

**The Social & Eco Justice Committee
2021-2022 Annual Report**

(submitted by Yvonne Hsien on behalf of Linda Leone, Chair)

In the fall of 2021, Linda Leone became the committee Chair and the 10 members of the SEJC welcomed 3 parishioners from St. Patrick's onto the team. We met nine times (via zoom or in person) between July 2021 and June 2022. A social event was also held in August 2021.

Reconciliation

We had announced in our 2020-2021 report that our focus this year would be on reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Between June 27 and December 26, 2021, a “**Reconciliation Corner**” appeared in our weekly parish bulletin. Each notice invited parishioners to watch a video or a film, read an article or a book, attend an exhibit, enroll in a course – to learn more about Indigenous history and cultures. All of these notices can be [read again](#) on the SEJC webpage. Several faith groups belonging to GVAT (Greater Victoria Acting Together) asked permission to use these notices at their parishes.

In September 2021, a **special Indigenous Collection** (books by Indigenous authors and/or on Indigenous issues) started circulating in the church foyer. We thank our parish librarian, George Murphy, for his help in setting up this collection. On **Orange Shirt Day** (September 30), other parishioners wearing orange shirts joined members of the SEJC at the 9 am mass, to commemorate the victims of Indian residential schools.

Renewal of Parish Gardens

Under the leadership of our new Garden Coordinator, John Seale, members of the SEJC have worked side by side with other parishioners to gradually transform our gardens into a more native-plant, drought-resistant, low-maintenance and pollinator-friendly green space. A donation was made **in memory of Clive Loader** (who tended the parish gardens for 17 years) to defray some of the costs of this project.

Tenant Starter Kit for Cool Aid

Before the pandemic, the SEJC would organize parishioners to go serve breakfast at Our Place twice a year. Since Covid 19 restrictions made this impossible, we decided instead to assemble a Tenant Starter Kit for a person moving into supportive housing operated by Cool Aid. Parishioners responded generously to our appeal for donations in October 2021: it took little time to check off all the required items.

Write for Rights

In keeping with our annual tradition, an in-person Write for Rights session was again held at Holy Cross on Dec. 12, 2021, as part of an international letter-writing campaign organized by Amnesty International in defense of human rights around the world. This time, a parallel session also took place at St. Patrick's. In total, 24 participants wrote 61 letters!

GVAT (Greater Victoria Acting Together)

The SEJC also serves as the GVAT core team at Holy Cross. GVAT actions and campaigns are too numerous to mention in this report, but generally speaking, its advocacy work has involved the prevention of adult and youth homelessness, increasing the supply of affordable housing, protection of tenants from renovations and demovictions, conservation of old-growth forests, improvement of public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, increasing local food production, formation of better mental health crisis response units, and easier access to mental health and addictions services for both children and adults. Holy Cross and St. Patrick's parishioners have been asked to participate in various letter-writing campaigns in the past. One involved writing in support of the re-zoning application submitted to the city of Victoria for the construction of a new Anawim House for Women (Feb. 2021).

Two notable GVAT events held at Holy Cross:

On Feb. 26, a mini-workshop (**A Roof for Everyone**) on the housing crisis in Saanich was jointly organized by Holy Cross, St. Patrick's, Broad View United, and First Unitarian Churches, and held in person at Holy Cross. 34 participants came to hear the invited speaker, Saanich Councillor Zac de Vries, and discuss how to make our communities a more diverse and inclusive space. Read this [blog](#) to learn more about the workshop.

On March 28, members of the SEJC attended a virtual **Climate Conversation** session, led by GVAT Climate Justice Action Research Team Co-Lead Jane Welton. Everyone left the meeting feeling more informed and hopeful, and resolved to do their part in saving humanity's common home. Read this [blog](#) to learn more about the event.

To learn more about GVAT campaigns and successes, go to its website: www.gvat.ca. **Please consider donating to this organization** to support its work, which aligns so well with Catholic teachings on social and ecological justice.

Sharing our experience with the new SEJC at Our Lady of the Rosary:

A new SEJC has just been formed at OLOR parish. We are sharing our experience with them, and wishing them great success in their endeavour.

We express our deep gratitude to Fr. William and all parishioners for their support throughout the year.