



Report on D&P Ontario Regional Assembly (ORA) 2026 – May 22 to 24

By: Mary Jane Veinott, D&P Parish Representative, St. Andrew the Apostle

The Ontario Regional Assembly 2026 was held in North Bay at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse on the shores of beautiful Lake Nipissing. The panoramic view from the Chapel and conference room added to the ambience of joy and peace an integral part of the conference.

Members of Development & Peace from all parts of Ontario and beyond gathered to reflect on the work of D&P in the global south and on issues of importance to Indigenous people of Northern Ontario.

The Friday evening presentation was given by Mika Levesque, a Program Officer for D&P who was drawn to working with communities of the global south through her time spent in Indonesia as an exchange student from Quebec. Research for her PhD on Human Rights took Mika to many countries including Mexico, Thailand, Berma. She continued to grow her interest in justice and advocacy while working in Asia for Montreal - based International Development. This lead to her working for Development and Peace as a program officer drawn by its mission of structural change and the principle of the preferential option for the poor by working in partnership with the people in the country. The reason why there are so many poor people in the world is that economic development has lead to 1% of the population controlling 79% of the world's wealth. Solutions to poverty and inequality are in stopping the exploitation of the global south where agri-industry disadvantages the farmers coerced into growing only one cash crop and losing their livelihood if crop fails. D&P identifies people who are linked to the local

communities to work as partners to advance the progress of women, indigenous people and economic justice.

On Saturday there were several interesting presentations. The “Ring of Fire” session was conducted by Kerrie Blais an environmental lawyer who works for LAND (Legal Advocates for Nature’s Defense). The proposed mining development would impact 5000 sq km of the Hudson-James Bay lowlands on Treaty 9 lands, a region significant environmentally as a major wildlife habitat and a buffer in reducing the progression of climate change with its carbon storage capacity in the peat lands.

Recently passed legislation - provincially, Bill 5 and federally, Bill C5 infringe on Treaty Rights by severely limiting the need for government to consult with the Indigenous people who comprise most of the population of this very remote area. With these laws their concerns and needs will largely go unheard for safeguarding their communities, lands and water from the environmental degradation, pollution, lost forests, wildlife and the impact on climate change. LAND is working with a group of young Indigenous leaders to launch court challenges against the two laws as violating constitutional treaty rights and legal action to get a court injunction to stop the development.

The [Here We Stand](#) video provides a powerful, in-depth look into the concerns the Indigenous peoples have on the Ring of Fire and why we should all be paying attention to the negative impacts of this development.

Two insightful workshops were given on the Spirituality of Social Activism. The first explored our responsibilities as called for in Laudato si for wealthier countries– to “Hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” and to heed the call to Ecological Conversion in saving our planet from environmental catastrophe. The second “Returning to Spirit” examined how we as individuals have areas of “incompleteness” (unresolved issues from our past) which limit our ability to interact in a positive way with others and to make positive changes in the world.

Saturday evening liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Fred Colli, retired bishop of Thunder Bay in the beautiful chapel at the Motherhouse with a magnificent view looking out onto the Lake. The youth contingent gave a moving reading for the prayer of the faithful on how we can build a more just and peaceful world.

On Sunday morning two D&P animators conducted a workshop on ‘Synodal Discernment – How to Walk Together’ based on the ‘See, Judge, Act, model of decision-making used by D&P to advance its mission in the world. Silent reflection and sharing of thoughts and insights at each phase are used to determine common themes & affirmations.

The workshop is part of the preparation for the upcoming National Council (the central governing body for the D& P organization) Orientation Assembly (OA) set to take place in May of 2027 in Hamilton. Two delegates from each diocese are chosen to attend the Assembly and the decisions of the Assembly are binding on the National Council to enact.