

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

# Vincenpaul

CANADA



The newsletter of  
the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul  
National Council of Canada  
Volume 1 no. 4 - October 2017

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**CLICKABLE!**

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**Church of Our Lady of Lourdes  
Paulatuk, Northwest Territories, Canada**  
Photo by Father Jon Hansen  
North of 60 restoring Father's House in  
Paulatuk NWT. This year the windows.  
Next year the roof. Read more at  
[https://jonhansencssr.com/2017/08/23/  
pastors-letter-for-august/](https://jonhansencssr.com/2017/08/23/pastors-letter-for-august/)

## INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

The format of the Vincenpaul-Canada magazine and of the Changing Times newsletter were modified. We will now publish an electronic version of the Vincenpaul-Canada newsletter. Three editions of this newsletter are attributed to social justice, editions of February, June and October.

Please enjoy this Social Justice edition of Vincenpaul-Canada newsletter of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. I encourage you to submit any articles or comments about social justice that you may have for the next edition. You may also like to join our Facebook page for further discussions. Please help us to grow in our understanding and actions related to social justice.

Sincerely,

*Jim Paddon, Chairperson  
Social Justice National Committee*

[jpsvp@hotmail.ca](mailto:jpsvp@hotmail.ca)

**PLEASE VISIT OUR  
NATIONAL WEBSITE  
FOR VALUABLE  
SOCIAL JUSTICE  
RESOURCE MATERIAL  
THAT YOU MAY  
USE FOR FUTURE  
ACTIONS OR MEETING  
AGENDA TOPICS.  
[WWW.SSVP.CA/](http://WWW.SSVP.CA/)  
SOCIAL-JUSTICE**

## CHAIR REPORT

Dear fellow Vincentians:

Welcome to this Vincenpaul Social Justice edition. I hope that after a pleasant summer and the opportunity to spend time with family and friends we are now ready for any challenges we may face in regards to our efforts to identify and address the many areas in need of Catholic social justice action.

There are some new sections in this edition which I am sure you will find relevant and important. The first one is our youth section which will include news from our youth members and which may be an attractive tool for use in recruiting more youth to the Society and especially social justice. Our national social justice committee has now added a youth advisory panel. It is time we enabled our youth to have a real voice and an active role in shaping our future.

The second section will address issues related to indigenous peoples. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a member of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, a coalition of seven Catholic organizations whose goal is to address several recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation commission report. In addition, there is no doubt our Society has the ability to do more as we try to build sharing partnerships with indigenous peoples. Our North of 60 project and the Cadotte Lake project are examples of how we can accomplish such relationships. However, there is much more to do, including raising the awareness of the many issues related to indigenous peoples, not only amongst our membership but also in the larger Catholic population.

In addition, we shall try to maintain a focus on our environment and our obligation to advocate for and support actions related to this topic. Please visit our

national website and read the Environmental Stewardship and Ecological Change position paper we developed with our USA and Mexican Vincentians.

Restorative justice is a topic that is often overlooked but one which we should be looking at ways we can do more. We do have a few members who currently visit inmates and work with these returning citizens as they attempt to overcome the many challenges of trying to re-start their lives. I encourage our membership to look at ways you can help. While visiting prisons is not something everyone is comfortable with, reaching out to our friends in need is. Please contact us if you are currently involved in this area or would like information on ways you can become involved. We invite your stories and comments related to restorative justice for future editions.

The members of our national social justice committee are: Chair-Jim Paddon (Ontario), Atlantic-Parnell Kelly, Quebec-Michel Olivier, Ontario-Corry Wink, Western-Maria Lupul, BC-Yukon-Gord Stuart, Spiritual Advisor-Msgr. Peter Schonenbach, ex-officio-Jean Noel Cormier.

Our Youth Advisory Panel: Shelby Mulder, Victoria Goldsack and Calvin McDonnell and their advisor, Lillian Mulder. I am very pleased to inform you that as a direct result of the workshop these youth presented at the recent AGA regarding safe water, the Ontario regional Council will fund a water project in Nicaragua at a cost of \$5,000.00. Great work and a huge thank you to our youth. They have demonstrated what they can contribute to the Society.

Please enjoy this edition of Vincenpaul and encourage your fellow members to read it and join our social justice team.

*Jim Paddon, chair  
Social Justice National Committee*

# SPIRITUALITY

## REFLECTIONS ABOUT PREJUDICE

The Vincentian, who is convinced that a big part of his or her work is to bring about good systemic change in society, must also be convinced that prejudice cannot be part of his or her being.

We have but to look at our world to see how prejudice fuels so many major social problems. When we look at history we realize how hard it is to eradicate prejudice; indeed, untold suffering and injustice has occurred because of ingrained prejudice. It is not easy to be truly prejudice-free but we must strive to be so.

