



# 2008

## BC State of Volunteering Report

**Volunteer BC**  
Released June 2009



# About Volunteer BC

Volunteer BC is a provincial association of volunteer centres, provincial voluntary organizations and individuals working together to strengthen the growth and development of voluntary action in British Columbia. Currently, there are over 30 volunteer centres in British Columbia, with several others in the development stage. These centres play a key role in promoting and supporting effective volunteering in our communities. Volunteer centres work with a broad range of organizations across the voluntary sector including human and social services, health care, education, arts, sports and recreation. They provide volunteer recruitment, referral and support services to these organizations, disseminate information on volunteer management and programming, provide training for volunteers and managers of volunteers, and advocate on issues related to volunteerism and volunteer programs.

Volunteer BC promotes the development and value of volunteerism in BC by working cooperatively with volunteer centres, voluntary organizations, governments, business, and volunteer-involving organizations; and supports volunteer centres with information, capacity building and learning opportunities to build a stronger sector.

## Volunteer BC has four core program areas:

1. Volunteer engagement and participation
2. Information brokerage and communications
3. Education and training
4. Capacity building

Visit us on-line at **[www.volunteerbc.bc.ca](http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca)** to learn more and check out the many tools and resources to support volunteers, volunteer centres and organizations with volunteer programs, such as:

- The Provincial Training Calendar
- National Volunteer Week
- Directory of BC volunteer centres
- How to Volunteer 101
- A list of resources and tools on volunteerism and volunteer management



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	2
Message from the President.....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
About the BC State of Volunteering Report.....	6
A Numerical Snapshot of Volunteering in BC .....	8
Volunteer Centres in BC.....	10
Volunteering in 2008: A Provincial Perspective.....	12
Volunteering in 2008: Perspectives from Communities.....	15
Campbell River: Making Connections for Community in a Changing Environment.....	17
Cranbrook: Where Commitment Has No Time Limit .....	21
Prince George: The Volunteer Capital of BC.....	25
Richmond: Olympic Size Opportunities for Volunteers.....	29
Vancouver: Redefining Volunteerism in the City .....	33
Moving Forward.....	38

# Acknowledgements

The inaugural BC State of Volunteering Report would not be possible without the support and effort of the following partners:

First, an acknowledgement to the five volunteer centres who partnered with Volunteer BC to share their insight and commentary of what volunteering is like in their communities. These stories are the foundation of the 2008 report. Thank you to:



Secondly, we would like to thank **2010 Legacies Now** for sharing some statistics for the VolWeb.ca event volunteering website. VolWeb.ca is an important tool for the province and 2010 Legacies Now is a key partner for Volunteer BC.

Thirdly, we want to thank **Volunteer Canada** for sharing some results from their 2008 survey of volunteer centres. We applaud their continued effort to try to capture an accurate portrait of the volunteer centre movement across the country. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our national colleagues.

Thank you to the **Province of British Columbia**. The Government's support of Volunteer BC through the **Ministry of Housing and Social Development's Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch** (through an ongoing gaming grant) and a special grant from the **Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts** has supported the establishment of this report.

A special thank you to the **Volunteer BC staff and board members** who were involved in the creation of the 2008 BC State of Volunteering Report. Without such a collaborative effort, this report would not have been possible.

Finally, thanks also go to **The Information Refinery** for donating the design and layout of this Report and the BC State of Volunteering Report website.

# Message from the President

This report marks our first foray into trying to capture an overall picture of the state of volunteering in British Columbia. It seeks to take the pulse of volunteerism in our province, and to ask some key questions: How do we measure up? What is happening in local communities that we should be proud of and share with others? What still needs work? Where are opportunities? And with all of these local snapshots, what trends are emerging and what are the common themes?

These are important questions, ones that Volunteer BC believes need to be asked, and answered, on a regular basis. As we engaged with five volunteer centres to contribute to our 2008 report, their answers to these questions were as diverse and wide-ranging as the communities and regions in which their perspectives are based. For Volunteer BC, it is one of our key roles to provide a broad venue for our local centres to articulate their local leadership and experienced thinking around volunteerism. The BC State of Volunteering Report provides that opportunity.



It is also important for Volunteer BC to take a step back from what is happening locally and provide the wider British Columbia perspective – identifying those key trends and noting where commonalities exist. It is through this macro-level analysis that a BC state of volunteering can be articulated.

So what is the state of volunteering in BC right now? Well, that's hard to put into a single word or phrase. This report and its various components (including the expanded local reports found on [www.bcstateofvolunteering.org](http://www.bcstateofvolunteering.org)) paint a detailed picture. But overall, we can say that volunteering is changing. The world around us is changing – the fluctuating economy and the ongoing demographic shifts come automatically to mind – and communities and volunteers are starting to adjust differently.

Unquestionably the world of volunteering in BC will change next year, when the province hosts the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. These events arguably represent the largest investment in volunteering in this province for a generation, and for generations to come. We look forward to observing what impact this spotlight will have on volunteering in subsequent years. This impact has even more potential importance given the alarming drop in the average number of hours donated by BC volunteers, as measured from the 2007 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (see page 9 for additional statistics).

We hope all BC volunteer centres will benefit from the sharing of local knowledge and circumstances and perhaps see themselves in elements of this report. We believe governments and funders will be interested in some of the examples of strong and innovative partnerships that have been identified. We think individual volunteers and all volunteer-involving organizations will use this report to find new ways of engaging one another and also to use the themes and findings to inform their work together. For Volunteer BC, this report will greatly influence our work and how we support volunteering for years to come.

Happy volunteering,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Ho'.

Justin Ho  
President  
Board of Directors

# Executive Summary

The 2008 BC State of Volunteering Report gives both a broad view of the health of volunteerism in its many facets, as well as specific experiences and examples from five commissioned local reports from Campbell River, Cranbrook, Prince George, Richmond, and Vancouver. From these reports insights can be drawn from five distinct parts of the province. The report also includes recommendations for action to address areas for improvement suggested by the findings.

The face of volunteerism in BC is diverse. There are certainly some common challenges shared across different regions, but there are other issues unique to each location. Until now, no tool existed that could capture the overall state of volunteering in our province.

## Volunteering in 2008: Province-Wide Themes

From the five commissioned reports, along with the provincial perspective of Volunteer BC and its wide-membership of volunteer centres and other volunteer-involving organizations, the following key themes (apart from the ongoing need for additional resources) have emerged for 2008:

1. Flexibility and creativity in the engagement of volunteers is prevalent across the province;
2. Redefining the right roles for the right volunteers remains an ongoing process, especially as the demand for more specialized, project-based volunteering grows;
3. The challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers are changing, in particular with respect to how young volunteers or more seasoned volunteers want to be engaged, but also in the recruitment of longer-term and leadership volunteers;
4. A growing use of technology is greatly benefiting access to volunteering;
5. There is an importance to being able to tell your story effectively to prospective volunteers. Regardless of the shifting nature of how and when people volunteer, the why of volunteering has remained fairly consistent – a connection to the cause;
6. A volunteer leadership deficit is emerging, particularly around governance volunteers; and
7. There continue to be challenges in involving a more diverse population of volunteers, especially volunteers from different cultural backgrounds.



## Moving Forward

There is a pressing need for more research and knowledge on volunteerism in BC. Future BC State of Volunteering reports should provide some momentum around further research. In addition, the 2008 report has led Volunteer BC to call for increased attention to the following:

1. **Sharing and spreading of best practices** – Forums where organizations can come together, train each other, exhibit unique strategies, and learn collectively are much needed, but hard to come by in a sector strapped for resources and bracing for harder economic times ahead.
2. **Telling your story** – Organizations whose message can resonate with volunteers will be able to connect with potential volunteers, regardless of today's changing motivations and interests in regards to volunteering.
3. **Collaborating and partnering** – Many organizations and communities that have been most successful in energizing and involving volunteers have been those successful in initiating partnerships with other organizations, with businesses or with local government.
4. **Focusing outside Metro Vancouver** – Mechanisms need to be established or enhanced that help share and grow the assets found outside Metro Vancouver. More needs to be done to make accessible training and tools that are needed all around the province.
5. **Diversifying the volunteer population** – In many communities, the volunteer population does not reflect the increasingly diverse general population.
6. **Bracing for what changes the new economic realities will bring** – Organizations will experience an increased pressure on their volunteer programs, not only to serve more people, but also to either involve the increased number of newly unemployed potentially looking to volunteer, or to replace volunteers who have left their community to find work elsewhere.



