



Employment and
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Canada

Canada's Volunteer Awards

CELEBRATING CANADIANS
WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

INSPIRING OTHERS

Developing and Engaging Your Organization's Volunteers
Managing Your Internal Operations
Serving Your Clients – Models for Program Delivery

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CANADA'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Inspiring Others

The 2016 Awards in Context

Canada's Volunteer Awards recognize the significant efforts and contributions of individuals, businesses and not-for-profits from across the country; encourage partnerships across sectors; and highlight the exemplary practices of people who give their time generously and find new ways of making a difference.

There have been 67 award recipients since the first ceremony was held in 2012. Coming from all walks of life, award recipients bring passion, life experience, and skills to their volunteer work. They generously give their time without seeking credit or always knowing the extent to which their work has affected others. Instead, they are guided by a passion for making a difference and a commitment to improving the lives of others.

The Purpose of this Guide

Each year the Exemplary Practices Session is held in conjunction with the Awards ceremony. Here, recipients share their knowledge, experience, and ideas about how to engage and inspire others to contribute in their community. This dialogue takes place in the context of select themes that change annually.

On June 8, 2016, Award recipients, their supporters, and stakeholder representatives with a perspective on youth, gathered to discuss their experiences and best practices in the areas of intergenerational volunteering and the use of technology in volunteering.

The dialogue was passionate as participants contributed their thoughts and ideas from their own experiences. What follows are the highlights of that dialogue.

The contributions of the Exemplary Practices Session participants are intended to guide people looking to enhance the impact of their volunteer activities through intergenerational practices and the use of technology.

“As volunteers, we plant a seed or we drop a stone in the middle of a pond, and through our passion, it grows... it's a ripple effect.”

*– Marilyn Lenzen,
Community Leader Recipient*

“I decided to volunteer because I thought, ‘if I can help just one person, it would be a way to give back to those who have given me so much hope.’”

*– Linda Ryan,
Community Leader Recipient*

Intergenerational Volunteering

Intergenerational volunteering refers to individuals from various age groups working together towards a common end—sharing personal experiences and strengthening the community as a whole.

Integrating the needs of different generations or blending generations together in a volunteer program can be challenging. However, done well, it can be rewarding and yield significant benefits for volunteers and the host organization.

The character of each generation is different, based on life experiences and expectations for the future. Some differences include: level of familiarity with technology; expected level of timely feedback and recognition of their work; and expectations for advancement—either the speed at which they believe they are ready and hope to advance and take on more responsibility, or whether they expect or want to advance at all.

Despite these differences, there are a variety of similarities across generations, such as: valuing work-life balance, desiring to be challenged in the work, wanting to be involved in decision-making, valuing teamwork, and seeking out opportunities for learning and development.

By exploring these generational similarities and differences, organizations and individuals can develop successful strategies for intergenerational volunteering.

Participants of the 2016 Exemplary Practices Session shared their own views on what they saw as important considerations when contemplating intergenerational volunteering experiences.

CONSIDER THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHICS. Session participants said that different demographics have different ways of understanding; including different ways of understanding how to care for others.

The discussion on psychological development considerations highlighted that organizations cannot talk to volunteers of different generations in the same way, hoping that they will understand. They have to be willing to experiment with a variety of ways of engaging and talking with different age groups, and adapting existing approaches to the special considerations of each person.

As an example, when discussing fundraising for his volunteer project, 2016 *Emerging Leader* recipient, Ryan Hreljac, recounted that, at the age of six, he did not understand the abstract concept of how far it was for someone to walk five kilometers to get water. But, he could understand that everyone should have access to clean drinking water. Knowing that there were people who didn't have the same access to essential resources as he did motivated him to raise money.

This example highlights the importance of finding creative and concrete ways to convey information to children, so that it is easier for young minds to grasp.

LOOK AT PEOPLE'S LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES AND NOT JUST THEIR AGE GROUP. Different things motivate different generations because of where they are or what they are doing in life. For example, some people choose to volunteer in order to apply the skills they already have, while others want to develop new skills or meet new people.

Recipients used the example of those of any age transitioning to college, university or a job. For them, volunteering is useful for post-secondary and employment applications. It also provides networking opportunities.

