



GUIDE TO EXEMPLARY PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



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PRIME MINISTER'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS CELEBRATE CANADIANS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXEMPLARY PRACTICES SESSION

On December 14, 2012, the Prime Minister honoured **Canada's most innovative and inspiring volunteers** who give their time in some of the country's largest cities, smallest towns and most remote northern hamlets. Seventeen recipients of the inaugural Prime Minister's Volunteer Awards (PMVA) were recognized for their efforts to improve the well-being of families and their communities.

The 17 winners hail from many walks of life. They include energetic and dynamic individuals who have devoted much of their lives to helping specific demographic groups, local business leaders that have nurtured cultures of social responsibility across their organizations and innovative not-for-profit organizations that have been remarkably successful in spurring collective efforts to improve quality of life in their communities.

To give a few examples, one winner is a survivor of human trafficking and is aiding women who have been similarly victimized. Another is the local division of a national corporation that feeds homeless people in downtown Vancouver. Still another winner is an organization operating in an isolated community in Nunavut intent on promoting physical, emotional and spiritual wellness for the whole community.

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS

All winners have been profoundly influential in their communities. Working locally, they have helped specific groups in their communities live better lives. They have much to teach Canadians from all walks of life about the best and most practical ways to build stronger communities through volunteerism.

The day before the awards ceremony, 13 of these exceptional volunteers participated in a session in which they agreed to share their experiences as well as the exemplary practices that have enabled them to succeed. So that the group could benefit from full explanations of their experiences, as well as hear important lessons in leadership, the volunteers shared brief presentations of their work, their challenges and their impact on communities. Later the same day, all participants shared their exemplary practices for success in volunteerism.

Read "Lessons in Leadership," which highlights the morning's presentations.

Review the exemplary practices of some of Canada's most successful volunteers.



LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

Thirteen presentations by some of Canada's most dedicated volunteers spurred discussion and debate the morning of December 13, 2012 about effective methods for reaching wide communities and making a lasting impact. All presenters shared impressive stories of success and, in particular, their experiences working as leaders, helping others in their own communities and in communities across the country discover the value and rewards of volunteerism. The following overview highlights just a few of the leadership messages the participants had in common.

LEAD BY SPEAKING

Many PMVA winners agreed that word-of-mouth marketing was vital not only for helping communities and potential partners understand the importance and relevance of a particular volunteer effort, but also for convincing people unfamiliar with volunteerism that it can be rewarding to give one's time to a worthy cause.

In 2009, **Timea Nagy**, a victim of human trafficking, began an organization called **Walk With Me** through word of mouth to support other victims. The power of Nagy's personal story has helped her organization establish nine safe houses in Ontario for victims as well as create Canada's first 24/7 mobile crisis team for victims. As Nagy describes, "In the beginning, two allies became four, which became six, and so on." **Walk With Me** has formed partnerships with police, social workers, nurses and politicians in Nagy's own community and across Ontario. Her work has trained 60 000 police officers and sparked a dialogue about a problem that is not widely recognized or acknowledged in Canada.

Zeibarth Electrical Contractors' Johannes Zeibarth delivered another powerful message about leading by speaking. For years, Zeibarth quietly wired houses for charities such as Habitat for

Humanity, not wanting to attract attention. When one day he mentioned his activities to a colleague, 50 volunteers magically arrived at the next job to help. Says Zeibarth, "Humility was a barrier for me at the beginning of my volunteerism." Once he realized the power of leading by example, Zeibarth began to speak of his volunteer activities with friends. As a result, three have established their own charities, including a cancer care foundation for young adults.

LEAD BY ACTING

Some organizations spread the word of volunteerism through their actions, transferring their interests and passions to others. Award recipient **TELUS** supports the Union Gospel Mission in Vancouver as part of a broad range of philanthropic activities that support TELUS employees in their efforts to volunteer in the hearts of their own communities. TELUS spokeswoman Jill Shnarr said that in recent years her telecom peers have stepped up their volunteerism efforts in response to TELUS's example.

