Welcoming **Communities**

A Guide to Volunteering



South Okanagan Similkameen Volunteer Centre 102-696 Main Street, Penticton, BC, V2A 5C8 | Tel: 1-888-576-5661 E-Mail: info@volunteercentre.info | WEB: www.volunteercentre.info

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A Guide to Volunteering *Building Community with Newcomers*

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Every day, thousands of Canadians give their time and talent to organizations. Volunteers strengthen community life including health and social services, sports and recreation, arts and culture, literacy, the environment, human rights and international development.

Whether you volunteer every week or once a year, as part of an ongoing program, on a short-term project, or for a special event, your time will make a difference. While you do not get paid, you can be part of building a better society and also benefit from the experience yourself.



By volunteering, you can give your time and skills to the causes and issues that matter to you. Volunteering is a way to get connected to the people and places where you live and can really help you get settled into your new life.

As a newcomer to Canada, volunteering provides many practical benefits when you are adjusting to new surroundings, trying to make friends, preparing for school or work, practicing new languages, or learning the transportation system. At the same time, organizations are benefiting from the time you give to them, the experience and talents that you bring, and your knowledge of the language and culture to your homeland.

Did You Know?



The top two reasons for volunteering are to "contribute to the community" and "use skills and experiences." –Statistics Canada, 2012 In 2010, **39%** of immigrants volunteered and they contributed about 162 annual volunteer hours!



Volunteering contributes to a happier, healthier and longer life:

Studies show that Volunteering provides many health benefits. For example volunteering;

- boosts self-confidence, increases happiness and life satisfaction
- reduces depression, often as a result of feeling more connected and less isolated
- helps develop solid support systems protecting against stress during challenging times
- helps stay physically healthy at any age, but is especially beneficial for older adults
- lessens symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease
- renews creativity, motivation, and vision that carries over into your personal and professional life.

Learn about Canadian Culture and Workplace:

Volunteering with a Non-profit is a great way to learn more about Canadian Culture and how Canadian Organizations operate. Because our communities are diverse, volunteers interact with people from many different countries and participate in a rich culture. Volunteering helps you practice and learn English.

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and help them become what they are capable of being. -Goethe

Volunteering is a form of Citizen Participation:



With Canadian citizenship comes equal rights and equal responsibilities. Participation in civic and community affairs is a right of every Canadian that when evoked strengthens a democracy. Volunteering is a vital form of participation and an essential and

irreplaceable element of a democratic society.

Social Responsibility:

Our Canadian society is only as strong as our communities. Volunteering with Non-profits helps make for strong communities and a stronger society. Without the contribution of Volunteers, schools, hospitals, community organizations, sports programs and cultural activities would be unable to carry on as they do now. Many people find great personal benefit in giving back to society.

Learn about Important Issues and make your Community what you like:

Volunteering with Non-profits is an easy and effective way to learn about important issues and understand how you can make a difference. Non-profits represent a variety of interests and beliefs: farmers, seniors, doctors, teachers, business owners, religious believers, women, youth, nature and the environment and human rights activists. Volunteering strengthens your connection to community and broadens your support network, exposing you to people with common interests, neighborhood resources, and fun and fulfilling activities.

Service to others is the payment you make for your space here on earth.

-Mohammed Ali



Skills Development:

Gaining professional experience through volunteering can build your skills, add value to your career goals, and meet new people; broadening your networks. Volunteering can also help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the greater community. For instance,

if you hold a successful sales position, you raise awareness for your favourite cause as a volunteer advocate, while further developing and improving your communication skills. Sharing your existing skills or having a willingness to learn new skills through volunteering makes a difference to your community. Remember that the most valuable skills you can bring to any volunteer effort are compassion, an open mind, a willingness to do whatever is needed, and a positive attitude.

