



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
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Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - National Council of Canada
2463 Innes Road Ottawa ON K1B 3K3
Tel: (613) 837-4363
Toll-free: 1-866-997-7787 (1-866-997-SSVP)
www.ssvp.ca - editor@ssvp.ca
Charitable Registration Number: 132410671 RR0001



A READING FROM THE RULE

At the March 27 National Council of Canada Board meeting, it was decided that the Society's mission and values would be read early in the agenda at each meeting, after the opening prayer and the spiritual reflection. The mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is even more important today, to be proactive in the assistance of persons in need, making no distinction of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions, and to help in all possible ways. The mission of the Society is a key differentiator since it is anchored in Catholic Social Teaching, and is inspired by the respect of human dignity, by personal contact, and by the personalization of assistance.

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis reminds us:

Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' parable summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals. By his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that "the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions." [66]

Being a good Samaritan is not always easy, as Pope Francis reminds us:

Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter. [215]

Richard Pommainville, Executive Director
National Council

MISSION

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- see Christ in anyone who suffers
- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
- help in all possible ways



THE MEANING OF THE WORD CONFERENCE

Let me share with you the fruit of my reflection on the meaning of the name "conference" for our teams at the base of our movement.

A little background on the history of its origin. When Frédéric Ozanam began his law studies in Paris in November 1831, he felt the acute need to magnify Christianity through the ages, to give it back its place in a world where atheism was gaining ground. He wanted to do this by writing a history of religions. He spent entire afternoons in libraries, including the one at Mr. Bailly's, near the Law School. Soon the exam period pulled him away from his project.

On his return from summer vacation in 1832, Ozanam found the group of young Catholic students who, the previous winter, had dared to protest against the rationalist theories of their professors, who despised Christianity. They did so orally before numerous audiences of more than two hundred people as well as in writing. They succeeded in obtaining an apology from the teachers involved. The teachers retracted their statements, saying that they had no intention of attacking Christianity, for which they had a high regard, and that in the future they would try not to hurt beliefs. He was now one of a dozen or so young people familiar with the library at Mr. Bailly's house. They also subscribed to the two law lectures a week and to the Saturday history lecture. The law lectures allowed one or the other to develop his or her skills as a litigator. With only one hour of preparation, they must improvise and not read. A critique of views and attitudes followed.

The history conference covered all subjects except the thorny area of politics: geography, art, history, religion and economics. There were about 40 members of various allegiances. Frédéric made a point of emphasizing that the contribution of Christian teachings met the aspirations of humanity. He even formed a trio to prepare himself and succeed in convincing.

They felt a tremendous dismay when, in March 1833, they were criticized for not living as friends of the poor, who claimed that Christ was a friend of the poor and that he saves the world. The need to bear witness through action had become more urgent. This was the cradle of our charity conferences. They are composed of Christians who are all eager to help those most in need. They seek to reflect the goodness of the Father, not in words, but in deeds. Only gestures are called upon to speak. Action becomes the privileged discourse.

Thus, our conferences bear this name rightfully. The way they present themselves demonstrates that Christian values put into practice solve the miseries of people AND communities. The overriding objective is to serve the poor by helping, without regard to their religion, ethnicity or... In other words, we do not try to talk religion to the recipients. But, unlike philanthropy alone, Vincentians are inspired by the Spirit of Christ. The exchange of views is aimed at the love of neighbour.

- Are we then aware and desirous to be speakers for Christ?
- What are the means used to familiarize ourselves even more with our subject?

May the Spirit of Pentecost inspire our action and enrich our conferences.

*Alain Besner, National Spirituality Committee
Quebec Regional Council*



FORMER KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

On May 31, 2021, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) published a statement following the report of a recent discovery of children's graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School on the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation.

