

How to Work with Volunteers



You Can
in the
Yukon!

Yukon Learn Learner Book Series

Yukon Network
Canada Volunteerism Initiative

Canada

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Canada 

Introduction

Many Yukon organizations including First Nation Governments use volunteers to help in the workplace and at special events in the community. Volunteers are people who have decided to give something back to their community by donating their time and skills.

Organizations that use volunteers don't always spend enough time preparing to make their volunteer programs run smoothly. As a result, volunteers and organizations can be left feeling like the experience was a negative one.

What happens to volunteers that aren't happy? Lots of times they won't come back and an organization is stuck without the help they really need. **This book gives organizations some hints to keep their volunteers helpful and happy!**

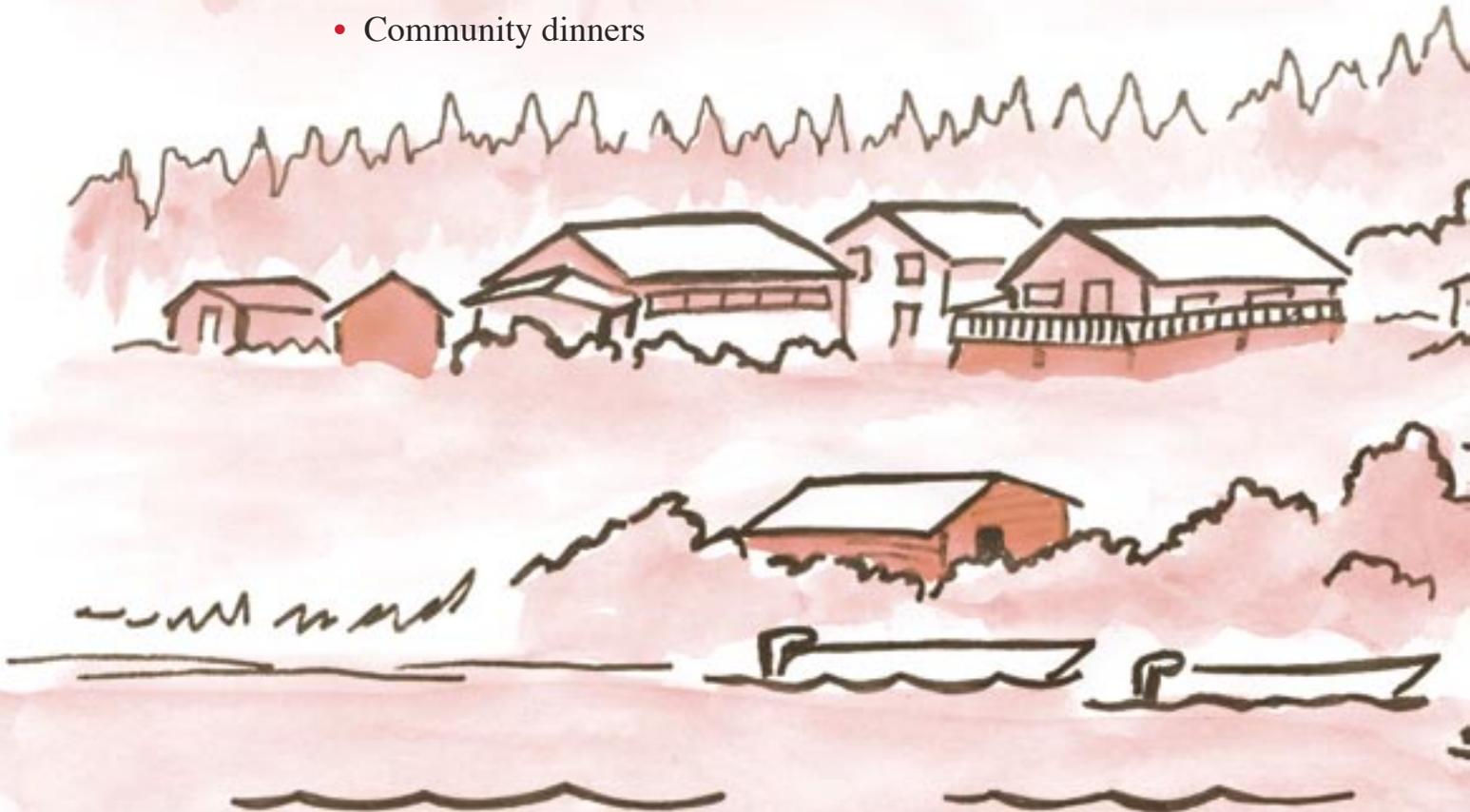


What is a volunteer?

