



Greater Victoria Acting Together

Annual Report 2020

Organizing for the Common Good

Organizing on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen and WSÁN EĆ peoples.

An alliance of diverse organizations

We are a powerful alliance of unions, education, conservation, faith, and front line service organizations. We are an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, drawing upon a proud history of victories won for working people and the common good. Our organizations are made up of proactive, everyday people dedicated to working together to tackle our community's most urgent issues. In a difficult time, GVAT invests in human relationships and gathers the strength we need to fight for our shared values.

“An individual can resist injustice, but it takes a community to do justice.”

GVAT builds relationships between people and organizations to take on challenges too big for any one of us to solve alone. Our alliance offers an antidote to polarization, isolation, fear, and feelings of helplessness in the face of problems like homelessness, a broken mental health care system, the opioid epidemic, and climate change. GVAT is a practical way to stand together and fight back.



We persevere and believe in each other. We are Greater Victoria Acting Together!

Highlights of 2020

Our Action Research Teams (ARTS) launched campaigns on ending homelessness, affordable housing for everyone, improving mental health care, and protecting old growth forests and the carbon they sequester!

“This is a safe space, but please don’t confuse safe with comfortable.”

Suzanne Karhiio, Indigenous Organizer, in the IAFNW “Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization Workshop”

“Anti-racism is learning to sit with feelings of discomfort.”

Rev. Melora Lyngood, First Unitarian Church of Victoria



“I sat in a room on a sunny spring Saturday with members and organizations from all walks of life. In many ways, we are so very different from each other and yet we discovered the ways in which we are united. We listened to each other respectfully and really connected in a deeply personal way. Tears and laughter abounded.”

Cortney Baldwin, UVIC Graduate Students’ Society



COVID Hit Hard, but GVAT Rose to the Challenge

In March we held a Delegates Assembly, just before the pandemic arrived. When COVID hit, we moved our meetings to Zoom and launched new efforts to support our communities. We called for:

- A moratorium on evictions (and we got it).
- Cancellation of basic utilities payments for low and middle income people (we got some of it)
- Subsidized childcare for healthcare workers and support staff.
- As COVID continues, we will keep up the fight!

In the fall, our Climate team launched its first campaign: working in solidarity with Indigenous communities to protect BC's last remaining old growth forests and the carbon they hold.



We're fighting for increased access to good mental health and addictions care, including:

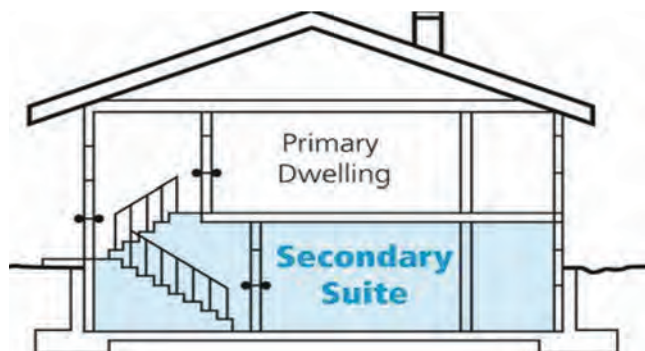
- Partnering with BIPOC organizations to campaign for alternative crisis response teams to ensure better outcomes for those who need help.
- Expanded peer counseling and peer counselor job training.

In the midst of a pandemic, GVAT members stood up for the right to adequate housing for everyone

GVAT letters poured into Victoria city council offices in support of a resolution calling for the BC Government to find emergency housing for everyone experiencing homelessness and develop a long-term plan for permanent supportive housing. The resolution passed unanimously!

“We begin to see that respect, dignity, honesty, kindness and generosity are not empty catchphrases but real ideals to aspire to when dealing with others. By initiating this process, I have developed a profound understanding and grasp of shared values and concerns in common with my faith community. What a privilege and gift this has been!”

Susan Layng, First Unitarian Church



We fought for municipal policies that support housing for students and working people, like legal garden suites in Saanich and secondary suites in Oak Bay.