I always thank God for a special grace He gave me when I was 6 years old (the year was 1943). I had just learnt how to read when I read a headline in the newspaper indicating that Germans were fundamentally bad, I can still remember thinking that what was written could not be true since my parents were good people and they were German. I have always kept this in mind when generalized prejudice is brought forward.

The world we wish to bring about when we work for systemic change must be one where the Christian Law of love of neighbour prevails and that it includes everybody.

*Msgr. Peter Schonenbach*  
*National Spiritual Advisor*

**“THAT EQUALITY SHOULD  
TAKE PLACE AS MUCH AS  
POSSIBLE IN HUMANITY.”  
BL. FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM**

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# SOCIAL JUSTICE

## CREATING A NETWORK OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

As our national social justice committee looks at various actions and plans for the coming year, there is one major area that we feel is essential to both educate our members and gain their support and future involvement in Catholic social action. We need to develop resource material that is effective in achieving this goal. Catholic social teachings certainly provide a foundation for all of us when we look at why we should be more involved. Our founder, Frederic Ozanam also demonstrated his support for social action and justice by supporting a number of issues, including a living wage, pensions for workers and the human dignity of everyone. Frederic understood the need to create a network of charity that also adhered to the principle of subsidiarity that gives the local level of the Society the ability to decide how to address issues related to poverty. It is by following this same concept for social justice that we feel is our next step. If we can develop a network dedicated to social justice and action that includes giving every Vincentian the opportunity to be a part of, we strongly believe we can make changes that truly address poverty.

Therefore, we presented several recommendations to our national board of directors which were approved at the June, 2017 board meeting. These included encouraging the formation of a social justice committee at every Council in Canada, a social justice rep for every Conference and to add social justice as an agenda item to all meetings. While these recommendations are not mandatory, we respectfully ask every Council to consider the formation of such a committee. There are several helpful documents on our national website that you may find useful <http://www.ssvp.ca/social-justice>. In addition you are invited to contact the committee chair, Jim Paddon [jpssvp@hotmail.ca](mailto:jpssvp@hotmail.ca) or your local regional social justice rep for assistance. In regions where there is also a Central Council, perhaps one committee that includes members from each Particular Council would work best. I shall also be in contact with Councils across Canada this year to offer assistance and advice. One additional advantage of engaging in social justice is the opportunity to recruit new members, who have an interest in social justice issues, to the Society. Youth are also another age group which has a strong interest in making societal changes that can make our world a better place for future generations.

*Jim Paddon, Chairperson  
Social Justice National Committee*



**JOIN OUR GROUP ON FACEBOOK**  
SSVP Canada Social-Justice-Sociale

## SOCIAL JUSTICE REGIONAL REPS

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## QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

### CLOSE TO 6,000 PARTICIPANTS IN THE QUÉBEC SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL FAMILY DAY!

On Saturday, August 12, the Québec Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Family Day took place. The invitation, sent to families in the Capitale Nationale greater region and Chaudière-Appalaches, attracted close to 6000 little ones and grown-ups on the Domaine de Maizerets site, in spite of rather uncertain weather! In addition to having the opportunity to meet *Paw Patrol*, *Toy Story* and *Mickey Mouse* characters, children and families enjoyed a number of free attractions: jugglers, stilt-walkers, inflatable modules, make-up, athletic activities, and sports challenges!

**ALLOW FAMILIES TO  
HAVE FUN WITHOUT  
SPENDING TOO  
MUCH MONEY,  
WHILE FOSTERING  
SOLIDARITY AND  
SOCIAL DIVERSITY**

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#### ABOUT FAMILY DAY

The main objective of that day being to allow families to have fun without spending too much money, while fostering solidarity and social diversity, the Québec SSVP Family Day held its 8th edition this year. First and foremost, the Québec SSVP wishes to offer everyone the possibility to participate in a festive and free event, to facilitate everyone's integration into community life and contribute to breaking the poverty cycle. The Québec SSVP thanks all its partners, who made this year a success, and more specifically EKO-Groupe F. Dufresne, the Caisse Desjardins in Limoilou, M-FM 102,9, FM93 and TC Media!

#### ABOUT THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN QUÉBEC

For the past 170 years, the Québec SSVP has been helping people in the Capitale Nationale greater region and Chaudière-Appalaches. In 2016, close to 40,000 people took advantage of the organization's programmes and services, via 74 service points. The Québec SSVP works on several fronts, the most important being food help. In real terms, we talk about more than 600,000 kg in food supplies and close to \$ 1M in food vouchers given every year — the need is real. Through various forms of aid (food, clothing, furniture, school supplies, and much more), the Québec SSVP supports hundreds of people in every service point, 28% of whom are children.

## QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

### SAGUENAY-LAC-SAINT-JEAN – AS A COMPLEMENT TO THE OPÉRATION BONNE MINE, THE DONATION BAG CAMPAIGN UNITED FOR GOING BACK TO SCHOOL LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

The DONATION BAG campaign organizing committee is composed of Julien Boulianne, lawyer, Karine Brassard, Managing Director of Fondation pour l'enfance et la jeunesse, Bruno Harvey, pharmacist owner and Gaston Laforest, President of the SSVP Council in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

The old saying “Unity makes strength” is quite appropriate for the Donation Bag campaign that took place across the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean territory, between April 24 and June 23.

Indeed, a number of organizations launched initiatives across the region to collect backpacks and school supplies to give to young people in need.

“That project is very important to us, because it allows students in need to have the same back to school experience as other children do,” says Mrs. Karine Brassard.

The organizations involved are mainly the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean Bar Association, the Jean Coutu pharmacies in Jonquière and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

They decided to unite and work together to help young people in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

#### UNITY

All Jean Coutu pharmacies in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean decided to embark on the adventure, joining forces with the Bar Association, the Saint-Vincent de Paul and the Fondation pour l'enfance et la jeunesse.

Me Julien Boulianne, who had gotten involved in the Bar Association campaign, emphasized that the first campaign had helped collect 60 bags, while in the second year, 250 backpacks were donated to young students.

In parallel with the Bar campaign, Jean Coutu pharmacies in Jonquière collected 100 bags for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

“Seeing that, we decided to unite and merge our backpack collection, expanding it to the regional level [...] our objective would be to collect more than 1000 bags for all youths in the region, who are in need,” said Me Boulianne.

*Lise Blais, Project Manager  
Quebec Regional Council*

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# ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

## ADVOCACY IN ONTARIO

The Voice of the Poor - Advocacy Committee has responded to several opportunities to participate in consultations which both the federal and provincial governments launched to get input on proposed legislation and projects that will impact all of us but especially our neighbours in need.

The committee gave input to the proposed Basic Income pilot at a community consultation. The Basic Income idea is that if all citizens received an income that was sufficient to meet the basic needs of people, the community would be better off in many ways. In time, health care and justice costs would go down, because low income people use those services more than people who have better incomes. The social fabric of society would be stronger because inequality would be reduced. The Basic Income pilot is an important opportunity to find if alleviating poverty will result in better, healthier communities.

Last fall the Federal government requested input for their development of a national housing strategy. Canada is one of the few developed countries that does not have a national strategy and the high cost of housing is the biggest single issue reported by Vincentians and our neighbours in need. In recent years both the Federal and Provincial government investments in housing declined severely. In Ontario, the Society has advocated for better housing supports and inclusionary zoning at the provincial level and was keen to give input to the national level to advocate for a national housing strategy.

As well, the committee gave written input to Federal government's request for input on a poverty reduction strategy. The Society has a valuable perspective on the needs of our most vulnerable citizens and gave a strong response which advocated for a national strategy that would set standards for poverty reduction across Canada.

Ontario is overhauling its Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the committee made presentations to the consultation ahead of the revisions and at the community consultations after Bill 148 had received its first reading.

The Ontario Voice of the Poor - Advocacy Committee is constantly looking for opportunities to advocate with various levels of government on poverty issues.

*Corry Wink, Social Justice National Committee  
Ontario Regional Council*

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# ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

## WHAT DO THEY DO ALL DAY?

Sometimes when I talk to people about the poor, they say, “What do they do all day”? So many of our daily activities involve money. We know that people on low incomes often don’t have enough money to meet their basic needs let alone non-essential wants. Most single people on social assistance in Canada have between \$600 and \$800 per month for all their needs: shelter, food, clothing, personal care, and so on<sup>1</sup>. Statistics Canada determines the low-income measure (LIM) which currently stands at \$1744 per month of disposable income for a single person. So, if they have so little money what do they do all day?

I interviewed two people who are on social assistance in Ottawa to find out how they live. Brad is a man in his 40’s who, for now, is homeless. He has had problems with landlords because they have evicted him arbitrarily and refused to give back rent deposits. Landlords are a hassle. Because he does not pay rent, he receives only the basic needs allowance of the OW (Ontario Works) program and this amounts to \$330 per month. He manages to couch surf most of the time but in a pinch will sleep in the stairwell of an apartment building. A friend lets him keep a few extra clothes in his apartment but Brad carries most of his possessions in his backpack which sometimes gets heavy.

How does Brad manage on \$330 per month? The Centretown area of Ottawa has several churches and community organizations which provide free meals for people on a rotating basis and Brad attends those when he can. Some churches and community agencies provide cash or grocery store gift cards to people who come to the door and usually give between \$5 and \$20. There are also churches and agencies that give out clothing which helps because regular stores are not an option. Then there are food banks which people can usually access once a month. Brad has to be selective about which items to take because he has to carry them around and sometimes cooking facilities can be hard to find.

