared reflection about these outreach experiences; incorporating student creativity deepens the teaching/learning process; attention to social issues is a key part of effective education; mutual respect and trust need to be central to the process.



After the banner-raising, Cogeco-TV interviewed Sarah and student, Maeve, about the project. Both described its positive effects on students in the class. (Photo by Jolene Simko.)

Students in Sarah's grade 4-5 class brought an array of skills, insights, experiences, talents, concerns and ideas (including ideas about peace) to their participation in Hands United for Peace -- as would be the case in any junior-elementary class anywhere in Canada. Their attention to project activities seldom wavered. They didn't seem particularly fazed by the inter-generational context for their work -- three (perhaps four) generations were involved. True, most were nervous about the public presentation that awaited them at the finale -- yet that didn't seem to deflect their involvement and commitment, which were impressive.



*The student choir is joined by members of the Chalmers choir for one of the three songs they performed so well at the public presentation. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*

- *PeaceQuest-Kingston*

From the group's website: [peacequest.ca](http://peacequest.ca)

"PeaceQuest-Kingston is a...non-profit, non-denominational and non-partisan organization based in Kingston, Ontario (which) supports and facilitates peace-building initiatives across Canada.... PeaceQuest was started in 2013 on the heels of the Canadian government spending tens of millions to celebrate the War of 1812 as a glorious struggle. A group of people in Kingston...decided to offer a different story of Canada and war, as we mark the centenary of World War 1. PeaceQuest-Kingston seeks to commemorate World War 1 by organizing events that emphasize peace -- a value (which) we believe Canadians cherish."

Jeffry Piker is music coordinator of PeaceQuest-Kingston. His career combined social research, writing, education in a variety of contexts, community development and program evaluation. His role was to gather information about the project, and to use that information to describe its planning and operation, and also to evaluate what was accomplished. (The evaluation will be published as a separate document.)

Michael Cooke is an active member of PeaceQuest-Kingston and co-chair of its steering committee. He is also a member of Chalmers United Church. During his career, he's had substantial experience in peacework, community development and education of various kinds, including administrative positions. His role in the project focused on preparation of the proposal document, fund-raising and communication among the partner groups.



*Michael was one of the speakers who welcomed people to the banner-raising.  
(Photo by Jolene Simko.)*

## **The project's view of teaching and learning**

Peace education for junior-elementary students (or indeed at any level of schooling) is not a new concept. The teaching/learning in this project which differed from the educational formats of many other such initiatives was well expressed by one of its six goals: *Encourage participating students to use their creative talents as a powerful tool for stimulating reflection, dialogue and engagement in community life.*

Consider the three key components of the learning objective: students will *use their creative talents*; the process will stimulate *reflection and dialogue*; and there will be *engagement in community life*. This turned out to be a deceptively complicated and challenging educational strategy -- especially since the curricular focus was explicitly on the many-sided, sometimes vaguely-defined, often controversial idea of *peace*.

With this in mind, let's look briefly at what was taught -- and how it was done -- in each of the five major project ingredients of *Hands United for Peace*: the banner, the story, the soundscape for the story, the songs and the final public performance.

- **Banner**

In late February, students came to the church in three small groups to work on the banner. David briefly explained its design and gave instructions about the painting process, which took each group about twenty minutes to complete. Each student painted one hand.

Weather complications turned raising the banner into an 'adventure'. The first scheduled day (in late March) had bad enough weather to require postponement. It was raised and attached to the church

tower two weeks later, on a chilly and very windy April afternoon. The audience included Sarah's class, project planners, a few parents, other interested on-lookers and members of local media. Some students spoke to the crowd about meanings of 'peace'.

The weather got worse over the weekend, with two unfortunate effects: strong winds weakened the banner's attachment to the tower, and rain caused paint to bleed slightly. (David had earlier been advised that the paint was impervious to bleeding.) The 'good news' is that the slight bleeding enhanced the 'look' of the banner. It was moved inside and hung prominently at the front of the church sanctuary, easily visible to all at the workshops, the dress rehearsal and the public performance.