The Benefits for the Community

- Your community can benefit from your talents, skills and perspectives
- You can improve the lives of your neighbours and community members
- You can improve the environment in which you live
- You can share your experiences and culture with those around you
- You can address community issues or needs
- You can join neighbours in creating a more inclusive community through engagement and participation



When concerned About Your Finances

Sometimes there can be some out of pocket expenses that come with volunteering: purchasing bus tickets to get to an organization, or a meal for when you are there. You can address these concerns with the organization, as many organizations are happy to reimburse you for these



expenses. If you are concerned about missing a shift at work due to time spent volunteering, organizations understand that paid work is a priority. Ask for a volunteering schedule that will not interfere with your work. Many employers in Canada help integrate volunteering with employment, and may allow time for you to volunteer. Volunteering can lead to new skills, training, and could even serve as a stepping-stone to an improved financial situation.

I Haven't Been Settled in the Community For Very Long

Volunteering can be an excellent way to engage in a community and get settled into a new location. Volunteering can help you gain practical knowledge of your surroundings. Whether it's learning about what community services are available to newcomers or where the best fruit market is located, a lot can be gained by being active in your community. Making new friends in your community through volunteering is also a great way to get settled.

I Don't Speak English or French Very Well

Organizations may have a range of opportunities in which advanced language skills in English or French is not necessary. Volunteering can be an excellent way to practice a second or third language.

Where To Find Opportunities

1. Check out the South Okanagan Similkameen Volunteer Centre's website:

www.volunteercentre.info and click "Volunteer Opportunities". Organizations that are currently affiliated with the Volunteer Centre have posted volunteer positions they could use your help with now. Check back frequently for new postings. You can also register as a volunteer with the Volunteer Centre under "I want to Volunteer" and receive regular e-mail updates on new volunteer roles.

2. A hard copy of the volunteer openings is available at the Volunteer Centre office at 696 Main Street, Penticton.

3. Phone or drop by the local offices of charities and community organizations and ask about volunteer openings.

4. Find out what festivals and events are planned in your community. You can be sure volunteers are needed long before the day of the event. A schedule of events can be found at your municipalities' website and/or tourism office.

5. Watch for Volunteer Fairs and other opportunities where you can meet representatives of organizations seeking volunteers.

6. Be persistent. Finding the right opportunity takes an investment in time and energy, but the rewards can be immeasurable.

Sources of Information: Volunteer Canada

One is not born into the world to do everything but to do something. -Henry David Thoreau



There are as many types of volunteer roles as there are people and volunteers. Here are real examples of volunteer roles listed at the South Okanagan Similkameen Volunteer Centre's search-able database at www.volunteercentre.info under "Volunteer Opportunities".

Volunteer Board Member

Do you like to work collaboratively? Enjoy working on a team? Would you be Interested in helping run an organization, and determine its direction and effectiveness? Expect a one year commitment. You'll attend a monthly meeting of the whole board. You'll also sit on committees as needed.

Event Development Chair

A fun way to use or develop your event planning skills and put them to use for a good cause! As the Event Development Chair you help to plan and coordinate the day's events. You can apply your own experience in the context of your current and new networks, and this is a chance for you to develop or hone your leadership skill set.



Volunteer Handyman Do you have handyman skills? Do

you like to get things done and make things work? Tell us about your skills and how you would be willing to help. Retired trades people are always welcome.

Variety of Tasks

Volunteers are invited to drop in and help with a variety of tasks related to processing, dehydrating and packaging vegetables and fruit. Volunteers are also needed for grounds and maintenance, truck driving, administrative tasks and more.

Outdoor Worker

Help is needed with yard maintenance and clean-up including mowing lawns, pulling weeds, snow shoveling and making safe outdoor spaces. Offer your time for on-going support and periodic projects.



Coffee Shop

As a volunteer serving coffee, snacks and sandwiches, the reward is in seeing the joy in smiles and a thank you from the people you serve. Volunteers of all ages, who are active, healthy, and ready to meet new people, will enjoy this great working environment. We have a variety of two hour or four hours shifts, Monday to Friday from 7:00am to 4:00pm. We will give you all the training you need but the

work is simple, busy and fun. We want you to know that you do need to be able to stand on your feet for your shift.