# About the BC State of Volunteering Report

The 2008 BC State of Volunteering Report gives both a broad view of the health of volunteerism in its many facets, as well as specific experiences and examples from which insights can be drawn from five distinct parts of the province. It also includes recommendations for action to address areas for improvement suggested by the findings.

## Why a State of Volunteering Report

Every day in BC, thousands of people are served and supported by volunteers. There are those whose time helps protect the most vulnerable, like the volunteer who brings meals to an elderly person at home without mobility, or the volunteer who answers a suicide crisis line. There are those who form the backbone of mobilizing resources for critical services, such as the volunteers who organize and participate in huge fundraising events like the SPCA's Paws for a Cause or the BC Cancer Society's Relay for Life. There are the volunteers who lead movements for social change and steer forward institutions, such as the boards of directors who guide forward the missions of our non-profit organizations. There are volunteers who serve sporadically, helping out at a special event once a year, perhaps cleaning up a local park once a month, or there are those serving in an on-going role for years at a time. Volunteers perform duties of every kind imaginable and few in BC have not had their lives touched in some way by a volunteer, whether or not they know it.

Like the job market in BC, volunteerism faces its ups and downs, challenges and changes. It intersects with changing demographics, the health of the broader non-profit sector, economic and political shifts, and emerging community needs. The face of volunteerism in BC is diverse, with common challenges shared across different regions, and other issues unique to each location. Until now, no tool existed that could capture the overall state of volunteering in our province. Such a tool can facilitate strategic research-based action to support the sector and to make the most of our province's volunteer resources.

## How the Report Is Structured

The report begins with an introduction to some key statistics on volunteerism in BC, drawn from the Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation, highlighting findings from both the 2004 report where available, and the 2000 report. We then provide some background to the volunteer centre movement in BC, providing context to the development of the volunteer infrastructure which serves many of BC's communities. In the next section, we highlight key findings drawn from the five case studies featured in this report, including key strengths of the volunteer movement in the province. Highlights from each of the five local reports follow. We close by sharing our findings on concrete actions and steps we can all take to continue improving and growing volunteering in BC.

### Report Objectives

- To understand the province's state of health in terms of volunteering;
- To make available valid, specific data for Volunteer BC, its members and partners, and other voluntary sector organizations to draw from in planning policies and programs to do with volunteerism;
- To obtain data from which to formulate recommendations for action around volunteerism in BC.



## Report Methodology

The inaugural edition of the BC State of Volunteering Report uses a case study approach to capture a nuanced image from different urban and rural communities of their respective volunteerism environments. Volunteer BC worked with five volunteer centres representing different regions and communities of different sizes in the province. The communities covered in the report are: Campbell River, Cranbrook, Prince George, Richmond, and Vancouver. The volunteer centres in these communities were ideal partners to investigate the state of volunteerism locally. They interact regularly with volunteers as well as with the agencies which rely on volunteers to deliver their services in the community. They have a reading of the issues facing volunteerism, the challenges and the trends over time. Each volunteer centre carried out interviews with key stakeholders, including organizations and volunteers, consulted relevant statistics, included a community profile as it links to volunteerism, and analyzed trends in volunteerism. Each centre was also free to explore the research questions through their own approach relevant to their community.



# A Numerical Snapshot of Volunteering in BC<sup>1</sup>

The Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) provides us with valuable quantitative data about volunteering in BC. The latest data available, from the 2004 CSGVP places BC's volunteering rate, 45%, exactly on par with the Canadian average. This means British Columbians sit below Saskatchewan (54%), the North West Territories (53%), Yukon (52%), Manitoba (50%), Ontario (50%), Alberta (48%), Nova Scotia (48%), and Prince Edward Island (47%) while above Quebec (34%), Newfoundland and Labrador (42%), Nunavut (42%), and New Brunswick (44%). In addition to the formal volunteering rate (volunteering through an organization), 78% of British Columbians participated in 'informal volunteering' such as helping a neighbour shovel snow or giving free childcare for a relative, compared to a national average of 81% in 2004.

BC, however, leads the country with the highest number of volunteer hours given annually: 199 (compared to a national average of 168). This is a much larger number that recorded in previous surveys (1997 and 2000) when the average number of volunteer hours was 169. This translates to the equivalent of **164,000 full-time jobs** and **315 million hours**. This is a significant contribution both in economic terms, and in terms of social change and community vitality. Further, BC's more than 25,000 registered societies are also important contributors to the provincial economy, providing employment, spending, investments, as well as helping create healthy, cared for populations better able to take an active role in the life of the community.

While BC can celebrate its impressive number of average volunteer hours, there is cause for concern in the *distribution* of these hours. While BC's overall number of volunteer hours has remained consistent over the years, **a smaller number of people are shouldering this growing number of hours**. In 2000, 25% of the volunteers were contributing 71% of all volunteer hours in BC, and nearly half of BC's total volunteer hours came from the 10% of volunteers who volunteered at least 362 hours annually. A further 24% of the hours came from the 15%

## Where do British Columbians volunteer?

- Arts, Culture, and Recreation: (25% of volunteer events and 29% of volunteer hours)
- Education and Research: (14% of events and 9% of hours)
- Religion: (12% events and 7% hours)
- Social Services: (17% and 20%)
- Health: (3% and 5%)

\*Data from the 2000 Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating

## Why Do Canadians Volunteer?

- Making a contribution to one's community: 92% of volunteers
- Having the opportunity to use one's skills and experience: 77%
- Having been personally affected by the cause supported by the organization: 60%
- Exploring one's strengths: 49%
- To network with or meet people: 47%
- Because friends volunteered at that organization: 43%
- To fulfill religious obligations or other beliefs: 22%
- To improve job opportunities: 22%

\*Data from the 2004 Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating

## Just Released! Volunteering in BC: 2007

As we went to press, the highlights from the 2007 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation were released. Some quick stats from volunteerism in BC share the following highlights:

- 47% of British Columbians volunteer, largely unchanged from the 45% reported in 2004. The national average is 46%.
- British Columbians average annual volunteer hours is down to 172 in 2007 from 199 in 2004. The national average is 166 hours.
- 292.7 million hours were contributed by BC volunteers in 2007. 2.1 billion hours were contributed by Canadian volunteers in 2007, the equivalent to close to 1.1 million full-time jobs.
- Slightly more women (48.9%) than men (44.2%) volunteer in BC, with other variations based on socio-economic cross-tabulations. Nationally, 47% of volunteers are women and 45% are men.

As more analyses emerge of these numbers in the months to come, check Volunteer BC's websites for links to the survey findings, statistics from BC and more.

Find the highlights of the 2007 survey at [www.givingandvolunteering.ca](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca).

of volunteers who gave between 208 and 361 hours. The 2000 survey also found that **BC's volunteers tend to volunteer for the same organization for shorter periods of time** compared to the rest of the country.

This pattern suggests that our volunteer force is not maintaining itself, suffering from a lack of new volunteers engaging in community service, and staying engaged. We depend on a small number of people to shoulder the bulk of the work. This finding is reflected in the local perspectives included in this report. It calls for some much-needed analysis of this status quo to understand why the numbers are dropping and what can be done about it.



<sup>1</sup> The results from the 2007 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) were not available as the 2008 BC State of Volunteering report was being prepared and could therefore not be fully incorporated into the findings. Initial BC states from the 2007 CSGVP are provided on page 9. Please visit [www.givingandvolunteering.ca](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca) for additional statistics and further analysis from the 2007 CSGVP, which was released on June 8, 2009.

# Volunteer Centres in BC

Volunteer centres play a pivotal role in promoting and strengthening volunteerism in BC. They serve as central nodes where people can connect to volunteer opportunities which match with their values, interests, schedules and other needs. Volunteer centres help their member organizations attract the people who sustain their programs and services.

For the most part, BC volunteer centres engage in four main activities, as outlined in Volunteer Canada's Four Core Competencies Definition Model. They:

- 1. Connect people with opportunities to serve**  
– Volunteer centres provide people with easy access to wide variety of opportunities to connect to their community through service.
- 2. Build the capacity for effective local volunteering** – Centres help agencies, business & individuals who work with volunteers do a better job recruiting, managing & retaining volunteers.
- 3. Promote volunteering** – Volunteer centres raise awareness of the power of service, encourage people to volunteer, provide information about volunteerism and recognize the contribution of volunteers.
- 4. Participate in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers to meet local community needs** – Centres serve as convenors for the community and as catalysts for action. Volunteer Centres work through local partnerships and collaborations with business, law enforcement, schools, and community leaders to identify needs and mobilize volunteer response.

