

The Determination for Peace
by Andrew Lavers

“Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures,” were words once spoken by John F. Kennedy. This famous U.S. President dealt with one of the most intense situations in history and was seen as a messenger of peace during unstable times. JFK is not the only example of a contemporary peacemaker; however, his words indicate traits that are of essence in one: patience, determination, bravery and selflessness. This does not necessarily mean that all peacemakers are powerful leaders or well-known voices. A peacemaker can be any individual clearly demonstrating positive traits needed to establish resolutions towards non-violence and pursue a peaceful world.

Scenes in which a peacemaker can rise to the occasion can vary greatly. From the streets of a community to the battlegrounds of foreign lands, each scenario has its share of destabilizing situations that can require the helping hands of those capable and willing. Communities and local areas, such as the area of Wetaskiwin in which I reside, and the neighbouring town of Hobbema, can face the threat of gang activity, or the misfortunes of poverty and youth displacement, all of which can have the eventual result of violence. There are no simple solutions for these conflicts. However, whether you hear of them are not, there are many community leaders who could be hailed for potential peacemaking within their own city streets, including Wetaskiwin’s. This help could be in the form of creating action groups against gangs and creating community watch organizations. Afterschool programs like The Boys and Girls Club or the Cadet Corps can also help promote peace by drawing youth away from violence. Attempting to reach out to the less-fortunate is another extension of peacemaking, seen in the form of homeless shelters or

food banks. These strides towards a more positive community experience can create a ripple effect towards achieving peace at the local level.

There is also a national need for peacemakers. Not only must personal safety be ensured for the citizens of Canada, international events can also require the attention and responses of individuals across the country and in government. Former Canadian leaders have been noted for their quest for peace, including Nobel Peace Prize recipient Lester B. Pearson who is seen as the father of peacekeeping due to his response to the Suez Canal Crisis. His ideals are now embodied by the Canadian Military. Deployments of Canadian troops and diplomats to foreign lands can cultivate some of the most valuable peacemakers the world has known. A supreme example of this being Master Corporal Mark Isfeld, who gave joy in the form of dolls to children in a war-torn area, demonstrating the traits of a true peacekeeper: determination, bravery, selflessness and a dedication towards achieving a brighter tomorrow.

The varying capacities in which a peacemaker can be found are a demonstration that heroes can be anyone, big or small, on a local or an international level, but all are working towards the same peaceful objective.