



Port Alberni Nuggets

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Baha'i Quote of the Month



Baha'i Stories:

Ridvan

The Governor of Baghdad at this time was a relative of my father, but his enemy on account of differences in religious opinion and family misunderstandings. This man, rendered uncomfortable by the sight of my father's increasing fame and influence, exerted himself to effect his removal from Baghdad. He caused representations to be made to the Shah of Persia that, whereas Beha Ullah had been driven out of Persia because of the harm threatened by his presence to the Mohammedan religion in that country, now he was injuring the religion even more in Baghdad, and still exerting his evil influence in Persia; and that therefore he ought to be removed to a place at a greater distance from that country, and one where he could do less harm.

These representations and suggestions he sent repeatedly to the Court of Persia, until at length the Shah was moved to use his influence with the Sultan of Turkey to have the Bábís transferred from Baghdad to Constantinople. An order to this effect was at length made by the Sultan.

When this news came to us, from which we inferred that my father would again be made a prisoner, we were thrown into consternation, fearing another separation. He was summoned before the magistrates.

My brother imperiously declared that he would go in his stead, but this our father overruled and went himself. Great numbers of his followers had assembled about our house, and these witnessed his departure with many demonstrations of grief, feeling that it was possible that he might not return,

The magistrates expressed great sorrow to my father; they said that they respected and loved him, that they had not instigated the order, but that they were powerless to suspend or modify it, and must proceed with its execution. My father remained in conference with them nearly all day but could do nothing to avert the catastrophe. When he returned, he told us that we must prepare to set out for Constantinople in two weeks.

This report was like a death-knell to his followers, who were still gathered about the house. Many of them were Arabs; their fierce natures rebelled, and they gave way to violent remonstrances. They implored the Blessed Perfection not to desert them. 'You are our shepherd,' they said; 'without you, we must die.'

The next day they so overran the house that we could not prepare for the journey. Then the Blessed Perfection proposed to go with Abbas Effendi to the garden of one of our friends and live there in a tent till the time of departure, that the family might be able to proceed with the packing. This remark was repeated and misunderstood, and the rumour circulated among the believers that the Blessed Perfection was to be taken away alone. Then they came pouring in by hundreds, so wild with grief that they could not be pacified; and when my father started to leave the house with my brother, they threw themselves upon the ground before him. One man who had an only child, which had come to him late in his life, stripped the clothes from the child's body and, placing it at my father's feet, cried, 'Naked I give you my child, my precious child, to do with as you will; only promise not to leave us in distress. Without you, we cannot live.'

Then, as the only way in which to soothe his followers, the Blessed Perfection took all his family to the garden, leaving to friends the preparation of his household goods for the journey. Here we pitched tents and lived in them for two weeks. The tents made, as it were, a little village, that of my father, which he occupied alone, in the centre. -Myron Henry Phelps and Bahiyyih Khánum, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, p. 27-31

News and Events:

News from our twin community of Jaipur, India

Naw-Ruz was celebrated in the Jaipur Baha'i House, followed by a picnic the next day.

Financial contributions were sent from our community to assist with the efforts in Rajasthan.

A new study circle (ruhi book 2) started with 17 participants in Sitapura

The world conferences are being held in many clusters in Rajasthan and also planning for the nine year plan.





Bahá'í World News Service

Agriculture: BIC underscores role of farmers in policymaking



BIC GENEVA — How is it that despite sufficient quantities of food being produced to feed the entire global population each year, food systems fall short of providing food security for all of humanity?

To examine this question, the Geneva Office of the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) hosted a discussion during the United Nations global Food Systems Summit—the first major food summit since 1996 aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The event specifically looked at the need to put farmers at the heart of discussions on food production and included the Deputy to the UN Special Envoy for the UN Food Systems Summit, the Secretary of the Committee on World Food Security, the Director for Knowledge Management and Learning at CARE International, representatives from the United Nations Development Programme, as well as Bahá'í-inspired organizations with related experience.

