

**Discussion Paper:
Themes, Issues and Ideas
from the Community Dialogues**

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Overview

Purpose of Community Dialogues

- Involve local organizational leaders in the nonprofit sector in discussions of strategies and resources for reaching out to and engaging volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Promote partnerships and relationships that can be later used for the implementation of these strategies and development of resource materials
- Identify existing resources and/or work being done on diversity issues in each of the seven communities
- Elicit issues and needs related to the engagement and support of a more diverse volunteer base and indicate what additional tools, resources and strategies would prove helpful

Dates and Local Hosts

	Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge
Date	Nov 1 st , 2007	Nov 13 th , 2007	Nov 27 th , 2007	Nov 30 th , 2007
Host	Community Development Council of Durham	Community Development Halton/Volunteer Halton/Halton Multi-cultural Council	Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area	Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries and United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries

	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
Date	February 8 th , 2008	February 12 th , 2008	March 3 rd , 2008	March 27 th , 2008
Host	Human Services Planning Coalition, York Region Planning Department	Pillar Nonprofit Network	Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington	United Way of Peel Region and Peel Regional Diversity Roundtable

Participants

In total about 250 people participated in one of the eight Community Dialogues. Community Dialogue Participants included: coordinators of volunteers, executive directors, program staff, board chairs, volunteers, student interns

	Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge
# of Community Participants*	25	25	33	13
# of Survey Respondents**	27	38	46	

	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
# of Community Participants*	40	40	20	50
# of Survey Respondents**	35	27	35	40

* does not include staff from host organizations or guests from other regions

** Note 1: number of respondents as of date of proceedings report and Note 2: not all survey respondents provided responses to the open-ended questions

Dialogue Themes

These are the issues and needs raised by Community Dialogue participants:

- Recruitment
- Cultural Understandings of “Volunteerism” (or lack of)
- Creating Meaningful Volunteer Roles
- Partnering/Networking
- Important Role of Volunteer Centres, Professional Associations and Volunteer Management Professional Staff
- Internal Capacity
- Creating a Welcoming Environment
- Working and Thinking Differently
- Screening New Canadians
- Language and Communications Barriers
- Widening Dimensions of Diversity
- Transportation
- Creating Appropriate Volunteer Assignments that Acknowledge Job Readiness Needs of Newcomers
- Client Response
- Expenses of Volunteering

Recruitment

- How do we access culturally diverse volunteers?
- We need to “sell” volunteerism in a new way – using strategic, targeted approach
- The importance of adapting and marketing volunteerism as a vehicle to employment
- Failure to connect – “volunteers don’t know where we are and we don’t know how to say we’re here”
- Groups that are new to anti-oppression, diversity and inclusion are often afraid of inadvertently being offensive or doing something illegal, and they become hesitant to act
- Some organizations still asking if they want to recruit diverse volunteers
- 90% of volunteers have a connection to the organization they choose to volunteer with – how do you foster newcomers’ sense of connection to an organization?
- Must consider Newcomers’ economic position and stage of settlement
- Need to change approach and recruit Newcomers directly as opposed to making broad call-outs

Cultural Understandings

- Volunteerism is not a concept that is well understood
- New Canadians may be unfamiliar with philosophies and perspectives of Canadian organizations (e.g. feminist oriented organizations)
- Misunderstandings that even though work is unpaid, there are still important expectations of volunteers

- New Canadians tend to volunteer in their own communities
- There is a cultural stigma associated with some types of volunteer work in certain communities e.g. volunteering for an AIDS organizations, the criminal justice system, etc.

