



Art of Living

CANADA

1986 – 2016



Art of Living CANADA

Celebrating 30 Years of Grace and Gratitude



In the summer of 1986, a strong and lasting embrace began between Canada and Sri Sri when he first arrived on the country's eastern shores, in Nova Scotia. It was there that, as a young Pundit, he taught the first course at a local temple with about thirty participants.

Later that same year, Sri Sri returned to Nova Scotia and launched *The i and I Awareness Association*, which he renamed in 1987 the I & I Art of Living Foundation (AOLF). This groundwork paved the way for an initial advanced course – now called Art of Silence – in 1989, followed by the first teacher training program at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia.

From these humble beginnings, the AOLF has grown by leaps and bounds, today boasting 42 chapters in Canada, with over 175 certified teachers and more than 20,000 participants. Canada is also home to the International Art of Living Centre (Canadian Ashram), which sits on 250 acres of woods and lakes in Quebec and welcomes thousands of visitors each year.

The International

Art of Living Centre

Built in 1991, the International Art of Living Centre is located in the village of Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc, Quebec, just two hours northeast of Montreal. The Centre is set in a peaceful and serene natural environment, making it an ideal location for educational and rejuvenation programs for the local and global community. Open year-round, the Centre offers both daylong and residential programs and activities for individuals and families alike. The Centre's team of volunteers is known worldwide for its hospitality, and receives thousands of visitors from around the globe each year. Course participants will tell you it is truly like coming "home"!

As the Art of Living family continues to grow so does the Centre. A new meditation hall, dedicated to the memory of Acharya Ratanandaji, Sri Sri's late father who was a social entrepreneur, Vedic scholar and women's rights activist, was inaugurated by Sri Sri during the Guru Purnima festivities on July 15, 2011. The occasion also marked the 30th anniversary of the Art of Living Foundation and the 20th anniversary of the Centre.





The beautiful new meditation hall, built to hold 2,000 people, is often packed to capacity during Sri Sri's summer visits, peaking at 3,000 participants and guests during Guru Purnima when people flock to the Centre from around the world to be with him.



Sri Sri Ayurveda
Institute for Education and Wellness

The Sri Sri Ayurveda Institute for Education and Wellness is the Ayurvedic arm of the Art of Living Foundation. It operates as a school of Ayurveda and a holistic treatment centre.

The Institute offers eight massage rooms and a full Ayurvedic training facility for technician training, Marma Chikitsa, Ayurvedic cooking, etc. The centre trains therapists and welcomes clients from around the world.

The trainings and treatments are certified by the ANQ (association of naturotherapists of Quebec) and the RMQ (massage therapists of Quebec). The Institute's mission is to inspire, empower and support the overall well-being of individuals and the planet through the wisdom of the Vedas.





CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 30 YEARS

Inspired by Sri Sri's message of global peace, harmony and nonviolence, Art of Living Canada has introduced a broad array of courses and community initiatives over the past 30 years as part of its mission to motivate and improve communities across Canada.



EMBRACING FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

In 2003, Sri Sri made a visit to Nunavut, after which programs were launched across Canada, in coordination with aboriginal communities, to teach life skills training to help alleviate issues related to gang violence and suicide.

Starting in Manitoba, from 2004 to 2006, Art of Living volunteers taught the first yoga classes and breathing techniques to students and teachers at the elementary school in Ginew. From there, the program was extended to Pauingassi First Nation Reserve. These after-school programs included handicrafts, cooking and games along with yoga and meditation.

In the summer of 2006, 22 teenagers from Pauingassi travelled to the International Art of Living Centre in Quebec to attend a YES! camp. They were joined by American youths from Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and New York. For most of them, this was their first trip away from home and was a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with people from different backgrounds.



"The Art of Living has literally changed my life. I believe that this will help our aboriginal youth, our men, our women to heal. My mother is a residential school survivor, my father committed suicide when I was 12. I've lived on the reserve, so I've walked all of those paths and this is the one that seemed to feel like I was loved. I felt the love within myself and I think that's where it starts in order to begin your healing."

*– Cheryl Kim Watson, Aboriginal Banking Representative BDC,
Ochapowace First Nation, SK*

The next stop for the Art of Living volunteers was the Gitanyow reserve in British Columbia in 2007. In that community, children between the ages of 8 and 13 were taught the YES! and ART Excel courses. The program was a resounding success. The first Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) was launched in St. Theresa Point reserve in June of the same year. The program was developed in response to the growing need for practical solutions to deal with high levels of youth suicide, gang violence, substance abuse, malnutrition, school dropout and lack of access to basic infrastructure in the communities.

In Ontario, volunteers extended their arms to First Nations communities in urban settings. The first of those programs was offered to the Six Nations reserve, and workshops were offered in Toronto at the Native Women's Resource Centre and the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre.

