



Phase I & II

Youth Volunteerism Study

Community & Neighbourhood Services
Youth Volunteerism Study: *Phase 1*
2005 August

Valerie J. Pruegger, Ph.D., Research Social Planner
Lisa Hubac, B.A., Research Assistant
Policy & Planning Division

In 2005, community workers in the Centre Division office of Community & Neighbourhood services were interested in exploring the issue of youth volunteerism in summer programmes at The City of Calgary. Of particular interest was how to attract more racialized and immigrant youth to these programmes, both to provide a more inclusive opportunity, and also to provide needed networks and job contacts for these young people.

The first step was to determine the demographic makeup of youth currently volunteering, and their motivations for doing so. In 2004, 179 volunteers worked in Community & Neighbourhood Services for a total of 8507 volunteer hours. But not demographic information was gathered. So, at the orientation for all youth volunteers in 2005 June, a survey was conducted to explore these questions (see Appendix 1).

This paper highlights the results of that survey. Further research is planned to use focus groups in targeted communities to probe in more depth racialized and immigrant youths' perceptions of volunteer work and The City of Calgary as an employer. Minority youth remain a large and largely untapped volunteer pool by the formal volunteer sector. This research will help us learn more about the motivators and barriers to volunteering.

The Survey

A total of 120 young people completed the survey (see Appendix 2 for tables). They ranged in age from 12-17 years with the majority (n=97, 91%) being 12-15 years. The majority (n=82, 69.5%) were white Caucasian Canadians, but there were 21 (18%) Chinese-Canadians and 2 (1.7%) Aboriginal volunteers. Most volunteers did not know what their family income level was (n=75, 69%) but others rated it as medium (n=23, 21%). Only 3 (3%) rated it as low and 7 (6.5%) as high.

As expected, the majority of our volunteers are white youth who likely come from middle income environments. The supposition here is that while the majority of youth did not know their family income, this would be unlikely if they were poor or very rich. This is supported by the large number who cited preparing for college or university applications as a reason for volunteering as noted below.

We asked youth why they volunteer. They cited adult encouragement (n=50, 42%), to use on college or university applications (n=90, 75%), satisfaction from helping others (n=81, 67%), fun and enjoyment (103, 86%), a desire to learn other skills (n=72, 60%), a duty to give back to their communities (n=32, 27%) and simply a desire to join friends who volunteer (n=46, 38%). Other responses can be seen in Appendix 2. These reasons provide a baseline from which to market volunteer opportunities at The City of Calgary that will appeal to the motivations of youth. It remains to be seen if racialized and immigrant youth share these motivations.

We thought that many youth would be inspired to volunteer by an influential member of the community and this was supported in the data with 78 (68%) saying that they were so influenced. Two young people talked about this person providing information they may not otherwise have had and making the opportunity sound interesting. Others made the decision to volunteer on their own because they wanted to help, they like volunteering, they like kids and they enjoy helping others. These findings speak to the importance of engaging community leaders and parents in order to increase youth volunteerism, but as well to emphasize intrinsic factors that influence these decisions. The influence of peers is also a big factor given that 81 or 69% of youth have friends who volunteer.

Youth derived many benefits from volunteering. The primary benefit was to develop experience, build a resume, make contacts and develop new skills. But a large number also saw it as a chance to have fun. Many cited both of these benefits together. A smaller number saw it as a chance to help others, and a few thought that it was their responsibility and an opportunity to help the community. In encouraging youth to volunteer, it appears that the emphasis should be on skill building, experience and fun rather than on the more altruistic benefits of volunteering. The youths, themselves, thought that word of mouth from peers and sharing stories of volunteer experience with peers would be the most effective routes to encouraging youth to volunteer (n=104, 87%; n=90, 75% respectively). Other sources of encouragement include parents (n=52, 43%); pamphlets (n=50, 42%) and public service announcements (n=33, 28%) that provide information on volunteer opportunities; and websites (n=51, 43%). Other suggestions were to use television ads, provide extra credit at schools or use celebrity endorsement.