Individual volunteers can have a similar effect on those around them. Patrick Busque, presenting on behalf of his father, the late **Richard Busque**, told the group that his nine-year-old son was beginning to get involved in volunteerism of his own accord after witnessing the volunteerism of his grandfather and the great passion that he brought to his work and community. **Dr. Rick Irvin**, who has received widespread praise for his pioneering work in palliative care in Barrie, Ontario, said, "When you're out in front as a volunteer, you gather people to you and then you get to work." Dr. Irvin has changed the way end-of-life care is provided in his region and also raised awareness of issues that will affect more Ontarians in the coming years. He said that the act of standing up to receive an award lends credibility to the people who nominate award-winning volunteers.

MAKE CONNECTIONS

Many participants voiced the opinion that making connections is vital to success. **Exploits Valley Community Coalition** spokeswoman Karen Beresford said her group, deeply inspired by the concept of building a social enterprise, has borrowed brilliant ideas from similar groups about housing multiple services under one roof—something that would not have occurred to her without outside inspiration. Meanwhile, community support keeps her organization vital and effective. “Partnerships have been the key to solving crises of all kinds, from fixing water main breaks to working with farmers to help feed the homeless,” she said.

Alberta’s **Lo-Se-Ca Foundation** has benefitted profoundly from its community connections. LoSeCa, which began as a single group home for persons with disabilities, has grown to 23 homes that serve 85 individuals. Lo-Se-Ca forges links between residents and the larger community by connecting them with volunteer opportunities and paid positions as well. One key connection is a partnership with the Brothers of Charity, with which Lo-Se-Ca shares exemplary practices in volunteerism and raises funds. When Lo-Se-Ca faced an acute staffing shortage, it reached out to new Canadians, integrating them into the community by providing much-needed training opportunities.

The **Child Development Institute’s** Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) program operates in 92 sites worldwide and reaches between 4 000 and 10 000 children. The tremendous success of the program, which uses a cognitive behaviour strategy to address aggressive and antisocial behavior in children, has spread via partnerships with police services, band councils, child welfare bodies and mental health groups. In total, the program has established 25 partnerships.

Ashid Bahl and his **For the Love of Children** foundation have helped some 20 000 newcomers to Canada settle in Alberta and contributed to aid operations around the world that benefit children. The breadth of Bahl’s work has been possible largely through the many partnerships he has created with corporations and governmental organizations, which reach into communities across the city and province.

IT’S A SMALL WORLD

The participants were delighted to learn that many partners had ended up in the same room December 13, 2012 having supported each other’s causes and enabled each other’s work. One of **Richard Busque’s** volunteer organizations in the Beauce region has helped two of **Timea Nagy’s** human trafficking survivors. **TELUS** is a great supporter of the **Lo-Se-Ca Foundation** in Alberta. And **Rich Goulet** revealed that three of his high school students have been awarded TELUS scholarships over the years.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

All participants shared the results of their work, making it clear why each is exemplary in Canadian volunteerism. Here are a few highlights of what they revealed:

Alfreda Bérubé, a passionate supporter of the arts, established l'Éclosion in 1982 in Sainte Anne-de-Madawaska, New Brunswick, as a training workshop for persons with disabilities. Twenty years later, she founded FABÉMA to provide arts and music training for persons with disabilities. Today, Bérubé's dream continues, with her new vision of creating a music school in the northwest corner of the province.

Rich Goulet began his work developing a comprehensive sports program at a school that had little to offer in the way of sports, with the goal of developing good citizens and creating better schools. Goulet has mentored many students who now coach basketball in the community and elsewhere and has developed a highly competitive basketball team at Pitt Meadows Secondary School in BC.

The **Ilisaqsivik Society** has empowered the community in Clyde River, Nunavut—imparting a sense that the hamlet can provide its own ideas and answers for its unique challenges. The society, which was started when the community recognized that its programs did not adequately respond to the needs of Clyde River's 830 inhabitants, is now the main employer for the hamlet.

Dr Rick Irvin's work promoting palliative care has helped lead to the establishment of Hospice Simcoe's Hospice House, a 10-bed residential hospice in Barrie Ontario, serving Simcoe County. Through volunteerism Dr Irvin has nurtured dignity and respect for the ongoing care of people and their families.



EXEMPLARY PRACTICES USED BY CANADA'S MOST EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERS

Canada's volunteers hold deep knowledge about the practices that create lasting change in communities. At the December 13, 2012 PMVA Best Practices session, we asked our winners to form three groups and brainstorm the exemplary practices they have experienced first-hand in their own work or witnessed in the work of other volunteers. To guide their conversations, we asked the expert groups to focus their discussions on three of the most important principles for making a difference in a community—making an impact, increasing the number of people reached and engaging other groups—and then put forward their exemplary practices under each heading.

