

# ENGAGING YOUTH FROM DIVERSE ETHNO-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

## Summary of Year 1 Research Findings

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CENTRE FOR  
COMMUNITY  
BASED RESEARCH

73 King Street West, Suite 300  
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 1A7  
Phone: (519) 741-1318 Fax: (519) 741-8262  
E-mail: [general@communitybasedresearch.ca](mailto:general@communitybasedresearch.ca)  
[www.communitybasedresearch.ca](http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca)

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# 1- Introduction

This reports summarizes the year 1 research findings of the project entitled: “Engaging Youth from Diverse Ethno-Cultural Communities: A Working Model”, led by the K-W Multicultural Centre. The main purpose of the project is ‘to understand present immigrant youth volunteering practices and perceptions in Waterloo Region and to explore local strategies to deepen their engagement in volunteering”.

The research findings are organized according to three main questions:

- 1) How are ethno-cultural youth presently volunteering (current practices)?
- 2) What are the attitudes towards volunteering that ethno-cultural youth hold (attitudes and perceptions)?
- 3) What could be done to deepen ethno cultural youth engagement in volunteering (strategies)?

Two main methods were employed to collect the data:

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** A total of 10 focus group discussions were prepared and conducted with the main stakeholders. They included ethno-cultural youth (5 FGDs), Organizations or service providers (2 FGDs) and parents/cultural community members (1 FGD).

**Key Informant Interviews:** Several face-to-face individual interviews were conducted, the majority with ethno-cultural youth (5) and the remaining two with service providers/organizations.

The report does not summarize the on-line survey as these were summarized in a previous document.

## 2- Current Volunteer Practices

The discussions with youth belonging to diverse ethno cultural backgrounds revealed that they participated in a number of different activities and most of them contributed to maintain strong cultural ties. In big cities like Toronto, there were educational institutions catering to the needs of specific ethno-cultural community and the participants volunteered in their different programs. This was particularly true for the established communities like the Greek and the Croatians.

*In Toronto they have a pretty established Greek community. They [youth] do a lot of volunteering within the Greek community, they don't really help anyone else but only the Greek community, but I guess that works. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Also Croatian school and Croatian dance, we are just expected to go. And encourage other Croatians to come to keep the Croatian community alive. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Immigrant youth were involved in helping other community members as well.

*I shovel my neighbour's driveway for free. It's not expected of me. I do it because I am bored. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*You just help someone else to clean [snow from their driveway]. That you have to do it, maybe you don't have other stuff to do. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[I contribute by] taking the leaves off the trees. It's something I wanted to do. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Well basically I love to get involved in the community anywhere. If anyone in the neighbourhood needs help, I would just do it. (Youth Key Informant)*

Diverse ethno-cultural young people were also helping their parents and extended families in different household chores. In many cases, their parents expected them to perform these tasks, however, they were also involved in these activities as they considered it their responsibility and they felt obliged to help other members of the family.

*My parents expect me to wash the dishes everyday and I do chores every weekend and my parents expect me to do that. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*In my culture because I am the eldest son in the family I feel this as it is kind of my responsibility to help younger siblings. (Youth Key Informant)*

Some youth, especially females, volunteered their time taking care of children and helping siblings within the families and in the neighbourhoods.

*I help out my brothers and siblings. They are in school and I am done my school so I try to help them in their school work. Partially I want to help them and partially it's my responsibility. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I did volunteer where I came from and I do volunteer here in Canada. So in the neighbourhood I baby-sit the children and they don't pay me, I just do it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

There were expectations from the youth to take part in religious and cultural activities and some youth performed different roles to come up to that expectations.