Volunteer centres are non-profit organizations or groups dedicated to fostering and developing volunteerism in the community as a whole. While many organizations encourage volunteering through their specific programs and outreach, volunteer centres serve the broadest membership: including volunteers and the organizations that involve them in their work. Volunteer centres contribute to sustaining our national heritage of volunteering by reaching across the non-profit and public sectors to include organizations working in

## Surveying BC volunteer centres: When was your centre established?

- Prior to 1970: 9%
- 1970-1979: 41%
- 1980-1989: 6%
- 1990-1999: 18%
- 2000-Present: 18%
- Don't know: 9%

\*Volunteer Canada Volunteer Centre Study 2008, Harris/Decima

## Surveying BC volunteer centres: What is the total population of the community your centre serves?

- Under 50,000: 27%
- 50,001-100,000: 32%
- 100,001-200,000: 14%
- 200,001-500,000: 14%
- 500,001-750,000: 5%
- More than 1 million: 9%

\*Volunteer Canada Volunteer Centre Study 2008, Harris/Decima



human and social services, health care, education, the arts and recreation - regardless of size or source of funding.

Approximately 35 of BC's communities have volunteer centres, serving diverse populations ranging from Metro Vancouver's more than 2.5 million residents, to Hope's population of 6,667. Volunteer centres are usually physical centres, sometimes storefronts, and are often operating in conjunction with other community services, such as information services or resource centres. In BC, a 2008 Volunteer Canada survey of volunteer centres found that 52% are stand-alone non-profits, 33% are part of larger multi-service organizations, and 14% are part of the United Way. Eighty-seven percent are registered charities. A few volunteer centres are virtual only, using a website to list volunteer opportunities through which potential volunteers can search.

## **Surveying BC volunteer centres: What is the total population of the community your centre serves?**

- Predominantly urban: 32%
- Predominantly rural: 23%
- Urban-Rural mix: 46%





# Volunteering in 2008: A Provincial Perspective

The 2008 BC State of Volunteering Report is comprised of local case studies provided by five volunteer centres from distinct parts of the province. Separately, these local perspectives provide a view of what volunteering is currently like on the ground, in communities large and small, urban and rural, coastal and inland. They showcase the incredible degree of support volunteers make possible in the diverse array of community organizations with which they share their time. Yet critical challenges exist, and organizations need the support and tools to effectively meet these challenges. This may demand a paradigm shift in how volunteerism is approached in the province.

Collectively, the local stories and commentary paint a picture of what volunteering looks like provincially. Common themes have emerged from each of the five submissions. In addition to the need for more resources, there are common challenges, as well as common opportunities. Prior to providing highlights of the five local perspectives on volunteering, here are the trends that make up the BC state of volunteering.

***Flexibility and creativity in the engagement of volunteers is prevalent across the province*** – Each of the five volunteer centres contributing this year reported creative ways of engaging volunteers in organizations – either encouraged by the volunteer centre or initiated by agencies themselves. There is a growing acknowledgement by all communities surveyed that as demographics and economic circumstances continue to fluctuate, flexibility in how volunteer positions are structured and how volunteer effort is mobilized to help meet an organization's mission becomes a key factor of what makes a volunteer experience effective and successful, both for organization and volunteer. Although flexibility and responsiveness have always been strengths of community and non-profit organizations, this overwhelming focus on flexibility around volunteering is fairly new and is an encouraging sign given the many changes ahead for BC communities.

***Redefining the right roles for the right volunteers remains an ongoing process*** – In more formal volunteering (volunteering with a community or non-profit organization), the right volunteer depends on what each organization needs help with. The shaping of volunteer roles is typically based on the needs of the organizations themselves in serving their clients or constituents. However, there is a growing movement to rethink how those roles are defined, changing the focus to the interests of how individuals want to volunteer. Growing numbers of interested volunteers (whether highly skilled professionals, recent retirees, younger volunteers, or culturally diverse volunteers) are looking for more project-based work. Some organizations have adjusted by providing more volunteer-centred job designs, with some success. Much more work in this direction is still needed.

***The challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers are changing*** – There are still many challenges in communities when it comes to recruiting and retaining volunteers. This is particularly stressed by volunteer centres reporting from outside the Lower Mainland. Volunteers for such skilled roles as manning crisis lines to filling board positions and various roles in between are getting harder to find. Job design barriers like the commitment level and length of time needed were sighted as issues. But more alarming commentary pointed to problems of an even more fundamental nature. In some cases certain types of volunteer position seem to no longer resonate with volunteers, making recruiting for these still vital roles within an organization almost impossible. These observations reaffirm the need for more creativity and flexibility in volunteer job design, coupled with a continual need to inform job design with an understanding of the differing motivations of key volunteer populations – in particular younger volunteers, more seasoned volunteers, and the highly skilled professional volunteer.

Challenges and successes in engaging with particular groups of volunteers have been identified by the five communities surveyed. For instance, engaging younger volunteers demands specific approaches and although

## Event Volunteering in Numbers: VolWeb.ca™ Statistics

there are some examples of success, organizations continue to struggle to identify effective ways of drawing in youth as volunteers. Baby boomer volunteers as well are looking at volunteering differently, wanting to apply their professional skills for meaningful volunteer opportunities, but on their timetable and under their own terms.

***A growing use of technology is greatly benefiting access to volunteering*** – Technology is emerging as one key tool to help address recruitment challenges. More volunteer centres have begun utilizing new online tools – such as the VolWeb.ca™ Volunteer Opportunities Listings Tool – to provide better access to information about volunteer vacancies and various needs for service in their community.

For the most part volunteer centres in BC have been making good use of the internet to recruit volunteers. Volunteer Canada found that 93% of volunteer centres in BC have websites. Increasingly, on-line is the only place where some people look when seeking a volunteer role. It is also how a growing number of tourist-volunteers, foreign student volunteers, and others coming temporarily to BC find volunteer work from their home base before arriving in a community. Centres use a variety of means to recruit on-line. Some have simple lists of volunteer positions needing to be filled, some have a basic website with contact information and an explanation of the services of the volunteer centre, and some manage sophisticated databases of volunteer opportunities where people can search through the listings, select an opportunity, and apply all on-line. A small number of volunteer centres are virtual only, a useful alternative in smaller communities where it is sometimes not economically feasible to have a physical centre operating.

***There is an importance in being able to tell your story effectively*** – As whole volunteer populations shift with respect to how and when

Volunteer BC was a founding partner of VolWeb.ca™ website, which launched in 2005. Created by 2010 Legacies Now, the site aims to encourage volunteerism and increase access to volunteer opportunities across Canada, leading up to and beyond the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. VolWeb.ca™ is supported by the Province of British Columbia and numerous other partners, including CTV and Volunteer Canada. Since its launch, the site has grown considerably, attracting both event organizers and volunteers interested in special event volunteering.

Statistics from VolWeb.ca: January 2005 – December 2008

### VOLUNTEERS

- Number of registered volunteers in BC: over 7,400
- Since VolWeb.ca's inception in 2005, there has been a 2445% increase in use by volunteers
- Event positions listed on Volweb.ca: over 3,400
- Volunteer Centre positions listed: over 1,000
- Total positions: 4,400


### ORGANIZATIONS

- Number of organizations using Volweb.ca: 1,667
- Since VolWeb.ca's inception in 2005, an increase in organizations by 687%

### VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

- Male: 1,879 (27%)
- Female: 4,996 (73%)
- Rather not say gender: 784
- Youth (18 & under): 1,245 (19%)
- Adult (19-54): 5,028 (75%)
- Older Adult (55+): 432 (6%)
- Rather not say age: 963
- High School: 1,261 (17%)
- Post-Secondary: 1,707 (23%)
- Certificate or Diploma: 1,253 (17%)
- University Degree: 2,377 (31%)
- Other: 971 (12%)

\*Percentage based on volunteer members who offered this information



they volunteer, why they volunteer has remained fairly consistent – a connection to the cause. For organizations, this implies great value in investing the time and energy to ensure your mission and vision are particularly compelling, and that your story clearly articulates how volunteers impact that mission and vision. When these key messages resonate with volunteers, then recruitment and retention problems can be greatly alleviated.