<https://www.cccb.ca/announcement/cccb-statement-regarding-discovery-at-former-kamloops-indian-residential-school/>



INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT RECOGNITION - RESPECT - RECONCILIATION

The National Council of Canada approved a resolution at their March 27, 2021 board meeting to include an Indigenous land acknowledgment at all National and Regional meetings and encouraging this action for all councils and conferences.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement (virtual platform)

While we meet today on a virtual platform, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today and the importance of the land, which we each call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility in improving relationships between nations and to improving our own understanding of local Indigenous Peoples and their cultures. From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Metis, and First Nations people that call this nation home.

March 27, 2021 board meeting

What is a Land Acknowledgement?

A land acknowledgement is a Recognition of the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. It should never be done as a form of tokenism but rather because of our understanding of the significance that such action has to both our Indigenous sisters and brothers, and our membership.

Why do we recognize the land?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous People who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is also part of Indigenous protocol to honour the land of those you are visiting, or working and living on. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history.

By incorporating land acknowledgement in our Society, we are contributing to the process of honouring and embracing the spirit of a place. The importance of living with nature is one that Indigenous People have understood for many years but is one we are now appreciating as part of the growing environmental concerns we all share.

Land acknowledgement is also about respect for the historical and ancestral relationship that Indigenous People have had and continue to have with the land, climate and all creatures.

The example of the respect Indigenous People have for the land is very relevant in today's world of climate and environmental concerns. We could learn much about the Indigenous concept of nature and human beings being connected. Indeed, this concept is the basis of systemic change, which is the overarching term that our social justice efforts come under. We are connected to one another, to nature, to God.

Moving beyond land acknowledgement is about reconciliation.

Land acknowledgement should be a starting point for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in our efforts to gain a deeper and richer understanding of Indigenous history, culture and faith traditions. The negative effect systemic racism has on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Colour) persons is well documented in poverty statistics. How and why Indigenous People are affected by systemic racism should be part of our journey of understanding and reconciliation. A land acknowledgement is part of our obligation to address injustices in today's world that directly contribute to and sustain poverty.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National social justice committee



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Dear Social Justice Supporters,

Our monthly social justice updates will now appear as part of the new SSVP bi-weekly newsletters.

There are several topics I'd like to address this month.

Strategic Planning

Our national social justice committee is reviewing our structure in an effort to raise social justice to a level that is equal to our charitable work. We would like to look at ways we can provide a stronger communication link to every social justice rep/supporter, which would include the opportunity to focus on one or more specific social justice topics. One method we shall use is an online survey which you should have received by the time this newsletter is published. You can reply online and are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete and submit it by the July 15 deadline. The information gathered from this survey will help complete our strategic planning later this summer.

One outcome of this strategic planning could be the creation of several sub-committees, each dedicated to a specific topic such as advocacy, diversity & inclusion and prison ministry.

National Housing Campaign

The *Changing Times* newsletter, which is being dedicated to housing and homelessness issues, will also be part of the bi-weekly SSVP news and published in the second edition each month. Please consider our efforts by planning one or more actions locally in your council or conference. There are a number of excellent resources to be found on the national website.

Diversity & Inclusion

I would encourage you to check out the Ontario pilot project on their website (www.ssvp.on.ca), the theme of which is *Diversity is a Fact...Inclusion is an Act*.

Indigenous Peoples

As you are likely aware, our national council recently approved the addition of an Indigenous land acknowledgement at all national and regional level meetings, while also encouraging all councils and conferences to consider this action.

The Kamloops, B.C. Residential school tragedy of the newly discovered graves reminds of a very sad time in our history. Please keep these children in your prayers as this and other such discoveries come to our attention. Please pray for justice for all.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National social justice committee



GAP BETWEEN HOUSING NEED AND AVAILABILITY

In Moncton, a dozen volunteers from the Mother Teresa Conference are in direct contact with hundreds of people in need as they go out in pairs to visit their homes. At each monthly meeting, during the activity report, the number of cases encountered that did not have access to healthy, safe, and affordable housing, the theme of the national housing campaign, is mentioned.