*Right now I am with a religious organization and we help out with the youth with regards to educating them with religious based information, connecting them with other youth in the community. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I find in my community you are expected to go to church because in Mexico it is very religious, churches are on almost every block, you are expected to go to church every Sunday. You are expected to help out, there is usually a lot of involvement in the church community too, and during the holidays there are lots of family activities. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*We have to go to church as well; our priest always wants us to encourage Croatian people to come to the church. I guess that is our role, to encourage Croatian people to come to church. (Focus Group Participant)*

*They [youth] take certain roles when there a cultural event. They take a leading role getting things organized. These are the things that they are pushed into and at the beginning they are pushed but then they mingle up. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*We encourage them [youth] to help in the church to lead most of the activities in the church and for our usual yearly celebrations. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

Some of the youth actively participated in school volunteer activities and helped educating other students.

*At the school everybody is from a different country and we brought a table and stuff from our country and food, and at lunch time people came in to visit our table and we had to explain things about our country. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*We help the students in English language after school. We help them to do homework and their reading. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Some tried to facilitate and foster peer connections and develop friendship among children.

*[I am involved in] putting all the high school kids together and making sure that they know one another and try to build that brotherhood, sisterhood type of relationship they might have with one another, so education based as well as just friendship based [activities]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

## 2.1 Meanings of volunteering

For most of the youth participants, volunteering means helping others selflessly without any material gains.

*[Volunteering means to] help others and don't expect anything back. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[Volunteering means] Just work without getting paid. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[Volunteering is] taking time off your busy schedule to help others. I think that is volunteering. Even the smallest task if you are lending a hand, you are volunteering. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My definition of volunteering is doing work to help better something or someone without getting any compensation. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Some of the youth key informants noted that just helping out others without any schedule and structure could not be called volunteering. They saw volunteering as more structured activity to help others.

*In my opinion you are a volunteer if you actually have a schedule and go for one or two hours a week to a place to do something for help. (Youth Key Informant)*

*For me it is a volunteer when you actually take that as a job even though you don't get money or whatever. If you actually give your time and bring results to a project that is what I consider a volunteer. (Youth Key Informant)*

Some considered that volunteering had an element of choice—something they would do willingly.

*Volunteering is something that is free of choice, like you want to be there. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[To volunteer], you have to do something that has to be done. Someone doesn't have to come to you and grab you by the hand and do that or do this. You have to go there and do it by yourself. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Many of the youth participants did not consider helping family, siblings and/or community members as volunteering.

*Helping my family and my community is not volunteering, it is all part of the family and the community, and you cannot separate yourself [from them]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I don't fully consider helping my brothers and sisters to be volunteering. It's kind of a responsibility and sometimes I don't want to but have to do it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*If I am doing anything for my own family is obviously not volunteering. Just anything I do for I guess for others or my community or my city [is called volunteering]. (Youth Key Informant)*

## **2.2 Status of volunteering in youth participants' countries of origin**

As such, participants, except for one<sup>1</sup>, did not find any word in their own native language that could capture or describe the word 'volunteering'. This was partly attributed to lack of focus on volunteering practices in their countries of origin.

The participants belonging to different Asian communities (e.g. China, Pakistan) found that there had been little, if any, emphasis on youth/children participating in volunteer activities.

*There is little volunteer work in my country [China], children aren't asked to do volunteer work [in educational institutions]. Few people do volunteer work in my country. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*The same here [no emphasis and opportunities for volunteer work], back in my home country and as far as I know it is true for Southeast Asia. Volunteering in my country is a newer concept, something that hasn't been around for a long time, not like the YMCA where there are a lot of opportunities. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*In Pakistan there is nothing, same. Before I came here I didn't even know about volunteering because it wasn't necessary for graduating from high school or anything. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*In Pakistan there isn't much of volunteering. So first when you come in here, it is not the [native] culture that drives you to volunteer. (Youth Key Informant)*

*Actually in Taiwan we don't have this volunteering stuff going on so basically like the volunteer system I was first heard when I arrived in Canada. (Youth Key Informant)*

*In our culture, may be other cultures too, there is no such thing as volunteering. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

Participants belonging to African communities noted that similar had been the situation in their countries.

