

The Vincentimes

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Diversity is a Fact. Inclusion is an Act.

This is the theme of the ONRC systemic racism pilot project launching this month. As chair of our National Social Justice Committee, I raised the issue of systemic racism with our National President in 2020. He recommended our Social Justice Committee develop a report with possible actions for consideration by the National Council Board of Directors. The Social Justice Committee has added systemic racism as an agenda item for all monthly virtual meetings. We have invited guest speakers from racialized groups to join us as we seek to educate ourselves about systemic racism and how we can raise the awareness level of all members about the negative effect it has on racialized persons living in poverty.

As a member of the ONRC executive and the ONRC Social Justice Committee, I asked ONRC if we could develop a pilot project in Ontario that could be used as a base for a future national program. This idea was supported by the ONRC executive, and we have formed the ONRC Systemic Racism Working Group (SRWG). The SRWG consists of 10 members including Linda, ONRC President, and myself. The other members are from various racialized groups and bring a wide range of lived experiences combined with a dedication to our Vincentian mission and values.

The SRWG has met monthly as we worked towards the development of this pilot project for Ontario. The theme of diversity and inclusion is meant to describe the rich culture we all have as Canadians. Our diversity should be celebrated and embraced by everyone. While SSVP has always been there to help anyone in need, we do believe there is a greater strength that would come with having a better understanding of the cultural diversity we have in Canada and why SSVP would only become stronger with a more diversified membership. The inclusion of more racialized members in the SSVP would allow for more dialogue between members and our neighbours in need.

I invite all Vincentians to join us in this pilot project. Review the action plan [Diversity and Inclusion \(ssvp.on.ca\)](https://ssvp.on.ca) to see how you may help. Enjoy the articles in this newsletter from members of the working group. Use other resources available on our website found at the same link as above. Share your stories on Facebook.

*Jim Paddon, Chair
National Council Social Justice Committee*



Diversity is a Fact. Inclusion is an Act.

In today's society, **Diversity is now an acceptable Fact** in our everyday life and continues to evolve as more persons are now choosing to join and be included in the diversity journey. Diversity is defined as differences between people, that can include dimensions of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. Simply put, Diversity embodies acceptance, respect, and understanding that each individual is uniquely different.

Canada is one of the world's most diverse countries with immigrants representing almost 25% of the total Canadian population, highest proportion among G8 countries. Canada was the first country in the world to enact an official Multiculturalism Policy 1971. Multiculturalism preserves the cultural freedom of all individuals and provides recognition of cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to our Canadian society. Studies have shown that people's social connections form one of the primary predictors of personal well-being, and there exists evidence that fostering a rich and diverse social network contributes to one's health, success and happiness.

Living in such a diverse country with over 250 ethnic origins has provided the livable platform for us to truly practice Inclusion as an Act. While Diversity focuses on the traits and characteristics that make people unique, Inclusion emphasizes the behaviors and social norms that ensure people feel welcome. In 1984, the concept of inclusion was conceived with the declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly on the "International Bill of Rights" which recognises that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Researcher Peter Downs' seven pillars of inclusion includes:

- Access
- Attitude
- Choice
- Partnerships
- Communication
- Policy and
- Opportunities.



Diversity and Inclusion work hand-in-hand; **Diversity is a Fact, Inclusion is an Act.** The importance of Diversity is highlighted in the bedrock principle of our Catholic Social Teaching, *The Principle of Human Dignity*:

“Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family.”

The act of Inclusion in society is also echoed in *The Principle of Participation*:

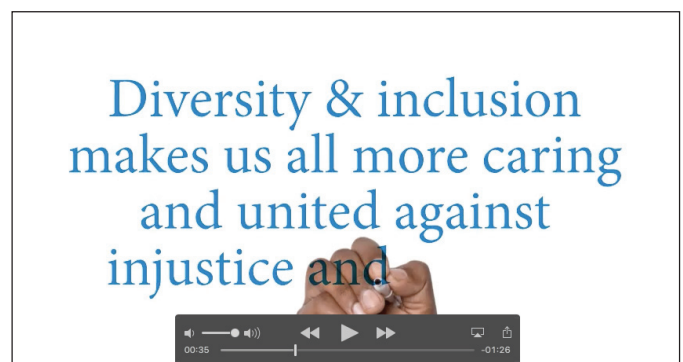
“We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.”