Read about the practices that create deep impact in a community.

Read about the practices that lead to the widest possible reach.

Read about the practices that establish strong engagement with others.

IMPACT

What we asked

During the December 13, 2012 PMVA Best Practices session, we asked the award winners how the activities of an individual, business or not-for-profit organization can have the most lasting impact on a community. How can volunteers address the priorities of the community? What tools does one need to make a lasting impact as a volunteer?

What the experts said

These are the exemplary practices that the PMVA winners advise other Canadians to follow to give their projects the deepest impact.

Ask people

A key strategy for creating a lasting impact on a community is to use a bottom-up approach. As change-makers, volunteers must exhibit humility at all steps of research, preparation and implementation of a project, asking those who will be affected what it is they most need—and how volunteer efforts can best address the issues.

Include the community

Communities respond more positively when they feel a sense of ownership for the activities volunteers undertake. While consulting people is an important step in creating a lasting impact, it is also critical to follow through in a spirit of community partnership by ensuring that as many people as possible are invested somehow in a project's success. Everyone has something to give, and appealing to the community to volunteer not only engages individuals, but also builds a community's capacity to lead. It brings diverse perspectives to bear on a program's success. These are keys to achieving lasting impact.

Establish clear goals and responsibilities

All volunteers, especially beginners, need to establish in writing a clear vision and goals for their project as well as specific roles for each person involved. Only if a project succeeds over the long term can it provide a lasting impact in a community. Clarity of vision and organized implementation tend to produce projects that succeed.

Leverage resources

No program can succeed without the resources it needs. To achieve lasting impact, volunteers must emphasize networking with other sectors within the community: individuals who can act as mentors for volunteers and community members; private enterprise and governments, which can be a rich source of project funding; and other not-for-profit organizations, which can provide expertise and even personnel. Every community has resources of some kind—no volunteer should overlook these vital tools.

Educate and learn

Volunteers have a great deal to offer communities and derive ample satisfaction from their work. At the same time, the communities volunteers serve have a great deal to teach. Volunteers must always keep in mind that volunteerism has two aspects—giving and receiving—and that volunteers receive or, in other words, benefit from giving.

Measure success

Data and evidence are key to implementing quality assurance in volunteerism. And quality assurance is key to maintaining informed and effective programming. Volunteers need to collect evidence about program outcomes—whom they have affected, to what extent and how—if they are to continue to evolve programs that leave a deep and lasting impact. Once armed with evidence of success (or evidence that supports a need for change), volunteers tend to become impassioned about their work and the improvements needed. That passion can be contagious.

Sustain the good work

When a volunteer organization creates a legacy that meets the precise needs of a community, a lasting impact is sure to result that sustains the good work of the organization. Volunteers achieve legacies by listening attentively to community voices so that they can respond appropriately, by being receptive to change when change is needed and by providing consistent leadership, acting as champions for change.

REACH

What we asked

During the December 13, 2012 PMVA Best Practices session we asked our award winners how their contributions have benefitted individuals, communities and organizations. How far can the benefits of volunteering extend? What is needed to increase the number of people reached?

What the experts said

These are the exemplary practices that the PMVA winners advise other Canadians to follow to give their projects the broadest possible reach.

Empower people

Including members of the community in the decision-making processes of project design and delivery is an effective way to give communities ownership over the projects that affect them. By giving ownership, volunteers encourage more individuals to take part; by including more individuals, communities benefit on a wider scale.

Share information

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so if a fledgling volunteer effort copies an established one, the established volunteer knows he or she has done an excellent job. Volunteers should share their experiences with others, never hoarding success or exemplary practices. The more volunteers share information, the stronger all volunteers become.

Network

By helping communities organize with one another and create new ties and alliances, volunteers can encourage productive synergies and collaborative work. Greater collaboration enables more individuals and organizations to benefit from a volunteer effort. It helps all volunteers reach further.

Document success

Volunteers can reach each other and the rest of the community by writing down their stories of success in ways that demonstrate their passion and pride. Written deliverables are valuable resources within an organization and can be shared with similar organizations that cannot develop their own resources. Careful documentation is especially important for organizations that have not benefitted from media coverage.

