

Your Task: *Represent the Canadian Peace movement of your decade through an info-graphic. Incorporate visual images into your representation.*

The Sixties

The Sixties began with the Ban the Bomb movement and closed with the struggle against the Vietnam War. The early peace movement depended upon leadership from the Canadian churches, from women's groups like the Voice of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, as well as from communists and socialists active in unions and the Canadian Peace Congress. These three groups provided the continuity that sustained the movement. The biggest obstacle was the Cold War; their greatest achievement, keeping Canada out of the nuclear arms race.

This era coincided with the rise of the New Left on campuses around the world. Students and faculty stood in solidarity with national liberation struggles and in opposition to American imperialism. Teach-ins were held across the country. I remember a film festival in my Scarborough high school, in 1968, where my teachers exposed us to films from Vietnam, as well as from the U.S. Information Service, a wonderful lesson about propaganda and politics.

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The Seventies

If the Sixties was the Age of Aquarius, the Seventies was a time of disillusionment, drugs and disco. The war in Vietnam dragged on, and Trudeau's promise of a Just Society was slow in coming. After the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi, Hans Blumenfeld organized an ad published in the Globe & Mail entitled, "This War Must Stop," signed by a very large number of prominent academics and others. Frank Cunningham notes that, "such ads are not uncommon now, but this was one of the first of its kind, and had an impact on a Parliamentary debate taking place at the time in which Parliament ended up passing a motion critical of the war."

Doug Roche, former Canadian disarmament ambassador, recalls that, in comparison to the Sixties, "the 1970s were relatively quiet. The atmosphere of détente had generated a certain amount of complacency." In 1976, however, as nuclear arms continued to proliferate, Project Ploughshare was founded to represent the Canadian churches on issues of disarmament and development; and Operation Dismantle was founded in 1977 to push for a world referendum on disarmament and to make a nuclear-weapons-free zone. Canadian Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War was formed in 1979, the first of many professional groups that bolstered the ranks of the peace movement in the eighties.

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The Eighties

It has been said that the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 was the best thing that happened to the peace movement. His aggressive attacks on liberation movements in Central America and his rapid escalation of the nuclear arms race motivated millions into the streets.

During Reagan's first visit to Ottawa, I helped my fellow Carleton students organize such a welcome that the secret service had to re-route his cavalcade, and Trudeau admonished us to be more hospitable when he got to Parliament Hill. My professors, Leo Panitch and Reg Whitaker, had to bail me out of jail after I was charged with Section 175 of the Criminal Code: causing a public disturbance by shouting. After helping to organize the "Refuse the Cruise" march, the Ottawa Disarmament Coalition and the Peace Petition Caravan Campaign – Canada's first nation-wide peace effort – I was pleased to play a role in the formation of the Canadian Peace Alliance in 1985.

With Reagan's help, we learned to organize a broad movement. Nonetheless, we failed at our major task, which was to stop the testing of cruise missiles over the Canadian north. As the possibility of nuclear war seemed to recede, this broad movement began to dwindle.

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The Nineties

The 1990s began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War. The peace movement rallied quite quickly when President George H.W. Bush prepared for an attack on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait. Our mobilization stopped when the war ended quickly in March, 1991.

For much of the decade the movement was dormant, but there was a flowering of activity when NATO started bombing Yugoslavia in 1999. The progressive community was divided over the issue, with Yugoslav-Canadians (mainly Serbs) deeply angered at the NATO attack, while others supported “humanitarian intervention.” It was clear that the collapse of Soviet Bloc and end of the Cold War had not brought neither an “end to history” nor any “peace dividend.”

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The Twenty-First Century

The new millennium brought new hope following the Battle of Seattle in 1999 and the rise of the global justice movement. The first World Social Forum helped debunk the myths of neoliberalism and show that “another world is possible” – but then came the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent War on Terror. This undercut both the peace movement and the movement against corporate globalization.

We protested the bombing of Afghanistan in 2001, and our protests escalated as George W. Bush prepared to attack. Several friends from the Vietnam era thought it ironic that the country with the most weapons of mass destruction was attacking a country that proved to have none, so we organized an International Weapons Inspection Team to search for these weapons in the U.S. Our website, “Rooting Out Evil,” attracted 28,000 honorary weapons inspectors from around the world, who contributed \$26,000 on-line to send our team of parliamentarians and senators from Italy, Denmark, the U.K. and Canada down to Washington. We got major attention on CNN and the BBC – but were virtually ignored by the Canadian media.

The mobilization of half a million Canadians in eighty cities and towns – particularly the 250,000 in Montreal – forced the government to alter course and averted our participation in the Iraq war. That was a major victory for the Canadian peace movement. The subsequent decision not to participate in the U.S.’s missile-defense system was another major victory.