Creating Meaningful Volunteer Roles

- Make volunteer opportunities meaningful and match skills and needs. Newcomers arrive with education and skills. A volunteer opportunity to make photocopies is not meaningful nor will it help a newcomer move forward – match roles to their capabilities

Partnering/Networking

- The need for partnering/networking between organizations *and* with organizations that support New Canadians
- There is a lack of collaboration between agencies serving Newcomers and Coordinators of Volunteers

Important Role of Volunteer Centres, Professional Associations for Managers of Volunteers, Paid Position Dedicated to the Professional Management of Volunteers

Internal Capacity

- Training needed for working with diverse populations
- Financial limits (and resulting capacity limits) to support advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management
- Non-diverse staffing
- Existing staff are overwhelmed and agencies cannot respond to sudden spikes in newcomer volunteer interest
- Managers of Volunteers don't have up-to-date demographic statistics

Creating a Welcoming Environment within an Organization

- Confronting cultural and systemic prejudice
- Resistance to training by staff and volunteers (“I don’t need it. I’m not a racist.”)
- Formal processes can be intimidating and discouraging
- Hesitancies by New Canadians re: co-ed programs, culturally mixed groups or events with Canadian food
- No reciprocation – do we attend the functions of culturally diverse groups? We want them to be part of our community, but we have to be part of their community as well
- It’s important to assess whether an agency’s service is actually needed by diverse communities
- Need to diversity volunteer leadership at the governance level
- Develop volunteer positions that follow a mentorship model
- Creating support strategies for non-English speaking volunteers doing direct service work in the community as volunteers are recruited in their mother tongue but all day-to-day supports are in English

Working and Thinking Differently

- Adapting traditional ways of doing things
- Success metrics (e.g. volunteer retention equals success). For example: The idea that volunteer retention equals success. But if we want to meet the needs of diverse populations, we may have to reconsider our notions of success. Case in point: one volunteer wanted to improve her English and job shadow. Once she was able to find employment, she moved on. Statistically, it looked like a failure, because the organization didn't retain her. From another perspective, we met her needs, so it was a success.
- Learning from New Canadians rather than assuming a teaching role
- Organizational openness to change
- Need to recognize the diversity within diversity – some immigrants do have language issues while others are fluent in English and some have lived in Canada for decades and are fully integrated
- Diversity policies contradict volunteer management practices e.g. some Newcomers may be unable to meet requirements of strict screening practices such as completing a police check and providing immunization records
- Improving communication between senior-level staff and Managers of Volunteers

Screening New Canadians

- Reference checks can be difficult
- Police checks can be intimidating
- Upfront cost of Police check is a significant barrier
- Immunization records may have been left behind in home country

Language and Communications Barriers to Volunteer Recruitment and Support

- Communicating volunteer expectations is difficult
- Agencies don't know how to access and cannot afford interpreter services

Other Dimensions of Diversity

- What about other aspects of diversity (e.g. LGBT, disability)? Will the project include these?

Transportation

- Poor or no public transportation available to volunteer site

Creating Appropriate Volunteer Assignments that Acknowledge Job Readiness Needs of Newcomers

- Need to develop legitimate short-term volunteer roles that meet the needs of volunteers

- Some volunteer placements are too short for managers to build a good relationship with a volunteer who speaks English as a second language; the time to build relationships is important in order to meet expectations and help develop skills
- Need to develop volunteer positions that advance employment readiness
- Catering to the motivations and needs of Newcomers seeking Canadian work experience, references and documentation (e.g. volunteer hours logged)

Client Response

- matching diverse volunteers in helping roles to white, older clients is a problem and issues come up re: language barriers, religious beliefs and sometimes clients are not tolerant.

Expenses of Volunteering

- transportation, childcare expenses are barriers

Survey Themes

In advance of each Community Dialogue, local hosts asked participants to complete an online survey (Thank you to Trudy Beaulne of the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo for coordinating the development of the online survey).

