



Nova Scotia Provincial Council Community Life 2019 Annual Report

Submitted by Catherine Gonsalves, Community Life Chairperson, NS Provincial Council

It was great to see an increment in the receipt of annual reports from parish councils and also to note that most of them had chairpersons. The annual reports reflected engagement in the community life work in many areas.

Dignity and Rights of Persons

Most members understand the need to support the most vulnerable and marginalized in our society and hence they volunteer and provide financial support. Many councils are aware of the concerns and struggles of Indigenous women. However, a few councils have educated their members by holding workshops or inviting native women to be guest speakers at their workshops. Several councils have discussed Bill C-262 which is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous women. The Antigonish Diocesan Council used the Kairos blanket exercise to help members explore the historical national relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada. However, to overcome this lack of knowledge and/or contact with our native people, we need to be proactive and invite indigenous representatives from the area for their views and perspective. Possibly, this can be done through a Diocesan Workshop.

Most councils made themselves cognizant with the laws pertaining to dealing with Human Trafficking and have shared this information with their council members. The article, "The Dignity and Rights of Persons: Human Trafficking in Canada" which was published in the Fall 2019 edition of the League Magazine was discussed at council monthly meetings. Some councils are interested in providing more information through a presentation with the R.C.M.P. Constable responsible for Human Trafficking.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

The councils are aware of the needs for immigrants and refugees in their community and welcomed and supported these new members. A few councils showed support for immigrants by attending citizenship ceremonies and also assisting these new members to assimilate into the Canadian way of life. They are aware of the difference between temporary, foreign worker, immigrant and refugee.

Social and Economic Justice

All councils are strongly engaged in this area of community life. They provide financial and material support and volunteer hours at homeless and domestic abuse shelters, food banks, soup kitchen, clothing drive for adults and children, youth programs, employment and skill training, anti-poverty campaign, parent resource and drop in centers, visiting the sick, providing lunch and entertainment in nursing homes and in church halls, hosting tea for widows and widowers in parish community, etc. Some councils celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day which is on June 21 by attending a powwow in their community. I think in order to learn more about the indigenous people in our country, let us not miss the opportunity to be a part of their June 21 celebrations. Let councils mark this date on their June agenda. Financial support was provided to assist indigenous people through the Catholic Missions in Canada who play a great role in their lives and community. Financial support is also provided for CNEWA projects but more councils need to be encouraged to come on board specially with National Council encouraging financial support for building/restoration of a well in Kerala, India through the Pieta Bhavan project. A low percentage of councils participated in seminars relating to Social and Economic Justice.

Remembrance Day Services

There was full participation by councils on Remembrance Day and also great support for the Royal Canadian Legion poppy campaign. However, there was a slight improvement among members who offer support to our men and women on active duty throughout the world by wearing a red garment on Fridays.

Support for Developing Countries

Despite a limited participation, the report indicated a positive commitment in the right direction with reference to awareness of child labor conditions, trade laws and practices in global economy. Most councils are aware of the economic difficulties in developing countries and urged the government to change structures that put profits before people. They support many organizations in developing countries, the most prominent being Chalice. In order to create awareness, a few councils took the initiatives to invite guest speakers to share their stories from developing countries. Many councils offer support to Samaritans Purse, Canadian Red Cross, Operation Christmas Child, Save a Family to name a few. It was great to note that one council made over 400 dresses for Africa and also supported Grandmothers for Grandmothers in Africa. Some signed sheets for Water Pledge (Care for our Common Home). Many sponsored breakfast programs, food banks, hamper programs, women's shelter under the HUG program.

Even though some areas did not get the attention it should have because of time, I acknowledge with pride the wonderful work done by our members at the parish and diocesan council levels. The report reflects the inordinate amount of caring and sharing by the League members. There is always room for improvement and setting of new goals for the future but let this not deflect all the marvelous work achieved.