Brad has had run-ins with police and security guards. When he gets stressed out, he has anger management problems. Once, a security guard got angry with him because he wanted to keep some supplies in a disused locker in a community centre. When I spoke with Brad, he thought that there was some issue pending with police but he couldn’t remember what it was about.

Brad’s friend Sue also receives social assistance. She gets the full \$706 OW allowance but after her rent is paid, she has only \$170 to meet her basic needs. It is far less safe for a woman to be homeless than for a man so having her own place is important. Like Brad, she makes the rounds of places where she can get some help: community meals, gift cards and

food banks. She was happy that the Society of Saint of Saint Vincent de Paul provided basic furniture for her new place because otherwise her home would have been bare. Getting enough food is a constant struggle for Sue and the stress shows on her face.

### STAYING ALIVE WHEN ONE IS IN DEEP POVERTY IS A FULL-TIME JOB.

Depression is her constant companion.

Staying alive when one is in deep poverty is a full-time job. Research done a few years ago about the stresses of people in poverty concluded that finding the necessities of life to survive required all the

mental energy and ingenuity that people had. As a result, there was no energy, mental or physical left over to find ways out of poverty<sup>2</sup>.

Some people say that social assistance recipients would be all right if they just learned to manage their money better. I challenge anyone to find a way to stay healthy on an income that is less than half of the LIM. Every day is a struggle to keep body and soul together and this struggle erodes both mental and physical health. Canada can do better and Vincentians need to advocate for our neighbours in need.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/Detail/?ID=1109&IsBack=0>

<sup>2</sup> <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/341/6149/976>

*Corry Wink, Social Justice National Committee  
Ontario Regional Council*

## WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

### CHANGING THE “ME” WORLD INTO A SOCIAL JUSTICE WORLD

Today, we live in a world where “ME” – my needs and my wants are most important. Where the media and any kind of advertising tell us that “we need this, we need that and we need it now”. Consumerism has taken over our lives, and some of us never seem to have enough of anything.

It is also true that some of us feel differently and would like to see a change take shape and the world become a fair and just place to live in, a place where we all share equally of the abundance God has provided us with. I have been given a chance to try and make a tiny little dent in that “Me World” and possibly affect a few lives for the better.

My name is Maria Lupul and I am a member of the St. Theresa’s Conference in Edmonton, Alberta. I have been a Vincentian for 14 years. After being President of my Conference for 5 and half years, I have one year left in a four year term as President of the Edmonton South Particular Council.

A few of the Vincentians whom I have had the privilege to work with over the years, suggested that maybe I should get involved in the Western Region Social Justice Committee. After a couple of Skype calls, and with the blessing of our Western Region President, Tony Barry, the Western Region Past President, Peter Ouellette, and the National Social Justice Committee Coordinator, Jim Paddon, I accepted to be the Coordinator of the Western Region Social Justice Committee and be its representative at the National Social Justice Committee.

Committee is the key word, because without a committee, one cannot accomplish much. On that note, allow me to introduce the current members of the Western Region Social Justice Committee; Alan Matisz from Medicine Hat, Jeanette Kostenuik from Winnipeg, Maureen Harrison from Calgary, Nicole Zimmerman from Red Deer, Stephen Dufresne from Edmonton and Suzette Montreuil from Yellowknife. Of course, there is always place for representatives from other parts of the Western Region.

I should add that I also have the support of my Conference, and last but not least by any means, I have the full support of my husband Terry.

Because all of this just happened in a very short time frame, and the Committee has not met to discuss past projects that might still be worked on or to formulate new projects, our future path is not defined yet. However, there are a few ideas that I would like to explore.

The first one of those ideas is to try and establish a Social Justice Committee, of even just 1 or 2 members, in every Central Council, every Particular Council and every Conference of the Western Region.

**CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT  
WE COULD ACCOMPLISH  
IF WE ALL WORKED  
TOGETHER IN OUR CITIES,  
PROVINCES AND FINALLY  
ACROSS OUR BEAUTIFUL  
COUNTRY?**

Another idea that would be highly beneficial to our Society and therefore to the people we serve, would be to make our Social Justice work much better known. We would not only let people know that we are here to assist when assistance is needed, but we would also let people know that our work is done with their monetary donations or material items. This would be one way of trying to even out the field, by encouraging the people that have much, to share with the people that have little.

If any of you has any suggestions for new Social Justice projects or causes, please let me know. We are always open to new ideas. Can you imagine what we could accomplish if we all worked together in our cities, provinces and finally across our beautiful country? I am very excited at the possibilities that lie in front of us, not only about the work we can do, but also of the friendships that can be built during that work.

The word “volunteer” is synonymous with work, fellowship and fun. Volunteering should be fun. If it is not, it becomes just unpaid work and eventually the volunteers, one at a time, will vanish. One can accomplish just as much while having good clean fun.