Be faithful to the mission

By remaining faithful to a project or program's mission, volunteers demonstrate not only the worthiness of the mission itself, but also the team's dependability in the face of difficulties that inevitably arise.

Advocate for recipients

Volunteers should spend time getting to know their beneficiaries and uniting individuals and groups that can contribute to their cause. As volunteers develop a deeper understanding of their recipients' challenges and potential solutions, they not only become the recipients' most qualified advocates, but also empower recipients to seek support from one another. As success grows, so does reach.

Encourage cooperation

One of the greatest potential outcomes of cooperating with other individuals and organizations within a community is greater diversity and an expanded reach. By spurring partnerships across all sectors, volunteers are more likely to avoid the problem of being solely dependent on government funding. Single-source funding increases a program's risk of losing major resources. Alternatively, staying diverse keeps an organization's eggs in many baskets.

Stay flexible

Adaptability is fundamental to all successful volunteer programs. As volunteers seek funding, they should keep in mind the day-to-day needs of their recipients rather than fall into a pattern of seeking funding for trends. Volunteers will reach further by investing in promising models and checking in regularly to assess success and tweak as necessary.

Focus on leaving a legacy

Succession planning is a crucial aspect of leaving a legacy in the voluntary sector. Without someone to carry on the work once a volunteer has stepped away, the community risks losing the support that it has come to depend on. Reach can evaporate overnight. Volunteers should make sure they have talented, experienced individuals or teams in place before they decide to step away.

ENGAGEMENT

What we asked

During the December 13, 2012 PMVA Best Practices session, we asked our award winners the best ways to engage other groups to create lasting community change. What kinds of supports are needed? What types of people and groups are likely to want to be engaged?

What the experts said

These are the exemplary practices that PMVA winners advise other Canadians to follow in order to engage others in their efforts.

Create caring communities

When a community cares about its own and others, there is a palpable sense that the positive changes volunteers have brought about will last. Companies involved in volunteer work should engage their customers in their efforts, telling them about corporate work in the community and treating them as advocates instead of merely as customers.

Tap into existing agencies and infrastructure

Networking is a powerful strategy for engaging communities; and engaged communities sustain positive changes. Getting partners involved in actual volunteering efforts can be more effective than merely asking them to write a cheque. Such engagement can work at the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels with organizations and businesses of all kinds.

Share resources

When volunteers share resources with other not-for profit organizations, the parties tend to engage deeply, often coordinating the ways in which all the organizations operate. Such engagement leads to substantial benefits, including ensuring that organizations avoid straight competition, which can drain resources. By sharing resources, volunteers not only enhance their engagement, but also help ensure that more organizations do more good work in the community.

Connect

Deep and lasting connections with similar organizations encourage wide engagement across a community. But volunteers must also make efforts to connect with non-voluntary organizations. For example, using the news media to get an organization's best stories into the public realm should be a major engagement strategy of any volunteer. Organizations should also use social media to create a viral movement that supports the cause.

Be a role model

The old adage of modelling the kind of success you want to inspire in others is highly applicable to the voluntary sector. Volunteers should engage others by becoming mentors and by advocating for all organizations they work with to follow exemplary practices for engagement. By modelling how others should behave, volunteers help create lasting change in their communities.

Celebrate success

Most people react positively when an organization's successes—big and small—are formally celebrated over time. A celebration can take the form of an official awards ceremony or be as simple as talking about success within an organization. By celebrating their successes, volunteers help ensure that a community stays engaged in the activities that maintain its health—and that volunteer organizations continue to attract support from individuals and companies. Celebrations are also a powerful means of changing attitudes, especially about the recipients of volunteer support.

Be seamless

Busy volunteers can be tempted to invent their processes as they go along—especially when their actions seem to be working. It is critical, though, that volunteers coordinate the delivery of services with other organizations to avoid duplication. When a community is happy with an

organization's service delivery, it will become more engaged and committed to the process. Similarly, volunteers should be sure to use evidence-based practices in their service-delivery model.

Listen and learn

Volunteers create a community of individuals and organizations by engaging like-minded peers that trade ideas and experience and look to each other for leadership. Listening attentively to what peers have experienced and learning through collaboration are sure routes to widespread engagement.

Plant the seed

Important causes tend to benefit from champions. Becoming the champion of a volunteer effort encourages others to engage. Well-placed pride is an inspiration to others.