“Growing evidence suggests that improvements in rural productive sectors depend heavily on farmers and people engaged in local agriculture—something that has become ever more apparent during the pandemic,” said Simin Fahandej, a representative of the Geneva Office, at the gathering.

She added: “Yet, their voice and experience are largely missing from high-level conversations on food systems and policy-making processes.

“The bulk of decisions on agricultural policy and food security are typically made far from the rural settings and local realities that shape how policies will be implemented in practice.”

Drawing on the Bahá'í teachings, Ms. Fahandej continued to explain that, in order to achieve change, new conceptions of the role of farmers in society are needed. "Imagine what new possibilities can emerge if we embrace farmers as 'the first active agent in human society' and allow questions regarding the economic development of communities to begin with the farmer?"

On this basis, panelists explored how knowledge generated at the local level about food production by farmers and communities can inform international policies on food and agriculture.

Ever Rivera, a representative of the Bahá'í-inspired organization FUNDAEC with extensive experience in the fields of education and agriculture, described how narrow and limited conceptions need to be replaced with a more profound understanding of human nature that sees the nobility of every human being and protects each one against prejudice and paternalism.

Mr. Rivera elaborated further, describing FUNDAEC's approach to developing capacity in people to contribute to the well-being of their societies, particularly in supporting initiatives aimed at food self-sufficiency.

"FUNDAEC promotes approaches that draw on the profound traditional knowledge of farmers and on the best practices of modern science, enabling farmers to enhance food production processes and to develop community structures and new systems that support collective well-being.

"These include the establishment of small groups of farmers who collaborate and support one another, the development of a village storehouse accessible to all, and changes in agricultural practices and in the distribution of produce to eliminate unnecessary intermediaries in bringing agricultural products to market."

Discussions at the gathering also addressed the harmful impact of certain major challenges of environmental degradation, such as soil erosion, large-scale deforestation, and water shortages. Dr. Martin Frick, the Deputy to the Special Envoy for the UN Food Systems Summit, stated that "all of these wrongs can be righted, with no other means more effective than through food systems. And you will only achieve that by addressing issues of human dignity... and power imbalances."

The Geneva Office of the BIC plans to release a statement on themes related to agriculture and food security as it continues to hold gatherings exploring these issues.

[Sharing:](#)

Jodi's sharing:

Sadly she had a fall a while ago and broke her hip and was rushed to a hospital in Nanaimo and received a hip replacement. She is back home in Port Alberni and slowly recovering.

Mr. and Mrs. Mirani's sharing:

We are very excited to have our dear Baha'i friend from Iran visiting us here and staying with us. Mrs. Nabili is from a prominent Baha'i family and will join us for our feast.

Lesley's sharing:

For two weeks I am taking the intensive training at hospice and, although emotionally exhausting, it is also a precious gift personally and in the tools we are honing in order to accompany others in their last stage of life or those who are grieving a loss. We are spending time in practicing listening skills and, of course, I am reminded of our beloved Master, who was the perfect listener.

“To the questioner He responded first with silence—an outward silence. His encouragement always was that the other should speak and He listen. There was never that eager tenseness, that restlessness so often met showing most plainly that the listener has the pat answer ready the moment he should have a chance to utter it. I have heard certain people described as “good listeners,” but never had I imagined such a “listener” as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It was more than a sympathetic absorption of what the ear received. It was as though the two individualities became one; as if He so closely identified Himself with the one speaking that a merging of spirits occurred which made a verbal response almost unnecessary, superfluous.”

But we, of course, can never be Abdu’l-Baha. And so enters our feelings of humility. I am learning that listening is a humbling experience, because, in being completely sincere, you come before someone with all your shortcomings. There is also so much you cannot know or will never know about the other person’s experience. You may be having a difficult day yourself and may not be able to be fully present. Here we come face to face with our fragility.

It is also a humbling experience to listen to someone else sharing their deepest thoughts and feelings, some of which they may have never said to anyone else. Listening in such an intense way is a regular practice in humility, because you are involved in “not doing” more than “doing; it’s not about your personal accomplishment or something for which you can take credit. You are merely a channel for healing, not its Source. And really it is a blessing you receive more than an offering you make.