Volunteers are people – from young to old - who give their time, efforts and skills to help others. They volunteer for many reasons, but usually they volunteer so they can give something to their community.

Volunteers are responsible for the success of community programs and special events held all over the Yukon including:

- Music Festivals
- Soccer leagues
- Ski marathons
- Concerts
- Literacy programs
- Soup kitchens
- First Nation gatherings
- Community dinners



Who are the volunteers in your community?

- The college student who helps a high school student with their math
- The man who cuts firewood for elders
- The youth who visits elders at the senior's home and helps serve dinner
- Your kid's hockey coach
- The neighbour who serves on volunteer boards
- The lady who serves soup at the soup kitchen
- The security at Dawson City Music Festival
- The judges at the Harvest Fair



The benefits of volunteering

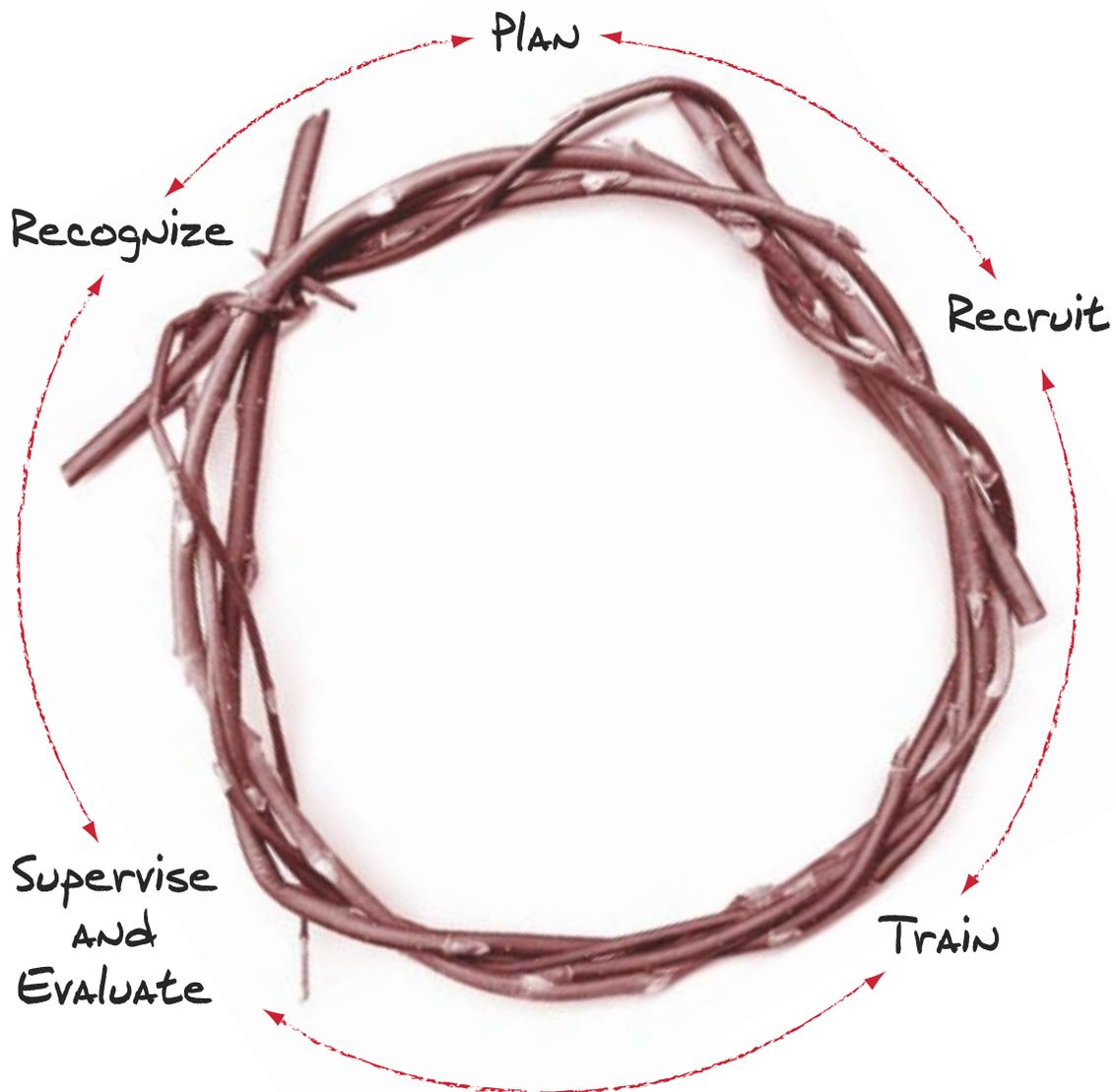
Imagine all the things that couldn't get done without the help of volunteers. Many people volunteer because it makes them feel good and lets them give back to their community. Volunteers don't get paid with money, but they do get other benefits.