*David instructs students about the painting process. (Photo by Jackie, parent-volunteer in Sarah's class.)*

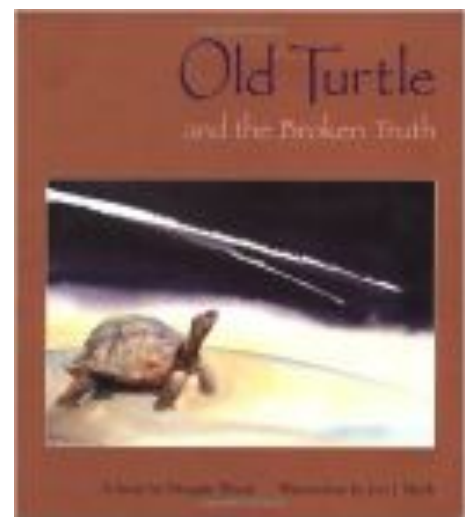
- Story

*Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* is "...a fable about a world full of suffering and violence in which a child, seeking a remedy to the chaos, visits a wise old turtle who explains the fragmentary nature of her people's truth. The child returns to her people and finds a way to mend the 'broken truth,' resulting in wholeness and healing for all of creation." (From a book review at the website of the Friends General Conference, a U.S. Quaker association: [www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org).)

The story provided a major 'text' for teaching and learning during the entire project. It was read three different times in Sarah's class, and preparation of the soundscape enabled students to focus even more deeply on ways to understand and express its meanings and messages. Early in the project, I attended the class' second hearing of the story. Afterward, Sarah allowed me to ask the students a question: "The word, 'peace', is never used in the story. Do you think this is a story about peace?"

Sitting in a circle on their discussion carpet at the front of the classroom and passing the 'speaker's feather' around, they told me their answers. Nearly all thought it is a story about 'peace'. Some of their reasons: "The little girl wants people to get along." "The book is talking about the world right now -- so much war -- the book tells us what should happen." "'You are loved' is important -- but also, 'everyone is loved'." "The girl did something for everyone without expecting anything back -- that's what peace is." "People need to stop the fighting." "The little girl did the right thing."

One student had a different (and equally important) view, explaining why the book is not about 'peace': "It's about people fighting each other."



*From an on-line search for 'images of Old Turtle and the Broken Truth'.*



- Soundscape

The first of five 90-minute workshops to prepare for the final performance took place in Sarah's classroom in early April. David introduced students to the idea of a *soundscape* and the plan for the class to provide a soundscape behind Margaret's reading of the story. He compared it to a soundtrack in movies and videos: they would use vocal, hand and finger sounds to create setting and mood which would deepen the audience's connection to the meaning of the story.

David identified nine elements of sound: pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, articulation, tone colour, harmony, texture and space. Students provided familiar examples of each, to indicate possible soundscape applications of the concepts: "low pitch is scary", "deep music can also be happier", "Indiana Jones has faster music", etc. He led them in practicing elements of sound using their voices, hands and fingers, sometimes produced separately, other times blended together.

He wondered, "Which elements of sound do we want to add to the story?" In particular, he asked them about actions, places and feelings. One example was nature sounds -- a student suggested "the chirping of birds". David supported the student's answer and pointed out that the answer used words rather than sounds -- the student then made some chirping sounds. At the end of the lesson, he invited students to think about other possible sounds (in addition to the birdsong example) to use with the story before the next workshop, which would take place in the church sanctuary a week later.

The following workshops involved the creation of the entire soundscape. The class was divided into three small groups (named A, B and C), each with its own location around the front of the church and its particular role in sound production. Because of limited time (practicing songs also occurred during the workshops), the soundscape was generated for the story piece by piece. David brought a plan to each day's practice -- it often needed to be revised in process, based sometimes on students' input and other times on his own decisions about ways to improve the sound effects. It didn't get a complete run-through behind the story until the dress-rehearsal, the afternoon of the performance. At the event, he directed the soundscape from near the back of the centre aisle. When story with soundscape ended, the audience showed genuine appreciation with strong and sustained applause.