In New Brunswick in November 2019, the number of applicants waiting for subsidized housing was 5,291, and likely continues to rise. As of March 2021, the provincial cost of housing is reported to be 30% higher than in 2020. In the Moncton area, homelessness is on the rise. The YMCA's Street Intervention Program recently identified and interviewed 145 homeless people in Moncton, and to this number must be added the 100 clients of Nazareth House Refuge and the 42 users of the Harvest House shelter. Many people with disabilities have difficulty affording accessible housing at a reasonable price.

Since statistics often evoke little sympathy, to see the full severity of the housing situation, you have to be in the presence of people who are struggling with this problem. In the last ten months, the Mother Teresa Conference members have documented more than 50 cases of people with housing problems.

The major problem noted by our volunteers was the difficulty in finding affordable housing. In Moncton, the average price of a unit is \$949, and a single room is \$500 or more. For a person of modest means, this represents more than 30% of their income.

The second biggest problem was the inability to pay the deposit required by the landlord. This amount, usually equal to the monthly cost of the rent, is given to the Rentalsman's office to cover any damage a tenant might cause. Few people living in poverty have enough money to pay this deposit. A New Brunswick group advocating for poor tenants would like the province to create a fund from which poor tenants could draw to pay the deposit.

The unavailability of subsidized housing is the third major problem that the people we visited shared with our members. Some municipalities are making commendable efforts to create them, but the slow release of federal and provincial funds leaves many languishing in misery. Many low-income people are desperately trying to get subsidized housing, but with a waiting list of over 5,000 individuals and families, their chances of getting it are slim.

A fourth finding of our volunteers is the lack of sanitation and safety in some of the apartments that people manage to get. Unrepaired stoves, toilets, broken windows, and bedbugs are factors that make life difficult for the occupants. Yet landlords have a legal obligation to meet all health, safety, and other legal requirements for the premises they rent. A tenant who has a problem with health, safety and building standards can apply to the landlord for action. The reality is that many problems remain unresolved for a long time. More teeth are needed in the enforcement of housing standards.

Statistics in the media raise awareness, but one has to get out there and see the many difficulties that people living in poverty have in finding adequate housing. This is what the members of the Mother Teresa Conference in Moncton have found. They have the opportunity to see the problems firsthand. With empathy, they do everything they can to help the needy people they meet. However, the root cause of their misery is often an injustice related to the unequal distribution of resources in New Brunswick.

Sister Auréa Cormier, Secretary

Mother Teresa Conference

Telephone: (506) 854-0675 (506) 854-0675



TWINNING - INTERNATIONAL FRATERNAL HELP

A historic commitment by the Society

Twinning has been a work of the Society since its founding in 1833. Frédéric Ozanam, our main founder, wanted to “embrace the world in a network of charity”. That the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul be established on all continents. That universal charity be exercised with the poorest of the poor. Twinning is at the heart of the Vincentian mission.

In Canada, twinning agreements were made in the 1960s. A report¹ mentions a twinning by the Council of Toronto with the Dominican Republic and another by the Council of Chicoutimi with Chile. “Other partnerships have taken place in Quebec City and Montreal. Some women's conferences also participated in the program.”² The twinning program expanded during the 1990s under the presidency of Sister Ellen Schryburt and has grown over the years. Currently, the Society has 175 active twinings with 21 countries. However, challenges remain.

The countries receiving aid from Canada are emerging countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Vincentians in these countries rely on twinning to serve the poor in their communities and help them improve their living conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the plight of the poor in these countries. Social and health services, already fragile before the pandemic, are overwhelmed. Many have lost their jobs in the now shutdown tourism industry, and lockdowns. The economies of these countries are suffering. Immunization programs in most recipient countries are progressing very slowly or have not yet started. Brothers and sisters in these countries need our moral support and financial help even more during this health crisis.