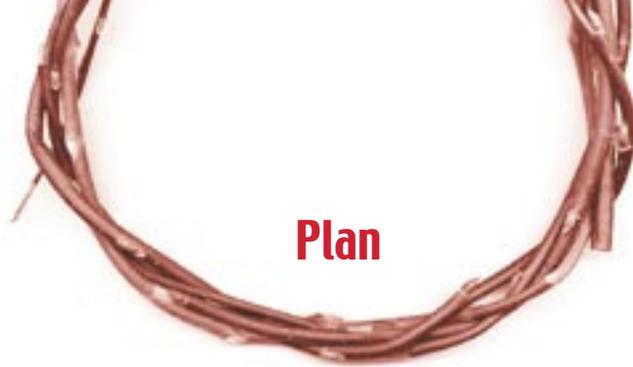
- Feel great about helping others
- Get free training
- Build their skills
- Add something to their resumes
- Meet new people
- Have lots of fun
- Help build a better community



How are volunteers managed?

To make sure your volunteers are energetic and effective, they must be well managed. Follow these five easy steps to manage your volunteers:





Plan

Careful planning is important to meet the needs of your organization and your volunteers. **Ask yourself:**



Who do we want to volunteer?

What will the volunteers do?

How will we reward and acknowledge the volunteers?

What do the staff and board want volunteers to do?

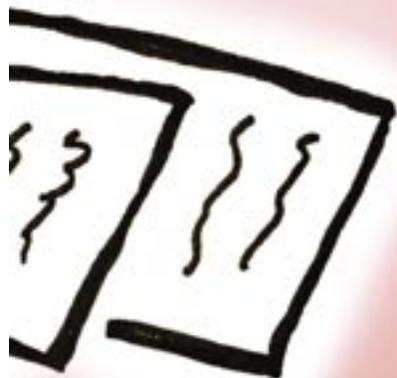
How will we keep
our volunteers
interested AND
eager?

Who will answer
volunteer questions
AND support them?

How will we
train our
volunteers?



After answering these questions you can...



Plan: Have real positions for volunteers.

Create volunteer positions like you would create a staff position, this way everyone will know what is expected of them.

A job description should answer these important questions:



Computer Tutors needed:

- Computer Tutors work one on one with an adult who wants to learn more about computers and the internet.
 - Tutors meet with their learners for 1-3 hours each week, for a minimum of two months.
 - The tutor/learner pairs can work at the Yukon Learn computer lab, the library or at the learner's home.
 - Tutors will prepare lessons for their learners and work with them to help them meet their computer goals.
 - Tutors will report their learner's progress to the Tutor/Learner Coordinator.
 - Tutors should enjoy working with adults and know how to use Windows, the Internet and Microsoft Word.
 - Free training is provided to all tutors, with the opportunity to become a CRLA certified tutor!
- If you like computers and want to help someone in your community, you will find this job very rewarding. A security clearance is required. Please contact the Tutor/Learner Coordinator for more information.