*Groups A and C during a soundscape rehearsal. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*



*From the performance -- Group B was halfway up the centre aisle, in front of David. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*



- Songs

The students performed three songs: "Peace Is This Breath" (joined by women from the Chalmers choir -- composed by Margaret for this project); "As We Walk Along This Road" (joined by women and men from the Chalmers choir -- based on a traditional Japanese melody, with words by Margaret); and "Fly Little White Dove Fly" (joined by women and men from the Chalmers choir -- composed and recorded by the Canadian group, The Bells, in 1971 -- group member and Gananoque resident, Cliff Edwards, gave permission to use the song and sent regrets that he couldn't be at the performance).

The first song came before the story and soundscape at the public performance. Right after the soundscape, the Chalmers choir sang "I Dreamed of Rain" (composed by Jan Garrett in 2003) by itself and then were joined on stage by the student choir for the other two songs.

Margaret introduced all the songs to the class at the first workshop. After leading a few minutes of breathing and vocal warm-up exercises and with David providing keyboard backup, Margaret taught the words to each song line by line. They were given a first, tentative run-through by the class.

Nearly half the class was already involved in weekly music lessons: piano, cello, violin, guitar, and two were members of a noted local junior choir. Yet, as would be the case in any such collection of junior-elementary students, many in the class were seriously shy about singing, especially in public. Creating a soundscape was one kind of challenge -- building a choir was obviously another. In this first singing rehearsal and throughout the workshops, Margaret used support rather than admonition to encourage the reluctant ones -- several boys and a few girls -- to sing. At times, she directed the singing from farther back in the centre aisle, to encourage a stronger collective sound from the choir. Progress became apparent, slowly but steadily. At the final performance, everyone was obviously singing in all the songs. Applause by the audience was spontaneous and strong after each one.

Throughout her singing instruction during the workshops, Margaret provided insights and advice about the role of songs in a performance such as this one: singing a song is like telling a story; the importance and joy of singing together; the value of abdominal breathing and open mouths for a strong collective sound; the relevance of the meanings of words in the songs (e.g., "peace is this cry" -- students gave several suggestions: poverty, hunger, etc.);

In the middle of their second song, "As We Walk Along This Road", some students spoke words individually which expressed what the class had accomplished in its understanding of ways in which peace can be built: looking for ways to help others in need; caring for our planet;

looking for compromise; forgiving; treating others the way we want to be treated; showing respect; feeding the hungry; raising money for cancer research; gathering resources and welcoming refugees to our city; planting trees; encouraging each other; singing and sharing stories.



*The student choir at the performance. Who says boys don't like to sing...eh? (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*

- Public performance

Students connected to the other four project ingredients through their anticipation of a public performance at the end -- in front of family, their teacher and perhaps others from their school, members of a church and a community group whom they wouldn't already know and other strangers from the community. They would not be able to stand back and watch -- they knew they would be the focus of the audience's attention.

Part of teaching and learning during project workshops was about how to do a public presentation: how to stand for long periods of time, where to be at different parts of the performance and how to move there, how to express the sounds of the soundscape and the words and melodies of the songs with strength and clarity, how to follow the director's lead in each case (eyes on the director, attention to cues) and in general how to use rehearsal time effectively.

Beneath it all was students' understandable need to handle the nervousness that can grow over time in an extended project. Right after the dress-rehearsal, just a few hours before the performance, students asked David several 'what-if' questions, revealing how they were feeling. David's answers were reassuring: "We'll get through it." Indeed, David's and Margaret's interactions with them throughout the project was based on genuine respect, treating them as learners rather than as children, as partners in this initiative, never talking down to them.

