

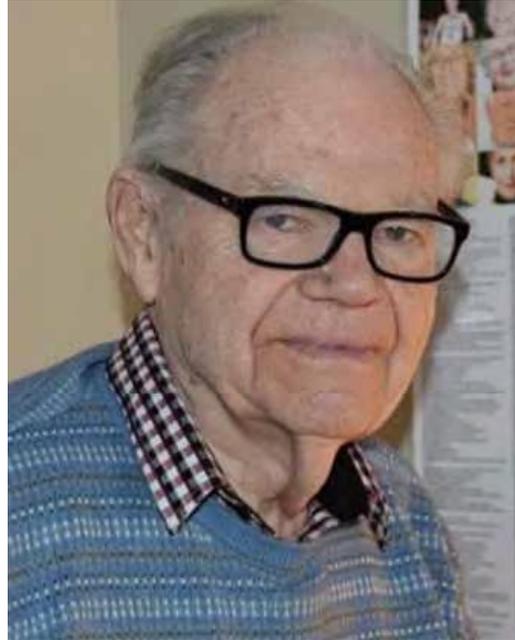
Murray Thomson

1922 - 2019

Murray McCheyne Thomson devoted his entire life to the original mission of the G78: stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons and advocating for world peace. He is also renowned for co-founding seven peace organizations from 1976 to 2012. Murray was one of the key partners, along with Andy Brewin, J. King Gordon and Robert McClure who together drafted the open letter to the government of the day, enlisted the support of 77 other signatories, and initiated the process that led to the creation of the Group of 78.

Murray was born in 1922 in Henan, China, to Christian missionary parents and witnessed the Chinese Civil War as he was growing up. He returned to Canada in 1937 and enrolled at the University of Toronto. During the Second World War, he enlisted in the air force and became a pilot. Although he never flew in combat, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki turned him into a pacifist. He graduated in 1947 and moved to Saskatchewan to join the Department of Adult Education in Tommy Douglas's CCF government.

Subsequently, he pursued graduate studies at the University of Michigan and moved with his wife to Thailand in 1956 as a UNESCO fellow at the International Institute for Child Study, and then to India. He left South Asia in 1962 to become the Peace Education Secretary for Canadian Friends Service Committee and, in 1963, he helped found the Quaker Peace Education Centre of Grindstone Island. From 1970 to 1974, he worked for the Canadian University Service Overseas (now CUSO International). One of his greatest triumphs is Project Ploughshares, an organization he helped found in 1976, which aims "to advance policies and actions to prevent war and armed violence and build peace". In 1981, he achieved another major milestone by co-founding Peace Brigades International, which "protects human rights and promotes non-violent transformation of conflicts".



In the early 1980s, he was called upon to help establish the United Nations World Disarmament Campaign, and he played a critical role in drafting the policy document passed by the General Assembly. In 1985 he co-founded Peacefund Canada and, in 1991, Canadian Friends of Burma. Throughout his activist years, the Canadian federal government and the United Nations often requested his expertise to advise upon disarmament and arms control.

In 1990, he was awarded the Pearson Medal of Peace, and in 2001, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. In 2002, he received the Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee Medal and, in 2012, Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Murray died in May 2019 at the age of 96.