Badi's sharing:

In His numerous talks and Writings, we have read Abdu’l-Baha mentioning the need for East and West to reach each other. One example is the quote below from The Promulgation of Universal Peace:

“Today, the Bahá’is of the East are longing with deep desire to see you face to face. Their highest hope and fondest wish is that the day may come when they will be gathered together in an assembly with you. Consider well the power that accomplished this wonderful transformation.”

I never understood it practically until our Assembly decided to adopt the Assembly of Jaipur in India (my pioneering post many years ago) as its twin Assembly and join forces and share experiences. We had a zoom meeting to get to know each other better.

I was so surprised to hear that some of the friends in Jaipur said that they thought they would never see a Baha’i from the West in their lifetime and how fortunate they were to have this blessing. And our Baha’i friends here were in awe of seeing the friends from the East and spending a little time together.

Still, the benefit of this encounter which was motivated by the words of our beloved Abdu’l-Baha was not revealed to me until we started consulting to do a project together, which resulted in being guests at their beautiful, elaborate celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Ascension of Abdu’l-Baha.

Soon, we found out how lucky we are in the West to have the financial resources, whereas we lack human resources in our small community. In contrast, our friends in Jaipur have ample human resources, but they struggle with finances to carry out Baha'i activities.

Our community decided to help with their teaching efforts by contributing financially to the teaching work. We just sent the second contribution to assist them.

We are so happy to have the privilege to be involved indirectly with the teaching work there, and they are very grateful for the financial assistance.

I am not sure that I fully understand the wisdom and benefits of West and East reaching out together, but I have seen this beautiful experience in our tiny community. What a blessing!

Poem of the month

Poem by Jodi



News and Nuggets from our First Nations Community



Land-based learning integrates into schools along the west coast



Port Alberni, BC

When reflecting on this past school year, Nancy Logan said COVID-19 gave her students at Haahuupayak Elementary School an added bonus of “survival education.”

Located within the community of Tseshaht First Nation in Port Alberni, many of the school’s students are dealing with intergenerational traumas.

COVID-19 added to those challenges as students worried they’d be putting their grandparents and elders at risk by attending school. Some developed a fear of the outdoors, described Logan.

If students are shut-down and don’t feel safe at school, they’re not able to learn, she added.

While Haahuupayak has always emphasized project-based learning through things like cooking and woodworking, the pandemic opened the door-way to establish an outdoor learning space, along with a school-wide social emotional program.

“The one part that has been so exciting in this pandemic is the will and the desire to want to do things differently,” said Logan. “It really opened our eyes to that need to move away from textbooks and into the real world.”

For Logan, school should be a place of connection.

“A start to helping [children] ground and deal with their big emotions,” she said.

Helen Lucas teaches the school’s Grade 5/6 class. In her eight years of teaching, she said this year was by far the most challenging.

“In part, because we were all feeling the same,” she said.

As part of her social studies class, students were assigned to identify a community problem and come up with solutions.

COVID-19 was the obvious choice.

After brainstorming, the class concluded that an outdoor learning space would “bring happiness to the whole school” after a dark and disappointing year, explained Lucas.

Not only would it strengthen the students’ connections to their culture and environment, Lucas said it would also provide them with a safe space to alleviate some of their anxieties and sadness.

A recent study, Restoring Our Roots: Land-Based Community by and for Indigenous Youth, was published in the International Journal of Indigenous Health and aimed to demonstrate the many ways learning from the land is beneficial for Aboriginal youngsters.

Targeted assimilation and land theft are central to the historical and ongoing dissociation of Indigenous people from their traditional connection to the land, read the study.

“It is thus paramount that Indigenous youth be given the opportunities to (re)connect with their cultures in safe, accessible spaces [and] places,” the study concluded.

To get the project rolling, Lucas secured a circle of well-being grant and her students followed up by writing “persuasive” letters to Logan asking for additional funding.