Twinning is the exercise of universal charity, a Vincentian responsibility. Members of the Society in Canada are also passionate about seeking social justice and correcting inequalities in these countries. Every conference and council should consider twinning as a core activity.

Twinning Application can be found at this web link:

https://www.ssvp.ca/sites/default/files/9.15_twinning_application_2017-09p.pdf

Clermont Fortin, Chair

Twinning Committee, National Council of Canada.

¹ Étude sur le jumelage, Maurice Ouellette, vice-president of the Superior Council of Canada, September 24, 1971 page 4.

² Ibid, page 5,



COMMUNITY DELIVERS FOOD ESSENTIALS TO THE NORTH ONE CONTAINER AT A TIME

By Sara Francis, Special to Grandin Media - [Catholic Alberta](#) - May 27, 2021

<https://grandinmedia.ca/community-delivers-food-essentials-to-the-north-one-container-at-a-time/>

A beautifully painted shipping container filled with non-perishable food and goods is headed for a permanent home beside Holy Name of Mary Church in a remote Arctic community.

And Grace Blake couldn't be happier.

"Families here, especially during this COVID time, have been very much in need. We are an isolated community so we don't get the type of groceries we need on a regular basis," said Blake, a Gwich'in elder and lifelong parishioner of Holy Name of Mary Church in Tsiighetchic, located in the Inuvik region of the Northwest Territories.



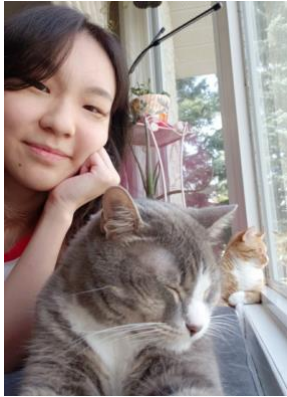
Grace Blake

The 200-person community does not have an airport and relies on ferries for access in summer or two ice bridges in the winter. In the spring and fall, the road into town is closed due to break-up and freeze-up.

"Right now we are isolated from the highway because the McKenzie River is flowing with ice and it's like that for about a month and a half in the spring and fall, so we have no way of going to bigger centres to shop; whatever we can get from our store plus the free donations help," said Blake, a recently widowed mother of eight and grandmother to 21 children.

Holy Name of Mary Church is located in the [Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith](#), which is twinned with the Edmonton Archdiocese.

This is the eighth hand-painted shipping container to serve nine northern communities as part of the North of 60 Project, an initiative of the [Society of St Vincent de Paul](#) Western Region.



Emma Wang is a member of Anchor, the youth group at St. Thomas More parish.
Courtesy of Emma Wang

And this is the second time Emma Wang and her friends in the Anchor youth group at [St. Thomas More Parish](#) in Edmonton have hand-painted a mural on the side of one of these shipping containers.

“I hope it helps other people and their faith. We don’t usually do these kinds of service projects; it was really fun,” said Wang, a Grade 11 student.

Seven high school youth met for eight two-hour blocks over three weeks to paint the mural. Two years ago the same youth group painted [a shipping container that was sent to Fort Good Hope, N.W.T.](#)

St. Thomas More parishioner Sara Dimitri facilitated both times.

“God is truth, beauty and goodness and hopefully by providing some beauty on the sea container it can be a reflection of God’s beauty,” Dimitri said.



[Sarah Dimitri](#)

The Tsiighetchic community asked the youth group to paint a portrait of Our Lady of Lourdes, the namesake of the parish, and Holy Name of Mary Church on a cliff overlooking the river valley.

The sea container is slated to arrive in Tsiighetchic in August. It will travel by truck from Edmonton to Hay River, then transfer onto a barge, which travels down the McKenzie River, emptying into the Beaufort Sea. The Northwest Territories government donated the transportation.

Food prices in communities north of the 60th parallel can be exorbitant and further enshrine communities in poverty, which is a major concern in the north.