*I don't think in Somalia people are very involved in volunteering. They know one another in that sense and I don't know how important it is to them, I am not really sure. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

In these countries, they would help, especially the old people, more as a moral obligation and did not consider it as volunteering.

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<sup>1</sup> For that participant 'Khidmat' (which means service in English) was used to describe volunteering.

*Back in Africa, if I help somebody like an old person in my country it is because of morality or respect. In the West, I might call it volunteering. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

A few participants, on the other hand, mentioned that volunteer work was very competitive in their country and they had to pass an exam before finally being considered for any volunteer work.

*Where I came from in China, volunteer mean excellent, if you want to volunteer you must take part in an exam if your score is high enough you take the opportunity because there is so little opportunity for people. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Unlike their countries of origin, the participants found that in Canada there was a lot of opportunities and emphasis on volunteering.

*I think in Canada there is a lot of pressure to volunteer but I don't think it is a bad pressure. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I only started to learn about volunteering and its importance after living in Canada for a while and having my teacher and my parents tell me about it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*We don't have as you have to do volunteering in high school and things like that. Up here it is the culture [to volunteer]. (Youth Key Informant)*

*Volunteering is not as good as going to paid work is the perception of people in other countries, but here it is an important thing to volunteer as well. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

### **2.3 Frequent or common volunteering places (external)**

The discussion with the service providers/agencies indicated that most of them had youth volunteers belonging to different ethno-cultural backgrounds. Most of these volunteers were above 16 years of age. Many of these organizations had volunteer board of directors but few, if any, had youth volunteers representation in their boards.

*Our agency is focused on diversity and since I have been there for a year and half and myself being from a different background, I have always tried to recruit [volunteers] from diverse cultures. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*We have a board of directors as well that over see many of our businesses. It would be wonderful to have a youth representative on that but the majority of those members are 50 plus [age]. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Youth participants volunteered at a number of different places. Some of the frequently mentioned places included community centres, YMCA, Kitchener public library (KPL), summer camps, universities and schools.

*I found places that are more common here are community centres, YMCA and KPL. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I have noticed that more people I have come into contact with have volunteered at summer camps, the day camps, get to play soccer with kids and stuff. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*There are better chances at school [for volunteering] where you have teachers help. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Generally, diverse ethno-cultural youth found to be volunteering at places where they felt a sense of contributing to human beings or organizations providing services in areas that was related to their own experiences. Some other common places included big organizations providing services in a many different areas and also the credibility of the organization was considered important.

*Everyone no matter where they come from appreciates the value of healthcare so it can be an easy sell to the potential volunteer. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*We are a large organization with a great number of areas and volunteer positions so once someone shows interest you can usually find a suitable match for their needs and skills. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*It is also a service [health care] in our community that potential volunteers have used and so many feel a desire to repay the services that they have received. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*If it is an issue that is close to your heart you are going to want to be part of it. We get sometimes women who want to volunteer with us either because someone experienced a sexual assault in their life or someone they know [had experienced it]. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

## **2.4 Existing ways to learn about volunteer opportunities**

Volunteer accepting organizations used a number of different mediums to advertise their volunteer positions. They included advertising on volunteer action centre website, newspapers, sending flyers to other organizations and through educational institutions.

*We are a member of the volunteer action centre and first look at that. I advertise in Cambridge newspaper and try to advertise in the community at the multicultural centre, send a flyer. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I would say the volunteer action centre for sure and then target. We went to the university fairs and where we knew young people were looking for positions. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Some youth participants had received information about volunteer opportunities from different places like their friends, school, the internet, etc. However, others had never received any information about volunteering at all.

*Mostly I receive information [about volunteering] from friends and second I receive it from the Internet and third probably teachers and school. (Youth Key Informant)*

Many of the participants used internet to learn about the available volunteer opportunities in the region.

*The Internet has a bunch of websites, there is one with over 50 different topics, animals, old people, and we had to do it in grade 12 for a project. We had to look it up, (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Another identified means was word of mouth—getting information from people working in the organization.