With the help of Brenda Sayers, the school’s financial administrator, Logan applied for funding through the First Nations Schools Language and Culture Program, transforming the project into “something bigger than we ever could have dreamed of,” said Lucas.

“This project gave us something to look forward to,” she said. “It’s helped us through a really hard year.”

Describing one of Nuu-chah-nulth’s guiding principles, His-shuk-nish-tsa-walk (everything is one), a classroom doesn’t have the same resonance as does the outdoors, said Lucas.

“To see the trees and use all of our senses to hear, smell, feel and touch the environment while we’re learning just brings everything together,” she said.

Rather than using textbooks to teach about life cycles, teachers will have the ability to bring students into the forest to map out things like what organisms live where, how they are interconnected and what habitat they rely on, explained Logan.

“You see a change in the energy with kids,” she said. “You get them outside and you see them come alive.”

When Kensie Johnson, one of Lucas’ Grade 5 students, thinks about learning outdoors she said she feels “happy.”

“I feel awake,” she said. “I also feel excited to hear all the noises of what’s around us in the world.”

The 10-year-old said she notices a shift in her classmates, too.

“Sometimes they become sillier,” she said. “They also work much faster and calmer.”

The push to incorporate more land-based learning comes from a nationwide quest to “decolonize the education system and honour some of the local knowledge,” said Comeau, vice-principal of the Nootka Sound Outdoor Program.

The outdoor program offers land-based learning to students in the remote communities of Kyuquot and Zeballos.

In Kyuquot, the student population is 100 per cent Indigenous, said Comeau.

Because the community is so isolated, the program usually aims to expose students to new regions through overnight trips to Strathcona Park or Mount Washington. As a result, local areas often get passed up.

COVID-19 became an opportunity to teach children about their local territory.

Activities are planned around the local seasonal calendar, including events like the chum salmon run in September and the herring spawn in March, explained Comeau.

By presenting learning opportunities that are relevant to the student’s lives, Comeau said they are able to tap into their background knowledge which instills them with more confidence in their learning.

“Instead of presenting a foreign topic to [students], it’s something they have a family connection to, or a connection to through their culture,” she said. “If you can access that knowledge and present a learning opportunity they can draw from, they don’t feel like they’re just left high and dry without any of the tools or information to help them in the learning task.”

From the editor's desk:

Why the World Needs Meaningful Conversation

When was the last time you had a deep, meaningful conversation with somebody? Wouldn't you like to have more of those?

We sometimes spend hours talking to people without it amounting to anything concrete. Those conversations can build community and friendships, and we need to have them feel we are part of society. Small talk helps us connect with people safely without offending or contradicting them. That is why in many countries people talk about the weather — which to visitors seems strange, irrelevant, and a waste of time.

As people get used to making meaningless small talk to connect, they're also forced to tolerate and observe conversations that are hateful, divisive, and hurtful. These harmful conversations are mostly based on the supremacy of one political view, ideology, race, religion, and nationality over others. These subjects and many more have been used to put one set of people down by criticizing them so that they feel good about themselves. Observing these conversations is so painful that I'll take meaningless conversations about the weather at any time.

At present, the art of meaningful conversation is being gradually forgotten and has become a rare commodity. Humanity seems to be losing its way of communicating with each other and is choosing confrontation instead. Hurtful words are often used to inflict the most harm to the opposite views. The Baha'i Writings remind us about the importance of being courteous and sensitive in choosing our words while addressing others, especially those whose ideas are different from ours. Baha'u'llah, the prophet and founder of the Baha'i Faith, wrote:

“Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or expounder should carefully deliver his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression which each word maketh is clearly evident and perceptible. The Great Being saith: One word may be likened unto fire, another unto light, and the influence which both exert is manifest in the world.”

Social media, with all its benefits, has given a new dimension to this problem. It provides an avenue for anyone to say whatever comes to their mind under the pretext of “Freedom of Speech.” As a result, some people have replaced logic and common sense with erratic emotional outbursts that achieve nothing except create pain and hate.