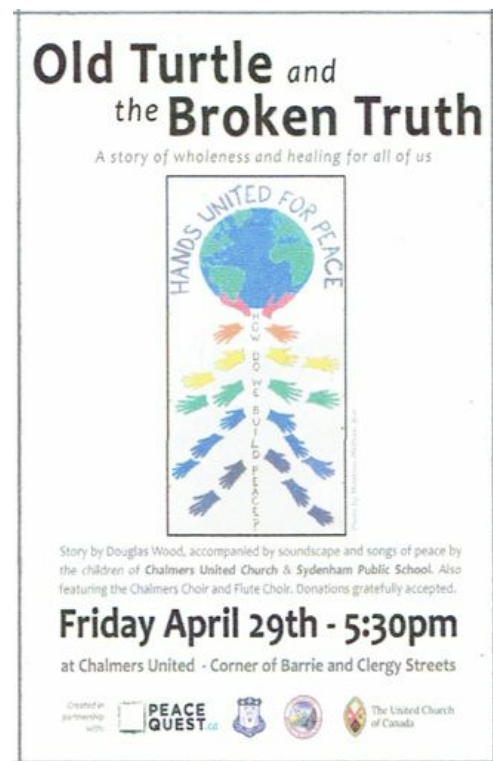
Saying that the performance went well is something of an understatement.

David, Rev. Drew Strickland (minister at the church) and Michael Cooke (for PeaceQuest-Kingston) gave brief welcoming comments. Sarah told the audience she could see the effects of the project on the students: how they listen to each other, how they care for each other.

The audience (of ninety or so, seated in the two centre sections -- a fine turnout) showed obvious enjoyment and appreciation for the songs and story with soundscape, by their careful attention and enthusiastic applause. At the end David thanked the students "...for all we have learned from you."

The event was followed by a well-attended reception in the church hall. Equally impressive to the number of people there (which was substantial) were the obvious positive energy, high spirits and sense of personal accomplishment felt by the students. It was a feeling shared by everyone.

Three (perhaps four) generations participated in the performance, sat in the audience and attended the reception. A PeaceQuest-Kingston volunteer (life-long musician, one of the older people present) commented later: "It was wonderful. Fascinating. The kids put their heart and soul into it. They used their voice and body to represent the story. The singing was beyond just being 'in tune' -- it was transporting. More than entertainment -- there was unity in the program -- a performance with a difference."



*Poster for the final performance. Note: the Chalmers Flute Choir was not able to perform. (Poster design by Jolene Simko.)*

## Experiential education

Several kinds of education occurred during the project -- for example: values clarification, memorization, skill development, story analysis, practice. What made this project different from many other examples of peace education, however, was that it featured experiential education at its core.

Experiential education has two essential characteristics: productive activity and ongoing, guided reflection about that activity.

- Productive activity:

We usually think of productivity in experiential education as involving things like outdoor adventure, co-op jobs at workplaces or practice-teaching in teacher training.

Much of what the students were doing was certainly productive, creative activity. Their voices (and hands and chests) created the soundscape and musical content for a public performance that was enjoyed by many people. They produced artwork: the banner and their peace flags were hung behind the singers on the stage at Chalmers; their water-colour paintings of meaningful episodes in the story were displayed at the back of the church sanctuary.

- Ongoing, guided reflection about the productive activity:

Part of our folk wisdom is that 'experience is the best teacher'. However, experience sometimes teaches the wrong lesson or no lesson at all. That is why on-going, guided reflection is needed -- so that learners can actively *make sense* of their experiences. The five 90-minute workshops were filled with so many important things to do to prepare the soundscape and songs that little time was left for guided reflection within that context.

It was in Sarah's class that guided reflection about students' experience had time and space to occur. Early in the project, the class watched a video showing the significance of peace flags in Nepal -- and then students each painted a peace flag. During the period of the workshops, her discussions with the class revealed that students' work on the soundscape behind the



*Student painting a peace flag. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*



*Peace flags of four students. (Photo by Jeffry Piker.)*

story, along with songs about the meaning of peace, were challenging students to do what they say, matching their actions to what they were learning about building peace. On the morning of the final performance, she read the story to the class (for the third time) and asked them to reflect on what they had gotten out of the project: "we change how we see the world"; "singing together can be building peace"; "how to make new sounds and expand how we use our voices"; "we can choose peace -- it doesn't just happen"; "we should have it in our world". It was then that she asked students to each paint a water-colour picture that reflected their response to the story.

## Learning outcomes

### For the students

The Monday morning after the final performance, I visited the class to get students' feedback about the project. Here is some of what they wrote -- it well represents all their comments.

