

# North America



**In 1964, the International Movement ATD Fourth World** arrived in North America to join the efforts of the “War on Poverty” proposed by United States President Johnson. Since this first venture, ATD Fourth World continues to develop in the region focusing on reaching out to families that are the most disconnected and most excluded because of poverty and joining other individuals, groups and small organizations fighting poverty.

Currently teams exist in Canada in Montreal and Toronto and in the United States in Appalachia, New Orleans, New York and Washington DC.

In Canada, ATD Fourth World develops partnerships – **within the cultural, political and educational field** – with individuals and groups that aim to reach out to the poorest, joining their fight against poverty to promote a fairer and more

humane society that reflects the spirit of October 17th, World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty.

In the United States the **projects continue to join the aspirations that families have for their children**. Families who may shun other programs still welcome our presence with books, art, music and computers because it is built around sharing knowledge and in a spirit of mutual respect.

**The Fourth World People’s University** in Canada and gatherings and workshops in the USA bring together people in situations of poverty to reflect on issues that are important to them and the world and to learn from one another. They provide a forum to speak out and gain confidence in working with others to effect positive change.

In the region, **Tapori** remains a channel through which children from all backgrounds develop their

sense of fairness and empathy, create friendships and add their own ideas and actions for a world without poverty. In 2006 and 2007, children across North America joined the International Tapori Silhouette Campaign by tracing their bodies on a piece of fabric, and then decorating it to show who they are and what needs to happen for a better world. The Tapori secretariat, based at the US National Center in Washington, continues to support the dialogue with children within the English speaking world.

In November 2008 the exhibition “The neighborhood”, held in Toronto, brought together paintings by Urs Kehl, a fourth world full-time volunteer and the poems written by Fred Dunn, a peace activist who experienced 14 years the hardship of living on the streets. The exhibit bears witness to the courage and life at the heart of neighborhoods hidden and shunned by prejudice.

## International Seminar in Montreal on the Impact of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty *“October 17, 20 years of History, 20 years of future”*

In view of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, an international seminar took place in Montreal in May 2006. It brought together a diverse group of delegates from impoverished communities, human rights organizations of all sizes, trade unions, and UN agencies to review and reinforce the impact of the World Day. Participants – from Burkina Faso, Canada,

France, Haiti, Ireland, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Switzerland, Tanzania and the United States - evaluated the impact of the Day and reaffirmed its role as a mobilizing strength in the struggle to end poverty.

This seminar led to the launch on October 17, 2006, of a Call to Action entitled *“Ending Extreme Poverty, A Road to Peace”* which was submitted to the United

Nations General Secretary a year later with over 160,000 signatures from 155 countries.

*“Those who ‘have’ have a moral obligation to those who don’t. If even one man, woman or child lives in poverty, it is one too many. It is an inequity we must remedy for the sake of our children and grandchildren.*

Ottawa, Canada



## Street Libraries and Festivals engage children and parents around books, computers and art in neglected and under-resourced communities

Street Libraries currently occur in a central neighborhood in Brooklyn (New York) and through the Travel Project born out of New Orleans. At Edmond Hamelin Park in Montreal a Summer Street Festival has taken place since 2008. They develop from the principle of reaching out towards the aspirations of the community and the aim of sharing knowledge. The format is simple:

colorful blankets on the ground, a communal time of reading stories or taking part in art projects, activities that promote discovery, highlight skills and encourage creative expression.

Behind the simplicity, however, are rigorous methods. Street Library volunteers arrive at the same time every week, week after week. They invite all children,

but keep a special eye out for those with the most difficulties. They solicit and rely on input and support from parents and other community members. They prepare achievable activities with quality materials. They write observations from their interactions in the community in order to process and learn from them, in turn sharing insights and questions with parents.