The other side effect of this phenomenon is when people reject any logical and scientific idea which does not coincide with their views by labelling it “fake.” Though misinformation and propaganda have been part of media since the beginning of newspapers, it has only recently reached its highest peak. It has entered areas of life that were untouched before.

Sometimes people don't want to spend the energy to investigate the truth, so they outright reject it since there is the danger of learning they could be proven wrong. So, by calling other points of view “fake,” we escape the chance of learning something new or finding a new way of looking at the issues, and that will lead to a war of words. These warring parties fight a bitter battle of conversations as if they are on the battlefield having one goal: the destruction of the other's point of view at any cost.

We can't continue to tread this path of inability. Instead, we need to have a meaningful conversation so that humanity can choose a united way to build the future. The world needs to go back to the basic principles of communication. Learning the art of meaningful conversation and consultation will help us solve the matters that are tearing our society apart. We need to see each other not as enemies but rather as fellow human beings and be forgiving in dealing with one another. Abdu'l-Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah, wrote:

“Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another... Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy

Truth is essential to a just, equitable society. Indeed, Abdu'l-Baha wrote, “The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.”

However, the problem lies when we bring the ego into the conversation. Then it becomes the clash of egos rather than ideas. That, in turn, leads us to conflict and hatred. Instead, we need to learn the basic principles of consultation. Abdu'l-Baha gave us a few points to keep in mind. He wrote that we:

“... must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.”

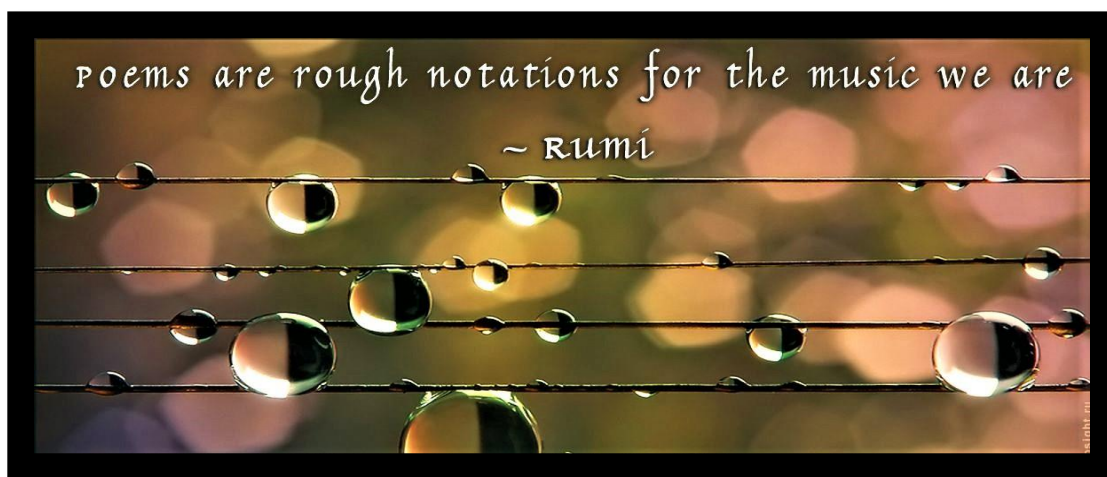
The problem with the lack of meaningful conversation and consultation is the absence of moral and spiritual guidelines for proper interactions. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, provides us with the fundamentals. He wrote:

“They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.”

Here is more advice from Baha'u'llah: He wrote that we should speak “with words as mild as milk” and “with utmost leniency and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may induce everyone to attain that which becometh man's station.”

Although meaningful conversation looks like a simple statement, its influence and potential are immense. After all, it is the foundation for building a system of communication to resolve the ever-increasing and complicated problems facing humanity.

Famous quotes:



Upcoming Events:

Next feast, Jalal/Glory, April 9, 2022

First day of Ridvan April 21, 2022

Ninth day of Ridvan April 29, 2022

Twelfth day of Ridvan May 2, 2022

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