In closing, I encourage you to choose to join and be included in the diversity journey and promote our mantra, ‘**Diversity is a Fact, Inclusion is an Act**’.

Systemic Racism Working Group

Omar Ellis

St. Leonard's Conference, Brampton



Click here to enjoy our [Diversity and Inclusion](#) video on ONRC website.

Diversity Facts

Ontario is a large, dynamic province with wonderful diversity in our landscape, resources and people. Likewise, Ontario’s SSVP is a large and vibrant community united by our mission to serve persons in need. In addition to service through home visits, stores and special works, our mission includes helping to alleviate the root causes of poverty.

One underlying cause of poverty is systemic racism, which can create very real barriers for Indigenous and racialized people. Growing our awareness of this issue can help us be more sensitive to the unique challenges of the communities we live and serve in. Consider the following:

- According to the 2016 Canadian Census, visible minorities make up 29.3% of Ontario’s population, up from 25.9% five years earlier. In the Greater Toronto Area, there are over 3 million people who self-identify as visible minorities.
- The majority of visible minorities identify as South Asian (29.6%), Chinese (19.4%), Black (16.2%), Filipino (8%), Arab (5.4%) and Latin American (5%).
- Aboriginal peoples (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) make up nearly 3% of Ontario’s population, representing 22% of all Canadian Aboriginals.

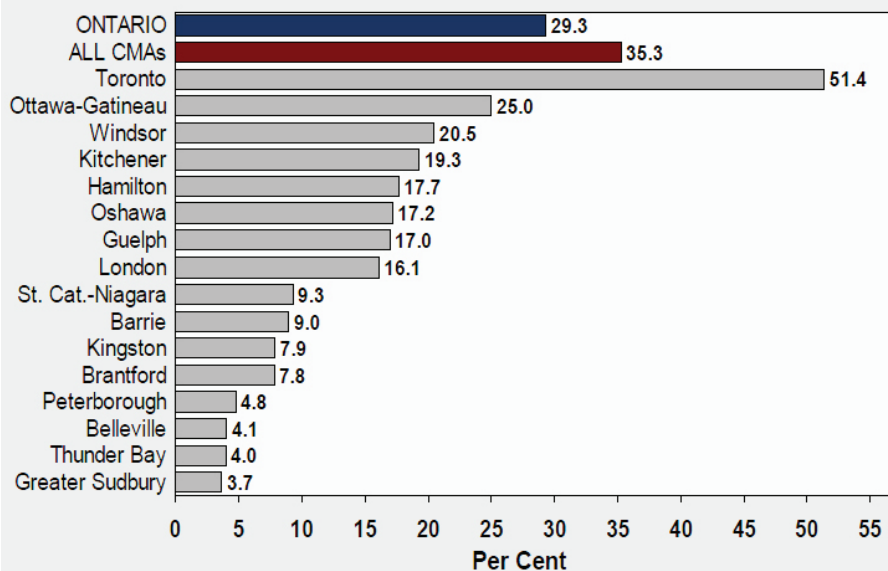
While immigration has historically fuelled our economy, data reveals a significant income divide. The 2016 Census showed 20.8% of people of colour are low income compared to 12.2% of non-racialized people across Canada. Discrimination means racialized people are less likely to get jobs when equally qualified and likely to have a lower income than non-racialized peers. Additionally, 47% of First Nations children live in poverty compared to 12% of non-Indigenous/non-racialized young Canadians (source: Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives).

Recently, reports from federal and provincial bodies, such as Public Health Ontario, point to the disproportionately high impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities. Causes are complex, but there’s general consensus they’re often rooted in social and structural inequities. Racialized people are overrepresented in essential workplaces, including food processing, grocery stores, long term care and other front-line service. Race also plays a role in how one interacts with all areas of healthcare, from awareness and screening, to diagnosis and treatment.

Taking time to build our knowledge of diversity and racism issues, and continuing to welcome volunteers with varied talents and experiences are two ways to help us better connect with those in need.

