

MANDATE

POVERTY AWARENESS WORKING GROUP

Revised Apr.17/16 (final)

Overview

The Poverty Awareness Working Group brings attention to the economically marginalized members of our community who are struggling in a variety of situations. It enhances the awareness within the Congregation about, and takes or promotes action on a wide range of anti-poverty and affordable housing issues, including issues associated with indigenous peoples in Canada. We do this in furtherance of our commitment to affirm and promote the Unitarian-Universalist principles of:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person; and
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

More Specific Mandates

The Poverty Awareness Working Group:

1. Educates our congregants on the nature of and issues related to poverty and to indigenous peoples, especially the importance of :
 - (a) safe, secure, accessible, affordable housing, including social and supportive housing;
 - (b) ensuring a reliable, adequate income for all;
 - (c) learning about the history and cultures of Canada's indigenous peoples and the devastating impact of colonialism;
 - (d) understanding the nature of stigma and discrimination and addressing these.
2. Supports and furthers the mission of the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI), which provides affordable home space, encourages harmonious relations amongst tenants of diverse backgrounds and mobilizes the resources of faith communities and others for these purposes. We do this at First Unitarian and within the community, through activities such as educational events, fundraising, and volunteer support of MHI residents and the MHI Board and its Committees.
3. Supports and furthers the mission of local organizations that support the basic needs, and furthers the general support, of Ottawa's indigenous peoples, such as:
 - (a) Oshki Kisis (Algonkian for “New Beginnings”), the first-stage shelter operated by Minwaashin Aboriginal Women's Support Centre – e.g., our Shelter Project collects and provides household and personal goods and furnishings for women moving to housing from the shelter;
 - (b) Shewnejeagamik (Centre 510), the day program of the Odawa Native Friendship Centre for homeless and marginally housed indigenous people¹ – e.g., we solicit donations to provide food for the meal program and encourage Congregants to volunteer (assist with serving, clean-up and befriending, when appropriate).

¹ Centre 510 provides 2 meals on weekdays, provides access to computers, shower and phone and offers various counselling and referral services and cultural and other Odawa programs, including legal and housing support. Our volunteers serve meals, do dishes and clean, and when welcomed engage with the people who use Centre 510.

4. In partnership with the Global Justice Working Group, supports and furthers the mission of local organizations that support economically [and socially?] disadvantaged students to graduate, such as:
 - (a) Pathways to Education (at Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre) – identifying and encouraging tutors and mentors from the Congregation; providing funding for summer camp; and
 - (b) Students Will All Graduate (at Carlington Community Health Centre) – providing funding for summer leadership training.
5. Considers on an ongoing basis what other organizations require financial or other support to promote these concerns and the extent to which First Unitarian might support these.
6. Provides a home and sounding board for the Site Stewardship Initiative, which seeks to focus congregational attention on good Samaritan opportunities to provide affordable and supportive housing on the tax-free land the Congregation holds or is able to acquire.
7. Champions a compassionate society free from inequities, stigma and discriminatory practices that exclude the poor, particularly those who are indigenous or people of colour by:
 - (a) Partnering with other UU congregations and other faith groups committed to similar goals;
 - (b) Learning from and collaborating with other civil society organizations and individuals committed to similar goals;
 - (c) Sharing the Congregation's Unitarian views on these issues, especially housing needs, with