And before I close, I would like to ask for your prayers for me and for my committee. That the Lord above may guide our steps and our actions in the journey ahead. That everything we do be centered in the Society’s Values and with the Society’s Mission in mind.

Serving with joy,

*Maria Lupul, Social Justice National Committee  
Western Regional Council*

[wrcsocialjustice@gmail.com](mailto:wrcsocialjustice@gmail.com)

## BC & YUKON REGIONAL COUNCIL

### WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Catholic Social Justice is based upon the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Catholic Social Teaching is body of doctrine developed by the church to help us apply the teachings of Jesus Christ to our communal, social life regarding matters of poverty and wealth, economics, justice and the role of the state and commerce. CST started in 1891 with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII where he speaks against the growing gap between rich and poor. Further encyclicals developed the principles of CST from 1891 to the current time.

Biblical Injunctions supporting Catholic Social Teaching include:

1. **Proverbs 31:8-9** “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy”
2. **Matthew 7:12** “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”

Pope Benedict says in *Caritas in Veritate* (CV)

1. “Justice and charity need each other”
2. “Charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples.
3. “I cannot give what is mine to another without first giving him what is his in justice” (to love is to give)

Pope John Paul II says the foundation of CST “rests on the threefold corner stone of Human Dignity, Solidarity and Subsidiarity”

Human Dignity is “The Why” we practice CST. It is because we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are not just something, but someone who is capable of freely giving oneself, and of entering into communion with other persons.

Solidarity is “The What” we work on. It is based on the unity of humankind. Solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, not merely vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of others.

Subsidiarity is “The How” we practice CST. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. Under the principle of subsidiarity, organizational functions should be carried out at the lowest level that is practical (this is people power).

The complete list of Catholic Social Teaching topics is:

1. Human dignity
2. Community and the Common Good
3. Rights and duties
4. Option for the poor
5. Participation
6. Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers
7. Stewardship of Creation
8. Solidarity
9. Subsidiarity & Role of Government
10. Promotion of Peace

A culture of the common good provides for the health, welfare, and dignity of all people, regardless of race, gender, religion or economic class. This central goal of Catholic Social Teaching expresses our faith’s understanding that society functions best when decisions are made with an eye toward what benefits everyone, and not just the few. In the words of Pope John Paul II, the common good refers to the “good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

Catholic Social Teaching is a call to action. Pope Paul VI said :

“It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words lack weight unless they are accompanied for each individual with a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and effective action.”

*Gordon Stuart, Social Justice National Committee  
BC & Yukon Regional Council*

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The topic of prison ministry or as we prefer to call it, restorative justice is one that can be very complicated and challenging to Vincentians. Our goal is to dedicate a section of this edition and future social justice editions to this topic. One area we need your help with is simply being aware of what our members are doing across Canada. If you are visiting prisons or are involved in any type of outreach related to former prisoners, or as we to call them, returning citizens, their families and also victims of crime, please let us know about your efforts. Perhaps even to have a prayer group for those affected by crime in Canada is an easy but effective way to help. Collaboration with established organizations is also recommended as a way to both learn and do more.

One particular project we are currently working on is in Hamilton, Ontario. There we have teams of two Vincentians ready to work in a personal on-going partnership with a returning citizen. In addition we have held a couple of larger gatherings for both Vincentians and former inmates where we can meet, talk openly and develop a better understanding of how we can help. Finally, the Hamilton project includes what we call prisoner release kits which are put together with the assistance of our local thrift store. These release kits include some basic and essential items such as toiletries and a voucher for clothing at the thrift store. We have permission from the Hamilton jail to store a supply of these kits which are then given to an inmate upon release. While it is great to get out of jail, inmates are often released with only the clothes they entered jail with.

If you have a local jail, remand centre or prison near you, I encourage you to consider starting some type of program. We also forget that the families of those in prison face many challenges in simply living with some hope for a better future and the financial burdens of raising a family. Please contact us if we can be of assistance or offer advice and resource information regarding restorative justice.

*Jim Paddon, Chairperson  
Social Justice National Committee*

## WHAT PRISON MINISTRY DID FOR ME

A few years back I committed an act of crime. I was caught, and sent off to prison. The sudden change in so many aspects of my life was quite overwhelming and it came with a high price. I was separated from family, from friends, from colleagues, from co-workers, as well as from making plans for the day, let alone for the week or the month. I now found myself in a setting where I did not know anyone, where I had no one to communicate with and didn't know what the day would bring. I had to learn to adjust to, what was for me, a previously unknown and little understood environment in which I would have to cope and try to make the most of. Isolation set in, depression set in, anxiety set in. I tried not to feel sorry for myself, though I was upset with myself for letting things come to this, because I never thought of what my actions did to others.

