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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

International Spiritualist Alliance

The International Spiritualist Alliance (ISA), headquartered initially at Vancouver and since 1979 at New Westminster, was incorporated as a society by the Government of British Columbia on 25 September 1959. At a SEANCE held in January 1959, the spirit communicators had outlined to Reverend BEATRICE GAULTON BISHOP's group a program for the formation of an international organization.

As the principals involved in the society's founding, Gaulton Bishop became President, Reverend Dr. John Horning First Vice-President, and Reverend Doris A. Horning Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. Bishop continued as Senior Minister and President until her passing in 1974. Gaulton Bishop and the Hornings had been leaders within the NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.

The society's purpose was to draw Spiritualists the world over into closer brotherhood and unity. Certificates of registration would be issued to independent churches, societies, study groups, libraries, healing sanctuaries, and individuals not otherwise affiliated, as well as to *bona fide* healers, lecturers, and demonstrators of the various aspects of MEDIUMSHIP. Candidates would be ordained to the ministry of SPIRITUALISM or licenced based upon prior ordination recognized by an affiliated church. The society would publish an *International Spiritualist Review*, a directory of registered churches and accredited workers, and a manual of services for the guidance of ministers. A missionary fund, lending library, and tape recording library would be established. During its first years of operation, the ISA achieved most of those objectives.

The 1959 constitution also provided that the "Board of Governors would not be responsible for the Internal Government of any Church or group registered under the International Spiritualist Alliance"¹ and that each church would retain full control of its constitution. During the 1980s, there was a departure from that view when the ISA began to exert more control over its affiliated churches and ministers, at least within British Columbia.

¹British Columbia Companies Branch society file S-5777.

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As an international parent organization, the ISA did not maintain full-time rented premises during Gaulton Bishop's lifetime. Spiritualist services were held in her home, and later in that of Doris Horning. The organization focussed rather upon the need for unity among Spiritualists. The spirit-inspired ISA emblem, copyrighted at Ottawa, represents the Trinity of Spirit, Soul and Body. Inclusion of the words "Unity is Strength" and the four points of the compass were intended to bring Spiritualists into harmonious thought internationally. In 1960, the ISA had representatives in Ontario, California, England, and Scotland. The directory of churches for summer 1973 lists an impressive 29 affiliated organizations in Canada, the United States, and England, including groups in British Columbia (8), Ontario (7), Quebec (2), Nova Scotia (1), California (2), New York (2), Sussex (2), Hertfordshire (1), and Kent (4). The ISA's British registered headquarters were at a Christian Spiritualist church in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. In 1975, memberships within the society peaked at 259 individual members.

The international nature of the organization was due to the vision and personal contacts of its founders. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Gaulton Bishop and the Hornings maintained contact with members and affiliated groups in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec through frequent goodwill tours. Gaulton Bishop also visited England from time to time.

With Doris Horning's retirement in 1978, the ISA began a period of significant change. There was a lack of continuity with respect to membership renewals and publication of the *International Spiritualist News Review*. The leasing of full-time rental accommodation in June 1979 required a considerable commitment from board members to ensure an adequate cash flow. In 1980, the ISA was registered as a charitable organization within Canada. In 1984, a 25th-anniversary dinner and dance celebration was held.

In 1987, the ISA had 117 members, including 17 ordained ministers, 1 licenced minister, 1 student minister, and 98 regular members. By 2000, the ISA was reduced to five affiliated churches, with four in British Columbia and one in Ontario. The ISA ordained the ministers who served in affiliated churches. In British Columbia, ISA ministers registered in accordance with provincial legislation had been recognized to perform marriages since 1965 or possibly earlier. In May 1969 the ISA assisted an affiliated church in Montreal, the Spiritual Healing Church, to obtain full ministerial rights and privileges within the Province of Quebec.

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Gradually, as the ISA-affiliated church congregations matured, they sought autonomy by obtaining their own corporate charter, marriage rights, and charitable organization status. One joined the SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF CANADA, but the majority resolved to become independent organizations.

Today, the ISA church in New Westminster is a thriving Spiritualist congregation offering weekly services and other events, with the board of directors freed from the responsibility of monitoring the activities of other congregations and ministers.

Further Reading:

International Spiritualist Alliance. Available on-line: www.isacanada.ca

International Spiritualist News Review, various issues including April 1966, May/June 1969, and July/August 1973.

The International Spiritualist Alliance, Inc. *Ministers Manual*. Vancouver, British Columbia: International Spiritualist Review, 1960.

Joy Lowe and Walter Meyer zu Erpen, "The Canadian Spiritualist Movement and Sources for its Study," *Archivaria* 30, edited by Debra Barr (Summer 1990): 71-84.

British Columbia Companies Branch society file S-5777.

Historical research in the possession of the Survival Research Institute of Canada, Victoria, BC.