When asked why they think many youth choose not to volunteer, the majority suggested that these young people are uninterested or don't care (n=93, 78%); would rather relax or pursue other interests (n=92, 77%), or consider it a waste of time with no benefits (n=84, 70%). Other reasons include lack of time (n=68, 57%); lack of knowledge about how to get involved (n=66, 55%), never being asked (n=57, 48%), being teased (n=53, 44%) and having to work (n=52, 43%). Again, these results stress the importance of highlighting age appropriate benefits and using peer influence to increase volunteerism in this population. It might be expected that having to work may be more of an issue for many racialized and low-income youth and this will need to be explored further in the focus groups. This was suggested in the present data where 48% of the Chinese-Canadian volunteers

versus 39% of the White Caucasian Canadian volunteers cited having to work as an impediment to volunteering. The Chinese Canadian volunteers were also more likely to cite lack of knowledge of how to get involved (76%) as a barrier than were White Caucasian Canadian volunteers (40%), while the latter group was very much more concerned about being teased or looked down on by their friends (41%), than were the Chinese-Canadian youth (24%).

Virtually all of the youth who volunteered had had positive volunteer experiences in the past or knew of others who had positive experiences (n=115, 98%). Only 2 said they had a negative experience.

Discussion

Some of the findings from this preliminary study are supported by the literature. For example, the Volunteer Centre of Hamilton listed several barriers for specific ethnic groups including a lack of knowledge about volunteer opportunities or the benefits of volunteering; lack of time due to economic constraints or family/religious commitments; language or cultural barriers or a feeling of not being welcome as volunteers (Graff, 1991; Martin & Galvin, 1988). In terms of the latter, one barrier is that they have never been asked (CASA, 1999)! Others have found transportation, childcare, parking and other expenses create a barrier for a number of potential volunteer groups (Lautenschlager, 1992; Volunteer Centre of Metropolitan Toronto, 1992). Graff (1991) further identified ignorance of volunteering in some groups who do not have a volunteer tradition in their home communities, and discrimination, both directly experienced by members of ethnic groups or feared to exist in the course of their volunteering. Some fear they will be used as a token. Also, there may be an emphasis on contributing to the family or the group, rather than to the larger society (National CASA Association, 1999). The extent to which these barriers impact participation of racialized and immigrant youth in Calgary remains to be explored.

The finding that career advancement is very important as a motivator is supported by a study of 1119 volunteers. Although few young people participated in this study, for those 14-24 years, career advancement was a very important motivator (Reimer & Dorsch, 2004). A national survey of volunteering (Ontario Association, 1997) showed that 82% of the youth surveyed volunteered to use their skills and abilities and 58% to improve their job opportunities.

With the rise of the 'third sector' or non-profit sector to meet public needs that are not being met or are being off-loaded by the public sector, volunteerism will play a critical role in the future of Canada. And, with one in four Canadians being Aboriginal or a member of a visible minority group, attending to barriers and benefits to volunteering for this population will be critical. In 1997, Canadian youth, 15-24 years, contributed an equivalent of 123,993 full-time year round jobs; 48% of these hours contributed by youth with non-Canadian, British or French origins (Mata, Brodhead & Petersen, 2000). Religious organizations were the

preferred vehicles of civic engagement with this group suggesting that working with religious leaders might be a good way to motivate ethnic minority youth. This study also showed that formal and informal volunteerism was more prevalent among Canadian-born youth than foreign-born youth. Not surprisingly, females of all groups had higher volunteering rates.

Volunteering can aid integration and contribute to the creation of social capital. It can also help ease immigrant youth into Canadian society. The greater the participation of minority youth, the greater societal social cohesion as participation may provide a small measure of equality and a sign that minority youth feel included in Canadian society and are willing to contribute to it with time and money (Mata, et al., 2000).

References

Graff, L. (1991). *Volunteer For The Health Of It*. Etobicoke: Volunteer Ontario.