*Ask someone that knows about that and maybe they can help. Like someone that works in that place. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Usually I only hear [about the volunteer opportunities] from friends or people in the community if there is [any volunteer] opportunity. (Youth Key Informant)*

Educational institutions also helped students finding position matching their interest and goals.

*There is like a clubs day [at the university] when all [the students] unite. Clubs set up booths, and get people to volunteer. And there are also booths of other volunteer positions outside the university. [There are] also a volunteer fair [in the university]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My high school teacher helped me find the placement according to my skills. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I would say at the school I see sometimes posters about volunteer jobs and that kind of stuff. The importance of volunteering in Canada I have never gotten any information about that. (Youth Key Informant)*

Participants noted that the information about volunteer opportunities was not widely disseminated and sometimes they would find it hard to learn about existing openings. They suggested that there should be more advertising for community wide opportunities for young people to be part of these initiatives.

*I find that for the universities there is enough awareness, but volunteering in the community for hospitals, special events and the city are not advertised very well. People might want to volunteer but they might not know where to look for. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think in the schools, volunteering is advertised, but outside of schools it's not. I am sure some people are advertising in schools for things outside of schools, but other than advertising outside the university I don't see any ever. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*She [my daughter] asked me where to go to volunteer for school community hours but I really didn't know what to say. It is a problem. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

## **2.5 Perceived benefits of volunteering (motivations to volunteer)**

There are a number of different reasons or motivations for ethno-cultural youth to devote their time and efforts in different volunteer activities. It appeared that they were involved in such activities mainly to help others out of their own volition. They saw a number of benefits to get involved in volunteer activities and can be categorised as:

### **a- Benefits to the individual**

There were a number of different benefits or individual motivations for young people to participate in volunteer activities.

*[Some of the individual benefits include] looking at pursuing a career. Wanting to gain experience and giving back to the community. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

**Feeling happy by helping others (making a difference in others' lives):** For the youth, one of the strong motivations stemmed from their desire to help others who were in need. It provided them a sense of satisfaction and happiness. They felt their contribution would bring about a positive change in other people's lives who they were trying to help.

*People just stress over everything, when you volunteer and see people involved it is like scientifically proven that when you help other people you actually get happier so it teaches you to get over it [stress]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*You don't have to consider all the time to be paid back. Like you help someone and that you feel comfortable, you feel happy about yourself because you help someone. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It is good to volunteer without paying back because when you help them they will go on forever and be happy. (Youth Focus Group Participation)*

*It is nice getting involved and helping people and feel that whatever you are doing can make a difference [in people's lives]. (Youth Key Informant)*

**Enjoying volunteer activities:** Some participants reported enjoying volunteering or helping others. They also found volunteering to be helpful in bringing about positive change.

*I volunteer because I just enjoy it. I want to change it [the way things are carried out], I see in school there is like an arts related club so I just told my friends “yah we should do it”. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think it is fun and I like it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

**Meeting new people:** For many volunteers, volunteering provided an opportunity to meet new people and learn from them about their cultures. They found it a good way to exchange ideas and support other volunteers and people they would interact.

*Volunteering sometimes is so much fun because you meet other people and learn new cultures and backgrounds. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think volunteering is good, because you meet new people and stuff. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Sometimes purely out of interest, you want to know more about different background, just curious so you volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Volunteering allows me to connect with youth and to know what they are going through. I have gone through the same things and can assist them with relationships that they might be having or school difficulties so I can give them assistance with that. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I meet a lot of new people through volunteering. I knew more about my neighbours and other people through this volunteer position. (Youth Key Informant)*

*One thing I was hearing was people [youth] volunteer because if they are new, they want to connect with the community and try to go to different organizations and volunteer. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

**Understanding Canadian Context:** Volunteering was also thought to be helpful in understanding the Canadian context which could help the young immigrants integrating in the society.