Pleased with the success of those programs, the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Ron Evans, made a visit to the International Art of Living Centre on July 18, 2007, to meet with Sri Sri to discuss joining forces to effectively combat the difficulties encountered by members of First Nations across Canada.



Art of Living has shared a rich friendship with these communities over the years and, in recognition of this friendship, Sri Sri invited a small group from the Wetomaci reserve to attend the Indigenous Youth Festival held in Arunachalpradesh, in northeastern India in 2008, where they addressed the audience and shared their life experiences and history with indigenous people of India.

This connection has remained close, and in July 2011 Art of Living invited 29 adults and youth from the Atikamekw First Nation reserve to perform their traditional dance to celebrate Art of Living's 30th anniversary at the World Culture Festival in Berlin.

In the fall of 2015, partnering initiatives with the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) brought breathing programs to Ehpewapahk Alternate School in Alberta.

Closer to home, teachers and volunteers reached out to First Nations communities neighbouring the International Art of Living Centre. The Atikamekw reserve at Wemotaci in the Haute-Mauricie region of Quebec was one such community. In addition to the Yes! and Art Excel programs, volunteers also brought their organic gardening expertise to help the community create an organic community garden. The garden also served as an educational facility in providing primary and secondary school children the opportunity to reconnect to the earth.

The friendship between Art of Living and the First Nations people of Canada remains strong and Art of Living teachers and volunteers continue to reach out when the need arises.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE OF PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

The Youth Empowerment Seminar (YES!) for Schools program, an IAHV project, is taught by Art of Living teachers and volunteers across Canada to elementary school and high school students (ages 14 to 17). The program teaches youth practical tools and life skills to manage stress and emotional issues such as low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, which all ultimately inhibit learning.

The YES! for Schools program was launched in Canada during Sri Sri's visit to Toronto in 2008 and has been taught to more than 1,400 teenagers across Canada.

The children's testimonials are a real tribute to the success of the course:

"I find that this class has showed me how to relax and how not to get stressed when I have an exam, test, quiz, etc. After I do the meditating I feel really calm."

– Isabelle, age 13

"This course made me feel more confident about myself and really made me come out of the box. I made a lot of cool friends and I love them all. I'm also feeling less lazy and I'm being more active."





Yogathon

Rise for a Cause

Inspired by Sri Sri's vision to break the cycle of poverty, disease and social inequity, and filled with a desire to support the cause, volunteers came together to organize the first annual Yogathon event held in major cities across Canada in August 2012. Thousands rallied from Halifax to British Columbia to join forces and take the 108 Sun Salutation challenge, with profits going to Care for Children.

In just a few years, Yogathon has grown into an international event in over 12 countries, with tens of thousands rising for the cause in August of each year. This event is also an opportunity for Art of Living to bring awareness about yoga and the benefits of having balance in a healthy mind, body and life.

Many Art of Living chapters across Canada also hosted other events in support of Care for Children, such as an "East Meets West" concert in Toronto, which celebrated an evening of fusion music presented by world renowned artists: Indian classical flutist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and tabla players Swapan Chaudhuri, with guitar players Vlatko Stefanovski and Miroslav Tadic.



YOGATHON
#RISEFORACAUSE

Caring for the Environment

Mission Green Earth

Organic Garden and Deepening Roots Program

The International Art of Living Centre has a five-acre certified organic garden, which provides the Centre with the opportunity to sell this rich organic harvest of herbs, vegetables, strawberries and blueberries to the local community at its farm stand and through a vegetable basket program.

Deepening Roots is a residential program offered in collaboration with the Foundation's sister organization, IAHV, since 2005. The program teaches young adults how to develop eco-friendly attitudes and provides education in sustainable agricultural practices, including permaculture.

As part of their training, participants work in the Centre's organic garden and learn the latest organic techniques. The training also includes a nutrition component, and helps participants develop leadership abilities, communication skills, conflict-resolution skills, teamwork and stress management.

Community Tree Planting

As part of Mission Green Earth, volunteers across the Greater Toronto Area, from Mississauga to Richmond Hill, partnered with their communities on ecologically oriented programs such as "Don't Be a Litterbug," adopted green spaces in their communities and planted over 10,000 trees since 2008.

In Shelby Wood Park, the trees were diseased and had to be cut down. Volunteers took on the task of planting trees each week to replace the lost ones. Other parks were adopted by volunteers in Mississauga, and for their contribution and commitment the volunteers received an award from Mayor Hazel McCallion.

Not to be outdone, volunteers in Richmond Hill contributed to the beautification of Hunter's Point Wildlife Park by planting trees and cultivating a garden of native wildflowers.

