

## International affairs columnist Gwynne Dyer hosted at Grace Tipling Hall



Written By **Constance Scrafield**

The somewhat unique opportunity to hear from a popular international affairs columnist, frequently published in the Shelburne Free Press and Orangeville Citizen, was recently enjoyed by over 75 area residents.

A speaking engagement with Gwynne Dyer came to Grace Tipling Hall in Shelburne last Tuesday (March 21). The famous journalist and author spoke without notes for a little more than an hour on the scope of geopolitics, the art of war, in the 20th Century.

"We are a warlike species," he admitted, but pointed out it was automation in 1916 during WWI that took us forward with the machine gun.

From then, invention went on to create more powerful weapons of new artillery and more dangerous bombs.

Mr. Dyer warned, "We should not be using our weapons as a form of diplomacy."

Yet, throughout his talk, he brought his audience back to a moment of consolation and indeed, optimism.

The good news, he told them, is that "we are celebrating 75 years of not using nuclear" (nuclear has been known for 77 years) and he has every reason to believe that we won't use them in the future.

?The deterrent quality of capability keeps a safer world,? he postulated.

A silver lining of sorts.

The bad news is that we don't seem capable of exercising communication to not use war as a solution.

Gwynne Dyer gave his listeners a clear assessment of the war in Gaza: that there would be no victory for either Palestine or Israel. Hamas set out not to win but to disable, he told them, and there is no prospect of a two state settlement as long as the same powers remain in Israel.

?Nor peaceful solutions,? he added, calling it a stalemate.

Likewise in Ukraine, with more than two years on, it is now a stalemate.

?War is an abomination? was his assertion.

It seemed important to Mr. Dyer to be optimistic: so far in the last 70 years, we are better at recycling and health care.

Intervention Earth is his new book, for which he interviewed the world's top 100 climate scientists to serve the hard geopolitical truths that the global climate emergency we are facing is indisputable and must be faced with global cooperation.

For the precariousness is not such much about war as about the climate emergency. He proceeded to very much advocate for community-based and grassroots endeavours to bring all the parties to the table. However, he countered this by being in haste to make us understand this has to be a science-based education. There is plenty of evidence to confirm the extent of the dangers but we must educate ourselves on how to make the differences.

This is the 10th time Gwynne Dyer has given talks here in Shelburne but this is his first time speaking to the community. He is one of the few such celebrities to speak at schools to give them an optimistic message they may not get on social media. In fact, his previous appearances in this area over many years have been at Orangeville District Secondary School (ODSS) at the behest of the History Department, of which Neil Orford, who organized Dyer's talk on March 21, was a teacher. Later, when Mr. Orford took over as Head of the History Department at Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS), he re-issued the invitation to Gwynne Dyer to come there. That continued every two years until Covid hit and this is Mr. Dyer's first return since then.

Neil Orford is also the founder of CanHist which supports ?a six-part Speakers Series welcoming some of Canada's most provocative & innovative thinkers to Shelburne.? John Lorinc the first of these, will come to speak on April 25.

Toward the end of his discourse, Gwynne Dyer told his audience, ?We have it in our hands to make the difference without waiting for leaders to do this for us.?

Always quick to be optimistic, Mr. Dyer said that we too can make an enormous difference in the climate crisis.

Intervention Earth is available at BookLore and online.