

The Meaning of Volunteering

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Examining the Meaning of Volunteering to New Canadians

Project funding has been provided by
Ontario Canadian Volunteerism Initiative

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to all of the volunteers who played a role in completing this study. Special thanks to all the support provided by Pillar - Voluntary Sector Network's Research Committee and Pillar's administrative and research volunteers.

Pillar's Research Committee:

- Estela Quintero
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Pillar's administrative and research team who assisted with the study:

- Mindy Gordon
- Ryan Huffman
- Gilles Longtin

This report is also dedicated to all those who participated in the study either through focus groups, personal interviews, or by completing the questionnaire.

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Thank you everyone for all of your assistance.

Executive Summary

We anticipate that empowering leaders of organizations with the understanding of what volunteering means to a new Canadian, and what their past experiences have been in their country of origin, will lead to more successful recruitment and better integration of new Canadians into organizations. This small sampling of new Canadians in London provided us with some interesting insights into the messages they are hearing when we, as Canadians, talk about volunteering.

This document highlights the results of several conversations we had with new Canadians about what *The Meaning of Volunteering* is for them.

The project set out to gain insight into these questions:

- Do we understand the experiences immigrants have had both in their country of origin and here in Canada related to volunteering?
- How have these experiences had an impact upon the understanding of volunteering for the new Canadian?
- Are the current messages we use to solicit volunteers from this population working?

We asked new Canadians if volunteering existed in their country of origin and what their view is of volunteering in Canada. Their stories are used throughout this report to illustrate their experiences.

Introduction

Background

Pillar – Voluntary Sector Network has undertaken this research with funding from the Ontario Network of the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative.

“Canadians have a rich history of volunteering and community involvement. From soup kitchens to volunteer fire departments, helpful neighbours to dedicated drivers, volunteers are part of Canada’s way of life.

There are as many reasons to volunteer as there are volunteers. More than 6.5 million Canadians use their knowledge, skills, abilities, talents, and interests to contribute to their communities. Teaching a young person life skills, coaching gymnastics, coordinating a fundraising event, cleaning up a park, helping out in an emergency—there are endless ways that Canadians get involved.

Volunteers make a meaningful contribution by actively participating in Canadian communities; their combined efforts help to strengthen the fabric of Canadian society and build a prosperous future.

Community organizations work to provide volunteers meaningful volunteer opportunities, a safe and supportive environment, a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and a warm thank you for their contribution.

Today, Canadians are looking for ways they can make a difference in their communities and organizations are working to involve more volunteers.

In 2002, The Government of Canada selected Volunteer Canada and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy to deliver the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI), a program designed to encourage Canadians to volunteer and to help more organizations involve volunteers.

The Canada Volunteerism Initiative

The CVI is a practical way to invest in community and in volunteers. The goals of the program are:

- to encourage Canadians to volunteer with organizations
- to improve the capacity of organizations to involve volunteers
- to enhance the experience of volunteering

The Local Networks are made up of individuals from not-for-profit and charitable organizations of all types and sizes—food banks and literacy groups to well-known national charities.

These are the champions that the CVI relies on to identify volunteer priorities in their communities. The Local Networks advise on national programs and develop an action plan for volunteerism in each province or territory. It is through their participation that CVI gains a regionally sensitive understanding of volunteers and organizations that involve volunteers.

The Knowledge Development Centre is working to build the body of knowledge on volunteering and volunteerism in Canada and to transfer this knowledge to voluntary organizations to improve their capacity to benefit Canadians. The Knowledge Development Centre funds community-based and national research projects related to volunteerism.”¹

Pillar – Voluntary Sector Network identified a need to learn more about the experiences of new Canadians with volunteering in their countries of origin. From the research study *The First Decade of Volunteering*, participants’ anecdotal stories led us to believe that the newcomers’ previous experiences shape how they view volunteering in Canada.

¹ <http://www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/canvol-init/canvol-init.php>

The Context

From 1991 to 2000, 2.2 million new immigrants came to Canada. One-fifth of Canada's population is foreign born.²

London has enjoyed a relatively high proportion of the immigrant skills coming to Ontario. Currently 20% of London residents are immigrants. The 2001 Census has shown that between 1991 and 2001, 18,475 new Canadians came to London. Major immigrant groups during this time period include: Poland; China; Yugoslavia; Bosnia; Herzegovina; Iraq; United States; Vietnam; Iran; Lebanon; India³

London study results revealed over 30% of organizations recruited at least one newcomer (someone in Canada for less than 3 years) as a volunteer. Newcomers were likely to be involved as service/frontline volunteers (22% of organizations recruited at least one newcomer volunteer and an average of 35 newcomers volunteered as service/frontline volunteers per organization) and fundraisers (9% of organizations recruited at least one newcomer volunteer and an average of 28 newcomers volunteered as fundraisers per organization.) Fewer than 10% of organizations recruited at least one newcomer to their Board of Directors.⁴

Organizations use messages to recruit volunteers; to date those messages have reflected for the most part the Canadian context of volunteering. If we are to bring the numbers of newcomer volunteers involved with our organizations in line with the numbers they represent in our communities then we need to alter the way in which we recruit volunteers and the messages we use to target them.