In Malton, the Art of Living Foundation is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Malton Environmental Stewardship Project, whose goal is to revitalize the Etobicoke and Mimico Creek Watersheds. This is part of a visionary 25-year visionary plan that involves planting 20,000 native trees, shrubs and meadow plants.



SPREADING THE MESSAGE OF *NONVIOLENCE* *AND PEACE*

The first Canadian Prison SMART program was launched in 2007 at the St. Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre in Brockville, Ontario, with 21 residents participating. At the end of the program, Dr. Colin Cameron, the residents' physician said: *"It was kind of neat to see. They're continuing to do this, as a group, even after the course is over ... and it was their initiative."*

Many Art of Living chapters have created local initiatives to support nonviolence in their community. Art of Living Montreal partnered with the Little Burgundy Urban Mediation Project (BUMP), meant to reduce the number of young people being recruited by gangs. The Art of Living volunteers dedicated their time to offer tutoring to elementary and secondary school students.



Scientific Studies on Sahaj Samadhi Meditation

In June 2014, the Department of Psychiatry at Western University began research into the effects of Sahaj Samadhi meditation. Preliminary findings showed that Sahaj Samadhi meditation improves the symptoms of late-life depression.

It was found that meditation was more than five times as effective as medication alone. 64% of the patients practicing Sahaj Samadhi meditation were no longer clinically depressed after 12 weeks. The entire Sahaj Samadhi group experienced, on average, a 40% reduction in symptoms in 12 weeks while there was no significant reduction in depression scores in the standard care group. It was found that Sahaj Samadhi meditation tends to reverse the detrimental changes in heart function suffered by seniors with depression, and the benefits persisted for six months even though there were no follow-up Sahaj Samadhi meditation sessions. This research is ongoing.

Serving the Community

Art of Living volunteers reach out to the community and offer support in times of need due to natural disasters or daily challenges.

After the flooding of June 2012, Calgarians were in a state of shock. Art of Living volunteers moved quickly to partner with local organizations and civilians to create a city-wide movement of 5,000 to 10,000 volunteers to clean up the city.

Art of Living Calgary has partnered with various agencies and institutions such as the University of Calgary and SAIT Polytechnic to offer free drop-in meditations for anyone wanting to de-stress. This initiative has touched over 5,000 lives so far.

In Montreal, Toronto, Windsor and Vancouver, volunteers have joined hands with other groups to serve people in need through food banks, clothes drives and soup kitchens.

Corporate Initiatives

In Canada, corporate initiatives were first offered as a retreat format and were experienced by groups such as YPO (Young President Organization), until the Transformational Leadership for Excellence (TLEX) course for corporations was launched. TLEX was taught to federal government employees and managers in Ottawa in 2013 and is now offered to corporations across Canada.

CANADA REMEMBERS

Sri Sri's MEMORABLE MOMENTS

1 2004 MONTREAL

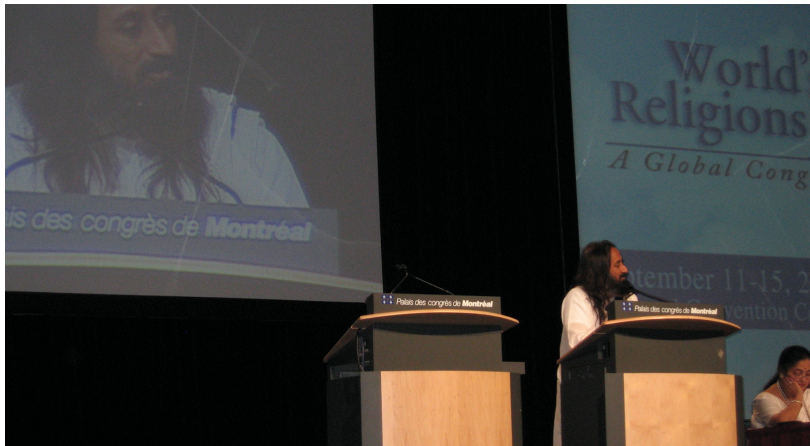
On August 14, Sri Sri was invited to speak at St. Joseph's Oratory, a breathtaking Roman Catholic basilica in the heart of Montreal and reputed to be Canada's largest church. To have an Indian spiritual and humanitarian leader speak to an audience of 2,000 people from all faiths on the universal themes of peace, unity in diversity and human values in a Roman Catholic place of worship was truly a groundbreaking event.

During his tour in 2006, Sri Sri was presented with the International Peace Award by the For the Love of Children Society of Alberta Canada, the Centennial 2006 Medallion by the Legislative Assembly in Calgary and the Humanitarian Award by the City of Brampton in Ontario. Many Canadian cities have proclaimed a Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Day in honor of his visit, including the cities of Regina, Windsor, Surrey, Richmond, Ottawa, Halifax and Edmonton.