- ***What is the main lesson you learned from the story?***

"To include everyone." "Everyone is loved." "Everybody is equal."

"Share with others." "You should care more about other people." "You shouldn't be greedy."

"Don't get caught up on one thing and make war and hate people who are different -- you need to see how everything is special." "It doesn't matter if you're different."

"You shouldn't judge people." "Everyone should be treated the same."

"One big thing is part of many little things." "Peace takes time." "It's really complex."

- ***What are two valuable things you learned from being part of the project?***

"How to build peace." "Peace is important." "Peace can be anywhere."

"I'm not sure about this project because for peace there has to be war."

"We should be more aware about peace because of what's happening in Syria, etc."

"Listen to what other people have to say." "With people look at the things you have in common"

"We can make peace by entertaining." "How to make new sounds." "Use music to tell a story."

- ***Complete this sentence: "In our search for peace we need to..."***

"Work together." "Stay with a person to find out how they act." "Be kind."

"Help the world in small ways, but big ways for who we're helping." "Help each other."

"Use our brains." "Not have wars." "Find the wildlife."

"Change." "Never give up." "Always look for different ways to build peace."

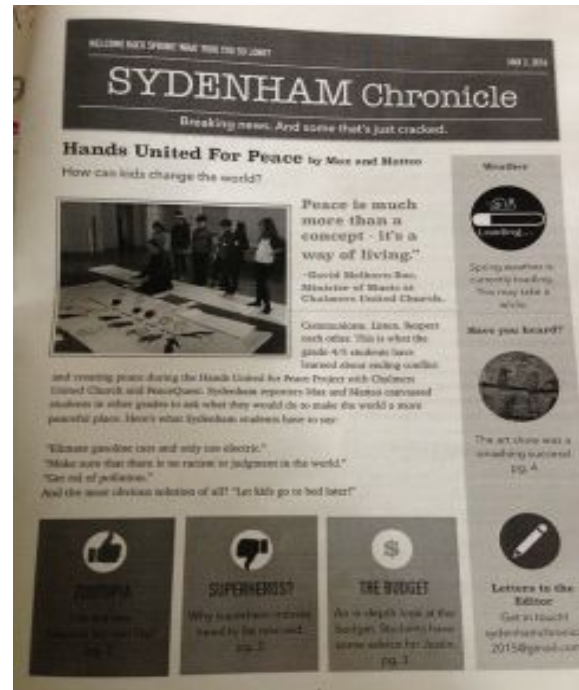
## For the partner groups

Because of the many challenges of information-gathering during the project and serious limits on participants' time, I was not able to gather much information to document learning taking place within the three partner groups based on their participation in the project.

- Sydenham Public School

The Monday after the final performance, the May 2 issue of the student newspaper ("SYDENHAM Chronicle") was distributed at the school. Most students and teachers see the publication and read it regularly. It also goes home to many parents. The feature story in this issue was about *Hands United for Peace*.

In an interview not long after the end of the project, Sandra reported that she, David and Margaret had started talking about how to move the partnership forward into other activities in the future.



(Photo by Sarah McCourt.)

- Chalmers United Church

David and Rev. Strickland both pointed out that a major goal for the church was to "...foster deeper relationships between the congregation and the neighbouring elementary school". They both acknowledged that community outreach ("...to connect with what others in the community are doing...") can be difficult to accomplish, because it requires "...new ways of envisioning and practicing collaborative ministry."

During April, the project's most active period, the church bulletin featured the banner: "...a fantastic metaphor for building peace." Rev. Strickland said, "For us, (the project) was a major educator about how we need to be as a church."

One Sunday morning service that month focused specifically on the project and its meaning and implications. David wrote three questions for a panel (himself, Margaret and Michael) to answer, followed by discussion with the congregation: Why do this project now? Do we need a war to understand peace? How do we build peace? (The second question came directly from one student's comments during in-class reflection.) The presentation had originally been scheduled to take fifteen minutes and actually lasted more than thirty minutes.