From an engagement point-of-view, having an intergenerational team can also be helpful, since each demographic can relate to its peers. There is a need to speak a common language and to be able to communicate the benefits of volunteering from the perspective of what is of value to that particular demographic.

Recipients were quick to say, however, that regardless of life circumstance, some things stay the same: the desire to do something good.

CONSIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT. Some volunteers, of certain age groups, prefer to work alone, while others may prefer to work in groups or with their peers. For example, teenagers prefer to work with their peers. This should be considered when an organization is recruiting and trying to retain young volunteers.

Exploring the possibility of having families and friends volunteer together is also a consideration for increasing engagement. Recipients spoke to a unique aspect of volunteering happening in churches, where all members of the family volunteer a great deal. Sometimes they are doing the same thing, sometimes they are contributing in their own areas of interest.

“One of the [Indigenous] artists who created one of the suites at the [social enterprise] hotel [that I was working on], thanked me and said that when he walks into the suite... he realizes that his life finally has meaning.”

*– Jon Zwickel,
InnVentures Hospitality,
Business Leader Recipient*

“At the dedication ceremony, I had the opportunity to pass over the house keys to a young lady with a family of three, and I knew it really made a difference in her life.”

*– Jon Walker,
Exit Realty, Business Leader Recipient*

FOCUS ON LEVEL OF COMMITMENT AND DIVERSITY OF OPPORTUNITY.

People who choose to pursue bringing together different generations of volunteers need to also consider the level of commitment different generations can give. Some can only commit sporadically or for the short-term, while others can commit for longer, more sustained timeframes. This requires flexibility and an appreciation for what people have to offer as volunteers, rather than only focusing on what the organization wants from them.

Participants emphasized that it is possible to involve volunteers for short-term projects, such as creating a video (high school student) or providing legal advice (young new lawyer). There is not just one way to volunteer—in conventional ways or for long periods of time.

MAKE IT EASIER FOR POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS OF ALL AGES TO PARTICIPATE.

It is also important to be aware of why people of different age groups disengage. It's not usually because they are disinterested or don't want to contribute. Volunteers, whether they are young, middle-aged or seniors, juggle competing priorities. It is possible that they have other time commitments, their own financial constraints, cannot drive or that they cannot afford transportation.

Having an intergenerational volunteer force can help find creative ways to reduce people's barriers to participating by leveraging the strengths and resources that each demographic brings to the team.

“The thing I’m probably most proud of is the friendships that I’ve made.”

*– Don Wall,
Community Leader Recipient*

HELP PEOPLE SEE AND HEAR ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING.

A lot of volunteering takes place behind the scenes, so people do not get a sense of the impact they might be making.

Participants emphasized the value of intergenerational volunteering to engagement efforts by bringing younger and older people together so that veteran volunteers can speak to youth about their experience and contributions, and encourage them to continue to be involved.

LET PEOPLE GET INVOLVED AND BE HEARD.

Volunteers want to feel that they are contributing to an organization, a community or an effort, yet sometimes feel that they are given menial rather than meaningful tasks, or that their voices are not being heard. Being appreciated and knowing diverse perspectives are authentically considered is encouraging for all volunteers—regardless of age.

“I’m most proud of the fact that we have a team of very passionate volunteers across Canada talking about the issues of domestic violence.”

*– Shanan Spencer Brown,
Royal LePage Shelter Foundation,
Business Leader Recipient*

When considering the governance structure of organizations, it is rare to see young board members. Some at the Session suggested that we ask the question: “from an intergenerational perspective, when we look at our organization’s structural balance, is it including the voices and views of all generations, and what might be different if it were more inclusive?”

There was a view that while we should consider the power dynamics in our organizations in terms of age, we should also consider volunteers in terms of broader demographics, such as gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation, to see if different groups are represented in different activities.

Using Technology in volunteering

Technology has become such an integrated part of the daily lives of Canadians that most of us hardly notice it. However, the significant impact that it has had on innovation and the way we live and work is undeniable. The voluntary sector is not immune to this phenomenon.

As with other sectors, technology and innovation are central to productivity and growth in volunteerism. Innovation represents technological advancement and creative ideas that lead to new processes, systems and methods of work. Technology contributes to innovative advancements as well as supports them by providing greater efficiency and increased capacity.