**IT TOOK A LITTLE  
TIME TO TRY  
TO 'FIT IN' AND  
ACCEPT THE NEW  
ENVIRONMENT,  
WHICH WOULD  
BECOME MY  
EVERYDAY WAY  
OF LIFE FOR A  
PERIOD OF TIME.**

While incarcerated, I found out that there were various programs offered through the chaplaincy office. This was something I wanted to check out for myself. Eventually I found out when a Sunday Catholic Mass was held. On my first visit to a Sunday Mass, I was surprised to see a priest, as well as other people from the community there. At first I thought that maybe these people were acquaintances of inmates who came to the chapel, but soon found out that they were volunteers from the local community who gave of their time to come and attend Mass at the institution as well as meet with the inmates afterwards.

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The volunteers were Catholic nuns or sisters and former chaplains, as well as people from other walks of life who were called to minister to the prisoner. They were giving of their time to fulfil the role or calling of all Christians, to go and preach the Gospel in all corners of the world, which includes to those who are in prison. These volunteers were not mandated to come out, but were freely giving of themselves to be of service. It is the Holy Spirit within the individual that drew them to where God wanted them to be, and they obeyed the Call. I soon discovered that these Christians were expressing their love and kindness and acceptance of all, without condemning or questioning. They did more listening than speaking and I felt like I could talk with them about myself, or anything else, without the fear of being judged or making me feel bad about myself. If there was something bothering me and I mentioned it, they would respond with words of encouragement and making sure I knew that God, in His way, will also help me through it all.

Over time, I began to attend more services; Catholic Mass, Pentecostal Service, Salvation Army Service, Yoga Class, Serendipity Bible Study, and a Book club, among others. All these events were led by either the institutional chaplain, a minister or chaplain from the local community, or a layperson who had special skills or gifts to share with the inmates.

One specialized program, which I also attended, was the Kairos Prison Ministry.

Kairos sprang from the Cursillo movement and it's a three-day weekend program, which would be held from a Friday morning to a Sunday afternoon in the institution. Several volunteers would come in for the weekend event joined by some of the inmates, who have attended a Kairos program in the past, who now came to help out.

**THESE CHRISTIANS WERE EXPRESSING THEIR LOVE AND KINDNESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF ALL, WITHOUT CONDEMNING OR QUESTIONING.**

This ministry work shares the love and forgiveness of Jesus and addresses the spiritual needs of those incarcerated. By the end of the three-day session, while everyone was summing up their experience, many were moved to tears, both volunteers and inmates, because of what they encountered.

When I was released from prison, I had a desire to reach out to others just as the volunteers reached out to me. I started going to Sunday Mass at Providence Motherhouse in Kingston, which is run by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, and some of the sisters that attend Sunday Mass here, were the ones who came out to the prisons. I took a prison ministry volunteer course and later joined the newly formed group in Kingston, the St. Dismas Conference. On a weekly basis I meet with former inmates to share a coffee or something to eat and listen to how they are getting along, and offer help or advise where applicable.

At times I may help someone get groceries, take them to government offices, or help them search for jobs or a place to stay.

I also meet with inmates who are out on escorted temporary passes and they question me about the difficulties of getting back into society.

I am planning on moving soon and once settled in I am thinking of starting a Bible Study group in my own place.

The loving and caring environment that the volunteers bring is a key benefit of prison ministry work and is vital in our society because it helps those incarcerated to see that they are not alone in their walk, in their journey through the dark places of their lives. The Almighty Creator and God of Love is compassionate and merciful and calls His chosen ones to minister to those who are lost. What volunteers do for the uplifting of spirits of the prisoner is done in a way that man cannot do alone. When the Spirit of the Holy One dwells in the hearts of people, then great things begin to happen.

May God the Father bless all those called to minister in various ways, and empower them to bring Light and Love into the darkness of those now suffering.

*Lazslo Fehér*

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## YOUTH

### YOUTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

If you were able to attend this year's AGA in Quebec and attended the workshop regarding water issues which was presented by our Ontario youth, I am sure you would share my opinion regarding the interest, intelligence and talent these youth members have, especially related to issues of social justice. In fact three of these youth who took part in this workshop have been invited to join our national Social Justice committee as members of a youth panel. Our youth deserve and yearn to have a real voice in the future of our Society. We feel by being part of our national committee, we can demonstrate the high level of trust we have in their ability to not only do more but perhaps even teach us more senior members something.

Please encourage current youth members and potential members from your parish or schools to become active in the Society. Social justice can be a terrific recruitment tool in attracting more youth, even if it is only for a specific project. Please invite their participation as often as possible. Lil-

lian and Sophia, the Ontario Regional co-chairs for youth development, include a social justice component in all of their presentations. I'm sure they would be pleased to share this with your Conference.

*Jim Paddon, Chairperson  
Social Justice National  
Committee*

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR SSVP FOOD BANK AND OUR FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

The Food Bank at St. Theresa's Parish is an SSVP Food Bank.