Data Entry Volunteers

Volunteers receive orientation to the program and position and work with at least 2 other volunteers even when trained. All volunteers need to have a Vulnerable Criminal Record check done (at our expense) and we ask them to commit to a 1 to 4 hour shift per week.

Maintenance Volunteers

Enjoy housekeeping? We are always looking for someone to vacuum the floor, water our plants, stock our Free-Shelf, organize information pamphlets, wash mugs and take out the recycling and garbage.

Concession Cart

Volunteers are needed to provide the basic necessities; toiletries, candy, magazines, etc to patients. Cart is taken through the wards, cash sales of items are made to patients, staff and visitors on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons.

Creating An Ultimate Volunteer Experience

An "ultimate volunteer experience" is an experience that gives you the satisfaction and challenge that you need.

It happens within the time you have available and lets you decide what's right for you.

Whether you are an experienced or active volunteer, or you are just starting on this rewarding journey, we hope you find our publications useful.

Creating an Ultimate Volunteer Experience

is a tool to explore whether the volunteer position you are interested in is a good fit for both you and the agency you have selected. It addresses the expectations of volunteers and the agencies who need them.

You can find all pertinent publications at www.volunteercentre.info, or you can drop into our offices, located in the Blue Church at 102, 696 Main Street, Penticton or at the Community Centre in Oliver.

An Overview of Expectations

Creating your own ultimate volunteer experience can begin before you talk to someone from the organization where you wish to volunteer.

- 1. A first step is to consider whether you embrace the objectives of the organization. If the agency has a website, check out its mission statement, vision, goals and values online. Pick up literature if you can.
- 2. Determine if the culture of the organization fits with your values. Attend events and open houses sponsored by the organization.
- Ask if you may attend an in-house meeting. Talk to staff and volunteers who work there. Some organizations welcome volunteers to attend board and/or staff meetings to help gain a better sense of whether the organization is right for you.

Expectations that many Organizations have for their Volunteers

Organizations have expectations that volunteers will:

- 1. go through an interview process which may include reference checks; for people working with children, youth and vulnerable adults, expect to have a police record check done
- 2. be honest about qualifications, skills, motivation and experience
- 3. be on time, and let the appropriate person know about absences from work
- 4. complete work assigned to the highest possible quality
- 5. accept advice and direction from supervisors
- 6. treat co-workers and clients with respect and courtesy, and abide by rules of confidentiality
- 7. seize every opportunity for training

- 8. thoroughly understand the organization's policies and structure
- let the organization know about any factors, physical or 9. otherwise, that will limit the volunteer's ability to perform the work required
- 10. represent the organization positively and accurately to the community
- 11. recognize that a volunteer position is as important to the organization as a paid position and requires the same effort and commitment

Expectations that Volunteers may have for the Organizations

Volunteers have an expectation that organizations will:

- 1. provide orientation and training for the work they are expected to perform
- 2. provide a precise job description
- 3. assign suitable tasks which respect personal interests, skills, and experience
- 4. arrange a mutually agreed upon schedule; and be flexible
- let them know who their supervisor will be 5.
- treat the volunteer with the same respect and dignity as their 6. co-workers
- 7. recognize the work the volunteer contributes
- 8. if possible, accommodate any limitations the volunteer has told them about

Checklist for the Ultimate Volunteer Experience

The checklist suggests some questions to ask during the interview so you will be as informed as possible before you make commitment to the position.

Gathering Information

Have you decided on where you want to volunteer?

If not, complete the Self-Assessment Tool and go to www.volunteercentre.info and click on "I want to Volunteer". This takes you to a search-able database of volunteer opportunities and gives you an idea of where you could volunteer.

Have you decided whether you agree with the values, mission, goals and objectives of the organization you have chosen?

If not, some other position may be more suitable for you.

