

Birds Creek students win first ever Stories of Peace Award



By Nate Smelle

In 1981 the United Nations General Assembly declared Sept. 21 the International Day of Peace. Since then, each year people around the world have devoted this day of observance to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

This year, the team working to make Bancroft the "Peace Capital of Canada" and home of the Canadian Peace Museum in 2025 decided to celebrate the day by launching the inaugural Stories of Peace Award. In order to be considered for the award, the Canadian Peace Museum asked people to film a short video which answers the question, "What does peace mean to you?" Applicants were then asked to post their video to social media with the hashtag #StoriesofPeace2023, and tag @CanPeaceMuseum.

Upon reviewing the submissions, the Canadian Peace Museum announced on Sept. 21 that Bird's Creek Public School had won the first ever #StoriesofPeace2023 Award. According to the students featured in the video, peace is: "not getting bullied?"; "helping others?"; "having friends?"; "having fun?"; "filling someone's bucket?"; "feeling safe around other people?"; "watching a sunset on the lake?"; "no war, which is forgiveness, which is kindness, which is peace?"; "you're outdoors laying on the grass and you see the birds chirping and it's very lovely and beautiful?"; "it means being relaxed, not bothered, and my mind is just clear and I don't have any worries?"; "caring?"; and, "being kind with everyone."

Bird's Creek Public School's winning video was produced by LeeAnne Ireland. As the first winners of the award, the school received

a custom-made wooden trophy, as well as a \$500 cash prize generously donated by the restaurant chain Loaded Pierogi.

A video submitted by Gattuor Loch Bakam that was named the runner up, garnered the attention of an anonymous donor who provided the Canadian Peace Museum with a gift of \$100 to award to Bakam for his impactful narrative on peace. Sharing what peace means to him, Bakam defined it as "a state of harmony, tranquility, and an absence of conflict." Providing further insight his understanding of peace, Bakam added, "Peace is also associated with a mutual understanding, cooperation in the resolution of conflict through non-violent means. Peace encompasses a notion of justice, equality, and respect of human rights. Peace is highly valued for its impact on personal well-being and societal prosperity. Peace is life itself; peace is not just an absence of conflict."

The Canadian Peace Museum's executive director Chris Houston came up with the idea for the Stories of Peace Award as a way to celebrate International Peace Day while promoting peacefulness through understanding. By engaging the community and inviting people to think about what peace means to them, he hopes to inspire others to appreciate the value of peace.

When faced with the same question presented to those who entered the friendly contest, Houston replied, "People who are subjected to inequity, they're not at peace; they're traumatized by that. So I also think that piece is tranquility and nature in the absence of violence, but it is also the presence of fairness, and kindness, and equity."

The award winning videos can be viewed at: <https://canadianpeacemuseum.ca/awards>. For more information on the Canadian Peace Museum visit their website at: <https://canadianpeacemuseum.ca/>.