

A Community Approach to Increasing and Supporting Volunteers

This workshop was developed for Volunteer NWT, the Northwest Territories local network of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative. It is a way to introduce and cover much of the content in *Resources to increase and support volunteers*, nine booklets produced by Volunteer NWT and Volunteer Nunavut.

This workshop was designed for communities and organizations in the Northwest Territories where at least some of the participants are of Aboriginal ancestry. Aboriginal people are likely to be among those that participants want to attract to volunteering with community organizations.

The workshop respects that each community is unique with its own strengths and weaknesses, its own culture and ways of doing things. Workshop facilitators provide information, such as volunteerism research, volunteering statistics, best practices and resources. However, the workshop design assumes that the participants are best able to determine how to meet the challenges in their community. This workshop is adapted to meet the specific requirements in terms of content and time for each group or community.

The workshop engages all participants in problem solving. It is meant to be fun and lively. Participants leave the workshop feeling upbeat and inspired. While the *Resources to increase and support volunteers* are introduced, very little time in the workshop is spent reviewing the books themselves. This respects participants who may lack strong literacy skills. It also reduces boredom among participants.

One of the side benefits of the workshops in the Northwest Territories is getting people from different community groups together to talk about common issues.

Funding from Canadian Heritage through the Canada Volunteerism Initiative has allowed Volunteer NWT to provide good snacks and lunches that promote connections among participants.

A Community Approach to Increasing and Supporting Volunteers - Workshop Agenda

Saturday, November 13, 2004

10:00 a.m. **Welcome** (Volunteer NWT)

Opening Prayer (Community Elder)

Participant Introductions

Workshop Objectives, Format and Benefits (Facilitator)

Workshop Objectives

1. Introduce Volunteer NWT
2. Describe the volunteering workshop and tool kit
3. Exchange information on volunteering.
4. Discuss barriers or issues affecting volunteerism.
5. Identify supports needed to deal with barriers and issues affecting volunteerism.
6. Decide what action to take to increase the number of volunteers and how to best support volunteers and volunteering.

Format: Interactive

Main Benefits:

1. Become aware of issues affecting volunteers.
2. Have the opportunity to examine and address issues affecting volunteering in your organization or community.
3. Develop a plan to recognize volunteer contributions to the community and ensure there are volunteers needed by the community.

10:30 a.m. **What is Volunteer NWT?**

- An overview of the organization, the people involved, activities and plans.
- Questions and Answers

11:00 a.m. **Learning from Our Elders About Helping and Serving Others**

You are an elder of your own culture. Sitting in circle or in a comfortable way so you can see and hear everyone, share your thoughts on:

- How and why people helped each other in the old days.
- How and why people help each other today.
- How people understand the word 'volunteer'.
- How to continue to respect our traditions of volunteering or helping each other.

The facilitator will record your thoughts and summarize the main points.

12:00 noon **LUNCH Break (Served on Site)**

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Video: It's Our Way

1:15 p.m. **Increasing and Supporting Volunteers - Identifying the Issues**

The facilitator will ask participants to work on one of the two examples to explore issues affecting volunteerism. If there are more than 10 workshop participants, it may be best to split into two groups and each group could work on a different example.

Example 1:

Our community's popular annual spring carnival has been cancelled because we don't have enough volunteers. You are attending a community meeting to discuss the reasons that our community doesn't have enough volunteers to hold the carnival. The facilitator will chair this meeting and ask someone to record the conversation on a flip chart.

Please consider:

1. Why didn't last year's volunteers return to help this year? Did they receive adequate training, support and recognition?
2. What efforts have been made to attract new volunteers such as youth, families and newcomers to the community?
3. Do members of the carnival committee, the way they make decisions or their credibility/track record have anything to do with the lack of volunteers?

Example 2:

Our community's day care centre is shutting down because we don't have enough volunteers to: 1) form a board of directors to oversee the centre, 2) help raise money to hire staff or 3) help with programs. You are attending a community meeting to discuss the reasons that our day care centre doesn't have enough volunteers to keep the centre open. The facilitator will chair this meeting and ask someone to record the conversation on a flip chart.

Please consider:

1. Why didn't volunteers from previous years continue to help? Did they receive adequate training, support and recognition?
2. What efforts have been made to attract new volunteers such as youth, families and newcomers to the community?
3. Does the day care center's board, the way they make decisions or their credibility/track record have anything to do with the lack of volunteers?

The facilitator will summarize the discussion.

2:30 p.m. **Increasing and Supporting Volunteers – Overcoming Barriers to Volunteering**

Work on one of the examples from the previous exercise.

Example 1:

Participants represent the hunters and trappers, the women's group, the early childhood program, the elders committee, minor hockey, the recreation committee or another voluntary group in the community. All of these voluntary organizations have formed a committee to plan for increasing and supporting volunteers to put on the spring carnival. The short-term plan will save the spring carnival. The long-term plan will try to make sure there are enough volunteers to run the spring carnival in the future.

In your plan think about:

- the carnival activities and how to do them.
- the number of volunteers needed and why they are needed.
- the skills needed and the volunteers who might have them.
- ways of asking for volunteers.
- coordinating volunteers.
- supporting volunteers.
- strengthening the carnival association to support volunteers.
- recognizing volunteers.

One or two committee members will summarize the plan at the end of this session as a practice for a presentation that will be made to the whole community. Be prepared to explain how this strategy reflects your community's volunteer traditions. The facilitator will keep everyone on track.

Example 2:

You are a youth, parent, grandparent, educator, wellness worker or community leader. You have formed a committee to make a short term and a long term plan for increasing and supporting volunteers to keep the day care centre open.

In your plan think about:

- the day care decision making, administration and daily program need and how to do them.
- the number of volunteers needed and why they are needed.
- the skills needed and the volunteers who might have them.
- ways of asking for volunteers.
- coordinating volunteers.
- supporting volunteers.
- strengthening the day care board/committee to support volunteers.
- recognizing volunteers.

One or two committee members will summarize the plan at the end of this session as a practice for a presentation that will be made to the whole community. Be prepared to explain how this strategy reflects your community's volunteer traditions. The facilitator will keep everyone on track. The facilitator will summarize the discussion.

3:00 p.m. **BREAK**

3:15 p.m. **Wrap-up Plans**

3:40 p.m. **To Sum Up: What are the Main Ways of Overcoming the Barriers to Volunteering?**

The facilitator will briefly summarize the main ways of overcoming the barriers to volunteering.

4:30 p.m. **Closing**

Sunday, 2004

12:00 noon **LUNCH Break (Served on Site)**
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1:15 p.m. **What can we do to increase and support volunteers?**

Working in teams, each team will discuss and use the volunteer resources to plan for increasing and supporting volunteers.

What actions might work in our community?

Who might carry out those actions?

How can I help?

Each small group reports back on the main points in their discussion.

2:00 p.m. **Next Steps and closing**

What did we accomplish?

What happens now?

What follow up is needed, by whom?

3:00 p.m. **Evaluation of workshop**

Closing Remarks (Facilitator)

Closing Prayer (Community Elder)