Volunteer centres can, and do, play an important role in supporting organizations in the development of those messages and in helping get the word out. A number of volunteer centres have reported partnering with their local news media to share stories of volunteering in their community. This is a longstanding tradition in many communities, and an important activity that needs to continue and grow into other areas. Sharing how volunteers impact the lives of individuals and of communities is key to encouraging those who already volunteer, as well as to fostering the interest of new volunteers - as individuals see themselves in the stories being told.

***A volunteer leadership deficit is emerging*** – Volunteering statistics for many years have highlighted the alarming trend that many of the volunteer hours recorded are contributed by a small - and shrinking - group of core volunteers. Reports from the five BC communities have also confirmed this trend. There continue to be fewer “traditional” volunteers, those volunteers who lead by example, willing to step up and lend a hand in many ways for many organizations on a consistent basis.

In addition, there is also a noticeable trend reported by many of our volunteer centres, away from new volunteers stepping into leadership roles within community and non-profit organizations. Such roles as volunteer team leaders, committee members, or members of boards of directors are difficult to fill, while the growing interest is in project-based, time-limited volunteer opportunities. This is impacting the ability of organizations to fill key governance and leadership roles.

***The challenge of reflecting the community*** – Many of our local reports describe their ongoing efforts to try to introduce and engage different cultural groups to volunteering in Canada, with limited success. Cultural differences and language barriers are key reasons. However, also of note, is that our current understanding and definition of volunteering does not lend itself to be inclusive of a whole array of ways of helping that goes on in our communities. This includes the more informal and even casual kind of community service that is often overlooked in how volunteering is currently defined, but is a key part of other cultural identities.



## Volunteering in 2008: Perspectives from Communities

The following are highlights from reports commissioned by Volunteer BC. The insight and perspectives from these five reports form the basis for the 2008 BC State of Volunteering Report. The full reports can be found at [www.bcstateofvolunteering.org](http://www.bcstateofvolunteering.org).

\* Please note that the opinions and interpretations in these reports are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Volunteer BC.







## **Campbell River: Making Connections for Community in a Changing Environment**

# Campbell River: Making Connections for Community in a Changing Environment

Provided by Volunteer Campbell River

Located 264km north of Victoria, in the Strathcona Regional District on Vancouver Island on the 50th parallel, Campbell River is a vibrant city with a strong community spirit. It is known as the Salmon Capital of the World and offers world class salt water fishing as well as many other outdoor activities and attractions such as beaches, hiking trails, rivers for swimming, tubing, fishing and snorkelling, golf and disc golf courses, provincial parks, racing, a skateboard park, bird watching, kayaking and skydiving. Winter activities include snowmobiling, skiing, snowboarding, skating and curling. Always willing to lend a hand, help a neighbour and support a cause, Riverites love their community and want to make it a special place in which to live.

## Volunteer Campbell River

The first board of directors of Volunteer Campbell River was formed in 1989 and the Campbell River Volunteer Society was registered in 1990. Today, the society is known as Volunteer Campbell River (VCR). VCR's missions is, "To enhance the quality of volunteerism in our community by focusing on the provision of ongoing support and encouragement for individuals as they seek ways to become actively involved in the community, and community groups in their development and operation of effective volunteer programs."

Volunteer Campbell River is governed by a Board of Directors and is managed by the Volunteer Centre Coordinator. VCR operates with both paid and volunteer staff that includes a Volunteer Centre Coordinator, Office Assistant, Interviewers and Publicity Assistant. Currently, Volunteer Campbell River engages in the following activities:

- Operates a recruitment and referral service for volunteers and act as a liaison between member agencies and volunteers;
- Maintains a central registry for all member agencies and individuals engaged in volunteer activities in the community;
- Conducts one-on-one evaluations with volunteers to determine their skills, needs and interests;
- In partnership with the Campbell River RCMP, provides criminal record checks for volunteers free of charge;
- Maintains a resource library for use by member agencies and volunteers;
- Provides ongoing educational opportunities for volunteers and member agencies;
- Provides ongoing technical support to member agencies through the Island TechEase service run by volunteers out of the Volunteer Centre.

## Campbell River at a Glance

- Incorporated: 1947
- Population: Approx. 31,000
- Total land area: 133.34 km<sup>2</sup>
- Density: 206.1 persons/km<sup>2</sup>

## A Strong Culture of Recognition and Appreciation

Recent Riverite volunteer statistics reveals that retirees are one of our larger groups and teens are the smallest. Volunteer Campbell River offers assistance to teenagers through our Teen Volunteer Opportunities program, but

there are a limited number of placements for that age group. In the future VCR hopes to provide more opportunities to teenagers by working with local agencies and schools.

In studying Campbell River volunteers ranging in age 16 to 65+, the Number 1 reason people volunteer is the enjoyment that comes from helping and interacting with others. The Number 2 reason people volunteer is the cause and giving back to the community. We found 100% of the volunteers interviewed were program or direct service volunteer, the longest positions being held working with youth and seniors, in the arts and in sports. Our study also showed that people volunteer an average of four years.

The culture of recognition and appreciation of Riverite volunteers is strong. "Cheerfulness and determination accomplish many tasks," in the words of Gerry Cochrane, a volunteer who mentored a 64-year-old man for three years so that he could obtain his high school diploma. When people feel needed and care about the organization they are helping, volunteering can be a very positive experience.

"The feeling that you get when you volunteer is very rewarding," said Meghan Smith, who volunteers at Yuculta Lodge. The Women's Centre Executive Coordinator, Georgette Whitehead, said, "Volunteers support our centre while gaining meaning and [giving] empowerment to their lives." She said approximately 350 women walk through their door every month, with many coming back later as volunteers.

## Involving Volunteers – Rewarding, but Not Easy

Out of the organizations interviewed, 40% have a problem retaining volunteers, either overall or for the 21-50-year-old age bracket specifically. Some options that agencies are looking at include allowing more flexibility and volunteering from home.

Other challenges agencies face with volunteers is that they often leave due to employment commitments, going back to school, other priorities, moving, a family crisis, infrequency of need and inconsistent hours. This means that most agencies are continually looking for new volunteers. Volunteer Campbell River is the main recruiting tool for 60% of the agencies interviewed, although other tools used include word of mouth, returning clients, government incentives, and advertising in the newspaper and on television.


One of the main challenges for non-profit organizations in the region is funding and a "lack of financial resources to manage the program," says Althea Vermaas, a Coordinator of Volunteers Services for the Campbell River Hospital. Many non-profit organizations need to access funding in order to support their agencies and volunteers. Youth

### Some Volunteer Centre Key Facts

- For 07-08, the centre helped 432 volunteers by making 798 referrals to agencies
- VCR has 97 member agencies
- VCR has approximately 1,800 volunteers in their database

### Challenges of Having Volunteers

- Supervision
- Commitment and reliability
- Funding
- Life barriers
- Training
- Time constraints
- No volunteer coordinator



for Diversity Coordinator and Educator Tara Jordan said we are, “achieving success from volunteers on a shoestring budget.”

## Planning for a Shifting Volunteer Population

In our future, we see the City of Campbell River changing as jobs in the forestry, mining and logging sectors decline. Our local mine is shutting down and our main mill and employer in town is going through layoffs, with 420 people having lost their jobs in November 2008.

However, our community has experienced rapid growth over the last few years. As new subdivisions are built, people, on the other hand, are considering moving elsewhere to find jobs. The housing market has become flooded and new projects are being put on hold. We are at an uncertain time in the community. As Brad Bradbury, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism in Campbell River stated, “Riverites are a very resilient breed... challenges build our strength to survive as a community.”