Lautenschlager, J. (1992, September). *Bridges to the future: Supported programs for volunteers with special needs*. Ottawa: Voluntary Action Directorate, Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

Martin, D. & Galvin, N. (1988). *Voluntary action and multiculturalism*. Hamilton: The Voluntary Action Centre Of Hamilton And District.

Mata, F., Brodhead, J.D., & Petersen, I. (2000). *Youth volunteering in Canada: Reflections on the ethnic dimension*. Ottawa: Canadian Heritage.

National CASA Association (1999). *Recruiting minority volunteers*. Available at: <http://www.casenet.org/program-management/diversity/recrmin.htm>.

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (1997). *National survey of giving, volunteering and participating*

Reimer, H.A. & Dorsch, K. (2004). *Motivation of volunteers in youth-oriented programs*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.

Volunteer Centre Of Metropolitan Toronto (1992). *Volunteers from the multicultural community: Programs that work*.

APPENDIX 1. Youth Volunteerism Survey 2005 June 25

The City of Calgary would like to understand some of the reasons young people volunteer to lead our summer programmes. We would like you to take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses are anonymous and confidential. There will be no way to identify individual responses. Rather, we are solely interested in what volunteers in general think about these issues. The personal information collected will be used to better understand how representative our volunteer base is of youth in Calgary. It is collected under the authority of Section 32c of FOIP. Inquiries may be directed to Dr. Valerie Pruegger, Research Social Planner at 268-5126 or vpruegger@calgary.ca.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Age: years

Ethnicity (self-describe your ethnic background e.g. Chinese, British, Italian, etc.):

Income level of family (check one): low medium high don't know

Now on to the questions:

1. Why do you volunteer? Check all that apply:
- Adult encouragement
 - Looks good on college/university applications
 - Satisfaction from helping others
 - Fun and enjoyment
 - Friends volunteer
 - Duty to give back to community
 - Desire to learn new skills
 - Other - Briefly explain

2. If you were asked by an influential member of your community to volunteer, would that influence your decision to volunteer? Check one and provide a brief explanation of your answer.

Yes No Briefly explain:

3. Do you have friends who volunteer? Check one

Yes No

4. What benefits do you get from volunteering? Briefly explain.

5. What kind of experiences have you or people you know mostly had while volunteering? Check one

Positive Negative

6. What methods do you think are most effective in encouraging youth to volunteer? Check all that apply.

- Sharing stories of volunteer experiences with peers
- Pamphlets that list volunteer opportunities
- Word of mouth from friends and other youth who volunteer
- Parents
- Public Service announcements
- Websites with volunteer information
- Other - Briefly explain

7. What do you think are the main reasons why youth choose not to volunteer? Check all that apply.

- lack of time
- don't know how to get involved
- would rather relax/pursue other interests
- never been asked to volunteer
- belief they can't make a difference
- waste of time, no benefits
- not interested/don't care
- would be looked down on by friends/teased
- parents won't allow
- have to work
- Other - Briefly explain

Thank you very much for your time and your participation in this study!

APPENDIX 2. Survey Data

Respondents by Age		
Age	Number	Percent
7	1	0.8%
12	25	21.2%
13	25	21.2%
14	36	30.5%
15	21	17.8%
16	5	4.2%
17	5	4.2%
Valid Responses	118	100.0%
No Response	2	
Grand Total	120	
Average Age	13.7	

Respondents by Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Aboriginal	2	1.7%
Arab / West Asian	3	2.5%
Chinese	21	17.8%
South American	2	1.7%
South Asian	3	2.5%
South East Asian	4	3.4%
Caucasian	82	69.5%
Other	1	0.8%
Valid Responses	118	100.0%
No Response	2	
Grand Total	120	

Respondents by Family Income Level		
Income Level	Number	Percent
Low	3	2.8%
Medium	23	21.3%
High	7	6.5%
Don't Know	75	69.4%
Valid Responses	108	100.0%
No Response	12	
Grand Total	120	