Objective

The objective of Pillar's study, *The Meaning of Volunteering*, was to determine how new Canadians (immigrants to Canada within the last ten years) have experienced volunteering in their country of origin and how that might shape their view of volunteering in Canada. This information would then help to create and support a relationship where both the volunteer and the organization could benefit.

In order to do this, it was important to first understand what perceptions new Canadians have of the word "volunteering" from their country of origin and then discover how that affected their perception of volunteering once they arrived in Canada. This would be achieved through interviews with new Canadian individuals. The interviews would also help us to understand what, if any, association volunteering has with communist government regimes, socio-economic status, cultural beliefs, etc.

We hoped that by learning more about the new Canadians' perceptions, Pillar could offer suggestions to volunteerism advocates in Canada, especially in London, Ontario. This would include how messages should be packaged and what messages will have the greatest impact on the immigrant population. In addition, Pillar could learn how to encourage new Canadians to take advantage of the many volunteer positions available in London, Ontario.

² StatsCan 2003: 2001 Census Canada's Ethnocultural portrait

³ "Permanent Residents Destined to Selected Communities by Country of Citizenship", [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#), 2003.

⁴ "London's Voluntary Sector Employment and Training Needs Study", [Pillar – Voluntary Sector Network](#), 2004.

Methodology

Pillar designed a three-page questionnaire and distributed it to immigrants who had been in Canada for 10 years or less. Pillar's Research Team visited ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and a Conversation Circle to recruit respondents and disseminated the questionnaire via immigrant serving organizations, ESL classes, Pillar's own volunteers and other natural networks. When possible, a member of the Research Team would first share information about volunteering with new immigrants and then distribute the questionnaire. Since most of these respondents were learning English, the research team went through each question with respondents and addressed concerns along the way.

Before designing the questionnaires, information gathering interviews were conducted with new Canadians. Three focus groups were scheduled to discuss some of the experiences and to gain insights into the data collected. However none of the focus groups were very successful; it was discovered that the immigrants were not comfortable having the discussions about volunteering in larger groups. To compensate, personal interviews were conducted with some respondents to seek a deeper understanding of the experiences of the New Canadian and asked that respondents consider creating their volunteering story.

In addition, a Researcher met with the author of *The First Decade of Volunteering* to discuss related issues that emerged during that study.

Results from all sources have been combined to create the final report which includes volunteer stories and a presentation.

Results

Understanding the Concept of Volunteering

New Canadians wanted to have explained to them the motivations of volunteering, how it originated in Canada, and how to communicate this to others in their cultural/religious institutions and families. This desire was expressed by nearly all respondents. Many respondents indicated that while they recognized the value of volunteering to increase their language skills, gain Canadian work experience and other benefits, they did not know how to communicate that with others.

In one example, a respondent stopped volunteering because her family didn't understand the concept and she indicated that she lacked information to share with them to help them understand why volunteering is important. In another example a respondent indicated that in his religious institution it was difficult to get people to come forward and volunteer for similar reasons.

Religion And Volunteering

A Muslim respondent from Somalia described volunteering as an "act of charity". This is an expression Canadians commonly use to describe people giving freely of their time. To this respondent, the expression better reflected one's bid for the "janaat" or heaven which is accomplished through an act of giving freely of one's time. For the respondent, this was not tied to community good but more to the individual benefit of being granted entry into "heaven".

A respondent talked about how in his Islamic religion men and women don't touch one another unless married or family members. This has affected his interest level in volunteering. An interview respondent indicated that if he tries to preserve his religious beliefs volunteering is very difficult.

"Many Canadians do not yet understand our religious practices, therefore if I decline to shake the hand of the person interviewing me because she is a woman I have found that I am less likely to be viewed favourably for the volunteer position. I find this especially true if the position requires interaction with people being served by the agency because they will not understand my choice to not shake hands."

Interview Respondent, Somalia

Some respondents who practiced religion told us that their religious institutions supported the concept of volunteering or giving freely of time, money or possessions. However, many respondents indicated that religious practice was not permitted in their country of origin.

Experiences in Home Country and Volunteering

Respondents from Colombia indicated that people there are not likely able to volunteer due to the economic conditions of the country. High levels of poverty prevent individuals from contributing their time at no pay. Respondents indicated that they may do smaller random acts of kindness for one another. Organized volunteering there is rare and is exclusive to those of affluence.

In communist regime countries, people are concerned about how the government views them whereas in Canada people tend to care more about how their neighbour views them. When a communist government views people who gather together as suspicious, as illustrated by the story of the respondent from Somalia below, we can see how enormous a shift in thinking new Canadians coming from this background must make.

"My name is Baid I am a scientist with a University education. My country of Somalia is under a communist regime. The government is therefore very suspicious of its people. I recall a group of university students who gathered together to clean up one of our local hospitals. All of them were very proud of what they had done to

improve our community. The government though was suspicious of why they had done this and many of them were harassed and two of them were killed. When people do things on their own by themselves it is okay and not viewed in a bad way, often people will help one another, but there is no formal gathering of many volunteers for one task because of the government. Since coming to Canada I have been very impressed with the many organizations that have formalized volunteering. It is great to be able to come together with many people in order to help others."