*[Volunteering] brings new ideas and new ways of thinking; new ways on how to live in Canada like sometimes it is hard. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*When I volunteer I feel a part of the community and it helps to adjust here. (Youth Key Informant)*

*It [volunteering] gave me a better understanding of the social structure in this country, get Canadian experience. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

**Increasing self confidence (personality development):** Volunteering was considered to boost participants' self confidence. The youth also found that volunteer activities could help identify their strengths and areas of improvement for personality development.

*I think volunteering is good. [It] can help you give confidence and be a better person and the one you thought you could not do, you can do now. [It helps to] know your strengths and weaknesses. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I feel like I'm learning a lot [when I volunteer]. Because when I was at home in the Philippines I would just watch TV all the time. When I came here to Canada I learned how to become independent and to manage my time. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

**Improving English language skills:** Some young volunteers used volunteer assignments to practice and improve their English language.

*It [Volunteering] is good; you can practice your English. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I would recommend doing some volunteer work because you practice your English, make friends. Try to adapt to living here. I would say language, trying to learn English is one of the incentives. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think I always benefit from participating and volunteering because I do practice my English and secondly, it brings me more opportunities to meet other people and get comfortable with talking to people. (Youth Key Informant)*

**Building resume (future employment motive):** For the participants, volunteering helped build volunteers' resume and would increase their employability. It would particularly be useful for their future career if they were volunteering in their area of expertise or specialisation.

*This might seem sort of a pessimistic view, but a lot of people volunteer, and in the back of their head [they know] that it is going to benefit them. Like if they are applying to University or things like that. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Some people do it out of their heart but a lot of people know if they do it they will be rewarded in the end somehow. It doesn't mean it is not right, I would still prefer that than somebody not doing anything. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It helps them [youth volunteers] for sure. It is for their future but they obviously do love it [too], so it is a combination of [both]. You're going to do it for the rest of your life so why not start now. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My parents are happy when I am volunteering. Also if you do more it will look good in your resume. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Actually my friend says if I want to get a part time job it helps when you have volunteer experience. (Youth Key Informant)*

*When I came 16 years ago I had to start from scratch I had to build my resume and I had to volunteer. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*In Canada volunteering is another step of getting to the real world of working. It is a good thing that people must do; otherwise you have nothing to put on your resume. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

## **b- Benefits to the cultural community**

**Enhancing public image of cultural community:** Volunteering was considered to create positive image of the participants' cultural community. The youth also noted that through volunteering they could introduce their cultures to other people.

*People might be stereotyping, and say ok this guy is really smart, what a great Greek kid, maybe all Greeks are the same, maybe that could help that way [to build Greek community image]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think it's a good idea to introduce our own ethnic community to the general public. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*By volunteering, we introduce our culture to other people. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It is good to make them [wider community] understand that you are a part of the community and not just standing around. You are actually taking part in the community and helping out. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

**Bringing new skills/knowledge into cultural community:** Youth participants noted that volunteering could bring new skills to their cultural community and they could learn new ways of doing things that would be different from their own.

*By volunteering, you can bring new skills to your community. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[Volunteering] brings new ideas and new ways of thinking, new ways on how to live in Canada. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

## **c- Benefits to organizations**

The discussion with volunteer organizations revealed that they too had benefited in a number of different ways by recruiting volunteers from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. The organization learned about different cultures and could benefit from skills that these volunteers would bring to the organization.

*I think it is enriching to have so many different experiences. It brings different perspective on things that we may not see. They bring way more than we can offer as there is a lot of experience and the experience doesn't have to all be Canadian experience. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*One example I am thinking of is just our understanding of abuse and sexual abuse and seeing that in a different culture and how that is looked at and how*

*that is addressed and how it can affect someone from a different culture is quite interesting to learn about. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

With increasing changes in the population composition in the region, the organizations found it very helpful to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds. It helped them fulfilling the needs of different cultural groups especially when dealing with clients who had limited English skills.