As for the future of the town’s volunteers, we see strength and continuance in numbers. We expect to see a decline of volunteers amongst the employed work force age group as people find they have to leave Campbell River to find employment. This could mean an impact on volunteer positions such as coaches for our kids and those positions that require assistance with physical labour such as lifting and standing for long periods. We also see the possibility of more retired people moving into the community, and we aim to send the message that the need to meet new people and keep busy while helping a cause is a great reason to volunteer. Our future slogan could very well be *Live, Love, Retire and Volunteer in Campbell River!*



## **Cranbrook: Where Commitment Has No Time Limit**



# Cranbrook: Where Commitment Has No Time Limit

Provided by Volunteer Kootenays

Cranbrook, part of the East Kootenay region, is located in the southeast corner of British Columbia. Cranbrook is known as the “Key City”. It is the regional centre of the Kootenays and serves as a hub for the area. Forestry, mining, manufacturing, tourism, trade, service and transportation make up the economic backbone of the East Kootenay region.<sup>2</sup>

The East Kootenay region includes the communities of Cranbrook, Creston, Canal Flats, Elkford, Fernie, Golden, Invermere, Kimberley, Radium Hot Springs and Sparwood.<sup>3</sup> The West Kootenay, also referred to as the Kootenay/ Boundary region includes the communities of Castlegar, Fruitvale, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, Montrose, Nelson, Rossland, Trail and Warfield.<sup>4</sup>

## Volunteer Kootenays

Volunteer Kootenays is a program of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) for the Kootenays, operating volunteer centres in Cranbrook and Trail. Volunteer Kootenays provides a critical link for organizations in the region and for potential volunteers. The primary goals of Volunteer Kootenays is to promote volunteerism, connect people to volunteer opportunities, support development of the volunteer programs of our member organizations based on trends identified through the volunteer centre and provide opportunities for volunteer recognition.

The volunteer centre was established in 1994 and has gone through many changes over the years, including name changes from the Volunteer Bureau to Volunteer Cranbrook, and most recently to Volunteer Kootenays, with expanded services in the community of Trail. In July 2008, Volunteer Kootenays was excited to announce a new partnership with 2010 Legacies Now and Volweb.ca™, offering member organizations a Volunteer Opportunity Listing Tool, a software tool to manage and post volunteer opportunities to an online audience. This partnership sparked the development of a new website, connecting volunteers in the Kootenays to volunteer opportunities and in September 2008 **www.volunteerkootneys.ca** was officially launched, expanding the services offered by our volunteer centres to rural communities across the region.

## Volunteering In Cranbrook – A Story of Stories

Volunteering in Cranbrook is best described by getting a glimpse of what volunteers are doing right in our community, specifically two of our member organizations, Cranbrook Restorative Justice and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC/Yukon, as well as two programs of CMHA for the Kootenays, which include the Crisis Line and the Volunteer Assisted Shopping Program.

**Cranbrook Restorative Justice** – The Restorative Justice program in Cranbrook is a great example of the contribution that volunteers make in a rural region like the Kootenays. Restorative Justice is a non-profit organization with one

2 Cranbrook & District Chamber of Commerce. 2008 Membership Roster & Buyers Guide, pp.6-7.

3 Statistics Canada. 2007. *East Kootenay, British Columbia* (table). *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed November 13, 2008).

4 Statistics Canada. 2007. *Kootenay Boundary, British Columbia* (table). *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed November 13, 2008).

program coordinator, over 30 trained volunteers, and a volunteer board of directors. “Restorative Justice philosophy puts the emphasis on repairing harm caused by conflict and/or crime”, explains Program Coordinator Michelle Godec.<sup>5</sup> In their 2007 Annual Report, Restorative Justice received 63 referrals, of which 78.2% were male 72.7% were under the age of 18. The process offers an opportunity for the victim and offender to meet face to face and facilitate healing. A contract for restitution is negotiated and might include an apology in person, monetary restitution, clean-up, assessment and/or counseling.

Volunteers log over 1600 hours per year and travel at least 4,775 km as a part of their volunteer duties. Reimbursement for mileage for volunteers is an issue for many volunteer organizations in the area since it is often an ineligible expense in grant and funding applications. Mayor Ross Priest estimates that this approach result in “\$125,000 of savings in court costs”<sup>5</sup> Volunteers are a huge part of making that happen.

## Cranbrook at a Glance

- Incorporated: 1905
- Population: 24,138
- Total land area: 25.14km<sup>2</sup>
- Density: 726.6 persons/km<sup>2</sup>

## Some Volunteer Centre Key Facts

- Established in 1994
- 30 member agencies
- Over 50 volunteer opportunities posted online

**Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC/Yukon** <sup>6</sup> – The Hearts in Motion™ Walking Club in Cranbrook is so much fun, it’s hard to think of it as exercise. The club, which is led by Marion Hess with support from her husband Hugo, meets three times a week, all 12 months of the year, for an hour long walk followed by a coffee session at the local McDonald’s. The club currently has 60 members, but the number of people who are able to join walks fluctuates. During the months that there is snow on the ground, the group meets at the local recreation complex to walk loops around the track, but as soon as the weather permits they take their walks outside. Marion took over as leader of the club about a year ago, but has been volunteering for the Foundation since 1991.

Marion’s husband Hugo loves to mix things up in the spring and summer and often organizes hikes and barbeques. “Sometimes a group of us go out to Bull River for a one and a half hour hike and then we have a barbeque,” explains Hugo. Hugo is an avid hiker who enjoys taking the lead on the days the group ventures into the wilderness.

Organizing special events and keeping everyone “in the loop” is made easy with the internet. “We only have a few members without computers, so it’s not a very onerous job,” says Marion. The benefits definitely outweigh any work that has to be put into the club. Both Marion and Hugo agree that the social aspect of the club is well worth the effort. “We have met a lot of new friends,” says Hugo.

**CHMA Crisis Line** – The Crisis Line is a valuable volunteer program, offering 24/7 crisis intervention support to the East Kootenays and receives approximately 150 calls per month. This is a great volunteer program in the sense that volunteers are able to take calls in their own homes during their assigned shift. Volunteers contribute between 4,000-6,000 hours per year.

The number of Crisis Line volunteers has been sustained but has not increased despite increased marketing efforts, added flexibility in Crisis Line training options, and the re-design of the Crisis Line training. Recruitment of new volunteers, who are able to commit to the delivery of this comprehensive service, responding to callers with complex issues, is a key challenge for the organization.<sup>7</sup>

5 Lindsey, “Restorative Justice Alive and Well.” Kootenay News. November 12, 2008.

6 Liknes, Nancy. E-mail to the author. 10 Nov. 2008.

7 Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays. (2008). Crisis Line Services – Outcomes Report April 1st 2007 – March 31st 2008.

**CMHA Volunteer Assisted Shopping Program** – Volunteer Assisted Shopping is a great example of a program developed based on needs identified through the volunteer centre. The Volunteer Assisted Shopping Program, where volunteers assist seniors with the task of grocery shopping, was started in 1995 following changes in the health care system that limited services provided by Continuing Care Programs.<sup>8</sup> With a faithful group of volunteers, the program continues to be a value resource in the community 13 years later.

Volunteers contribute approximately 1000 hours each year. The average length of service of this dedicated group of volunteers is 4.5 years and their commitment and the friendships which develop have led to this programs popularity and success. Several of these volunteers also give their time to several other volunteer organizations in the community. The average age of this group of volunteers is 70 years, and is consistent with a report that states that the “benefits of volunteerism extend to both the giver and recipient”. The report also states three motivating needs of older volunteers, “to fill the vocational void left by retirement, to feel useful as a member of society helping others and to find a peer group.”<sup>9</sup>

## Volunteer Recognition

Volunteer Kootenays promotes the recognition of volunteers by profiling volunteers and volunteer programs in the media. Volunteer Kootenays provides leadership on issues related to volunteerism and volunteer recognition in the community. In April 2008, Volunteer Kootenays hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner where 90-year old Ruby Sinclair, a long-term volunteer of the Cranbrook Healthcare Auxiliary, Key City Theatre and Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce was named Volunteer of the Year. Ruby is a wonderful representative of the many volunteers serving our community.

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8 McPhee, M. (1996). Volunteer Assisted Shopping Program: Mid-Term Evaluation Report.

9 Connors, D. (2008). Transforming 50+ Volunteering: A Strategy and Literature Review. pp, 11.



## Prince George: The Volunteer Capital of BC

# Prince George: The Volunteer Capital of BC

Provided by Volunteer Prince George

Prince George has been called the White Spruce Capital of the World, the Gateway to the North, and the Northern Capital of BC. Being at the crossroads of Highway 97 North/South and Highway 16 East/West, Prince George is a natural hub for traffic in the Northern region of our province. It is also the meeting place of two rivers, the Nechako and the Fraser Rivers.