In Somalia, because government is the driving force behind work for no pay the people feel as though they are being taken advantage of and, therefore, they will often look like they are working but not really be working. This illustrates that people need to significantly shift their thinking to understand volunteering as beneficial to them and not their new country taking advantage of them too.

In Canada we have an evolved set of labour laws and protection for people, but in other countries this does not exist and people can be forced to work for no pay. In China, people are told that they must assist an employer at no pay. An example of this is provided below.

"My parents had to work for their boss with no pay. After an earthquake their boss would say you must come and walk around the building tonight from this time to this time and tomorrow it will be you that will come, and so on."

Interview Respondent, China

In Canada, volunteering is perceived as good and people who volunteer are considered to be unselfish in nature. In some countries, people volunteer to maintain their image and standing in the community.

"To rich people volunteering means image, for politicians it means votes."

Questionnaire Respondent,
Unspecified Country of Origin

"Some politician does (Volunteer) for image and some for famous to become like T.V. or movie stars."

Questionnaire Respondent,
Unspecified Country of Origin

Volunteering is evolving in some countries that previously didn't have volunteer programs. In post-war Iran, female volunteers are undertaking health education.

*"It is worthwhile to review the officially stated criteria, though not always observed, as they are quite significant. The volunteer women should be married with some children (but not too many), they should be educated at least to the level of reading and writing. They should have a good standing in the community, be interested and enthusiastic in participating in the program and have the permission of their husbands."*⁵

The aforementioned selection criteria affect the perceptions of female newcomers from Iran about volunteering and whether or not they can volunteer.

A respondent from Korea indicated that volunteering exists there and has its roots in responding to the needs of the community following the Korean War. Students in both elementary and middle school are encouraged to volunteer as a way of achieving higher grades.

Sex Stereotyping in Volunteering

In some countries there are very separate roles for male and female volunteers; these roles are based on old stereotypes of gender. Men are seen volunteering on construction sites and women are seen cleaning or serving meals. In other countries, women are seen as volunteering more often because of similar stereotypes as indicated by this respondent:

"I think volunteering does differ from group to group because only the people who have the facilities (rich people) are the ones who can do this. But in other cases women volunteer because they are more sensitive and caring, so they always want to help their community or whoever they can."

Conversation Circle Respondent, Columbia

"In India, women who are homemakers volunteer together in 'Ladies Club' to do good works together once their children have gone off to school."

Interview Respondent, India

Canadian Experience of Volunteering

Respondents indicated that they admired the formal organization of volunteering in Canada. The structure and associated screening and training left them feeling valued and respected by the organizations for which they volunteer. Respondents indicated that in Canada volunteers were treated more professionally than in their countries.

Some respondents viewed volunteering as a requirement in Ontario. Some referred to the Ontario Works requirements, while others referred to the high school requirements, and still others referred to the requirements of their VISA. After discussing the differences between volunteering and mandated placements, respondents understood the differences between volunteering and placements. However, as indicated by one respondent, the two concepts were often blurred by both government and those mandated to perform a placement.

"One thing, I believe, everyone and especially Canadian government at all levels should be aware of and keep in mind is that volunteerism is a great achievement and product of democracy. Though in all cultures people help their friends and neighbours without being paid just because of the altruistic nature of most humans, under totalitarian regimes people are simply prohibited to get together and decide to form an organization to help their less fortunate brothers. In such countries

⁵ Volunteer health workers in Iran as social activists: Can "governmental non-governmental organisations" be agents of democratisation? Homa Hoodfar WLUML Occasional Paper No.10, December 1998

'volunteering' is not an expression of a free will, as it should be by definition, but dictated by the government and eventually resented by most people.

In Canada, everyone should be aware that they have the privilege of volunteering due to the democratic nature of the society, as an extension of the freedom of thought, speech, and peaceful assembly. This is why the government should stay away from using the word when it comes to compulsory 'volunteering' by students, social assistant recipients and immigrants. Anything imposed by some kind of an authority cannot be of a free will, so it cannot be volunteering."

Questionnaire Respondent, Moldova

The concern that their skills were not really valued or well utilized by the organizations they volunteered with arose repeatedly in the discussions with respondents. There was also discontent that employers in Canada didn't recognize the skills or experience they brought from other countries. This lack of effective use of their skills left new Canadians feeling devalued by our community.

"I also find that in many cases the volunteering is done at a very basic level, without real utilization of volunteers' skills, especially those of professionals. Some people are quite happy with this while others feel dissatisfied and not useful enough."

Questionnaire Respondent, Moldova

Yet another respondent viewed things differently.

"Volunteering has special meaning to newcomers in Canada. On the one hand, it is an effective way for them to get involved in the community; on the other hand, it also gives the community an opportunity to understand diversity and value human capital."

Questionnaire Respondent, China

Respondents indicated that they were very grateful to the many volunteers who helped them along the way once they arrived in

Canada. This appreciation has motivated them to want to assist others through volunteering in order to give back what they have received.

"The volunteer in Canada helped when I arrived here, so it's now the time to help other person by volunteering."

Conversation Circle Respondent, Morocco

The Economics of Volunteering

Respondents indicated that they have found it difficult to focus on volunteering during the first 5 years of coming to Canada. Respondents discussed how their focus was on meeting their families' needs for shelter, food and clothing which includes trying to obtain employment in their field of expertise.