New technologies bring new skills and ways of thinking, which can then be used when volunteering. Technology allows us to gather data more easily, rapidly and in more ways than ever, providing new opportunities to use information.

Organisations, businesses, and volunteers often also use adaptive and emerging technologies to grow their capacities and potential as well as promote greater community integration and outreach.

Participants of the 2016 Exemplary Practices Session shared their views on how technology continues to impact the practice of volunteering, as well as how volunteer organisations are using it.

REVERSE MENTORING. Participants shared their experience on how they have seen a flip of the traditional role of older experienced volunteers mentoring younger volunteers. They explained that when dealing with new technology, this scenario is reversed. Youth can often explain how technology works. The advantage to this reversal is that it creates technology prowess in your organization.

DIVERSITY AND BALANCE ARE KEY. Discussions around the use of communications technologies to connect and engage others raised a couple of considerations.

First, all agreed that it is important to not get caught up in the technology boom. While smart integration of technology into volunteer strategies and operations is beneficial when done properly, an organization cannot rely solely on new technology.

Not everyone can or is willing to respond or engage this way. Some people do not have access to smart phones, computers, etc. or they use traditional methods like 1-800 numbers. For them, this underscores the importance of being heard. On the other hand, others may not want to communicate orally and some would rather send an email.

A second consideration is reach and appropriateness. Not all communication technologies are the same. Those who seek to enhance the impact of their volunteer activities through the use of technology need to get to know their different audiences and the most appropriate way to get their message across.

Several Session participants argued that it is important to not only have an online presence, but that the traditional ways of communicating and engaging have a substantial impact as well.

If we want to bring awareness to our initiative or organization, new media is the way to go. If we are looking to have people donate something or their time, then we may need to use a different approach to reach people.

Ryan Hreljac, founder of Ryan's Well, claimed that, from his perspective, "the best way to reach everyone is to have an e-blast as well as a mail out." He said that his organization "hears more from their mail out than from their Twitter and Facebook accounts."

USE IT TO CONNECT. Jean-Marie de Koninck, *Thérèse-Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award* recipient emphasized that his organization is currently developing an application that allows people to apply for various volunteer positions once they have obtained a criminal record check. He highlighted a number of benefits to this application: the volunteer gets a real-time notification when a volunteer position is available, the organization can fill positions quickly, and different organizations as well as volunteers can benefit from a single background check rather than continuously having to pay for them.

"I'm inspired when anybody can employ an entrepreneurial mindset..."

*— Victoria Lennox,
Community Leader Recipient*

EDUCATION IS CRITICAL. It is important to be clear on how different social media platforms are intended to be used. It was clear to younger participants when they stated that Twitter and Facebook cannot be used effectively in the same way. Whereas Facebook is a tool that allows organizations and individuals to gather people with deeper social interests—known as Friends—Twitter-users follow individuals in order to ascertain immediate status updates. Facebook is excellent for disseminating information that is more permanent and creating events; Twitter is better suited to spreading information or updates quickly.

Social media is an effective tool and we need to engage the right people who know how to use it to its full potential. As this field of communication continues to grow, social media is a great space in which people with these skills and insights can volunteer.

Organizations also need to match their needs with volunteers' as well as clients' and customers' comfort levels and skills. Lisa Browne, from Stella's Circle, shared that texting to make a donation was a new concept for her organization. People did not understand how it worked and the organization had to educate people.

Youth-centric organisations at the Session also shared some of their own expertise related to the use of social media. They stated that live tweeting is great, as it makes an organization's events more accessible to those who cannot attend. Groups who use this method tend to have higher levels of engagement.

Marketing professionals have found that consumer-oriented websites that have diverse visual content—including video—provide the best return on investment. Among other reasons for this, they cite the desire for consumers to be educated before making decisions on products and services, the way people process information as they learn about products and services, and the ability to easily follow-up with additional learning after their purchase.

It is therefore possible that volunteer organisations that incorporate video and other visual attributes into their webpages may be more effective in promoting their ideas, initiatives and successes, as well as communicating the benefits of volunteering.

That being said, while visual learners may be in the majority, there are many others who still prefer text. It is therefore important not to leave out the rest. Consider accompanying video with text on screen or in PDF format.