We have an excellent relationship with all 12 Catholic Schools in Mill Woods which form the Family of Schools.

In September the schools make up a schedule in which each school is assigned a month to collect food for the SSVP Food Bank. Because the schools do not operate during July and August and there are 12 schools, some of the smaller schools team up in one month.

The food is brought to the church in brightly decorated boxes, all done by the students. Each school collects the food whichever way they want. Sometimes they have Stuff a Bus, mostly done by the high school. Other times, when it is warmer outside, they have a food train. The students line up and pass the food items hand to hand until it reaches the church. Or they have a Food Bank Challenge. Around Christmas they might also collect clothing and winter accessories.

Often, I get a phone call and have to rush to the church, because a school is dropping off ... food ... clothing ... toys ... whatever they collected. Mostly food!

In return, at the beginning of each year, I always make it known to the schools that no one should go hungry. Anytime that a student and family are in need, the school can request a

food hamper from the SSVP Food Bank for that family. I also give all schools the SSVP assistance number. Many families are new immigrants, struggling to make ends meet.

When asked, we do SSVP presentations at the schools. It is wonderful that the children are being taught about charity and that not everyone has as much as they do. They might not have much, but there is always someone who has less.

The relationship between our SSVP Food Bank and our Family of Schools is the best.

*Maria Lupul  
Past-President of St. Theresa's Conference  
President of Edmonton South Particular Council, Alberta*

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# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CIRCLE

The Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle is the name given to a coalition of Catholic institutions which came together in 2016 in response to an invitation to work with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in developing actions which respond to several recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The institutions are the CCCB, Development and Peace Canada, the Canadian Religious Conference, the Catholic Women's League of Canada, the Knights of Columbus Canada and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Canada.

The name for this group was chosen since our Lady first appeared to a Mexican Indigenous person in 1531 and Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron saint for North American Indigenous Peoples. In fact December 12th is her feast day and also our national day of prayer with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Mission Statement: Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle is a Catholic coalition of Indigenous Peoples, bishops, clergy, lay movements and institutes of consecrated life, engaged in renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. We have four purposes:

1. To provide a forum for its members to dialogue and encourage deeper understanding of the relationships between the Church and Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Spirituality in Canada.
2. To serve as a united Catholic public voice on relations and dialogue between the Church and Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Spirituality in Canada.
3. To assist Catholics in engagement with the truth and reconciliation process and its Calls to Action.
4. To carry out agreed upon initiatives and concrete actions.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle is motivated by the love of Christ, filled with great hope for the future and attentive to the Holy Spirit's action in our world, to the glory of our compassionate Creator and Father.

Dear fellow Vincentians: As a member of this group we have an important role as a lay Catholic organization through which we can work towards a true sharing partnership with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. We only need to look at the success of the North of 60 projects and the Cadotte Lake project with 1st Nations Peoples in Alberta. However, we cannot be satisfied or complacent with these on-going success stories. Instead let us continue to offer both charity and justice to our Indigenous sisters and brothers as evidenced in our good works. Our role as a member of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle provides us with the opportunity to demonstrate how our actions have and can be a way to build bridges between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples. There is also a great need for us to educate our own members about the truth and reconciliation process and the rich and very spiritual gifts Indigenous Peoples can give to us about our Creator. Please join us in this journey of sharing. Please read and enjoy the various articles in this section of Vincenpaul.

*Jim Paddon, Chairperson  
Social Justice National Committee*

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## SERVING THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE LIVING ALONG THE JAMES BAY COAST

It was with great anticipation that Gord and I left for Moosonee, Ontario on July 16th. After a five hour train ride from Cochrane we arrived at the church where many of our friends, the poor, were sitting on the church steps. They guided us to the priests' residence. Fr. Paul greeted us and brought us to the Bishop's home, where we stayed for four days. We were fortunate to have time to talk to Bishop Bob Bourgon and we concluded that St.Vincent de Paul would be well received. We had a meeting with Fr. Paul, Kelly Harris, Peter Nakogee and discussed what the community needs were and how we could address them.

Their needs are basic staples such as flour, sugar, tea, raisins, baking powder, oatmeal, pampers, pablum. They are in need of winter clothing, coats, hats, mitts, gloves and neck warmers, not scarves. School lunch supplies are an ongoing need. Hockey equipment would be greatly appreciated. Hydro costs are extremely high and are causing distress.

In Moosonee, we will have a large storage area at the Christ the King Cathedral.

Kelly and Fr. Paul had already discussed opening a soup kitchen and we could provide for a food bank to help with 10% of their population which would be about 300 people.

Fr. Paul will invite other members of this community to get involved and hopefully they would begin a conference where he would be the Spiritual Advisor.