"The central debate in the literature about the economic performance of immigrants is whether recent immigrants are worse off than earlier cohorts. While the overall immigrant population does comparatively well in terms of employment and income, the data point to sharp differences when the focus is on more recent immigration (generally defined as those in Canada for 10 years or less). In a recent study of urban poverty in Canada, Lee (2000) found that the poverty rate among recent immigrants is significantly higher than the Canadian average (52.1 percent compared with 24.5 percent for all city residents). This is especially true for visible minorities, who comprise the majority of recent immigrants. Using 1991 census data, Kazemipur and Halli (2001) found a significantly higher poverty rate for newcomers from South-East Asian (30.8%), Arab (40.9%), Latin American (38.8%) and Black/Caribbean (29.4%) countries than for the Canadian average. Similar results are found in studies comparing employment rates of recent cohorts with previous ones (Verma and Chan, 2000). Using 1991 census data, Verma and Chan (2000) showed substantially higher unemployment rates

for visible minorities (up to 17 percent for certain groups).⁶

One respondent talked about the difficulty of achieving economic stability.

"The money they (immigrants) are supposed to bring with them normally will not last for more than a few months and after that they are supposed to have jobs and support themselves. You know that for many people it does not happen. They are desperate to find jobs, and often just any job, not the one they were trained as professionals. By bringing immigrants in and then leaving them to struggle alone, often forcing them to apply for social assistance, the government, in fact, is loosing a tremendous potential contribution by the immigrants, monetary (taxes) and socially wise. Non-profit organizations, working hard as they do, can only help a small percentage of immigrants to adapt and become full members of the society. And until the immigrants feel like valuable and needed members of the society, they will not be able to volunteer to the true meaning of the word."

Interview Respondent, Moldova

One respondent from Bosnia expressed concern that Canada has given over too many jobs to volunteers.

"Voluntary work is welcome everywhere and in that way many companies save money because they get unpaid workers. Cut voluntary jobs and give more chances to people to be hired and paid for their work."

Questionnaire Respondent, Bosnia

Upon further discussion with this respondent she explained that in Bosnia, before she left 10 years ago, everyone had jobs and there was little gap between income brackets. Many people performed informal acts of helping before the change in government. Since a change in government, there were few jobs and

people were encouraged to volunteer and didn't get paid.

One might conclude then that this experience has tainted how she views volunteering. This respondent confirmed that in her first few years in Canada this was the case, but after 8 years in Canada she understands the value of volunteering.

Finding Out about Volunteering

When respondents were asked how they learned about volunteering, most indicated that they first learned about volunteering through other new Canadians. However, some referred to the marketing campaigns used by organizations locally and by Volunteer Canada nationally.

"I was surprised to see so many ads for volunteering. I see an ad on television for a woman who has just finished baking muffins – yes I like the ad – it is very common for Canadians to contribute their time, money, and knowledge to their local community."

Interview Respondent, China

"Canada has lots of advertising about volunteering in Canada – newspapers, radio, television. In London I see ads in 'The Londoner' and on Rogers."

Interview Respondent, Bosnia

One recommendation from a respondent could assist immigrants in making the transition to volunteering and working.

"In my opinion, there should be a special governmental program for immigrants, such as 'Cultural Immersion and Skills Development' where newcomers to Canada could learn about the culture, develop and enhance their skills through lectures and training in class, internship-like on the job training and certification according to the profession/trade, and social immersion through working in a community under supervision of a trained volunteer mentor. This program should be considered as a step to volunteering, teaching immigrants the value of volunteering in a democratic society. Immigrants should not feel being

⁶ Martin Papillon, "Immigration, Diversity & Social Inclusion in Canada's Cities", CPRN Discussion Paper No. F27. December 2002: 9-10

pushed, but instead being helped to develop valuable skills, both professional and social. This program can be given through existing organizations, but it should be centrally developed, fairly standard, and available to all immigrants willing to use it."

Interview Respondent, Moldova

Other respondents talked about the difficulty they have had in finding the right volunteer opportunity for them. Many indicated that the opportunities they pursued didn't always meet their needs.

"When I came to Canada I started looking for volunteer positions by myself. I found one, but it wasn't what I was expecting, later on I went to Pathways and they found a placement for me which I enjoy a lot and it has helped me develop my skills for what I want to do in my future career area."

Conversation Circle Respondent, Colombia

Discussion and Conclusions

New Canadians are faced with a very frustrating process when coming to Canada. They are expected to find jobs in order to support their families, but most often they are turned away by Canadian employers who indicate they are looking for people with Canadian work experience. The applicant is left feeling that they must gain this experience through volunteer opportunities. However, for many the concept of volunteerism is completely new to them or has a totally different meaning. New Canadians are then left to decide if they will work for "free" or continue to search for paid employment. Since most are struggling to provide the necessities for their families they will continue to look for employment. Once their savings have run out many must turn to social assistance. Social assistance though requires them to work for "free" in a placement. This leaves the new Canadian feeling taken advantage of by the new country they have chosen as home for themselves and their families.

From our discussions with new Canadians we have learned that they are often discouraged from volunteering by family members and other members of the community who lack an understanding of the concept of volunteering and the important role volunteering can play in integrating more fully into the community. As part of providing immigrants with the tools to integrate into the Canadian culture we can provide them with the necessary tools to inform and educate themselves and others about volunteering, its origins and motivations.

