

Bancroft proclaims Sept. 21 as Peace Day

By Alejandra Cervantes

In a heartening and significant move, the Town of Bancroft has officially declared Sept. 21, as Peace Day. This proclamation aligns with the United Nations International Day of Peace, a global holiday dedicated to the cessation of war and violence, and the promotion of world peace. This annual event, observed every Sept. 21, aims to foster a culture of peace and understanding worldwide. The Canadian Peace Museum has played a pivotal role in this initiative, recognizing the urgent need to promote peace, especially in a world where deaths from conflict are on the rise. The Town of Bancroft has expressed its full support for the Canadian Peace Museum and its mandate, which encompasses promoting peace, equity, environmentalism, community cohesion, and Indigenous reconciliation. In a formal statement, the council of the Town of Bancroft declared: "Therefore, the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Bancroft does hereby proclaim Sept. 21, 2024 as Peace Day in the Town of Bancroft." Canada's history is replete with efforts to promote peace, though it also grapples with a violent past and ongoing inequities. This duality underscores the importance of both acknowledging past failures and celebrating successes in peacebuilding. The establishment of peace museums around the world serves as a testament to the global commitment to peace education and awareness. Notably, Canada is yet to have a dedicated peace museum. Chris Houston, the founder of the Canadian Peace Museum, eloquently underscores this sentiment. "I appreciate the relative peacefulness of Canada, but I do not take it for granted. We are opening the Canadian Peace Museum to promote peace and to showcase the links between peace, conflict, equity, cohesive communities, art, activism, and climate change." Houston's vision is to create a space that not only educates but also inspires action towards a more peaceful society. The rise of polarization, misinformation, disinformation, and hatred poses a significant threat to societal peace. The Canadian Peace Museum aims to provoke important conversations about our individual and collective responsibilities to maintain and promote peace. The museum's website indicates that it is expected to open in 2025 in Bancroft, a town that benefits from substantial visitor numbers and passing traffic. With strong community support, Bancroft is seen as an ideal location for this vital institution. The roots of the International Day of Peace date back to 1981 when the United Kingdom and Costa Rica presented a joint resolution to the United Nations General Assembly. This resolution proposed a day dedicated to the commemoration and strengthening of the ideals of peace. The General Assembly responded by declaring the third Tuesday of September as the International Day of Peace. In 2001, a significant change occurred under the leadership of then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The date of the International Day of Peace was moved to Sept. 21, and it was also designated as a day of non-violence and international ceasefire. This day was created to improve relationships between countries, encourage cooperation, and promote world peace and an end to conflicts. On this day, countries observing the International Day of Peace declare an official 24-hour ceasefire. During this period, conflicts halt, and world leaders set aside their differences, serving as a powerful example to citizens around the globe. To mark the occasion, the Peace Bell is rung at the United Nations Headquarters. This bell, a gift from Japan, is made from coins donated by children from various continents, symbolizing the human cost of war. The bell bears the inscription, "Long live absolute world peace." Since 1984, through the efforts of the NGO Pathways to Peace, countries worldwide observe a Minute of Silence at noon in each time zone on the International Day of Peace. This gesture is a global expression of unity and a collective wish for peace. It reinforces the belief that peace is not just the absence of conflict but a proactive and sustained effort to foster understanding, cooperation, and harmony among nations and peoples. Bancroft's proclamation of Peace Day is a profound commitment to these ideals. It reflects the town's dedication to fostering a peaceful and cohesive community. The Canadian Peace Museum's future presence in Bancroft is expected to further this commitment by providing a space for education, reflection, and action on peace-related issues. As Sept. 21 draws near, Bancroft stands as a beacon of hope and a testament to the power of community action in promoting peace. The town's support for the Canadian Peace Museum and its broader mandate is a step towards creating a more equitable and peaceful world. In a world increasingly divided by conflict and discord, Bancroft's proclamation of Peace Day serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of peace. It calls upon us to reflect on our own roles in fostering peace and to take concrete actions towards creating a more harmonious society. The words of Chris Houston resonate deeply in this context: "The urgency to provoke important conversations about our individual and collective responsibilities to be peaceful and promote peace is high." As we move forward, let us heed this call and work together to build a future where peace is not just an aspiration but a reality. The Town of Bancroft's proclamation of Sept. 21, as Peace Day is more than a symbolic gesture. It is a call to action, a commitment to fostering peace, and a reminder of the ongoing need for dialogue and cooperation in building a more just and equitable world. As the Canadian Peace Museum prepares to open its doors in 2025, Bancroft is set to become a focal point for peace education and activism, inspiring both residents and visitors

to contribute to a more peaceful world. In the words of the Peace Bell, "Long live absolute world peace." May Bancroft's dedication to this ideal inspire us all to work towards a future free from violence and conflict.