The Interview

Questions for you to ask:

- Does the position as described meet with your personal interests, abilities, skills and experience?
- Are orientation and training provided for the position?
- Are there policies and procedures?
- Are there continuing education opportunities?
- Does the proposed schedule fit vour lifestyle? Be up front about • Will any expenses incurred what will work for you.
- Do you know who your supervisor will be?
- Is an adequate work space provided?
- Is there a probationary period?

- Is there an evaluation process?
- In what way will you be given feedback?
- Can you give input or make suggestions in the position you're applying for?
- Is there a conflict resolution process for volunteers? How does it work?
- Are volunteers covered by the organization's insurance policy?
- while serving as a volunteer be reimbursed?
- Are there opportunities to be promoted or move into other volunteer positions?



You will undoubtedly have questions of your

own; it is helpful to write them down before the interview. Once you have finished the interview you may wish to take a bit of time to think it over, or you may agree right then that this position is for you. We hope that these questions have helped you make that decision and that you will have "the ultimate volunteer experience".

Greater Volunteer Leadership -Bridging the Gap in Expectations

Many smaller Non-profit organizations are underfunded and understaffed for the work that is needed.

Greater volunteer leadership and support is needed. Volunteers can play a developmental role in these organizations by helping to bridge the gap between what the volunteers can expect and what the organization can provide. Some examples of this include:

- If an existing job description for your volunteer role does not currently exist ask if you can create your own in order to be clear about what is expected of you
- If the orientation or training provided didn't answer all your questions, write your questions down and as you learn about the organization and the job, document the answers to your questions and ask that this documentation be considered in future orientation for volunteers
- Help find other volunteers like yourself and encourage them to volunteer. Friends and family volunteering together can contribute to a congenial workplace
- If you start a volunteer role and it isn't as suited to your skills as you would like, make a proposal to your supervisor on how you might make better use of your skills there

• If you see tasks and/ or a project that would improve the organizations' ability to serve its purpose, make a proposal to your supervisor on how you see this work being completed

Take the time to document your work and report your efforts to your supervisor and ask for feedback on your current work and how you might contribute in other ways

A Self-Assessment Tool to Help You Find Your Ultimate Volunteer Experience

An "ultimate volunteer experience" is an experience that gives you the satisfaction and challenge that you need. It happens within the time you have available and lets you decide what's right for you.



In order to help you explore what the ultimate volunteer experience means for you, we suggest that you consider the questions in this booklet. Although you may not wish to share your answers with anyone, you could talk to family, friends, co-workers or

others who are volunteering in an area you are interested in about their experiences and suggestions.

Once you have an idea about what your volunteering goals are, go to **www.volunteercentre.info** to explore the volunteer opportunities at our member agencies. There are many other places you could look to find volunteer opportunities and some of these are listed on page 9 under "Where to find opportunities".





Ask yourself these questions to better understand your volunteer interests.

1. What do you want to get from your volunteer experience?

- \Box Meet new people?
- \Box Learn something new?
- \Box Share your skills?
- \Box Get out of the house?
- \Box Give something back?
- □ HAVE FUN!
- □ Do something meaningful
- □ Put some variety in your life?
- \Box Have new experiences?

- \Box Improve your health?
- □ Improve your English language skills?
- □ Obtain greater understanding of Canadian culture
- □ Obtain meaningful Canadian workplace experience
- \Box Gain a reference
- \Box Expand your resume \Box Other?

2. What is your time commitment?

- \Box One time experience? \Box Regular schedule? \Box Short term commitment?

- \Box Long term commitment?
- \square Casual schedule?

3. Who would you like to work with?

- □ Youth
- □ Children
- □ Persons with disabilities
- □ The Environment
- \square Older adults □ Immigrants
 - □ Animals

Organizations working with children, youth or vulnerable adults will require a criminal record check as part of their screening process. Would this be a problem for you?

4. What are your work preferences?

- \square Work alone?
- \Box Work with others?
- \square Work from home?