The North of 60 Project began 10 years ago with the help of the late Eileen Orysiuk of Calgary and [Sister Fay Trombley](#), who is based in Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T, to provide food security to northern communities. Sister Trombley, a [Sister of Charity of the Immaculate Conception](#), is a former professor at Newman Theological College in Edmonton



Sister Fay Trombley, based in Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T., helped start the North of 60 Project.
Courtesy of The Catholic Register

“We only have two rules in our program,” said Peter Ouellette, the team lead for the North of 60 project. “Once we start with a community we will not pull out, so we have to continue to develop the rapport and work toward systemic change. The other rule is we don’t ship anything unless they ask for it.”

In a normal year the North of 60 team would solicit churches for food donations to bring them alongside the service project, but that was not possible during COVID. Powdered milk, dehydrated fruits and vegetables and cooking oil were donated from wholesalers or purchased with funds donated from the Knights of Columbus or SSVP chapters.

The goods inside the shipping container should last for a year and will be shared between Tsiighetchic and Fort McPherson, a hamlet about 60 kilometres west. This sea container will remain permanently next to Holy Name of Mary Church as a storage facility.

“We are not trying to feed the community, we are giving the community some security. Each of the communities have their own stores and we have no intention of competing with those stores. In the event the airplanes can’t fly for three weeks due to terrible weather then there is nothing on the shelves,” said Ouellette.

Blake said the general store in Tsiighetchic does not stock fresh fruit and vegetables on a regular basis year round and this is something she’d like to see change, possibly through government programs.

The traditional diet of the Gwich'in largely consists of fresh white fish, caribou and moose meat. Growing up Blake ate a variety of berries and wild rhubarb in the summer.



The Tsiighetchic community asked the youth group to paint a portrait of Our Lady of Lourdes, the namesake of the parish, and Holy Name of Mary Church on a cliff overlooking the river valley.
Courtesy of Peter Ouelette

Blake said she and her community are grateful for the effort of the SSVP Edmonton chapter and the North of 60 project.

“The St Vincent de Paul group sends us dried goods and foods that are not perishable and people truly appreciate that.”



SSVP RIDE FOR HUNGER

On Tuesday, May 25, our team cycled 70 km from Oshawa, Ontario to the CN Tower. Our goal was to raise \$25,000 to provide food assistance to over 460 families in Oshawa who call us on average three times a year. One hundred per cent of the money raised will go towards food vouchers.

Congratulations to all those who participated in the SSVP Ride for Hunger (from St. Gertrude's parish in Oshawa). A special thanks to Mike Crosby, the team leader of the event, and biker extraordinaire! Thus far, the ride has brought in \$15,000 for Persons in Need, and the money keeps coming.

In addition to Mike Crosby, riders from St. Gertrude's parish include Father Paul Magyar, John Krann, Brian Meittinen, Tim O'Connell and Christine O'Connell.

Click on the [link to the Kudoboard](#) to see a 'montage' of the day's events.

Maureen Kerr

St. Gertrude's Conference



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Can my conference/council be a financial recipient of another organization?

A: A conference/council can be a financial recipient of another charitable organization, a foundation, or governmental agency. Prior to accepting any funds, it is important to understand if the donor organization has any conditions attached to this contribution and, if so, what the implications are.

Q: Can my conference/council be a financial contributor to another organization?

A: It is against the Rule to simply pass money to another organization without any involvement. Please refer to 3.12 of the Rule, "The use of funds and assets".

The Society may not, at any level, allot funds to other organizations, except for branches of the Vincentian family; for example, the Sisters of Charity. Funds may be allotted to organizations that are pursuing objectives similar to those of the Society and that are registered charities according to the Income Tax Act. However, funds may be allotted only if the Society participates in the activities of these organizations and plays an active role in their management.

This last sentence is key, in the sense that SSVP must play an active role in the management and be a partner.