Plan: Use application forms.

Make sure you have the basic information about your volunteer: their name, address, phone number, medical concerns, reasons why they want to volunteer and any other useful information.

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Why do you want to be a Scout Leader?

Have you ever worked with children before?

Do you have your Driver's License?

Do you have your Standard First Aid and CPR?

What days and times are you available to volunteer?

Allergies or medical concerns:

Emergency Contact:

Plan: Have a game plan.

Everyone needs to understand how things are done, so have a clear plan on how you will run your volunteer program.



Plan: Let everyone know how you will use the volunteers.

Make sure that the other people in your organization know about the volunteer program and introduce them to your volunteers.



Recruit

Now it's time to find some volunteers! Think about what kind of volunteers you are looking for, then decide how to reach them. You can use:

- Newspapers
- Radio
- Community Bulletin Boards
- The Volunteer Bureau
- Word of mouth

The best way to find a volunteer is word of mouth.

Talk to people who might be interested in helping and ask your other volunteers to recruit friends and family!



Example Ad:

It is that time of the year again!!

Grad 2005!

**First meeting to think of ideas:
Wednesday at
Midnight Sun
coffee house
7 pm**



Council for Yukon First Nations is looking for volunteers to help make this years celebration out of this world! Come out and be creative and show our kids that they are important to us by making this a party to remember!

Please call 667-7631 for more info and ask for the Grad coordinator to volunteer your time.

Your message should be clear and easy to understand. Make sure your ads tell people why they should volunteer.

Keeping it Safe



Do you know where your volunteers came from?

It's a good idea to screen your volunteers to keep things safe. Sometimes you will know your volunteer, but remember that a safety check will keep you, the people you are working with and your organization safe. It's always better to be safe than sorry.



What's the risk?

Be careful not to put people in risky situations. Think about who the volunteers will be working with, where they will work and what they will be doing.



Write a clear job description

Write a careful description about the job explaining the dos and don'ts. Make sure that the job description says that volunteers will be screened.



Use an application form

The application form will give you very important information and can ask for permission to look at other information (medical exam, driver's record, police records check).





Interview

Talk to your volunteer about their background, skills, interests, and availability, but also use the interview to explore any doubts you may have.



Call a reference

By talking to a reference, you might learn some important information that hasn't been clear so far.



Request a Police Records Check

Get a security check through your local RCMP. This shows everyone that your organization is serious about safety.



Train your volunteers

Give your volunteer the skills they need to do the job right. Training is also a good opportunity to get to know your volunteers and see how they are in a work situation



Supervise and evaluate your volunteers

If there is any kind of risk with a volunteer you will see it when supervising them and doing evaluations based on your job descriptions.



Follow up with program participants

If your volunteer program focuses on people outside the organization, do some follow-up with them. They will let you know if there are any concerns with the volunteer.



Enlisting Youth Volunteers

Want some excitement and spirit in your work environment? Why not bring in some youth? Youth volunteers can bring fresh energy into your organization. They are fun and full of life.

Youth who participate in volunteering will benefit in many different ways. Volunteering will teach them important job skills, let them meet new people and it could even help them decide on what they would like to do in the future. Volunteer experiences look great on resumes and can help when applying for university and for scholarships. If you want young volunteers, talk to schools or youth centres. They might be able to help you find volunteers and can give you tips on how to work with your youth!



Train

Now that you have the right volunteers ready and eager to help, it's time to show your volunteers around and train them for their jobs. Volunteers should know the vision, purpose and mandate of your organization. This will help them feel like a valued member of the team. Like everyone, volunteers like to feel that they belong!

Organizations should not assume that their volunteers have all the skills to do the job. That's where training comes in! Depending on the volunteer's job, training might take 15 minutes or 15 hours. A trained volunteer will be able to do their job with confidence, instead of confusion! Sometimes free training will even attract a great volunteer to the job.