2

2006 MONTREAL



Sri Sri was a keynote speaker at the opening session of the World Religions after September 11 Congress in Montreal on August 30.

3

2006 OTTAWA



September 13, signing the Proclamation "Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Day" in Ottawa City Hall with Councilor and Deputy Mayor Jan Harder.

4

2006 BRAMPTON



Receiving the Humanitarian Award from the City of Brampton in Ontario.

5

2008 TORONTO



Sri Sri at the Mind, Body, Soul Experience workshop.

6

2008 TORONTO

Sri Sri launched the Yes! For School Program in Canada under IAHV, commemorated by a concert with Canadian Grammy Award winner, Sarah McLachlan.

8

2013 REGINA

Sri Sri speaking at the Conexus Arts Center. Sri Sri travelled across Western Canada to launch the Non-VIO movement, inspiring people across the globe to complete 1,000,000 acts of nonviolence. He had the opportunity to meet with mayors and several political leaders.

7

2012 VANCOUVER

Sri Sri addressed over 1,000 people during a multi-faith event at St. Andrew's Church. The Sri Sri Annual Graduate Scholarship for Proactive Approaches to Reducing Risk for Violence Among Children and Youth was created, in partnership with Simon Fraser University.

9

2013 CALGARY

Mayor Naheed Nenshi presented Sri Sri with a White Hat, a long-standing tradition in Calgary and a symbol of Western hospitality and good cheer that is bestowed on celebrities and dignitaries.

10

2013 CALGARY



Keynote speaker at a SEED event, Sri Sri addressed a crowd of 2,500 people with a speech entitled "Enlightenment: The Answer to Everything." Later at The Symposium for the Medical Fraternity of Calgary, he addressed a group of more than 200 medical professionals.

11

2014 QUEBEC CITY



Photo credit: Daniel Abel

Sri Sri was invited to see the opened Holy Door of the Cathedral Basilica Notre-Dame de Québec. This was a momentous occasion because the Holy Door is opened only once every 25 years.

12

2014 GATINEAU



Sri Sri spoke on "Inner peace is the key for world peace" at the Canadian Museum of History.

13

2014 OTTAWA



Sri Sri was welcomed by the Honourable John McCallum at a special evening on Parliament Hill to meet with Canadian parliamentarians.

14

2014 OTTAWA



The Indo-Canada Ottawa Business Chamber invited Sri Sri to address members of the corporate community on "Ethics in Business and Management Mantras."

"The Art of Living's message is something that resonates with all people. Its presence in 155 countries around the world shows this. Now more than ever do we need the powerful message of peace in our world. Now more than ever do we need to support the message of global peace and harmony in diversity. Now more than ever is the perfect chance to celebrate the important message of the Art of Living and its founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar."

The Honourable Mobina Jaffer
Senator

"As Her Majesty the Queen's representative in Alberta, Canada, I wish to extend my warmest greeting to everyone participating in and celebrating the 35th anniversary of the International Art of Living Foundation.

As a Canadian, I believe I am lucky to live in a country that welcomes diversity. Therefore, as a proud Albertan and Canadian, I wholeheartedly acknowledge the importance of supporting and assisting the spreading of this message as we have done throughout Canada's history and will continue to do so in the future.

I sincerely commend and thank each and every person who dedicates their time and effort to making the world a warm and caring place."

Her Honour, the Honourable Lois Mitchell
Lieutenant Governor of Alberta



For 35 years, the Art of Living has widely spread its message of peace, humanitarianism and culture awareness. Their practice of inclusiveness and understanding is truly admirable, and we must all collectively strive to follow and promote these principles.

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada



"I wish to congratulate the Art of Living on the occasion of its 35th anniversary celebration and to express my deepest appreciation for its ongoing contribution to the promotion of peace and tolerance through humanitarian service. Fostering cross-cultural dialogue, understanding and tolerance among diverse communities enriches and strengthens our social fabric."

The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk
Senator

"I wish to commend your outstanding work in promoting peace and well-being in the world by having a direct impact on thousands of people in ways that really matter to them. Your commitment, guided by social and human values, is a true source of inspiration."

Former Quebec Premier Jean Charest

"I wish to thank each member of the Art of Living for their commitment to this organization and the global community. As a Member of Parliament for Brampton North, a constituency that reflects the diversity of global society, I truly respect the work of this organization."

Ruby Sahota
Member of Parliament, Brampton North

"As Head of Council, I laud you for your messages of interfaith harmony and multicultural education as a means to bring about sustainable peace around the globe."

Jim Watson
Mayor of City of Ottawa