 \Box Work at the organization/ event?

5. What are your travel considerations?

- \Box Work in my community?
- \Box Travel to another
 - community?
- \square Walk to volunteer?
- \Box Drive to volunteer?
- \square Bus to volunteer?
- 6. Where does your passion lie? What causes or issues matter most to you?
 - □ Addiction and Recovery
 - □ Animal Welfare
 - □ Arts & Culture
 - □ Children & Youth
 - □ Advocacy & Human Rights
 - □ Building Community
 - □ Crime/Public Safety
 - \Box Death and Dying
 - □ Disabilities
 - □ Education
 - □ Emergency Services
 - □ Employment
 - □ Environment/Conservation
 - □ Family Violence
 - □ Food/Community Gardens/ Gleaning
 - □ Foster Care
 - □ Health

- □ Historic Preservation
- □ Homelessness/ Poverty
- □ Hunger / Food
- □ Immigrants
- □ Inclusiveness
- \Box Literacy
- □ Mental Health
- □ Seniors
- □ Sexual Assault
- □ Socializing with isolated people
- □ Sports and Fitness
- □ Substance Abuse
- □ Tourism
- □ Transportation
- □ Victims Assistance
- □ Vintage Cars, Trains, Boats
- \square Women's issues

7. If you were involved in volunteering at some time in your past, what did you like most about it? What did you dislike about it?

8. What kinds of volunteer experiences will give you the opportunity to use your own unique skills and abilities or to learn something new?

The following positions are only a small sample of the volunteer opportunities waiting for you.

- \Box receptionist
- $\hfill\square$ board member
- □ event organizer
- □ workshop facilitator
- □ project manager
- □ marketer
- □ program developer
- \Box fundraiser
- \Box driver
- □ tutor
- □ IT technician
- \Box gardener
- \Box festival worker
- \Box event promoter
- $\hfill\square$ friendly visitor

- dog walker
- □ fruit and vegetable packager
- \Box coach
- □ cat sanctuary cleaner
- □ facilitator/interpreter
- \Box teacher
- puppeteer
- 🗆 data entry
- □ office support
- $\hfill\square$ poster distributor
- □ presenter
- $\hfill\square$ yoga instructor
- \Box first aider
- researcher
- \Box cataloguer

9. Do you have any physical limitations or are you undergoing any course of treatment which might limit your ability to perform certain work?

How to Start a Non-Profit Society and Charity

What is a Society?

A society starts to take shape with the formation of like-minded individuals who wish to organize around a cause or an issue that is important to them.

The BC Ministry of Finance, Corporate Registry states on their web site that "A Society is a not-for-profit organization. Any funds or profits must be used only for purposes of the society itself."



One of the key differences between a Non-profit organization and a for profit business, is that in a business profits are distributed among its owners or shareholders. Non-profit societies must use their funds to deliver their mandate and directors do not benefit financially.

It is a requirement that all not-for-profits in British Columbia be registered in good standing as societies with the Ministry of Finance in order to be eligible for financial assistance from the province.

I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody. -Lily Tomlin

How to Organize into a Structured Society

- 1. The first and foremost consideration in becoming a Society is to have a clear purpose and mandate. Be aware that there are choices as to what structure your group would like to pursue.
- 2. Choose a name for the organization and explore important logistics, such as where the organization will be housed, how it will be financed, what role each person will play, and what their responsibilities will be.



- 3. Structure of your organization:
- a.) Choose to register as a society or operate as non-registered society. Societies are not required by law to incorporate.
 However, there are benefits to incorporating. Incorporation gives the organization a legal existence, which is separate from that



of individual members. This means that the organization can enter into contracts with other corporate bodies or individuals and can sue or be sued in the courts. An organization with substantial financial

and professional responsibilities and which employs staff should seek incorporation as it offers protection for the public, the membership, the executive and its staff.