The economic plight of some countries has played a significant role in shaping the understanding that people from those countries have about volunteerism. It is important to consider how to motivate these individuals to give freely of their time, energy and skills when doing so in their country of origin was tied directly to an individual's economic status in the community.

Examining the experiences of individuals from countries under communist regime has led to a greater understanding of the fear that can be generated by organizing together to contribute one's time, energy and skills. If you have witnessed others, who contributed to the common good, harassed or killed by the government it is not surprising that that same fear would influence your decision-making about volunteering in this new country of Canada. The research also revealed that people become protective of their time and the contributions that they make at the request of government. This too influences their decisions to volunteer in Canada if they perceive the requests to volunteer as coming from a government body.

Language plays an important role in everything that we do and every aspect has unique terminology, too. For example, in the voluntary sector we use numerous acronyms to describe various organizations (WWF: World Wildlife Foundation), positions (ED: Executive Director), forms (IF: Intake Form). For a person whose first language isn't English these acronyms and unfamiliar terms are even more complex.

"There are some important considerations when matching someone who is learning English with a volunteer placement. It is important to recognize that 'speaking with an accent does not mean that the individual is not proficient in English.' To find a good match for a volunteer position, it is essential to look carefully at the language needs required by the volunteer position, and also to recognize the skills the person does possess. Comparing the language needs of the position and the skills of the individual will help to ascertain the appropriateness of the match. If the 'fit' between volunteer and placement is not right, it is important to clearly suggest other options. Also, applying for a volunteer job may be an intimidating experience for an individual with limited English skills, partly because of a lack of familiarity with the process. It is important to recognize this unfamiliarity, to explain

the process with clarity, and to support the individual however possible."⁷

Our research has also shed light on how some religious practices can affect one's decision to volunteer. It is likely that there are other religious practices or religious doctrines that affect an individual's understanding of volunteerism in Canada and should be explored further. It is important that we spend time to educate ourselves about the religious and cultural norms from other countries. Organizations need to be respectful of cultural and religious differences such as with Islam where men and women who are neither family nor married don't touch or, in other cultures, where eye contact is considered disrespectful.

Respondents revealed that Canada's strength lies in the formal processes and structures that it has developed for volunteerism programs. These formalized systems leave volunteers feeling valued and respected by the organizations for which they contribute time, energy and skills. The formalized volunteer programs that exist respond to numerous community needs including those of new immigrants.

The experience of having been helped by volunteers to settle into a new community makes respondents want to give back to society through volunteerism. It is important then that they are given an accurate picture of what volunteerism means. Volunteers could discuss their involvement with new Canadians and share what is motivating them to volunteer. It is also important to discuss the differences with new Canadians between volunteering and mandated placements.

Coming from countries with high employment and no formalized volunteerism programs, immigrants who are unable to find employment in Canada and are often encouraged to volunteer in our highly formalized volunteerism

⁷ Wendy Barbulak, "Connecting Volunteers with Your Community: A Research Project for Volunteer Victoria", Volunteer Victoria, 2003.

programs. They might then draw the conclusion that "here I must work for free." Volunteerism advocates need to work hard to ensure that immigrants are not left feeling taken advantage of by volunteerism. More positively, immigrants who do find work in the career they have chosen through volunteerism will likely become excellent advocates for volunteerism.

Concern was evident from respondents that, while they are talented, educated, knowledgeable people, when they do decide to volunteer they want their talents and skills put to effective use. Organizations need to take stock of the skills, experience, and knowledge that is available from the volunteer applicant and ensure that the right fit is found between those and the volunteer position.

"As well, the issue of immigrant settlement is evolving as one of the most important questions of public policy in Canada. Canada is experiencing serious and increasing difficulties in making full use of the skills and talents of our newcomers in both the economic sphere and in public life in general. Simultaneously, immigrant and refugee communities and their spokespersons are expressing a growing sense of frustration, even despair, at the barriers they encounter to full participation in all domains of Canadian life."⁸

⁸Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond, "Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada", Perspectives on Social Inclusion. 2003: 15

Summary

"[Canada] contains the globe within its borders, and Canadians have learned that their two international languages and their diversity are a comparative advantage and a source of continuing creativity and innovation."⁹

Opportunities exist for organizations to become better informed about the past experiences of the new Canadian and to use this information to shape the marketing and volunteer recruitment campaigns they develop. It is evident that new Canadians are misinterpreting some of the messages they receive or they receive the wrong message about mandated placements. This leads to confusion about the role of mandated placements vs. volunteerism. Advocates for volunteerism in Canada need to identify ways to combat this either through increased awareness campaigns or political lobbying for change.

It is imperative that new Canadians are empowered with the knowledge they need to inform and educate their families and religious institutions about the origins of volunteering in Canada and its importance in our culture. Appendix 1 can assist readers in beginning that education process. However, it is also important that readers continue to educate themselves about the cultural, political, religious and social norms of other countries. Each story told by respondents is a picture of life in that country at the time they were there. We have learned that shifts can occur very quickly in countries and change this picture.