1. Why do you volunteer? (Check all that apply)		
	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Respondents</i>
Adult encouragement	50	41.7%
Looks good on college/university applications	90	75.0%
Satisfaction from helping others	81	67.5%
Fun and enjoyment	103	85.8%
Friends volunteer	46	38.3%
Duty to give back to the community	32	26.7%
Desire to learn new skills	72	60.0%
Other	28	23.3%
Total Respondents	120	100.0%

2. If you were asked by an influential member of your community to volunteer, would that influence your decision to volunteer?		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	78	68.4%
No	36	31.6%
Valid Responses	114	100.0%
No Response	6	
Total Respondents	120	

3. Do you have friends who volunteer?		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	78	68.4%
No	36	31.6%
Valid Responses	114	100.0%
No Response	6	
Total Respondents	120	

5. What benefits do you get from volunteering?
Satisfaction of helping people
Babysitting
I like helping people
Preparation for future jobs. Having fun over summer and meeting new people
Meeting new people to make new friends. Experiencing different ideas from different people
I am going to get experience so I'm sorta ready for a job plus it will help me get into university
Responsibility, sense of community
It is fun, you can meet people, makes summer exciting
You get to play even through volunteering
Good grades and fun
Fun, know people
Fun with younger kids
Child experience hours
Like experience; friends; interaction with younger and older people
Life experience; something on resume
Get volunteer hours for resume
Seeing people smile
To have fun learn new skills
Looks good on application
Good resume
Fun
For experiences
Looks good on application
Looks good on resume
New skills and enjoyment/fulfillment
Experience, meet new people
Just having fun
New skills, experiences, meet new people
Resume, fun
I get confidence, skills with kids, ideas for next time I volunteer
A more developed leadership skills and knowledge
Learning new things, meeting new people etc.
Free food, job reference
I learn lots of new thing and it's a great opportunity
New life skills to develop, new friends and experience with children
Fun, experience, connections
I just wanted to volunteer, I did not think about anything else
Resume, fun
Fun and joy
Have fun, able to get a job

5. Cont'.
Have fun with other kids
Getting to know people
Leadership skills and experience. Confidence in being in front of a group/leading games
Better chance of getting a job
The experience/knowledge
Good resumes for jobs, experience
Experience with different people
Fun
Enjoyment from doing activities with young ones
Look good on a application
Exercise, new skills, crafts
Nothing
Fun, looks good on resume
New friends, keep busy, hours for my D.O.E. award
Good on resume, experience
I meet new people
Helping other people enjoy their summer
Better resume
Better resume
Happy to help people
Fun
You can get references from your supervisor and it can help to get a job
Meet new friends; learn new skills; look better on resume
Learn new skills, interact with others, enhance resume
References for jobs/put on resumes, fun playing with kids, something to do
Resume
Resume
Fun, enjoyment
College hours credits volunteer stuff
Feel good about myself
Learning leadership skills while helping others
Learn about helping others
Job experience, fun
Fun, something to do over summer
Fun, enjoyment, experience, letters of reference
Learning new skills
Giving back to the community. Get to know people
Phyised hours, fun
Phyised hours, fun, provide role model for younger children
Enjoyment from working with kids
Leadership

5. Cont'.
I feel good
Experience, school credits, meeting new people, developing better skills
Skills, fun, satisfaction of helping others
Good stuff on your resume
Meeting new people
New experience, friends
Spending time with my brother
Getting to learn behaviours of children, meet people and to feel good about helping out
Work experience, resume, enjoyment
Volunteer hours
To learn
Experience; new friends; fun; learning new activities
Something to write on applications
Satisfaction for helping; experience
People skills; learn new skills; having fun; responsibility
I get to learn new skills and have fun and hang with little kids
Experience, confidence, and meeting new people
A good feeling
Fun
Get a good job
I get to meet and interact with a lot of kids/youth my age. I am learning more about children and my responsibilities
Something to do, fun, work with kids
Experience
Learn interact with interesting people
I get to learn
Fun, confidence, communication skills
Experiences with working with kids
You get more experience and learn lots of life skills
Experience; fun; get to meet great kids
Fun; volunteer hours and experience
Experience, it's fun
It looks good on a resume and is a lot of fun, it is also something to do
Experience with children, exposure to how things run like day camps