Supervise and Evaluate:

Once your volunteers start working, you will need to supervise. This will give you a chance to check if they are doing their job well. It also gives the volunteer a chance to tell you how they feel about their job.

EVALUATION FORM

What do you like most about your job?

What do you like least about your job?

What do you need to do your job better?

Are you getting enough support?

Is there anything I can do to help you?

Would you like to change anything about your job?

Will you keep volunteering with us? Why or why not?

These questions will help you get some important information about your organization and your volunteer. You might find that the volunteer is unhappy and should be used in a different position. If the volunteer's experience is positive, they are more likely to stay! If your volunteer decides to leave, a final interview can tell you why they are leaving and what changes you can make so your next volunteer stays.



Recognition



It is very important that your volunteers feel valued. There are many ways to show your thanks and appreciation to them. Be creative and think of exciting ways to celebrate the work your volunteers do for you. You don't need money to say thank you! The more personal the recognition, the better.

Here are some ideas:

- Give them a certificate showing their hours of work
- Give them a gift
- Say thank you in a newspaper ad or on the radio
- Make a wall of fame in your offices and hang their pictures up on it
- Have a volunteer appreciation night with a dinner and entertainment
- Give them a free pass into the event that they are volunteering for
- Give them a t-shirt with your organization's logo
- Take a picture of them volunteering and put it in a frame
- Show them how much money they helped raise or how many people they helped

The most important thing



CLAP!



CLAP!



CLAP!



CLAP!



is to say THANK YOU!



Working with everyone!



Volunteers can come from different cultures and backgrounds. To make sure that your organization welcomes all volunteers remember:

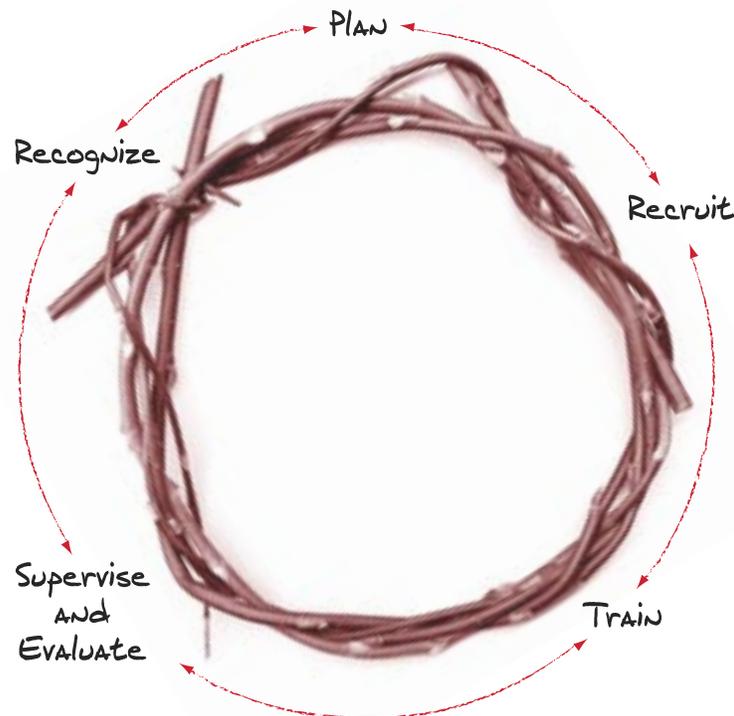
- Be respectful of cultural practices.
- Each volunteer is unique and you might have to adjust instructions or jobs to meet their needs. Encourage questions and make sure volunteers understand what they are doing before they begin.
- Everyone is different! Ask questions about your volunteers' culture and history, and find out what your volunteer needs. Don't make assumptions based on culture.
- Respect your volunteers as individuals. Don't impose your personal beliefs on your volunteers.

Make your organization a place where everyone is welcome!

Volunteering for a Board:

An organization's Board of Directors is responsible for the important decisions that an organization has to make. Guess what? They are usually volunteers too and they will need the same care and attention as other volunteers.

Follow the same steps that you use to manage other volunteers and you'll end up with a happy healthy board! You will probably need to recruit a board using ads and word of mouth. Include job descriptions and training for your board members so that everybody knows exactly what is expected of them. Don't forget about recognition -- board members should also be appreciated and acknowledged for the hard work they do.