Prince George is contending with both welcome change as well as new challenges. The city has witnessed significant development recently, including the University of Northern British Columbia hosting a Northern Medical Program and the creation of the Northern Sport Centre. There has been an increase in mining opportunities, development of the new container transportation corridor between Asia and North America via the Port of Prince Rupert, expanded airport facilities to include large cargo planes and the announcement of the new Cancer Clinic in Prince George to serve northern BC. At the same time, the Pine Beetle epidemic has had a huge impact on the lumber industry and the global financial crisis is affecting not only the long established lumber sector, but also mining and transportation. Many layoffs have hit the community, but nevertheless, optimism remains high.

## Quick Facts about Prince George

- Population: 83,225
- Median Age of Population: 37.3
- Population Change (2001-2006): -2.1%
- Population Per Sq Km: 4.7
- Employment/Unemployment Rates: 66.7% / 7.6%
- Percentage of Population aged 15 and over: **80.8%**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Community Profiles, Prince George (Census Agglomeration)  
[www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

## Volunteer Prince George

Volunteer Prince George (VPG) has operated as a stand-alone volunteer centre in the community since 1991. We have one staff person (20 hours/wk) and a volunteer board of directors of eight members. We currently serve 116 member organizations, register 600-700 new volunteers annually, and maintain a subscriber list of over 1,600 addresses. The subscribers receive our Volunteer Opportunities mailing monthly. We maintain a database of opportunities for our member organizations and connect potential volunteers with that information. "We see ourselves as the information broker between volunteers and non-profit organizations. It is also our aim to promote community awareness of all the excellent work being done by non-profits in our community" says VPG Manager Jo Nore.

Volunteer Prince George is consistently made aware of the crucial role that we play in promoting volunteerism, helping to recruit volunteers, supporting our non-profit members and providing information on how to work more effectively with volunteers.

## Trends in Prince George's Volunteer Community

Volunteer Prince George asked our member organizations, 116 non-profit groups, to respond to a survey and also conducted interviews with some of members. With a 46% response rate, the following was found:



Question: What do you think motivates volunteers to volunteer with your particular organization? (multiple answers possible)

**90.6% - The cause/mandate of our organization**

56.6% - Social interaction and friendship

39.6% - Work experience

39.6% - Required volunteering (school requirement, pre-course obligations, etc)

32.1% - Opportunity to lead and share skills

Question: Over the past two years, do you think volunteer involvement in your organization has

24.1% - Increased

33.3% - Decreased

**42.6% - Stayed the same**

When we interviewed our member organizations, a common trend found was the increase in youth volunteering, including young people in both high school and college or university. Another major finding was changes in the length of volunteer engagement, becoming shorter or more episodic. Scouts Canada representative, Donald McDonald, commented that it is getting harder to find volunteers who will commit to an entire year. There is a perception that they are too busy.

Another emerging trend is the aging of core volunteers. Some organizations depend on a core of longtime volunteers who are retiring and they are having difficulty finding new volunteers to take over their roles.

The Prince George non-profit community is also seeing an increase in volunteers seeking work experience. There is also an increase in client volunteers-beneficiaries of the organization's services who then support the organization by contributing their time volunteering, looking to keep themselves busy. Both these patterns are evident in the volunteer base of the Native Friendship Centre Emergency Food Program. One Program volunteer felt that his time donated to the Centre's Community Garden had helped him with his sobriety.

An alarming trend seen in Prince George is a decrease in volunteers experienced by some organizations. The Salvation Army Thrift Store has reported a dramatic decrease in volunteers. This may be an accessibility issue, but it is also symptomatic of a general decrease in core volunteers, which many long-established, traditional community organizations depend on. Finding effective ways to assist organizations in recruiting and retaining committed volunteers will be a critical need in the coming years for this region.

## Did you know?

Prince George had the highest rate of volunteering in BC at 62% (age 15 & older) compared to the provincial average of 45%.

Figure 2.1 Volunteer rate and annual hours, by selected census metropolitan area, population aged 15 and older, British Columbia, 2004

## Challenges for Prince George's Volunteer Community

The most common challenge faced by Prince George volunteers is a lack of time. Residents have very busy personal and work lives, with minimal free time to give to the community. This may be compounded by the economic crisis, as people spend their time worrying about employment and income, and less about community needs. The second biggest challenge faced is the difficulty in recruiting volunteers. Organizations consistently struggle to attract, recruit and keep enough skilled volunteers.

## Best Practices and Successes from the Prince George Experience

The following are a few examples from Volunteer Prince George member agencies who have creatively addressed their volunteer recruitment and management efforts:

**Engaging Youth with Tailor-Made Opportunities:** Sandra Sawtell from the Canadian Red Cross Medical Equipment Loans (MELS) shared an exciting opportunity to work with Duchess Park Secondary School Students in Prince George to provide work experience during school hours. A number of students come weekly to work in the MELS program. Sandra found that creating flexible volunteer jobs, breaking down jobs and simplifying assignments helped this initiative to be successful. She even created some jobs that can be done on a "drop in" basis without pre-scheduling. She also commented that allowing the students to listen to their iPods while working was a big hit with the students and offered that needed extra incentive. Being flexible and orienting volunteer roles towards the lifestyles of youth helped MELS to harness the valuable energy youth volunteers can bring to an organization.

**Cooperative Training:** Several agencies working in the provision of personal services such as peer counselling, suicide prevention line, and crisis pregnancy support, decided to create a Therapeutic Volunteer Training Coalition so that they could do some of the Standard Practice training for volunteers together instead of each offering their own training. They worked together in creating a common curriculum for the base training of new volunteers.

**Attracting Professional Volunteers:** Many volunteer jobs demand particular skills and expertise. The Prince George Native Friendship Centre has several programs which effectively engage professionals in volunteer roles. The Pro Bono Law Clinic has six lawyers who rotate in volunteer shifts in an advisory capacity for families needing legal expertise. The Pain Control Dental clinic works with 12 dentists who also volunteer on a roster basis to provide basic dentistry services to clients without dental coverage.

## Planning Now for a Changing Tomorrow

The increased need for volunteers within the Prince George's voluntary sector will need to be met with creativity in volunteer job designs, flexibility in time frames and a focused effort in volunteer management strategies supported by both human and financial resources at local, provincial and national levels.



**Volunteer  
Richmond** Information  
Services



## **Richmond: Olympic Size Opportunities for Volunteers**

# Richmond: Olympic Size Opportunities for Volunteers

Provided by Volunteer Richmond Information Services

The City of Richmond was incorporated as a municipality on November 10, 1879 and received its city designation on December 3rd, 1990. Richmond, just south of Vancouver, is made up of 17 islands that were built up and shaped by the Fraser River. The Fraser River has shaped the growth of the City; the rich delta soil provided by the river has been the basis of Richmond's economy and industrial development. Richmond's history is rooted in fishing, salmon canning, boat building, agriculture (dairy and berry production), shipping, aviation, and in recent years, increasingly in the manufacturing, service and technological industries.

The 2006 census, as of January 1, 2008, estimates the city's population at 188,100.<sup>10</sup> The population growth city-wide has averaged 3,100 people per year, or about 1.7% per year. Richmond is the fourth most populous municipality in the Greater Vancouver region, after Vancouver, Surrey, and Burnaby.

## Volunteer Richmond Information Services

In 1972 a small group of individuals connected with Richmond Savings Credit Union started a community information services program in the cloakroom of the Credit Union's main branch, and in 1976 The Chamber of Commerce and the United Way supported the Executive Director and Board of Directors in the development of the Richmond Volunteer Centre. In 1986, the two became the Richmond Information Volunteer Centre Society, which later became Richmond Connections (1994) and then Volunteer Richmond Information Services (2001), now a multi-service agency that includes the volunteer centre as a core function. VRIS works closely with non-profit organizations in Richmond to promote volunteerism as well as supporting non-profit organizations with their volunteer programs and services.

The work of the volunteer centre allows community organizations to better help those in need through the following activities:

- Our volunteer centre provides essential services to maximize the impact that volunteers make in the community.
- Potential volunteers can find volunteer opportunities on ***Volunteer Richmond!*** an on-line volunteer opportunities database available at [www.volunteerrichmond.ca](http://www.volunteerrichmond.ca).
- We hold regular training, workshops and conferences on volunteer management to help non-profit organizations involve volunteers effectively and creatively.
- We celebrate Richmond volunteers through our annual Volunteers Are Stars Gala Dinner and Awards and our "I Volunteer" columns in the Richmond Review.