- PeaceQuest-Kingston

This was the group's first opportunity to participate directly in the delivery of peace education in a local school. Indeed, one person suggested that this was a major reason for its decision to be an active partner in this particular project. (It is also true that, through the leadership of Ann Boniferro, its education coordinator, the group has been working long and effectively to encourage and facilitate peace education in many area schools.)

During the period of project planning and implementation, there was no real opportunity for the group as a whole to learn from its participation. Michael and I gave regular reports to monthly steering committee meetings -- these were well received but didn't generate much discussion. Its anticipation from the start was that this descriptive report (plus an evaluation of the project, soon to be completed) would be valuable resources for the group's future consideration of effective ways to support -- and participate in -- peace education in schools.

### **Three challenges facing the project -- and their solutions**

In an educational initiative as significant in learning objectives and complicated in operational format as *Hands United for Peace*, challenges are simply part of the territory. Three are presented here as examples in telling the project's story -- others might well have been included in this list.

- The 'adventure' of the banner

Sometime during the project, it seemed as though the banner took on a life of its own. David's original idea for the project had already included the concept of a public banner which would express to the community the project's 'message' (*hands united for peace*). He also had a preliminary sense of its design (a tree with branches, roots and leaves consisting of hands in rainbow colours) and the notion of a creative role for students and youth from the church in its production. Making that a reality was indeed a challenge.

In the early stage of project planning, he needed to focus on logistics, seeking advice from several sources: material for the banner itself; appropriate paint (environmentally safe, impervious to weather conditions); a good way to hang it outside at the church; finding an artist who could skillfully apply an outline of his design idea onto the banner, so that students and church youth could participate in the painting; scheduling banner-raising so it fit the project's and Sarah's teaching schedules. Step by step, the tasks got accomplished.

Then, as related earlier in this report, Mother Nature made her presence felt. (Given the central theme of *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*, could this have been more than merely coincidence?) First, a winter-induced postponement of the banner-raising. Then, a few days after it was successfully raised, persistent wind and rain required it to be taken down and moved inside to dry-out -- a necessary but by no means pleasant decision for David to make.

But all was not lost. A few people (myself included) thought that the bleeding of colour caused by heavy rains had somehow added nicely to the banner's overall appearance. With some slight touch-up of outlines here and there, it could still be effectively used. (Was Herself perhaps smiling knowingly at this point?)

It was hung inside the church at the front of the sanctuary, prominent during the workshops, at church services and at the final performance. The planning team considered some other community locations (certainly including the school) at which it could later be displayed inside.

Final note about the resolution of this challenge: When I gathered feedback from the students just after the end of the project, I listed the five project ingredients and asked them to (anonymously) circle their favourite. The banner received half the total votes.



*During the soundscape at the performance: behind Group A can be seen the banner -- as revised by Mother Nature. Also in view are many of the students' peace flags. (Photo by Sarah McCourt.)*

- Communication among the three partner groups

The partnership consisted of three groups very different in structure and organizational culture: a faith community (Chalmers United Church), an elementary school within a large public board of education (Sydenham Public School, within Limestone District Board of Education), and a community-based, mainly volunteer peace group (PeaceQuest-Kingston). Major differences can easily be seen in the formal and informal rules and procedures which guide the operations of each one. And yet they needed to find good ways to communicate and cooperate together.

Six individuals -- two from each partner group -- were essentially the project's leaders: David and Margaret from Chalmers, Sandra and Sarah from Sydenham P. S. and Michael and myself from PeaceQuest-Kingston. Although these six never met all together, effective communication needed to flow among them and the groups they represented.

David, Margaret, Michael and I met together five times as a 'planning team': in August, October, December, January and April. The hour-long meetings focused on specific planning tasks: communicating with the school (and school board) and gaining necessary approvals at

both levels; writing a project proposal; identifying the specific teacher and class that would participate; setting a budget and seeking funding; preparing a schedule of project activities; making decisions about production of the banner; establishing bookkeeping responsibilities; specifying the roles of documentation and evaluation (and again getting school and board approval); clarifying procedures for including singing in the project; addressing issues related to the possibility of taking photos of students; etc.

Communication between the planning team and the school was essentially the responsibility of David and Margaret, although after information-gathering got underway, I also had a role to play in this aspect. For nearly all planning tasks through the life of the project, email contact was essential -- it often included cc's to relevant participants.