General marketing campaigns about volunteerism are reaching new Canadians; however, these campaigns are not diffusing the stereotypes that new Canadians have about volunteering from their own experiences in another country. New Canadians have a wealth of experience, knowledge and skill to offer organizations. It is imperative that organizations develop targeted marketing campaigns to assist the

new Canadian in understanding volunteerism in Canada if they wish to tap into this resource.

"According to the 2000 NSGVP, those born outside Canada were more likely to say that they didn't volunteer because they did not know how to get involved. One third (33%) of non-volunteers born outside Canada cited this reason, compared to just 10% of Canadian-born non-volunteers."¹⁰

"Indeed, recent immigrants to Canada were more likely than established immigrants to say that they did not volunteer because they:

- had not been asked (48% of recent immigrant non-volunteers vs. 34% of established immigrant volunteers);
- did not know how to become involved (41% vs. 23%); or,
- had concerns about the financial costs of volunteering (26% vs. 13%)."¹¹

Respondents used terms like "act of charity" and "act of kindness" to describe giving freely of their time, energy and skills. This is different from the current marketing campaigns being used by many organizations in Canada.

Enormous opportunities exist for professional associations, voluntary organizations, government, immigrant serving organizations, and business to work together to develop a program that would encompass many of the concerns raised by made by respondents. Working collectively real progress can be made towards fuller integration of new Canadians into our communities for all aspects of their life.

This researcher is encouraged by many of the local initiatives being developed in London that examine how our community can support the hard work of our immigrants to be contributing members of our community. Programs like the

⁹ Jean Chrétien, "The Canadian Way in the 21st Century." [Berlin] June 2000. <<http://www.pm.gc.ca>>

¹⁰ Mc Clintock, Norah. "Understanding Canadian Volunteers NSGVP". [Canadian Center for Philanthropy](#). 2004, July 2004: 20

¹¹ Mc Clintock, Norah. "Understanding Canadian Volunteers NSGVP". [Canadian Center for Philanthropy](#). 2004, July 2004: 5.

“Passages to Canada” employer module which trains employers who have had success with hiring new Canadians to give presentations to Chambers of Commerce, Business and professional Associations. The mentoring/buddy program which partners a new Canadian with someone inside an organization in a related field to train them in the organizational work culture, terminology specific to that career, and the related policies and processes. There are local voluntary organizations that have developed group volunteering opportunities to enable new Canadians to

come together to share in an experience of helping. Following the opportunity the group is able to discuss the experience with one another and with the staff of the organization. These are only a few of the innovative programs that have been developed. By working together we can develop a shared understanding of where each of us has come from and how together we can overcome any obstacles through innovative and responsive programming and, most importantly, by listening to the stories that shape our understanding.

Appendix 1

Volunteering in other countries

This section has been provided as supplemental information for purposes of further investigation by the reader.

We did some research to find out what volunteering is like in other countries. Several websites were consulted and the results show that overall the concept of helping others without pay is common in most countries. We also found there are differing motivations for volunteering based on culture and government ideology.

"Japan has had a long tradition of putting the government above the people. In Japan volunteerism is seen more in terms of service and sacrifice. In Japan, families and neighbors have handled problems that arise."¹²

"Although there is a long tradition of community action and mutual aid in Russia, the idea of voluntary activity through organizations and on behalf of specific causes is only now developing. Because the term 'volunteering' is still associated with the Communist regime, it retains largely negative connotations. If a person spoke about doing some volunteering for no reason other than altruism, this was thought of as an odd phenomenon."¹³

Volunteering in India - "People felt it was a 'value based more on a feeling' rather than on an image. Volunteering had its roots in the idea of swantaukhaya, 'one's own happiness lies in another's'. The sense of what volunteering is has been developed through the relationship of 'self to society' and by the fact that many communities in India have made seva, 'service', dana,

'voluntary contribution', and shraamdaan, 'voluntary labour', an intrinsic part of their activities."¹⁴

"14% of Korean adults aged 20 or older volunteered an average 2.2 hours in 1999. Korean adult volunteers are middle class and mostly are housewives (34.1%), self-employed (19.5%), or office workers/engineers (12.2%). Most volunteer activities were done in religious organizations (34.4%), and the next in social service organizations (23.9%), civic organizations (11.2%), public health and medical organizations (5.6%), educational institutions and environmental organizations (5.3% each)."

"The survey found that sixty-four percent of Lao people volunteer on a daily basis. They believe that community participation, solidarity and helping each other is just a part of being a community member and way of life and culture of Lao people. Empathy, altruism, and the desire to improve the quality of life in their communities motivate some volunteers. Others volunteer to develop new skills and knowledge, adding to their experience and credentials. Some Lao people are compelled to volunteer from a sense of social obligation; they may not be deeply committed to volunteering but do so to maintain their image and standing in the community."¹⁵

Cambodia - "The main reason for people to contribute money, rice or labour is to gain merit for the next life. At the same time it is practical: the contributions are used to develop the village in this life and to sustain the institution that enables people to gain merit. Gaining merit is a powerful motivation and is often the main drive for social action. The help that is

¹² "Volunteerism in America and Japan." 14 July. 2004 <<http://www.heartsandminds.org/articles/volunteer.htm>>.

¹³ Priya Lukka and Angela Ellis, "An exclusive construct? Exploring different cultural concepts of volunteering." Institute for Volunteering Research, July 14, 2004 <<http://www.ivr.org.uk/culturalconcepts.htm>>.