Survey Question	905 Region (Durham, Halton, York, Peel)		519 Region (Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, London, Guelph)	
Issues/Challenges in Supporting More Culturally Diverse Volunteers	Language and communications	34%	Language and communications	53%
	Lack of resources	16%	Cultural differences	12%
	Cultural differences	6%	Lack of resources	11%
Overcoming Issues/Challenges	More resources (funding and staff)	27%	Interpretation, translation and ESL training	33%
	By training and understanding	20%	By training and understanding	23%
Organizational Benefits	Better able to serve a multicultural client base	47%	Better able to serve a multicultural client base	46%
	Improve org'l inclusiveness and understanding	24%	Improve org'l inclusiveness and understanding	21%
	Bring new ideas and perspectives	6%	Bring new ideas and perspectives	21%
Formal Policies and Practices*	Diversity orientation and training	35%	Diversity orientation and training	30%
	No specific policies and procedure	27%	No specific policies and procedures	25%
	Formal policies	24%	Formal policies	18%
Community Resources	Diversity Training	22%	Volunteer Centre	21%
	Multicultural Centre	19%	Multicultural Centre	17%
	Volunteer Centre	15%	Diversity Training	16%
	Other Agencies	15%	Other Agencies	13%
Recruitment	No specific promotion or recruitment measures	34%	No specific promotion or recruitment measures	42%
	Targeted recruitment/special	19%	Targeted recruitment/special	14%

Survey Question	905 Region (Durham, Halton, York, Peel)		519 Region (Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, London, Guelph)	
	outreach		outreach	
	Networking/Word of Mouth	15%	Networking/Word of Mouth	9%

Top Positive and Possible Actions

At the end of each of the Community Dialogues, participants were asked to discuss in small groups “positive and possible” actions that could be taken over the next several years to build capacity in advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management. Each group briefly presented their action items. Participants then used “dotmocracy” to vote for their priority actions. The following chart lists the top tier responses as voted by participants:

Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
Fund volunteer resource centre (with a diversity manager)	Make volunteer opportunities must be meaningful – matching skills and needs	Collaborate with community organizations re: best practices.	Reach out to faith communities, service clubs where people are and make connection to recruit volunteers.	Provincial Secretariat on Volunteerism. Professional Administrators of Volunteer Resources of Ontario has been pushing for it to be established.	Database that: helps agencies locate diverse groups; allows diverse groups to research agencies/volunteer positions; facilitates inter-organizational communication about volunteers and positions available – so if there is a poor fit between a volunteer and an agency, they can be referred to a more appropriate organization	Train staff and volunteers with goal of developing mentoring initiatives to continue the learning/dialogue.	Volunteer Centre for Peel Region mandated to support cultural diversity in volunteer management. Envision a progressive centre that “thinks outside the box”, recognizes all forms of diversity including gender, ability, age, etc., and works within a framework of social inclusion. It would perform many functions specific to this issue. Through it, a regional strategy could be implemented. It would be a centralized clearinghouse for volunteers: provide information, attract, recruit,

Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
							screen, train, and certify, match volunteer needs to available positions, be a referral service, etc. Have a dedicated staff person to be “go-to” person for cultural competency information – this resource badly needed by agencies working with diverse populations. e.g., If planning a volunteer appreciation dinner, one phone call is all it takes to obtain needed information. Want tip-sheets on ethno-specific customs and practices, diversity toolkits, etc
Increase knowledge in the community from diverse groups regarding	Advertisement and promotion – be inclusive and show diversity in promotional outreach	Build collaborative partnerships between organizations. Recruit	Volunteer Cambridge could increase its visibility in the community;	Create cultural ambassadors. Assist in promoting agency/service to clients;	Volunteer bank - “one stop shopping” for volunteers. Volunteers create their own profiles and search	Upper management can set formal diversity policies and procedures that lead to the	Toolkit on benchmarks and best practices of cultural diversity in volunteer management,

Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
volunteer opportunities		volunteers from agencies that serve new Canadians.	act as a broker and referral system; offer diversity training for non-profit staff.	volunteerism; board of director involvement. Hopefully at some point recruit FTE from these communities.	for the right organization to give them the best possible experience.	recruitment and retention of staff, volunteers and board members who accurately reflect the cultural diversity of the community.	with inventory component
Establish local network to access and discuss best practices	Pool resources and knowledge to tap into deep volunteer resource – stats are growing therefore agencies may see benefit of working together	Create one central organization that handles everything related to newcomers. House all ESL, settlement services, supports and volunteer opportunities under one roof. All the little organizations continue to exist, but now there's only one number to call – it would reduce confusion and overlap.	Mutual education. Meet and cooperate with cultural groups. Discuss the benefits of volunteering, the opportunities available; learn their needs and goals in turn.	Networking and partnering with other agencies. Gain access to recruitment opportunities by working with organizations that support diverse communities. Build capacity through joint funding proposals.	Hire more diverse staff.	Partnership between the settlement service agencies sending newcomers out to volunteer and the nonprofits that receive them. A committee could assess newcomers' needs and barriers and develop solutions. The committee could include the Multicultural Centre, International Student Centre, and Volunteer Centre.	
A partnership between cultural services and DRAVA	Print materials at outreach sessions must reflect diversity to	Hold a Volunteer Recruitment Fair at the	Education that links populations to resources and services (e.g.	Centralized volunteer recruitment coordination.			

Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
(Durham Region Association for Volunteer Administrators)	encourage/attract newcomers/diverse populations	Multicultural Centre. Go where the people are. X who works there is swamped with volunteer applications from newcomers – she has nowhere to place them.	Religious leaders are educated about volunteerism)	Renew Action 5: Volunteer and Leadership Development of the Inclusivity Action Plan. Collaborate with YRAVA			
Forums include representatives from diverse communities to identify not just needs but capacities	Advocate for a volunteer management position in your organization.	Engage newcomers who have benefited from volunteering to explain and promote the value and advantages of volunteering to other newcomers. They are the experts.	Cultural sensitivity training for our staff and volunteers	Centralized volunteer recruitment coordination. Resection funding; create master list of York Region agencies			
			Network with service providers who can help us connect with diverse groups (e.g. YMCA offers oral interpretation; K-W Multicultural Centre translates	Learning together - volunteers, board, and staff. First hold bias awareness training; then cultural competency training; then other training.			

Durham	Halton	Kitchener-Waterloo	Cambridge	York Region	London	Guelph-Wellington	Peel
			documents)				

Addendum

On January 17th, 2008 the Reference Group met to review the learnings from the first four Community Dialogues. The following issues and themes were generated at that meeting (in response to the report from the first four Community Dialogues) and will need to be inter-woven into the Project synthesis report.

- There is a difference between systemic change and operational change (at the sectoral level or the organizational level) – while there is time to discuss systemic change, making it happen is beyond the scope of this project.
- Project is a way to give voice to the issues and to do an initial analysis of the implications.
- There is a grey line between volunteering for job readiness and volunteering for community involvement.
- There is a difference in the view of volunteerism as a means to for government or organizations to save money vs. an investment.
- Volunteer management is still not recognized as an integral part of non-profit management. It's all about front-line staff's incapacity to influence organizational change. They are not sitting at the management table.
- The notion that different cultures don't understand the term "volunteerism" was challenged.
- The lack of representation from 'all volunteer' groups (which includes often cultural associations) because they volunteer on top of paid work commitments – they are not staff and therefore cannot easily attend these types of events (e.g. Community Dialogues).
- The project's focus on smaller and mid-sized organizations made them feel like they had a voice.
- Final report will contain ideas and recommendations for the development of social policies and the funding of programs that can strengthen the capacity of voluntary sector organizations to recruit and support a diverse volunteer base.
- Before we even begin planning for recruitment, those of us in leadership positions need to clarify why we want to recruit diverse volunteers. Why do we think we need them? Is it the in-thing now?
- How do we re-frame success metrics in volunteer management?
- Organizational readiness is very important. New Canadians will connect to people of their background. How diverse are our agencies?
- The synthesis report could be organized in "streams": Operations -- Front-line/volunteer managers; policy--EDs/boards; ??--MCI