



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
ISSN 2560-824X
Volume 6 no. 4 - February 23, 2022

In this issue:

- Transforming a Social Narrative by Listening
- CIAD's Annual Report 2021
- Webinar - National Fund Development
- Twinning - Guatemala
- Social Justice - 350 Milestone
- Question & Answer

Online version : [Volume 6 no. 4 - February 23, 2022](#)

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TRANSFORMING A SOCIAL NARRATIVE BY LISTENING

Someone once said, “Being listened to is so close to being loved, most people can’t tell the difference.”

The outrage across the nation and the church around the issue of Indian Residential Schools and unmarked graves, has become a heavy social narrative that has in some ways, taken on a life of its own beyond anyone’s power to manage. This very painful situation leaves many of us wondering what we can do, how can we best respond to the anger, lashing out, blaming, and sometimes acts of violence?

As simple as it may seem, I believe listening from the heart to the voices of those hurting the most, until we “get it,” is the best response.

The first reading from 1 Samuel, Tuesday, January 11th, about Hannah’s desperate prayer for a child, sparked this reflection by Betty Stome, an Oblate of St. Benedict, in the publication *Give Us This Day* that she edits:

“Hannah’s *voice could not be heard*. Granted, that’s her choice when she enters the temple, so intimate is her prayer to God. Eli the priest, for his part, keeps his eye on Hannah, and thinks he has her figured out. He’s so close yet so far, and assumes the worst of that woman. Hannah is truly not fit for the temple, and it’s his duty to tell her so: ‘Sober up or ship out, sister.’ You couldn’t blame Hannah if she’d have left in silence, ashamed or outraged after Eli upbraided her. Thank God she stays and speaks her painful truth. And thank God that Eli listens to her and offers such a gentle and moving response: ‘Go in peace, and may God grant what you have asked.’”

Stome continues, “Can you imagine? Hannah’s prayer became the priest’s prayer. And when her son was born, Hannah’s full-throated song became the song of all her people. Generations later, it became Mary’s song, the *Magnificat*, the Church’s song. A song that reminds us of all the great things God does for us. Among these great things: God lifts up the lowly and feeds the hungry. God scatters the proud and casts down the mighty. Can you imagine? A listening Church. A prayerful church. A servant Church. A humble Church. May God grant what we have asked.”

Could it be possible that God is doing something great in a way that we would never have imagined – leading us as a Church to the bottom of this social narrative, away from domination, power and control, from any stance of superiority, to more closely identify with the Jesus of the gospels, born a helpless child, living in poverty and simplicity, placed between two criminals, and dying powerless on the cross?

Perhaps the media has sensationalized the news, some extremists may have over-reacted, others may have exaggerated the stories over time – that is all actually secondary. What matters is that we follow the master, let go of any self-righteousness, and truly listen from the heart to the genuine pain of those who did suffer terrible abuse within a very flawed colonial system of assimilation tinged with genocide, allowing their voices to be heard. Through this darkness, listening from the heart, until we truly “get it,” is the way to shine some light on a very dark time, and eventually heal this social narrative.

As Betty asks, can we imagine? A listening Church. A prayerful Church. A servant Church. A humble Church. May God grant what we have asked.

Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie OMI, National Spiritual Advisor

The following video link, as part of this article, provides an opportunity to listen from the heart, and learn: <https://www.everythingisconnected.ca/film/>

TOGETHER WE HEAL – Join the Dialogue Circle!

Featuring Georgina Lightning.

Co-Facilitated by Catherine Twinn and Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI.

These monthly Dialogue Circles serve as an opportunity to participate in decolonizing our hearts and minds while learning to walk humbly with our Creator towards healing and reconciliation. We welcome Indigenous and non-Indigenous to join these sessions, open to anyone interested in listening more attentively to the stories needing to be heard for a renewed relationship to be born; to educate ourselves about our mutual reality and how to create new pathways together.

Our second session, on **Intergenerational Trauma** with **Georgina Lightning** is on **Thursday, February 24, 7:00pm (Mountain Time) / 9:00pm (Eastern)**, at the **Star of the North Retreat Centre** in St. Albert (AB). The session will also be live-streamed virtually.

Georgina Lightning (Cree/Bear Clan Treaty 8) is a story teller, filmmaker, actress, public speaker and advocate for change, with 30 years of experience in the film and TV industry. Her films have garnered several awards including the “White House Epic Award” given to emerging artists who change the world with the works they create, such as the narrative feature film “Older Than America,” exposing the residential school reality. Her current docudrama trilogy, “*Fantasies of Flying - Grandmothers Medicine and Behind Closed Doors*” is in post-production. The hope for this trilogy is to inspire reconciliation, enlightenment, healing and to reclaim the culture lost from the genocide the Indigenous people have endured since contact. Georgina will be sharing her experience of inter-generational trauma.

The session will involve a presentation, small group sharing and a closing sharing circle with Georgina.

There is no charge, but donations are welcome.

Please [register online](#) or by calling 780-459-5511.