*Systemic Racism Working Group
Sonali Peterson, member
St Matthew Oakville Conference*

Proportion of Visible Minorities, Ontario CMAs, 2016



Note: Ottawa-Gatineau (Ontario part). Kitchener = Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo.
Source: Statistics Canada

CMA = Census Metropolitan Area

Theme the Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity

In 1926, African American historian Carter Woodson created Black History Month to heighten awareness of Black history in the United States. Decades later more countries recognized the event by issuing their own proclamations; similarly Canada in the early 1970s observed Black History week. Subsequently in 1995, the Government of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine.

Black History Month is necessary. It is a time for promoting the knowledge, culture and many contributions of Black Canadians. Oftentimes, the role of Black people in Canada has not always been prominently highlighted in Canada's celebrated history. For example, few Canadians know that black enslavement occurred in Canada, or of how those who fought for their freedom helped to build our diverse and inclusive society. Likewise, Black Canadians made significant contributions in the First and Second World Wars. The dedicated service of Black servicemen was exemplary and is remembered and celebrated as a cornerstone of the proud tradition of Black military service in our country.

Black women also contributed to the war effort by serving in supporting roles so that more men were available for the front lines. Despite a past history that saw Black people bought and sold into slavery and continuing fights against racism, Black Canadians remain strong. Meaningful contributions and accomplishments of Canada's black community continue to influence every aspect of Canadian life, history and culture.

Black History can and should be celebrated every day through the pursuit of knowledge. ¹Therefore, let's celebrate this 6th year of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent.

Did you know...

- Mathieu Da Costa: Navigator and Interpreter, First Black person to arrive in Canada 1600
- Anderson Ruffin Abbott: First Black Canadian doctor in Canada 1837
- Elijah McCoy: Canadian-American inventor and engineer 1843
- William Peyton Hubbard: Canadian politician 1894
- Mary Ann Shadd: First Woman Publisher in North America 1853
- Josiah Henson: Established the Dawn Settlement near Dresden 1841
- Lincoln Alexander: Lieutenant Governor of Ontario 1985
- Michaëlle Jean: Governor General of Canada 2005

Worth Reading:

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

In 1951, Henrietta Lacks's cancer cells led to major discoveries in medical research.²

Systemic Racism Working Group
Valerie Alexander, Member
St. Mary Conference, Tillsonburg

1. <https://en.unesco.org/internationaldecadeforpeopleofafricandescent>

2. African-American woman whose cancer cells are the source of the HeLa cell line

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2021

**SOCIETY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
ONTARIO REGIONAL
COUNCIL**



**Visit us on the web
www.ssvp.on.ca**

Email: info@ssvp.on.ca

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

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.

Notice of Passings

*We would like to recognize and remember the following Vincentians who have passed.
They blessed so many with their lives.*

October 5, 2020 - Oliver Turley, Holy Rosary Conference, Milton
 November 16, 2020 - Rita Barrette, St. John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg
 December 16, 2020 - John Staley, St. Anne Conference, Tecumseh
 December 19, 2020 - Jack Springstead, St. John the Baptist Conference, Hamilton
 January 6, 2021 - Roger Garant, Sacred Heart Conference, LaSalle
 January 16, 2021 - Lynda Cote of St. John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg
 January 20, 2021 - Elizabeth (Betty) Barron, St. Basil Conference, Brantford
 January 29, 2021 - Steve Chappo, Holy Name of Jesus Conference, Essex

Upcoming Dates

February 24, 2021 - National Council webinar [“Les quatre piliers de l’engagement” presented by Denise Ouellette \(French session\)](#)
 February 27, 2021 - National Council webinar [“The Four Pillars of Engagement” presented by Denise Ouellette \(English session\)](#)
 March 13, 2021 - ONRC webinar [“Sharing what has worked with Vincentian Presidents and their colleagues” presented by Pat Lenz and Kristine Paul, Brant Particular Council](#)
 April 10, 2021 - ONRC meeting
 April 24, 2021 - Zoom meeting with guest speaker, Leroy Hibbert, speaking on Diversity and Inclusion