5. What kind of experiences have you or people you know mostly had while volunteering?		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Positive	115	98.3%
Negative	2	1.7%
Valid Responses	117	100.0%
No Responses	3	
Grand Total	120	

6. What methods do you think are most effective in encouraging youth to volunteer? (check all that apply)		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sharing stories of volunteer experiences with peers	90	75.0%
Pamphlets that list volunteer opportunities	50	41.7%
Word of mouth from friends and other youth who volunteer	104	86.7%
Parents	52	43.3%
Public Service announcements	33	27.5%
Websites with volunteer information	51	42.5%
Other	13	10.8%
Total Respondents	120	100.0%



Youth Volunteerism Study: Phase 2
2006 February 09

A small follow-up study to the survey was conducted in the 2005 fall and early winter. Three focus groups were held with youth of African and Caribbean Black descent. The focus groups were conducted in the participant's communities or a City of Calgary area office, and were led by a member of the target community. The goal was to use the same questions as those in the original survey, but to probe in more detail how youth from these particular ethnocultural groups feel about volunteering. In total, 32 youths participated from the Sudanese, Jamaican, Nigerian, and Ethiopian communities. There were 14 males and 18 females ranging in age from 13 to 19 years. The following observations were made by participants in answer to the questions posed.

1. What does volunteerism mean in your community? To you personally?

These young people defined volunteerism as helping out without getting paid, without expecting anything in return, or helping people and organizations in need. They felt that helping in this way is both a good thing to do as well as a way to feel good. One saw it as an opportunity to do things that ordinarily he or she wouldn't get a chance to do, and another highlighted the need to volunteer in order to get into university and to access further opportunities.

2. Why do you think people volunteer?

Similar answers to those found in Phase 1 surfaced in Phase 2. Some saw it as an opportunity to give to the community, to feel good inside, to ameliorate boredom, or simply to help. Others saw it as a means to an end, to get a good job, meet new people, and for experience. One considered it a religious duty and another a chance to have a life-changing experience.

3. What would inspire you to volunteer?

The participants noted that their inspiration would be things like an opportunity to work with children, meet new friends, better themselves or others, help others and have fun. Some were only interested if the opportunity was interesting, fit in with other commitments, didn't take too much time or if their friends were also volunteering and encouraging them to do the same. One talked about volunteering in a crisis or natural disaster situation, like a hurricane. Another was only interested if she would have the opportunity to learn new skills or gain experience that would be helpful in real life. Otherwise, for this individual, volunteering would be "a waste of time".

4. What prevents you from volunteering?

Uncertainty was cited by a number of participants as a barrier to volunteering: wondering if they would be treated with respect and uncertainty about not knowing the other volunteers. Others felt they would be bored, it wouldn't be fun, they wouldn't feel truly involved, or volunteering would be a waste of time. Still others cited time as an issue with school, work, clubs, sports, etc. taking all their time. One cited lack of information about volunteer opportunities and a need to know what was going on, perhaps through posters in schools. One said he or she does not volunteer because the opportunities s/he has seen are not appealing. And for one, location was a big problem in terms of access as was a perception that there was no opportunity to volunteer in the 'mainstream' population for black youth.

5. Would you consider volunteering as a youth leader in a City of Calgary summer programme? Why or why not?

Some individuals had already volunteered with The City, thought it was fun and that the other leaders were nice to work with. Others thought it might be a good place to learn new skills and to do something useful over the summer. Two had not heard of volunteer opportunities with The City and four said no for a variety of reasons. These included no pay, location not convenient, it would allow no social time, and the timing conflicts with vacation.