CIAD's ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Commission for International Aid and Development is one of the CGI's international solidarity arms, which supports the SSV worldwide in emergency humanitarian actions and disaster rehabilitation programmes, as well as in social and sustainable development projects.

We herein publish the 2021 Annual Report. Despite reduced activity due to the pandemic, the CIAD could provide assistance to 31 countries, which approximately amounted to €350,000. The reconstruction of houses in Indonesia, support for refugees in Lebanon, food aid in Madagascar, an agricultural development project in Haiti, or support for a retirement home in Colombia are just some examples of this Commission's work, which is detailed in this report.

https://www.ssvglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/informe-ciad-ingles.pdf?utm_source=Cyberimpact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SSVP-CANADA-NEWS---February-23-2022



Webinar – National Fund Development

The National Fund Development Committee is inviting Vincentians to witness the work performed by the Committee since its creation in June 2021 to identify and to develop communications and fund development strategies, with associated resources, to be used by the multiple levels within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada. A webinar in English will be held on Saturday February 26 at 1:00pm (Eastern), and in French at 10:30am (Eastern).

ENGLISH:

When: Saturday, February 26, 2022 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpcOurrTlqHdCLDVOyDvdKl_le7cPX-CgD

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

FRANCAIS:

Quand: Samedi, 26 février 2022, 10:30 heure de l'Est (ÉU et Canada)

Inscrivez-vous à l'avance à cette réunion :

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEsf-iuqzsoH9K3R5YBW_n38CkB650k63H

Une fois inscrit, vous recevrez un courriel de confirmation contenant les informations nécessaires pour participer à la réunion.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF GUATEMALA REPORT – YEAR 2020-2021



The National Council of Guatemala is twinned with the North Fraser Particular Council, BC. This is a resumé of their report for year 2020-21.

All Board of Directors meetings were held virtually this past year due to the pandemic. The SSVP is present in all regions of Guatemala.

The National Council carried out various activities during this pandemic with the Vincentian family of Quetzaltenango (northwest part of the country), including:

- assistance to the Mercy Home for the Elderly;
- Vincentian family meetings;
- collaboration in the construction of a house for those affected by natural disasters.



The National Council makes efforts to get assistance for the Home for the Elderly and books for the children of the rural areas. They are currently working with two conferences, planting coffee seeds, supporting a community pharmacy, constructing a house for a poor brother and another to store the coffee. Unfortunately, a honey production project remains unfinished. The Council has also purchased and delivered groceries to brothers of 16 conferences who were affected by unemployment.

There are people from the urban area in conditions of extreme poverty and, in some cases, abandoned and very sick. The National Council has requested that they be accepted in the Misericordia Men's Home for the Elderly or in the Santa Luisa de Marillac Women's Home.



The National Council of Guatemala expresses their gratitude to the North Fraser Particular Council for their financial support for several years. With this help, they were able to mobilize and carry out various work of mercy.

SSVP Canada has 14 active twinning partners in Guatemala.

*Clermont Fortin, Chair
National Twinning Committee*





350 MILESTONE

Halton reaches a wonderful milestone of helping 350 children get access to the Canada Learning Bond!

That is up to \$700,000 of federal funding that has been brought into Halton to improve educational outcomes.

We have celebrated every precious child who has received this hope by providing a \$100 contribution cheque into the RESP (which then was matched by 40% by the federal government, leveraging donor funds).

We also have presented each child with a framed personalized congratulatory certificate with the simple message, *We Believe in You*. We want the children to know they are valued, that they are cared for and that their educational future can be a bright one.

350 Seeds of Hope have been planted!

Now we have set our eyes on our next goal of 375 children. No child left behind; every child deserves hope for a brighter educational future is our motto.

Making families aware of the Canada Learning Bond opportunity and explaining the steps to take to open up a RESP to get access to their funds was the first social justice project that Halton embarked on.

It was our first foray into embracing our roles of Informed Navigators, connecting and referring and walking alongside our neighbours to access.

We offer encouragement, nudging, support, as we gently walk alongside them to access programs, opportunities and services that will benefit them and their families.

An informed conversation from a caring Vincentian can make a real difference in the neighbours getting access to hope for their futures.

Click here to access the [SOH toolkit](#)

If you would like more information on how your council/conference can launch the Seeds of Hope project, please contact [Linda Alexander](#).

Linda Alexander, Seeds of Hope Project Manager



QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: We have a conference president approaching the end of his/her second term and trying to plan her/her succession. No current member of this active conference seems willing to step up to succeed. If that does not change, what should happen with the conference?

A: The primary approach should not be to close the conference. Understanding why no conference members are willing to step forward to be servant-leaders should be the first step; understanding the reluctance in order to alleviate these blockers is extremely important. It is also important to note that it is a team effort. A particular council could appoint someone if no one steps forward, but this is not the preferred approach. The current president must NOT stay in office beyond their elected second term.

To assist, a Conference Executive Team module is available (LEAD-4) in the National formation repository

<https://ssvp.ca/members/training/>