There are five communities that could be served by SSVP; Moose Factory, Fort Albany, Attawapiskat, Kachechawan, and Peawanuck. The Bishop has a priest in Attawapiskat, and Fort Albany, he will contact them to confirm their involvement. We must also be in contact with the bands and elders

in each community to hopefully get their blessing. We did agree that our first project will offer all communities some help.

The Holy Spirit certainly guided us through this adventure. We met wonderful friends and felt His presence in each one of them. Gord and I took time to take a water taxi to Moose Factory to explore the community, visit the Polar Bear Habitat in Cochrane; we discovered a great part of our country.

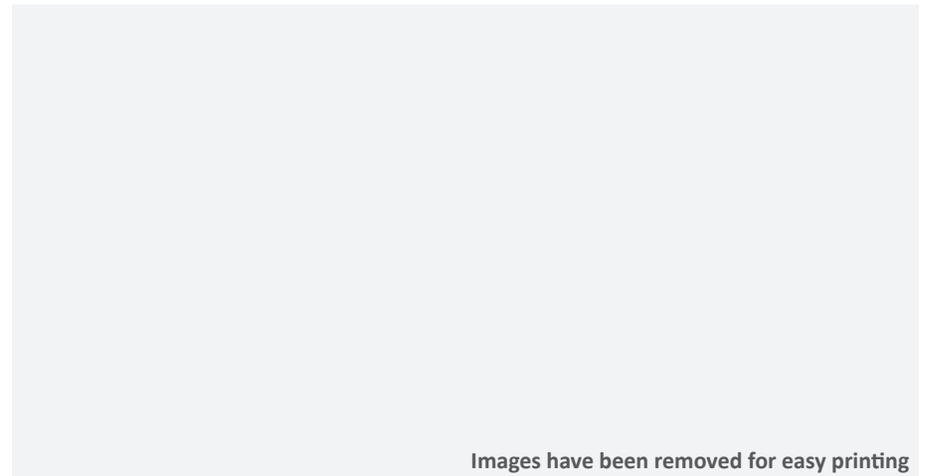
What a Blessing!

Conferences interested in serving Christ in the Poor, in the North, are invited to contact me, Gord or Peg Leroux.

Blessings,

*Gord and Michelle Jenkinson*  
*Rainbow Spirit North Particular Council*

[mhjenkinson@gmail.com](mailto:mhjenkinson@gmail.com)



# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## NORTH OF 60 - NUNAVUT

Brothers and Sisters,

A gentle spring was not to be had for Vincentians across Ontario – why?- because we made it ROAR!

Much sweat and effort, supported by love, justice and joy, was generated gathering food items, some household necessities, to fill sea containers heading to our brothers and sisters in Nunavut.

This summer's marine crossing saw two twenty foot containers filled by Ottawa Council/ Conferences for 40 families in Rankin Inlet; one twenty foot container filled by St Catharine's Central

**NUNAVUT IS  
OUR FURTHEST  
HOME VISIT.  
AS WITH ALL  
THE HOME  
VISITS WE DO,  
WE WILL DO  
OUR BEST TO  
HELP IN ALL  
POSSIBLE WAYS.**

Council/Conferences for 25 families in Naujaat; one twenty foot container filled by Windsor-Essex Central Council/ Conferences for 25 families in Gjoa Haven, leave the port in Montreal.

Two other northern communities received our help – Whale Cove and Toloyoak. Both of these communities were generously supported by much needed financial donations passed up by **you**, to ONRC North of 60 Project. Whale Cove was given an additional hug - St Raphael's Conference in Burlington gathered specific items for the community. This generosity helped generate 7 - 8 skids of food, shipped in wooden crates built by Arctic Consultants, our shipping company, for each community.

As Vincentians, we are learning daily of the hardships faced in the North. We under-

stand that what we send North offsets the food insecurities, but food falls within the job insecurities, plus the environmental changes to their fish cycles and size, and the herd size and seasonal passing.

For years, the Inuit People had been able to survive from the herds and fish but now that is impossible. Store bought food is needed!! However, the high costs exacerbated by the transportation costs, coupled with lack of job opportunities, makes any day stressful to our Inuit brother and sisters.

Nunavut has common problems we see in Ontario - drugs, drinking. In addition, like here, these are illnesses. It would be an easier battle to fight if the north had better access to trained workers to counsel. Like here it all just seems too slow but *as Vincentians*, we understand this and *as Vincentians*, we will support our brothers and sisters, **family**, until days begin on a firmer ground.

To end on a happier note...This year there is a new community needing our help - Kugaarik (Pelly Bay). This community sought help for 5 years and gave up!! When Father Bo explained his story, I promised him and the people of his community to have faith in our mission as Vincentians and to trust in our actions and energies. They will be part of our 2018 Summer Crossing

God Bless and Thank You for all that you do

*Pegg Leroux, Chairperson, North of 60 Project  
Ontario Regional Council*

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## 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.

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