CONSIDER TECHNOLOGY AS A SPECTRUM. Some recipients suggested that we should not limit the types of technology used or how it is used. "It is important not to get locked into the idea that technology is only Twitter and Facebook."

Useful technology not only includes social media, but PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheets, word processing, videos, microphones, telephones and projectors, as well.

Chris Holt, Executive Director of Vancouver Island Providence Farm, says that the organization thinks of technology as a continuum. “Technology on a farm includes shovels, spinning machine, all the way to computers.” Different people engage with different forms of technology in different ways.

We need to train and educate people on how to use technology, no matter what kind it is.

ANALYSE AND ADJUST.

Technology allows us to learn more about those we are connecting with than ever before. In particular, outward-facing applications and social media sites allow us to look into how they are being used and analyse the data. With this information we can see how many people have seen our post, visited our site, or clicked our links. We need to get better at using this information to modify our strategies to target different groups of people, including potential volunteers.

“What inspired me most to volunteer... they really helped me come a long way, and I just want to give back to them.”

*– Jessica Coriat,
Community Leader Recipient*

Conclusion

The contributions presented in this guide are intended to serve as guidance to those who seek to enhance the impact of their volunteer activities through the integration of intergenerational practices and the use of technology.

The perspectives shared by participants of the Exemplary Practices Session offer a number of practical considerations. While both present unique challenges, each also has the potential to bring outstanding opportunities. Done well, their integration into the volunteer experience can yield significant benefits.

The determination and purpose that award recipients have exhibited, and the impact they have had, are exemplary in their own right. We thank them for giving their time, creativity, inspiration and experience for the benefit of others by participating in this Session.

“When you’re working towards a goal, you don’t see the hours that you are putting into it until someone points it out to you.”

*– Denis Poitras,
Community Leader Recipient*

ANNEX A

2016 Canada's Volunteer Award Winners

■ NATIONAL AWARDS

LIFELONG ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Jean-Marie De Koninck

In 1984, Jean-Marie founded Operation Red Nose, a free, private chauffeur service offering impaired drivers safe rides home in their own cars during the Christmas holidays. Over 32 years, and with the help of more than 1.1 million volunteers, the initiative has generated close to \$1.6 million in annual donations for 100 local associations and has offered more than 2 million rides across Canada.

EMERGING LEADER

Ryan Hreljac

At the age of six, Ryan first raised money to build a well in Africa as part of a school project. Committed to providing effective and sustainable solutions to water crises in the poorest regions of the world, he later established Ryan's Well Foundation. In 17 years, the Foundation has raised almost \$8 million and completed 1,000 projects in developing countries, helping move over 1 million people from the harsh cycle of deprivation to a promising future.

■ REGIONAL AWARDS

COMMUNITY LEADER (QUEBEC)

Denis Poitras

Since 2008, Denis has been volunteering at the Club de plongeon Agami in Brossard. As club chair, Denis was successful in recruiting about 40 new divers and reviving various recreational courses, initiatives that helped fund the club and its expansion. His efforts, availability and generosity made it possible for athletes from the South Shore region to compete at regional, provincial and national levels.

COMMUNITY LEADER (PRAIRIES)

Don Wall

For 35 years, Don has served vulnerable newcomers by helping to facilitate their settlement and integration; empowering them to become contributing members of Canadian society. He worked with community organizations to offer tangible assistance, taught English, sponsored refugee family members to facilitate their reunions in Canada and opened his own home to refugee claimants.

COMMUNITY LEADER (ONTARIO)

Jessica Coriat

Born with cerebral palsy, Jessica Coriat advocates on behalf of people with disabilities with hopes to change the way they are understood and treated as well as increasing mobility and accessibility in community spaces. She also volunteers at Toronto Rehab's Lyndhurst Centre for Spinal Cord Rehab, offering hands-on assistance to patients, as well as providing orientation and facility tours.

COMMUNITY LEADER (BRITISH COLUMBIA)

Marilyn Lenzen

Since being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2000, Marilyn has been engaged in the leadership and governance of the Multiple Sclerosis Society in British Columbia as well as throughout Canada. She has mobilized thousands of volunteers, fundraisers and donors to raise millions of dollars in support of the Society and its mission in addition to herself putting forward hundreds of volunteer hours each year.