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<sup>10</sup> The 2006 Census reports the population of Richmond to be 174,461; however the report misses some people, and double counts others. Statistics Canada publishes an estimate of the undercount a few years after each census. The City uses an undercount-adjusted population as the baseline population and thus the adjusted City estimate of Richmond's population is 188,100.

- Volunteer Ambassadors deliver presentations and attend community events promoting volunteerism and providing information on volunteer opportunities in the community.

## 2010 Community Information and Volunteer Program

The Richmond 2010 Information & Volunteer Program is a compelling illustration of how local Richmond organizations (municipal, non-profit and corporate) are working together to build community capacity and leadership in volunteerism.

Richmond, home to the newly built Richmond Olympic Oval, will host the long-track speed skating events during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. In order to celebrate its role as an official venue city, the City of Richmond is planning a number of special events leading up to and during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. These "Richmond 2010" events such as the Oval Opening and Winter Festival of the Arts rely heavily on volunteer involvement. The City has therefore contracted the volunteer centre, VRIS, to manage the volunteer program.

This program offers many legacies for the Richmond community including a permanent Community Information & Volunteer Centre in Richmond Centre Mall; thousands of trained and engaged volunteers with experience at major special events; an organizational framework for the recruitment, training and management of volunteers at major City events; and post-Games and associated volunteer management templates and resources to be shared with other voluntary organizations.

As of fall 2008, the 350 Richmond 2010 volunteers contributed more than 2,000 hours to the program. These volunteers vary in ages from 12 to 72+ and speak more than 25 different languages, including Mandarin and Cantonese. By 2010, an estimated 2,500 volunteers will have been involved in the program. Some of the main events volunteers have been involved in include this year's Winterfest, the Beijing Games Event, the official opening of the Richmond Olympic Oval and the 2009 Winter Festival of the Arts.

Many volunteers are attracted to this program because they can volunteer on evenings and weekends for very short periods of time (usually 2-3 days) as individuals, groups or as a family. As a result, nearly 30% of our volunteers are students. We have also been very successful in engaging the 23-45 years age group because we offer family volunteering opportunities and schedule training and other activities after normal work day hours and on weekends. Busy baby boomers and seniors have also signed up for this program because they find its flexibility appealing – they can pick and choose the events they volunteer for and can work it around their scheduled vacations and babysitting duties for instance. This will be a community-wide engagement that will leave behind a legacy of new volunteers in our community.

### A Snapshot of Richmond Demographics

- 18 % of the population is aged 17 or under
- 12 % of the population is aged 65 or over
- The median age has increased from 38.5 in 2001 to 40.7 in 2006
- The population aged 55-64 has seen the most growth
- Over 125 different ethnic origins
- Chinese is the most commonly reported ethnic origin, with 45% of the population sharing this background
- Immigrants make up 57.4% of the population

\* Province of BC Statistics and the 2006 Census



## Finding Opportunities For...

**A diverse volunteer-base** – Richmond has the highest proportion of immigrants of any municipality in Canada. This adds to the diversity in the City as well as in how volunteer opportunities are marketed. Despite much effort, challenges remain. The challenge has not been in engaging new immigrants (they want to volunteer); rather, the challenge has been finding volunteer positions where they are able to *practice* their English. VRIS has recognized this challenge and responded by creating volunteer positions where new immigrants can volunteer. Nevertheless, these positions are very limited.

**A young volunteer-base** – VRIS receives many youth seeking volunteer opportunities, including new immigrants. There are few organizations offering opportunities for youth as volunteers. The VRIS Ambassador program provides opportunities for youth to participate in volunteer roles, as community events tend to take place on the weekends and in the summer. We also have youth deliver presentations in their own school on volunteerism. Youth work as Volunteer Advisors during an afternoon shift, or volunteer in the VRIS office. During our Christmas Fund season, youth and their parents can volunteer together in the toy room, paint windows at the Auto Mall, or wrap gifts, among other volunteer roles.

**A mature volunteer-base** – The seniors' population is also another area where VRIS has noticed significant change. The population aged 55-64 has seen the highest level of growth. However, in Richmond, and nationally, community agencies are finding it difficult to reach soon-to-retire or newly retired individuals to volunteer. Our Leadership Richmond – *Next* module is targeted to professionals aged 50 and over who want to contribute to the community by providing their skills and expertise to benefit non-profit agencies. It has been challenging recruiting this population, as conventional methods of advertising such as local newspapers, community bulletin boards, and flyers do not necessarily reach them. New research needs to be conducted to discover how these nearly or newly retired individuals are spending their time, what volunteer opportunities might motivate them to become involved in the community, and how to get this information out to them.

## The Challenge Ahead

Richmond has a strong sense of community and there are many individuals who give their time to assist in different volunteer work. When people mobilize to help people, the definition of the word "community" is fully realized. Bonds are created and form remarkably strong circles of support. VRIS is playing a vital role in this regard by being at the centre of bringing Richmond together. There are unprecedented opportunities for strengthening the community spirit in Richmond and VRIS will continue to develop and strengthen its existing programs looking towards the future for creative ways to strengthen community partnerships and support volunteerism in Richmond.



## **Vancouver: Redefining Volunteerism in the City**

# Vancouver: Redefining Volunteerism in the City

Provided by Volunteer Vancouver

What is the state of volunteering in Vancouver? Recently, our sector has seen numerous shifts: decreased funding, increased scrutiny, more pressure, less hope, and leaders challenged with no time to plan, no new volunteers and not enough money. It's the "no new volunteers" part that is often misunderstood. There is a common myth there is a shortage of people, however:

in a few short months, a team of over 25,000 (an even greater number applied!) enthusiastic, dedicated people will show up to volunteer their time and talent at the 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games.

We see that current structures and practices are not effective in working with today's "new volunteer". As a sector, we continue to seek traditional volunteers and involve them in traditional ways—performing repetitive, often deemed unimportant, work. The people willing to do this are limited.

It's not about supply. It's about demand. There are many people. People who want to be involved in community. People who are passionate about causes. People who have the skill sets, expertise and experience to further our organizational missions. People who are visionaries, strategic thinkers, planners and dreamers who can take on leadership roles, and move our organizations forward.

## Volunteer Vancouver

At Volunteer Vancouver, our passion is people. Working with voluntary sector organizations to engage people and develop leaders—paid and unpaid—at all levels.

Volunteer Vancouver's mission is to inspire and build leadership in the voluntary sector. We do this by making it easy for not-for-profit organizations to lead, plan, govern and work with people in order to deliver their missions.

Volunteer Vancouver works with 500+ member organizations. We work primarily with the (paid and unpaid) leaders within these organizations to maximize people engagement and volunteer involvement. We make it possible for individuals to find opportunities to a) be passionate about an organization's mission b) see how what they do makes a difference c) be engaged in time-specific projects and d) be engaged in a way that involves specific skills and expertise. Volunteer Vancouver also works with corporations interested in playing a vital role in community initiatives and volunteerism.

Programs & Services include:

- Education, mentoring and coaching on board and organizational development
- Board Chair Academy

## Vancouver at a Glance

- Incorporated: 1886
- Population: 578,041
- Total land area: 114.67 km<sup>2</sup>
- Density: 5,335 persons/km<sup>2</sup>

- New Executive Director Institute
- Workshops and customized learning opportunities designed to increase the capacity of organizations to engage talented volunteers
- GoVolunteer.ca: an online volunteer opportunities database
- A library of resources on not-for-profit management and the voluntary sector
- Vantage Point: a newsletter focused on issues facing the voluntary sector
- Business Consulting: working with businesses to enhance their community investment strategies and employer-supported volunteering initiatives.

## Temperature Check – Climate Change for Volunteering<sup>11</sup>

All volunteering is valuable—be it selling tickets at a fundraiser, preparing the field for a sporting event, mentoring youth, or lending strategic knowledge to an organization trying to save their little piece of the world.

From Volunteer Vancouver's perspective, volunteerism needs drastic, immediate change to survive, very much like the global environmental situation we are facing. The trends are ominous with less people doing more work<sup>12</sup> at a time when we need all hands on deck, but like the environment, there is hope and there are solutions. We need individual awareness, personal action, along with political and corporate support and commitment.