6. Would you be more likely to volunteer if you felt that you could make a difference in your community?

A couple of participants said 'yes' because this would be a good way to bring the community together and build unity. Others would if it would help make a positive difference especially as role models for other black youth. One would be motivated by the appreciation s/he would receive from his or her community and two cited the feeling of belongingness when "you help your own people, the reward is immense". One would only be interested if it brought change to the community.

7. How do you think you can benefit from volunteering?

Participants saw volunteering as a way to get a good job, build strong connections and networks, teach others, feel good, gain skills, assist with integration into the community and get work experience.

8. If you were asked to volunteer by an influential member of your community, would that influence your decision?

Many youth, particularly those in the Ethiopian community said that it would be difficult to say no to respected elders or influential members of the community. Especially if it was someone they looked up to or aspired to be like. But, for some youth, volunteering was a personal decision and they would not volunteer just because someone asked.

9. What do you think about The City of Calgary summer programmes? Do they provide a benefit for children and youth in your community?

Some thought that City of Calgary summer programmes are great and fun, others thought there is not enough outreach in the programmes. However, a few noted that they “provide an opportunity for kids of ethnic backgrounds to come together”. A couple thought they were a waste of time. As one participant said, “Painting children’s faces, baby sitting children or cleaning parks, won’t give me any kind of experience for my future career”. One thought they were helpful in getting exposure to and mingling with people from “the mainstream”.

10. Do you have any friends who volunteer? If so, have their experiences been positive or negative?

Most participants had friends or family members who volunteer and for most it was a positive experience. The only negative experience cited was at a seniors home where the volunteers had difficulty dealing with mental health issues and not feeling they had the skills to properly assist.

Summary

The focus groups provided little additional information to that collected in Phase 1 and supported the findings therein. For these Black youth, volunteering is a positive experience that may be beneficial for a variety of social and economic reasons. While there was some evidence that they may be anxious about cultural and racial barriers, this did not appear to be a major concern. It would appear that for some youth from these cultural backgrounds, the influence of a respected community or family member would be a strong predictor of volunteerism.

The findings from these two studies, and from the literature, suggest the following actions The City of Calgary could take to enhance youth volunteerism especially for youth from racialized communities.

1. Partner with influential members of the target community to advertise volunteer opportunities and create interest in volunteering.
2. Harness the energy of peer groups as many youth are motivated to volunteer by friends who do so or by seeing role models who do so.
3. Promote volunteer opportunities by focusing on the skills, experience, and contacts youth will obtain, and link these to their future educational or career aspirations.
4. Promote volunteer opportunities by emphasizing youth will gain valuable skills and experience while having fun.
5. Address the barriers to volunteering up front by developing fact sheets that explain, for example, why the volunteer opportunity is important and how it is a good use of time.
6. Ensure that youths' worries about being discriminated against or used as a token are addressed in an open, respectful and validating manner. Emphasize the opportunity for them to be role models for other youth.
7. Ensure that volunteer opportunities are advertised widely in ethnocultural communities, schools, ethnocultural media, faith communities, etc.
8. Proactively recruit racialized youth through presentations at schools, youth clubs, sporting events, and other youth friendly venues.
9. Follow-up throughout the volunteer experience, especially with racialized youth, to ensure that the experience is meeting the youths' needs and is positive.
10. Ensure that any advertisement for volunteer opportunities is culturally appropriate, e.g., graphics reflect diversity of youth; wording is inclusive, etc.

As volunteers become more important to the viability of our communities, it is critical to develop a volunteer base that is truly representative, and volunteer opportunities that provide important benefits to the volunteers themselves. This is especially important for racialized youth who may not have the same opportunities to gain the experience, skills and connections afforded by volunteerism that can help them in their post-secondary education careers or search for employment. This study has provided some ideas on how to expand the volunteer base for summer programmes at The City of Calgary by exploring means to promote these opportunities to racialized youth.