The Do's and Don'ts of Volunteer Management

Do:

- ✓ Reward a volunteer.
- ✓ Be clear about their role.
- ✓ Give them help AND support when they need it.
- ✓ Provide training opportunities.
- ✓ Make them feel welcome.
- ✓ Give feedback.
- ✓ Give them a safe place to work.

Don't:

- ~~X~~ Leave volunteers without direction.
- ~~X~~ Assume that the volunteers understand.
- ~~X~~ Take them for granted.
- ~~X~~ Exploit them.
- ~~X~~ Treat them badly.
- ~~X~~ Expect them to do YOUR job.
- ~~X~~ Put them in AN UNSAFE situation.
- ~~X~~ Make them do a job that they are not happy doing.
- ~~X~~ Put unrealistic expectations on your volunteers.

Encouraging people in your community to volunteer



Do you know someone who volunteers for everything? Sometimes there is too much that needs to be done and not enough volunteers to do it!

What can you do to get people interested in helping? Tell your friends, family and community about volunteering! Let everyone know that it can be a fun, exciting thing to do!

- Do you like the outdoors? Volunteer to help in an outdoors club!
- Do you like to ski? Volunteer as a track setter.
- Do you like soccer or hockey? Become a coach!
- Do you like children? Become a Big Brother or Big Sister.

There's a volunteer opportunity out there for everyone!

If you want to find a volunteer opportunity, look in the newspapers, listen to the radio OR contact the Yukon Volunteer Bureau! The Yukon Volunteer Bureau can help you find volunteers and help volunteers find you.

CONCLUSION

Now you should have the basic tools to help you manage an effective volunteer program. Your organization will run smoothly with happy volunteers who understand their role and feel like they are part of the team. You will feel better knowing that your volunteers are doing their best and that you took the time and energy to carefully plan your program.



Thank you
to All the
volunteers
who make
their
communities
and their
country a
great place
to be!



Resources



Volunteer Canada

www.volunteer.ca

This is an excellent website where you can learn more about volunteering. It includes information on current research, national events, tools and resources, and everything else you might want to know about volunteering in Canada.

Yukon Volunteer Bureau

www.volunteerbureau.yk.ca

3123 3rd Avenue (street address)

PO Box 31107, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 3W1 (mailing address)

Phone: **867-456-4304** Fax: 867-456-4302

info@volunteerbureau.yk.ca

The Yukon Volunteer Bureau can give you lots of information on planning, recruiting, screening, orientation and training, supervision and evaluation, and recognition for your organization's volunteers. We can answer your questions, provide you with examples of job descriptions and application forms, give you ideas for recognition, and any other resource you might want or need to make sure your volunteers are happy. Call us anytime!

Through the Yukon Volunteer Bureau you can also reach:

Canada Volunteerism Initiative – Yukon Local Network

www.volunteerbureau.yk.ca/canada_volunteerism_initiative/english/

coordinator@volunteerbureau.yk.ca

The Yukon Local Network of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative is part of a national program committed to helping volunteers. The local network is hosted by the Yukon Volunteer Bureau, and focuses on celebrating volunteers in the territory. We can help you to recognize your volunteers on National Volunteer Week, on International Volunteer Day, or any day – we have posters, cards, postcards, and packets of wildflower seeds that you can have for free to give to your volunteers as a thank you for their hard work. Ask us about our 'Community Cultivation Kits'!

Yukon Learn Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of literacy across the Yukon.

Yukon Learn Society initiated the development of this series of **You Can in the Yukon** books in order to create easy-to-read and relevant reading materials for Yukon learners.

We would love to hear from you. Do you have an idea for a You Can in the Yukon book that reflects our unique northern character? Or would you like to respond to this or any other book in the series? Please get in touch with us at (867)668-6280 or toll free 1-888-668-6280.

Other books in this series:

How to Go to the Doctor

How to Survive 40 Below

How to Plant a Yukon Garden and Grow a Reader

How to be FireSmart



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