We know that more people than ever are engaged in their community, whether it be helping a neighbour or creating an online petition. Canadians—and Vancouverites, in particular, are involved. However, the traditional volunteer structures that rely on incredibly involved volunteers are struggling. Whether it is a lack of people willing to serve on boards or a shortage of people willing to make sandwiches for a soup kitchen every week, we have a problem.

Not-for-profit organizations must respond to the changing demographics of volunteers and create meaningful, short-term projects which truly challenge and address the individual skills of volunteers. Increased vigilance is required to ensure we do not destroy the magic of volunteering by creating unnecessary systems and bureaucracy that can end up stifling the process of engaging people.

## Volunteering Redefined<sup>13</sup>

Community Engagement: the engagement of citizens in the betterment of their communities and support for others in their neighbourhoods, cities, provinces, country and across the world.

1. Citizenship - Personally driven efforts like helping your neighbour with errands
2. Organized Volunteering - Volunteering of time and energy to organizations with mandates focused in areas in which one cares like coaching the local soccer team or volunteering at a local shelter.
3. Knowledge Philanthropy – The donation of one's knowledge, skill and experience to organized

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from an opinion expressed by Volunteer Barney Ellis-Perry in a 2007 issue of Vantage Point

<sup>12</sup> 2004 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering & Participating: 11% of Canadians account for 77% of all volunteer hours; in BC 10% of the population volunteer 54% of the hours.

<sup>13</sup> Proposed "community engagement" language by Volunteer Omar Ladak

community building efforts like building a marketing program or sitting on a board.

4. Financial Philanthropy – Financial donations made to causes which one believes in.

“Community Engagement” encompasses all four and Volunteer Vancouver strives to foster and intensify Community Engagement by:

- Recognizing and applauding **Citizenship**
- Supporting and enabling **Organized Volunteering**
- Encouraging, promoting and facilitating **Knowledge Philanthropy** (our focus)

## Trends in Volunteering: The People & Challenging Organizations to Step Up

Volunteerism is experiencing a paradigm shift.

The way people want to be engaged is changing. The next generation of volunteers want to lead projects, develop strategies and solve complex problems. They are young professionals looking to balance their lives with meaningful work. They are baby boomers looking for the next challenge. They may be teachers, lawyers, accountants, writers, database architects or website gurus. They share a common desire of wanting to connect to a cause. They seek project-based, time-specific opportunities, and they are attracted to strong organizations.

Volunteer Vancouver suggests organizations integrate all the people—paid and unpaid—who work for the cause and create a true “people-first” culture. This is a philosophy that views the world through A People Lens© first, before the financial lens. It is about building and growing an organizational structure that engages a new kind of workforce. It is about deliberately determining which people have the skill sets and talents our organizations require to deliver our missions.


This is really about a new way for CEOs and Executive Directors to lead. It means organizational leaders must be intentional and strategic about involving people and their talents.

People are the competitive advantage of the not-for-profit sector. By engaging specifically-skilled volunteers who work on a project-by-project basis—it is possible to engage hundreds of short-term volunteers every year. Every person who has a positive experience with an organization becomes a “raving fan”. This is an opportunity to not only hire the community’s best talent for free, but also to build a powerful word-of-mouth marketing campaign.

Organizations are our primary customers and our challenges going forward include ensuring more organizations adopt a people-first philosophy in order to further their missions. This includes responding to the changing demographics/“next generation” of volunteers—who could be approaching retirement, or in their early 20s and recently entered the workforce. Their commonality is in what they seek in a volunteer role: something knowledge/skill-related, project-based, time-specific and connected to mission.

Some of Vancouver’s organizations have clearly “dove in” and are fully-embracing skilled volunteer engagement





and living the people-first philosophy. A growing number of organizations are “swimming” — meaning they are reading, taking workshops, talking about it within their organizations and trying new approaches. And many more organizations are still “playing on the shore” — meaning they might be aware of the major paradigm shift happening but they have yet to fully embrace a plan that will allow their organization to reap the rewards.

# Moving Forward

There is a pressing need for more research and knowledge on volunteerism in BC. Different sectors are trying to understand how to adapt their organizations' volunteer programs to keep up with the changes, and to sustain volunteerism. As the Federation of Community Social Services of BC recently stated, "In order to understand what we need to do to create and support a sustainable supply of volunteers for the community social services sector, research will need to focus on who makes up the current supply of volunteers in the sector, why they joined, what makes them stay, and what would cause them to leave. We also need to explore ways of engaging new sources of volunteers, and what kinds of resources would be needed to support these groups as a viable and healthy volunteer resource."<sup>14</sup>

Future BC State of Volunteering reports should provide some momentum around further research. The 2008 report has led Volunteer BC to call for increased attention to the following:

- 1. *Sharing and spreading best practices*** – Communicating success stories to other communities can help other organizations introduce new methods for volunteer recruitment, retention and effective management. Forums where organizations can come together, train each other, exhibit unique strategies, and learn collectively are much needed, but hard to come by in a sector strapped for resources and bracing for harder economic times ahead.
- 2. *Telling your story*** – Volunteers are often invisible to the public eye, rather forming the quiet backbone that keeps critical services and programs running smoothly. Finding ways to communicate more broadly the invaluable roles played by volunteers, and the many opportunities out there for those who take up the volunteer mantle, will be paramount if we are to intervene in the diminishing force of volunteers in BC.
- 3. *Collaborating and partnering*** – Many organizations and communities that have been most successful in energizing and involving volunteers have been those successful in initiating partnerships with other organizations, with businesses (such as for employer-supported volunteering), or with local government. It will be increasingly necessary to think strategically around how resources can be pooled, new volunteer populations can be engaged, and the expertise and networks of other institutions can be mobilized in the service of the organization's mission.
- 4. *Focusing outside Metro Vancouver*** – Communities outside of the province's largest urban centre have provided some of the most inspiring stories and examples of volunteering in their communities (many of them available in the full local reports found at [www.bcstateofvolunteering.org](http://www.bcstateofvolunteering.org)). Concurrently, they also highlighted areas where further supports and guidance are needed. Mechanisms need to be established or enhanced that help share and grow the assets found outside Metro Vancouver and to further make accessible training and tools that are needed. Rural organizations tell us that there is a shortage of in-person training opportunities that can help organizations develop and run volunteer programs which excel.
- 5. *Diversifying the volunteer population*** – In many communities, the volunteer population does not reflect the general population. Agencies, supported by volunteer centres, need to find ways of making

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14 [http://www.fcssbc.ca/uploads/fs15\\_volunteerism.pdf](http://www.fcssbc.ca/uploads/fs15_volunteerism.pdf)

their volunteer programs accessible to different groups – whether men and women, families, older people, volunteers with disabilities, or different ethnic communities. They need to find effective ways of reaching out to these different groups to communicate the message that they are needed, and valued, as volunteers.

- 6. *Bracing for what changes the new economic realities will bring*** – Many communities have voiced concerns about what the economic downturn will mean for their residents, their families, and the community organizations that are there to serve and support them. The changing economy will likely add further changes to volunteering in the province. Most likely, these organizations will experience pressure on their budgets as well as pressure on their volunteer programs to serve more people with fewer resources. However, pressures on volunteer recruitment and retention may materialize in two very distinct ways. There will inevitably be an influx of new potential volunteers, as many individuals who find themselves unemployed may look to volunteering to keep their skills sharp, their experience relevant, or simply to keep busy. However, in other communities, the pool of volunteers will shrink, as volunteers leave to find employment elsewhere. Preparing for either scenario becomes equally important as coping with the increased demand for services.

## The Volunteer Centre Opportunity Listings Tool

While VolWeb.ca is exclusively for volunteering for events, the VolWeb.ca's Volunteer Centre Opportunity Listings Tool helps link volunteers to the countless other volunteer opportunities in their community. An extension to the VolWeb.ca online technology, 2010 Legacies Now partnered with several volunteer centres around the province to build a tool that helps volunteer centres and their members manage their volunteer positions – all online, quickly and easily. The Listings Tool gives a non-profit organization the ability to create a new volunteer position, change information on a posting and remove positions that no longer need filling. For potential volunteers, each volunteer centre's custom website provides up-to-date information and the ability to search for open positions based on interests and availability. 2010 Legacies Now and Volunteer BC are partners in promoting and implementing this tool throughout the province, with 10 volunteer centres utilizing the Listings Tool to promote volunteer opportunities in their community.



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