Each partner group's two representatives were responsible for communication within their group. Because banner-painting, four of the five workshops, the dress rehearsal and the public presentation all took place at Chalmers, David and Margaret had significant responsibility in this regard. Once project activity got underway, Sarah had major responsibility for communication within her school. There were three times when Jolene Simko, PeaceQuest-Kingston's administrative coordinator, took an active role: preparation of the poster and informing the media about the banner-raising and about the final presentation -- her main project contact for these tasks was David.

What perhaps enabled such a complicated communication network to function effectively was the strong commitment each partner group brought to the success of the project. That plus the insights the six major leaders and others brought to the challenge of respecting the working contexts of their partner participants.

- Getting school board approval

Early in its meetings, the planning team realized that getting the approval of the Limestone District School Board was an essential step. Sydenham Public School (and its parent school board) were being asked to partner with a faith community and a local peace-work group.

The first partnership seemed challenging because a public board was being asked to partner with a faith community. The second partnership was potentially challenging since Kingston is, among other things, a military town -- Royal Military College is here, as is CFB Kingston. The school regularly attracts students from outside its catchment area, some of whom might come from military families, whose expectations are clearly as valid as all other families'.

Two items required board-level approval: the project's over-all plan (as defined in its formal, five-page proposal), and the planning team's documentation and evaluation plan.

Approval for the first was accomplished by early September. David was in contact with Sandra, who vetted the proposal to the Superintendent of Education at the board. Minor wording changes needed to be made, which specified that the partnership was 'open' and not necessarily limited to this particular faith community and this particular community group. The planning team readily agreed.



Approval for the second was accomplished in January. Michael and I drafted a letter to Sandra on PeaceQuest-Kingston letterhead, detailing the documentation/evaluation process. She vetted the letter to the board and received its approval without the need for revisions.

### **Three recommendations for peace education**

While writing this report, I was telling the story to particular people and groups. The students (and their parents) stayed front and centre in my mind's eye. I wanted to share with project leaders and the partner groups my impressions of how it seemed to fit together: to support what they had tried to accomplish, encourage them to reflect about their efforts thoughtfully, assist them to spread the word.

Especially though, I imagined that I was talking to other organizations that might want to consider undertaking an educational project something like this one: faith communities, schools of all sorts, community-based groups -- and in particular, groups working for peace.

I do believe this project contained valuable insights and creative ingredients for peace education. In that regard, here are three recommendations for groups wanting to utilize aspects of this educational model -- for learners of any age, any level of schooling, any social background, anywhere.



*Students are all smiles at the banner-raising -- with some of the gathered crowd in the background watching the banner reach its prominent position on the church tower. (Photo by Jolene Simko.)*

- 1) Pay attention to context.

Context may not be 'everything' (as some would have us believe), but it is extremely important -- and it surely had profound effects on the processes and outcomes of this project. Consider a few examples of the context-specific resources here present: David's knowledge about soundscape production; Margaret's experience doing music education with children; Michael's familiarity with project design and planning; Chalmers' and PeaceQuest-Kingston's fund-raising networks; Sarah's commitment to the educational power of reflective learning. The list of resources available here could be much longer.

It would be difficult to replicate this specific model for peace education in other contexts. More valid is the possibility of identifying valuable ideas and ingredients in this project and applying them in new ways and combinations, in formats appropriate to resources and opportunities existing in each particular location and readily available to be tapped.

2) Make careful decisions about which project ingredients to adopt.

The following ingredients were key to the operation of this project:

- Feature a story as major input into education about peace.
- Locate student creativity at the core of teaching/learning.
- Incorporate on-going, guided reflection as part of experiential education.
- Connect project activity to the wider community.
- Establish respect for differences of opinion and background.
- Focus project outcomes on a final public performance.
- Operate the project within a partnership format.

3) Effective communication and planning are essential for working in partnerships.

"Partnership" is a bit of a buzzword in community-based activities these days. Understandably so, especially where peace is a major objective of project activity.