¹⁴ Priya Lukka and Angela Ellis, "An exclusive construct? Exploring different cultural concepts of volunteering." Institute for Volunteering Research, July 14, 2004 <<http://www.ivr.org.uk/culturalconcepts.htm>>.

¹⁵ "Status of Volunteerism in the Lao PDR." July 2002, 28 July 2004 <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/02_07_01LAO_StatusofVolunteerism_MeasuringVolunteering.pdf>.

offered is often not only material, but also mental or spiritual: there are older and wiser people you can ask for advice. They take time to talk with you: they are interested in you as a person. They also voice the desire to see their community live in harmony, help the poorest people survive and get a better life. Conservation of traditions and cultural heritage are important as well."¹⁶

Volunteering in Bosnia and Herzegovina - "This fact translates into the conclusion that the concept of volunteerism and volunteers as a human resource base of the community is not fully embraced by the third sector in the BIH society. Volunteers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are motivated for volunteering as they have a need to apply their knowledge and to gain new skills."¹⁷

Hong Kong - "This survey has found that only a quarter (22%) of the respondents have participated in organized volunteering before (donation excluded), whilst over half of them (55%) have participated in some form of mutual aid. All in all, over 60% of the respondents have participated in one form of volunteering activity or another. Reasons for people who participated in any kind of volunteering include, "to help others" (72%) topped the list, followed at a distance by the reasons "to serve the community" (33%) and also "to kill time" (24%)."¹⁸

"69 percent of Kazakhstan's population aged over 18 participated in some form of voluntary activity during 2001. Volunteers' top motivations for doing voluntary work were: the desire to help others (71%); the

desire and opportunity to realize their potential by using their skills and abilities (39%); the need to do something good, change society and the world for the better (36%); and the opportunity to socialize with others, meet new people (28%)."¹⁹

"Mongolia - 11.5 percent of men and 9.5 percent of women tested by the survey have participated in voluntary activity before 1990s. During the years of 1990-2000, 22.6 percent of men and 25.3 percent of women were involved in volunteering. Participation in volunteering reaches at its highest point at middle age of people and it goes down after the age of pension, in general. Respondents valued the benefits of being a volunteer is sharing experience and skills, self-development, meeting new people, seeing the result of what s/he has done."²⁰

"In Albania, volunteering is something belonging to middle school and university educated people who make up more than 80% of volunteers."²¹

Nepal - "The modern form of volunteerism promotes the concept of welfare and external dependency, encourages mobilisation of external volunteers, which is likely to increase external dependency among the people. In the present context, there is a dire need to revisit the concept and definition of volunteer and volunteerism. Voluntary action is not limited only to welfare, essential service delivery, distribution of meals and other

¹⁶ CASLim Sidedine, Heng Kim Van and Judith Zweers, "Volunteer Resurgence in Cambodia." 28 July 2004, <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/KHM020405_IYV_Volunteering_engl.pdf>.

¹⁷ Azra S. Kacapor, "Volunteering in Bosnia and Herzegovina." November 2002, 27 July 2004 <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2003/03_04_15_BIH_volunteerism.pdf>.

¹⁸ The University of Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme "Study on Public's Reception and Perception of Volunteer Services." 04 Aug. 2004, <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/0201205_HK_study.pdf>.

¹⁹ Julian Hansen, Dana Askarbekova, Irina Yerofeeva and Valentina Kurganskaya, "Volunteering in Kazakhstan: Key Findings of a National Survey 2001." 2002, 21 July 2004 <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/02_12_05KAZ_volreport.pdf>.

²⁰ The Statistical Information and Research Department of the Governor's Office of Capital City of Ulaan Baatar, "Sociological Survey on Volunteerism." 5 May 2001, 28 July 2004 <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/MNG021004_IYV_Volunteering_engl.pdf>.

²¹ Zyhdi Dervishi, "VOLUNTEERING IN THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA: REALITY, IDEAS, CHALLENGES." June 2002, 28 July 2004 <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/ALB020612_IYV_VolunteeringReference_engl.pdf>.

materials at the time of emergency. Volunteers at the local level can also be effective in the process of social mobilisation."²²

"19% volunteers in Slovakia. Volunteers work almost exclusively in non-governmental organizations; and often these organizations are completely dependent on the work of their volunteers. The majority of volunteers work in social-care establishments (humanity and charity organizations, self-help groups), where the need for help is most urgent."²³

"The culture of volunteerism in Sri Lanka has continued to be influenced largely by religious ideas and practices, also of a diverse nature and of diverse origins. However *dana* or the practice of sharing and giving is the most dominant motivation in volunteerism and remain the bedrock of volunteerism in the country. Individual volunteerism may be described in terms of motivation, such as, a sense of self-satisfaction, a sense of family or community, arising out of religious motivation, a sense of sharing or giving of one's own free will, a desire to give something back to community/society, a reluctance to join others in volunteerism."²⁴

Ismaili Muslims, Chinese, Latin American, Polish

"Cultural attitudes: In some cultures, 'volunteerism' is not a promoted concept or is seen in a completely different light. Perception varies as widely as 'giving a helping hand' as a courtesy in the Chinese

community, to a religious requirement for Ismaili Muslims, to activities restricted to privileged persons in Latin America, to a negative perception for some Polish immigrants who were forced to volunteer to promote government ideology."²⁵