- b.) Choose to register as a Non-profit society within the province or as a federal Non-profit society. "If you are planning to operate an organization in a number of provinces, or across Canada, incorporation as a federal (Canada) organization may be a better option. However most organizations whose operations and activities take place within one province opt to register under provincial regulations." ArtsBC 2010
- c.) Choose to apply to become a charitable society. If your organization becomes registered as a "charitable organization" with the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) it will be permitted to issue charitable tax receipts and will not pay tax on income.

If you are interested in forming a Non-profit society in BC, the Ministry of Finance, Corporate Registry Branch has all the information and forms needed to form a society and to maintain a society. The web site is: http://www.bcregistryservices.gov.bc.ca. The telephone number for the BC Registry Services is 1 877 526-1526. Following are steps to incorporate as a Non-profit Society in British Columbia.

Steps to incorporating as a Non-profit Society in British Columbia

- Your Society will need a constitution and bylaws, list of first directors and notice of address. Societies incorporated in B.C. come under the provisions of the Society Act. Every director and member of a society should read the Society Act and regulations.
- The constitution will set out the name and purposes of the society and may contain other provisions. The bylaws set out the rules of conduct of the society.
- You may simply adopt the bylaws as set out in Schedule B of the Society Act and/or you may wish to make some changes to this for your own purposes.
- If you wish to define your own bylaws you would refer to "Form 3" for that purpose.
- **2.** A minimum of 5 people are required to apply for registration as a society.
- 3. Filing of the necessary documents and paying the required fees.

The following documentation is necessary:

- Name approval request: The first step in incorporation of a society is the approval of the name through the Names Unit of the Corporate Registry. Once your name is approved, it is reserved for you for a period of 56 calendar days. A name will not be available if it is similar to the name of an existing company;
- Constitution and bylaws which includes the Name and objectives of the organization as well as the area or location where the organization operates;

- List of First Directors and their addresses and signatures;
- Notice of Address of Society;
- 4. Maintaining Your BC Society. Once a society is incorporated, it is responsible for filing certain documents and associated fees with the registrar to maintain its active status. There is an annual report filing required that indicates the date of the Annual General Meeting and the current list of Board of Directors. Filing fees apply. If a Society fails to report each year, the organization can be struck from the register. Annual Report online filing is available at http://www.bcregistryservices.gov.bc.ca
- **5.** Membership: Members are an important part of the organization. Essentially they are its core customers and an organization exists in order to meet their needs. Members are responsible for selecting the board. Membership fees and benefits should be clearly communicated and delivered in the constitution.

Useful Resources for Starting a Non-profit Society

- Starting a Not-for-Profit Organization in BC. BC Registry Services -Corporate registry http://www.bcregistryservices.gov.bc.ca/bcreg/ corppg/societies http://www.gov.bc.ca/fin/contacts.html
- Ministry of Finance (BC) PO Box 9417 Station Provincial Government, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1, T: 250 387-3751, www.fin.gov.bc.ca
- A Guide to Incorporating with Forms and Fees (PDFs for downloading) www.fin.gov.bc.ca/registries/corppg/forms/reg20.pdf
- Charity Division of Canada Revenue Agency (Operating a Registered Charity) 1 800 267-2384 http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/prtng/menu-eng.html
- Society Act: Society Act on-line version is at this link: www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/S/96433_01.htm
- You can obtain the Queen's Printer official printed version of the Society Act from: Crown Publications Inc. 521 Fort Street Victoria, BC V8W 1E7, T: 250 386-4636

Additional resources for Volunteering in Canada:

- What Kind of Volunteer you are: http://www.getinvolved.ca/vquiz/english/
- Volunteering with your family: http://volunteer.ca/content/family-volunteering
- Volunteering as a youth: http://volunteer.ca/content/volunteering-and-youth
- Volunteering as a group: http://volunteer.ca/content/engaging-volunteers-group-volunteering

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Visit www.soics.ca for more information on programs and resources for Newcomer Canadians.









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