

2016 GLOBAL CITIZEN AWARD WINNER



CINDY HANSON comes from rural, working class Saskatchewan roots. Inspired by family connections to co-operatives and community involvement, she embraced a lifelong commitment to activism. In the 1980s this included Latin American solidarity work and feminism. Her activism later extended into Indigenous rights and in the 1990s, Cindy taught Native Studies and world issues in Manitoba. Cindy also worked at the House of

Commons, for several women's organizations, for multiple post-secondary institutions and on dozens of international development projects – primarily as a gender, training, and education advisor. Her work spans 4 continents and 20 countries. She is currently an Associate Professor of Adult Education (University of Regina) where her academic and research interests continue to support global learning.

A Conversation with Saskatchewan's Global Citizens...



What does Global Citizenship mean to you?

Global citizenship is multi-faceted: taking care of each other, sharing with each other, and being mindful of the natural world. During my younger activist days I learned two phrases from work with Indigenous and Latin American friends: "We are all related", and "¡El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido!" (the people, united, can never be defeated). Taken broadly these phrases emphasize what global citizenship means to me.

It also means that I have a responsibility to others and to the world around me to be the best activist, mother, educator, and friend I can be, in my work for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

What do you feel are some of the biggest challenges currently facing our global community? What do you identify as possible solutions to these challenges?

Three global challenges that stand out for me are growing fundamentalism, militarism and individualism. Fundamentalism (religious and nationalistic) blocks dialogue, creates narrow-mindedness, and increases violations of human rights. Fundamentalism is linked to militarism, which limits opportunities for peace and justifies violence. The emphasis on individualism, often reinforced by

capitalism, breaks down our abilities to relate to each other and to the natural world. Together I believe these three challenges increase global inequality in multiple and complex forms.

Possible solutions to global challenges can occur when people work together for change (for example, through

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participatory and direct democracy); change inequitable structures; and engage in activism; and finally, support communities and organizations that are working for change. I personally support InterPares, Oxfam Canada, Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW), Doctors Without Borders, Rights Action, Amnesty International, Idle No More, and DAWN to name a few.

Where do you find your inspiration? Tell us about a teacher, mentor, or other role-model who really made a difference in your life.

In my early years I was inspired by the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and the Co-operative Youth Program in

Saskatchewan. They both built my vision of what was possible when people worked together.

Grassroots and social movements that have influenced the field of adult education such as labour movements, agrarian movements, and indigenous and feminist movements continue to be sources of inspiration for me.

In trying to name individuals who inspired me, I worry about forgetting names. There are so many. Sheila Doig (Kingham), Elder Florence Foy (both who have passed on); Cathy Ellis and my sister, Lori Hanson (both past Global Citizen Award winners); José Mujica the past-president of Uruguay, and countless people worldwide whose tireless work for a just world continues. I am also inspired by artists and musicians who create and demonstrate different ways of engaging.

What advice would you give to today's youth that are considering going into International Development work?

Here are four pieces of advice: Watch foreign films; travel with an open mind. Read Eduardo Galeano, Paulo Freire, and authors from the global South. Be mindful; engage in work that is meaningful and leads to social consciousness. Take time to act and reflect - "We make the road by walking" (P. Freire). ♦