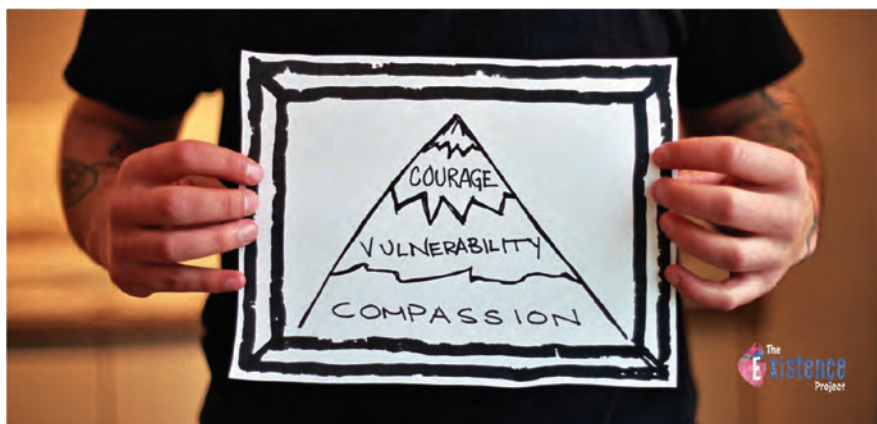
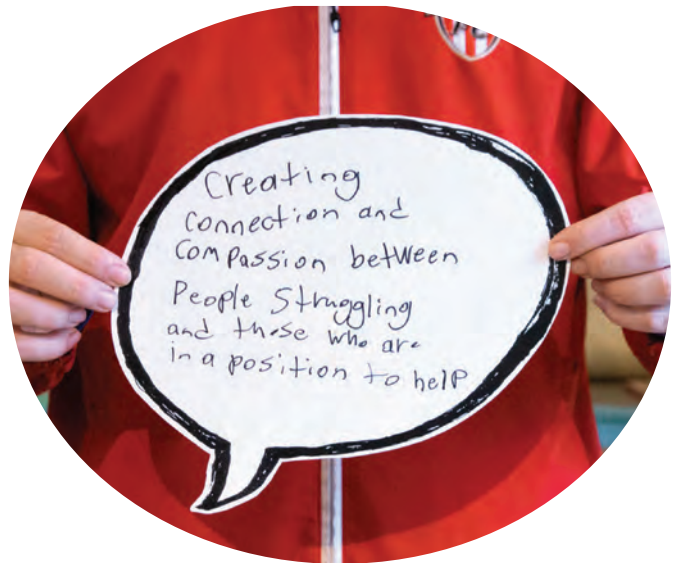
GVAT making big impacts in the community



In summer, in support of GVAT member UNITE HERE 40, we won the inclusion of job recall rights as a condition for any economic stimulus help for the hospitality industry, protecting vulnerable BC hospitality workers.

We are partnering with organizations representing Black, Indigenous, People of Colour and those experiencing homelessness to campaign for alternative crisis response teams to ensure better outcomes for those who need help.

Our Mental Health & Addictions Action Research Team is working for expanded peer counseling and peer counselor job training.



GVAT understands the incredible power of civic organizations when harnessed for the common good.

As broader society has become increasingly isolated and polarized, it is more important than ever that we seek ways to work together, to support each other and find lasting solutions to the daunting challenges we face. GVAT equips our members and allies with the tools to lead and build collective power for positive change. Working through civic organizations invites us to be in relationship with people outside our usual circles. These broader networks then allow us to learn about community issues from different perspectives and act strategically together to address them. When we win together, we gain new confidence, energy, and power to transform our cities and the lives we live in them!



“We are not looking for charity, we are not looking for hand outs. We are looking for justice and we are looking for goodness...none of us is free until we are all free. None of us is really going to flourish until we all flourish. Each GVAT member group comes with its unique talent, its unique world views, unique ways to solve these problems...”

Rabbi Harry Brechner

“I am proud that the BCGEU has committed to working with GVAT, because our union is just one part of the broader society. It is by working together with other groups that we build strength and solidarity within our communities.”

Doug Kinna, Executive Vice President BCGEU



Make your organization a member.

Collaborate

Strengthen and revitalize your organization through focused listening, intentional relationship building, and leadership training. Join a rising alliance of diverse organizations committed to staying together and staying in the fight for a greener, more inclusive, and more just future.

Learn

GVAT members receive access to a wide range of Community Organizing trainings, from building your organization's core team and cultivating new leaders to "Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization," our newest training developed and led by Indigenous leaders to help us reckon with our settler heritage and find a just and more equitable path to walk together into the future. If you can't build what you can't imagine, we invite you to stretch your imagination and learn the skills for effective civic engagement and personal growth.

ACT

Let's rise together to hold corporate and government decision makers accountable. Let's rise and live out our shared values by taking on the toughest issues facing our neighborhoods, our cities, and our nation.