COMMUNITY LEADER (ATLANTIC)

Linda Ryan

In 2011, after being diagnosed with breast cancer, Linda founded Pink Days in Bloom, a high-spirited fundraising initiative that combines her passion for people, plants, pink trees and tea. Through initiatives that engage Canadians from across the country, such as the Pink Tree Project and the Sea-to-Sea Tea, Pink Days in Bloom raises breast cancer awareness and funds for life-saving research and equipment.

BUSINESS LEADER (ATLANTIC)

Exit Realty Inter Lake

Since 2005 Exit Realty Inter Lake has partnered with Habitat South Shore. Over the years, the company has helped with a number of fundraising events that have resulted in donations in excess of \$240,000 being raised to fund the construction of new homes in Mahone Bay, Liverpool and Bridgewater, helping 19 people in need of housing, including 12 children, 2 of whom are autistic.

BUSINESS LEADER (BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE NORTH)

InnVentures Hospitality Corp.

For two years, Jon Zwickel of InnVentures Hospitality Corp. led the transformation of Skwachàys Lodge to become Canada's first Indigenous arts and culture boutique hotel. Helped by numerous professionals, he established creative business relationships for the centre. Owned by the Vancouver Native Housing Society, the Lodge provides safe, transitional and affordable housing for the city's Indigenous community as well as a place for local Indigenous artists and designers to share their work with a broader audience.

BUSINESS LEADER (PRAIRIES)

Landrex Inc.

For 25 years, Landrex has supported the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Edmonton through fundraising activities and volunteer hours by its staff, helping over 5,000 children. In addition to sponsoring youth sport teams, Landrex supports research on social issues such as employment, education and Indigenous languages revitalization through the Landrex Distinguished Professorship at the University of Alberta.

BUSINESS LEADER (ONTARIO)

Royal LePage

Royal LePage established the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation in 1998 to support charities that help women and children fleeing domestic violence. It has raised more than \$22 million and benefits 30,000 women and children annually. The company has also embedded a philanthropic culture within itself, inspiring employees to volunteer at women's shelters in their own communities, where they cook meals, sort donations and organize the annual National Garage Sale for Shelter.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR (QUEBEC)

Service d'entraide de Breakeyville

In 2011, Service d'entraide de Breakeyville launched the volunteer respite service for caregivers. The program offers several services designed to meet the needs of caregivers, including psychological support, informational activities and training. The program gives caregivers peace of mind and allows them to take personal time, thereby improving their quality of life as well as that of those in their care.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR (ONTARIO)

Startup Canada

Startup Canada is a grassroots, entrepreneurial-led movement that gives a voice to Canada's entrepreneurship community through collaborative economic development programs and initiatives that aim to increase job creation and prosperity in Canada. Startup Canada has engaged hundreds of volunteers, community organizations, government officials and private industry partners, delivering innovative educational programming across Canada as well as having an impact abroad.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR (ATLANTIC)

Stella's Circle

Established 70 years ago, Stella's Circle has evolved into an organization that offers innovative and responsive approaches in the fields of affordable housing, mental health and employment. Supporting 1,000 people annually and with a number of social ventures, the organization maintains leadership roles on many community boards. It is also a founding member of End Homelessness St. John's.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR (BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE NORTH)

Vancouver Island Providence Community Association

For 35 years, Vancouver Island Providence Community Association has been serving the Cowichan Valley through Providence Farm, a therapeutic community. The Farm offers innovative programs to address the social challenges of people with mental health issues, brain injuries, and developmental disabilities. Working closely with on-site partners, such as the Vancouver Island University Culinary Arts Program, the Farm helps its clients through courses, workshops and events.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR (PRAIRIES)

Habitat for Humanity on the Borders Lloydminster Society

In 2007, Habitat for Humanity responded to the dire need for housing solutions for First Nations communities with the introduction of the Aboriginal Housing Program. The Habitat for Humanity Lloydminster and Flying Dust First Nation have since partnered to build the first ever on-reserve Habitat project while providing training and educational opportunities as well as boosting volunteerism within the community. Habitat for Humanity Lloydminster now assists other reserves as part of the Adopt a Home program.