It is by no means an easy format within which to operate. Yet, using *Hands United for Peace* as an example, its potential virtues and values can readily be seen.

Two important insights can be gained from the experiences of this project:

- Effective communication among partner groups is neither automatic nor straightforward. Any partnership trying to accomplish the kind of peace education seen here will be well advised to take seriously the communication challenges which are likely to become apparent. Key for

success will be appreciation of and respect for the working knowledge and workplace culture that each partner brings to the process.

- Not everything can be planned ahead of time. And even the best plans often need to be revised, when unanticipated realities come into play (...tip of the hat here to Mother Nature). Still, detailed and careful planning are crucial for effective operation of partnerships -- especially in complicated contexts for peace education projects. One useful step will be for the partner groups to meet together early in the planning process, to share goals and clarify mutual expectations.

## **Other people whose efforts helped to make the project happen:**

### *Sydenham Public School and the Limestone District Board of Education:*

Jennifer Lawless (principal) gave ongoing encouragement to the school's involvement.

Parents supported their children's participation in the project: volunteering in some project activities, attending the banner-raising, the public performance and reception.

Holly Reichstein (office administrator) was unfailingly helpful whenever project workers visited the school for information-gathering and other tasks.

Doug Reansbury (long-time Kingston singer-songwriter, and parent of a student in the class) played back-up guitar for 'Fly Little White Dove Fly' at the public performance.

Krishna Burra (Board Superintendant for the 'family of schools' that includes this one) and Barbara Fraser-Stiff (Board Superintendent of Education) assisted planners to obtain approval for the project at the Board office.

### *Chalmers United Church:*

Rev. Drew Stickland strongly endorsed the project from earliest plans through the final public performance, and incorporated project themes into several Sunday services.

Carol Sleeth (church administrator) provided behind-the-scenes assistance when project activities affected church operations.

Joan Simeon (church treasurer) worked on project bookkeeping.

Ivan Brandsma (church custodian) shared his expertise for the original raising of the banner, and helped organize the reception in the church hall after the performance.

### *PeaceQuest-Kingston:*

Jolene Simko (administrative coordinator) helped draft the poster advertising the final public event, and contacted media regarding banner-raising and public performance.

Ann Boniferro (education coordinator) provided valuable insight and information about the group's rationale for becoming a partner in the project.

Joanne Gunning (financial coordinator) worked on project bookkeeping.

*Design artist for the banner:*

Lise Melhorn-Boe (local fabric artist) worked with David to design the banner. She painted the outlines to be filled-in by students and some youth from the church. And she did some minor touch-up after foul weather caused some 'bleeding' of the colours.

**Project budget:     \$5000.00**

Funding sources:     Chalmers Special Project Fund. PeaceQuest-Kingston. Four Winds Presbytery. Church in Mission Vision Fund. Community Foundation for Kingston and Area. Donations collected at the final performance.

Expense categories:     Stipends (two teachers; art designer for banner). Banner materials. Promotion. Event costs (piano accompanist at public performance, caretaker, reception refreshments). Documentation, evaluation and resource kit. Contingency.

**On-line information about *Hands United for Peace***

- A reading of *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* along with the book's artwork -- on Youtube:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GTYbsl6UYE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GTYbsl6UYE)
- Cogeco-TV banner-raising interview with Sarah and student, Maeve -- on Youtube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFRKt7-O9gQ&feature=youtu.be>
- 6. Kingston Whig Standard article from the banner-raising:  
<http://www.thewhig.com/2016/04/11/banner-day-for-peace-as-project-begins>
- snapd Kingston photos of the banner-raising  
<https://kingston.snapd.com/event/935489#/>
- Chalmers Sunday morning service panel discussion about the project -- from the Chalmers website (audio only):  
<http://chalmersunitedchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/04-17-16.mp3>

## **A personal note**

My sincere appreciation to all the many people who, despite their incredibly busy work and personal lives, took time to help me in information-gathering for this report. Their assistance was invaluable. Special thanks to Sarah McCourt, who supported my work in more ways than I could ever have imagined would happen.

Mistakes and misinterpretations in the report are entirely my own responsibility.