"In a second study, Moghaddam, Taylor and Lalonde (1987) look at how Iranian immigrants perceive their ethnic associations. This group sees such institutions as a way to obtain a more egalitarian social status for their community or as a way to achieve personal gain. They are more inclined to try to preserve the values of their homeland if they believe they cannot obtain the same advantages on their own. Cultural preservation and ethnic community building are not mechanically related. Cultural differences appear rather to be an ideological factor supporting institutional action and galvanization."²⁶

Lalonde and Cameron (1993) confirm the relationship between a negative perception of the reference group's social status and the development of solidarity. Caribbean and Chinese immigrants, who report being strongly discriminated against, favour community action, unlike other immigrants, who consider themselves less stigmatized (Greek or Italian immigrants).²⁷

"Another study (Labelle and Therrien, 1992; Labelle, Therrien and Lévy, 1994) describes how leaders of ethnic communities perceive their associations. Some of the groups in this study, such as the Italian and Jewish communities, are strongly institutionalized, while others, such as the Haitian and Lebanese communities, are not. Respondents see ethnic institutions as organizations that

²² Vinod K. Shrestha, et al. "Volunteerism in Nepal." December 2002, 04 Aug. 2004
<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/02_12_05NEP_book_on_volunteerism.PDF>.

²³ Nora Benakova, "Volunteerism in Slovakia." 21 July 2004
<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/html/2001/01_01_99SVK_statistics.htm>.

²⁴ Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development, "Volunteerism in Sri Lanka: Case Study for International Year of volunteerism." November 2001, 28 July 2004
<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/dynamic/infobase/pdf/2002/LKA020130_IYV_Volunteering_engl.pdf>.

²⁵ Lillias Skinner, et al., "The Changing World of Volunteer Management: A Practical Guide to Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management." *Association of Volunteer Resources*, 1995.

²⁶ F.M. Moghaddam, and D.M. Taylor, "The Meaning of Multiculturalism for Visible Minority Immigrant Women," *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 19(1987): 121-136.

²⁷ R.N. Lalonde and J.E. Cameron, "An Intergroup Perspective on Immigrant Acculturation with a Focus on Collective Strategies," *International Journal of Psychology*, 28(1993) 57-74.

assist and socialize newly arrived immigrants (by helping them learn and decode social mores, laws and consumption patterns, for example). In addition, Jewish, Italian and Haitian leaders see their institutions as instruments for preserving their cultural differences, particularly by promoting the teaching of mother tongues. Again, they point to their function as spokespersons and advocates of the interests of a group, government or pressure group, notably in the case of umbrella organizations such as the National Congress of Italian Canadians and Canadian Jewish Congress."²⁸

"Some studies deal indirectly with the question of involvement in leisure activities by examining the use of leisure time. Ujimoto (1987) deals with the distribution of leisure time in elderly Chinese, Korean and Japanese immigrants. His study leads him to three conclusions. The shorter the time spent in Canada, the more likely activities are to center on the family and circles of compatriots. Korean immigrants present one distinctive feature: they are involved in more leisure activities and volunteer work than are Chinese and Japanese immigrants, because of their religious affiliations. In all three groups, the proportion of individuals who do not participate in leisure activities outside the home is twice as high as the proportion of those who engage in no such activities within the family. These data, collected from a survey of 800 immigrants, illustrate the importance of examining patterns of daily life before describing any form of social participation."²⁹

"More recently, Tirone and Shaw (1997) have discussed the role of cultural socialization in the perception and use of leisure time, based on interviews with

Indian immigrant women. Like Ujimoto, Tirone and Shaw show the central role of family life in these women's lives and the slight importance they attach to personal leisure. These women have no desire for free time for themselves or for leisure outside the family sphere, and indeed view such activities in a negative light."³⁰

"A study of young immigrants (Helly, 1997) shows, on a small scale, that Adventist and evangelical churchgoers, particularly of Haitian origin, volunteer either in their religious institutions or in non-religious organizations, as do Vietnamese immigrants who go to Buddhist pagodas. These institutions and organizations can be either ethnic or universalist, and may also serve as the site of leisure activities (choirs, music, dance)."³¹ ³²

²⁸ Denise Helly, "Voluntary and Social Participation by People of Immigrant Origin: Overview of Canadian Research", Second National Metropolis Conference Immigrants and Civic Participation: Contemporary Policy and Research Issues. [Montreal] November 1997.

²⁹ K.V. Ujimoto, "Sociodemographic Factors and Variations in the Allocation of Time in Later Life," *Daily Life in Later Life: Comparative Perspectives* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1988) 186-204.

³⁰ S.C. Tirone and S.M. Shaw, "At the Centre of Their Lives: Indo-Canadian Women, Their Families and Leisure," *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29:2 (1997) 225-244.

³¹ Denise Helly, "Voluntary and Social Participation by People of Immigrant Origin: Overview of Canadian Research", Second National Metropolis Conference Immigrants and Civic Participation: Contemporary Policy and Research Issues. [Montreal] November 1997.

³² "A New Canadian's First Decade of Volunteering" November 2004