*“Not everybody comes to my neighborhood. There are shoot-outs, different kinds of violence. Most people would be scared away, but not the Street Library. Nothing was going to get in the way of their mission to share joy with books with our kids in close connection with us. (...) One of the remarkable things about Street Library is that they had an affect on the whole neighborhood. They brought people from all over the world to our neighborhood, and people in this neighborhood saw that, and they respected it.*

*Because of this respect, when the Street Library comes, people keep it clean and don't smoke or shoot dice. The community can really come together. Street Library opens doors.”* Asia Snow, Parent Activist, New York

The simplicity of the Street Libraries enables a long-term and trusted presence in low-income communities and with families struggling with persistent poverty. This relationship leads to further projects and partnerships that

promote positive changes at different levels of society for families and communities in poverty.

In 2007 a CD-Rom was launched *«Unleashing Hidden Potential: How parents, teachers, community workers, and academics came together to improve learning for children in poverty»*, a tool for training that is the result of a project of the same name born out of the experience of the Street Libraries.



## Working for the implementation of Quebec's anti-poverty law

*The Collective for a Quebec without Poverty* is a coalition of different organizations from trade unions to faith-based groups, women's and poverty groups that took the lead on a consultation which served as the first base for the elaboration of a law to combat poverty and social exclusion. ATD Fourth World, member of the Collective, has been active in ensuring the participation of people in poverty in this process.

A law in 2002 was passed designed with the recommendations of people experiencing poverty. It creates a statutory instrument in the fight against poverty that is at the heart of today's lobbying to the regional government. Through 2006 to 2008 ATD Fourth World continued to work- in particular facilitating a dialogue between people in poverty and government- to ensure that the law is implemented appropriately.



## The Travel Project helps families scattered by the Hurricane Katrina to re-connect and regain hope

Since their return to New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the Fourth World Movement have joined community organizations in their cleaning-up and rebuilding efforts. As some families slowly make their way back to New Orleans great energy is invested to support families in their search for affordable housing, adequate schools, professional health services and other basic necessities.

But many families are still unable to return home. In 2006, to reconnect with members of the Fourth World Movement, especially families in poverty, the team in New Orleans instituted

the Connected and Visible Travel Project that have visited families in Texas, Arizona, Kentucky, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia. The encounters are built around books, Taporí activities and the exchange of news, messages and photographs from family and friends from whom they have been separated. They are a turning point in helping families re-establish crucial ties and regain hope.

These travels have enable the team to meet new individuals and organizations working against poverty in the Gulf Coast region and to start building a network of anti-poverty activists.



**Delegates from the Fourth World Movement took part on the 2007 US Social Forum in Atlanta, *Another World is Possible*,** organizing forums and discussions that debated and promoted the need of ensuring that people in poverty are at the center of all partnerships against poverty.

## Opening of the Appalachian Learning Cooperative, a place for the free exchange of knowledge, skills, and culture

In the isolated region of south-western Virginia, often viewed only as receiving help, the Fourth World Movement purposely did not create its own project on arriving in 1994, but instead put its energy into learning from and highlighting Appalachian knowledge to fight poverty, supporting community development efforts through participation in community center programs, health fairs and clinics, housing repair groups, and the Head Start program.

On August 26, 2006, delegates from the National Center in Washington and Canada joined dozens of neighbors and friends from the area to mark the Grand Opening of the Appalachian Learning Cooperative. The Learning Co-op is the result of lessons learned over our 12-year presence in Appalachia, and is a place for the free exchange of knowledge, skills, and culture.

Activities include computer courses, language classes, music workshops, quilting circles, and stress relief exercises, all led and benefited by local residents.

In 2006 the book entitled **Taking a Country at its Word. Joseph Wresinski Confronts the Reality and Ideals of the United States**, by Fanchette Clement-Fanelli was published. The author works on 20 years of Joseph Wresinski's correspondence, interviews, meetings and visits' notes, to bring us the tensions, discoveries and convictions that emerge in the process of building a national and international movement to overcome persistent poverty. © 2006 379 pages (23 x 15 cm). Fourth World publications

If you want to learn more, fund our projects in the region or get involved, please be in contact:

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