*The population we are serving in our program is very diverse. We have set it as a mandate to reflect that [diversity] in our volunteers [selection]. We certainly welcome this [diversity] and in fact have demonstrated that. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I like being able to see those diverse cultures in our organization makes individuals that are coming into the hospital more comfortable as well. So that if one specific nurse doesn't understand their culture then to be able to possibly get a volunteer to assist or another staff person that is from that culture. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Ethno-cultural youth volunteers were considered a bridge connecting organizations with different cultural communities.

*We also try to use their skills in public education and use them when they do presentation in their community; it is the best way to communicate. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I do get a lot of word of mouth connections. Sometimes you get the lead through the volunteers to recruit for you, especially from their community. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

#### **d- School Requirement of 40 hours**

For a number of youth focus group participants, the main reason for volunteering was the school requirement of completing 40 hours in volunteer work.

*If there wasn't the 40 hours [requirement], we wouldn't do it at all. Not for one minute. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Yes, you get experience and your hours that you need to in order to graduate from high school. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

These participants saw that this was something they were forced to do and that's why many of them just wanted to complete these hours and would volunteer without any enthusiasm and interest.

*It is forced to have to do the volunteer hours. If people don't like to volunteer they are forced to do it otherwise they can't get a credit. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think people don't want to volunteer because they are not getting paid, forced to do the 40 hours, and there are way better things to do than working for no money. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*All I heard was you need 40 hours to graduate. So it seemed like nothing more than a chore I had to get rid of. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

This requirement might prove counter-productive in some cases. For some participants this enforced volunteering would actually deter them to participate in such activities.

*I just don't like doing stuff where I am forced to do it. My mother says you have to do snow shovelling. I don't do it and would rather face the consequence just because she told me to do it, she forced me. I don't do it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

However, there were many participants who were involved in different kinds of volunteer activities beyond those 40 hours requirement. They were simply interested in helping other people out in some ways.

*I volunteered at the YMCA and I did 80 hours. I don't really care about the hours, having fun at the same time as getting your hours. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*From a personal experience, when I coached soccer, I did coach because there was a mandatory 40 hours of community service for high school, but after doing it, like it's fun, I would do it again. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I have to earn 40 hours of community volunteer hours for graduating from high school. But actually if I don't need those 40 hours I still volunteer because I like to help. (Youth Key Informant)*

From the perspective of volunteer recruiting organizations, youth who were volunteering not to just fulfill their 40 hours requirements provided more stability to their organizations. They found it more beneficial to recruit those who were motivated to volunteer beyond that mandatory 40 hours requirement.

*There is a little more commitment and less transition [from youth volunteering beyond their 40 hours requirement], which give stability to our organization. As for volunteers that come in and say this is how many hours I need and you don't have that stability and it becomes very challenging. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I would say that those students that come in and indicate that they are here for their 40 hours aren't going to be ones that are really interested. They are not here because they want to be and so they are going to be more difficult. They are not going to be reliable, dependable in most cases. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*[If someone comes to complete] 40 hours I usually just direct them right away to someone else. If they are coming in because they are saying they need the*

*experience for courses or school then I talk to them and give the minimum 1-year and go through it and base my judgment on that. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

## **2.6 Cost (or negative impact) of not volunteering**

**Delayed integration into 'Canadian Culture':** For the youth focus group participants, one of the costs that individual and cultural community might have to pay was delayed integration into the mainstream society. Failing to participate in volunteer activities, especially in the wider community, would result into lack of understanding of the 'Canadian Culture' and thus would impede the integration process.

*[People who don't volunteer miss out on] experiences to try to understand the culture. If you are so shy and stay in your comfort zone and you don't try to get out there then not going to adapt very well very soon. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

**Missing learning and employment opportunities:** Another consequence that the participants identified was missing opportunities that would help learning new skills both for the individual and for the cultural community as a whole. They also found that lack of volunteering experience might result into losing some potential employment opportunities as well.

*I think youth miss out on things when they don't volunteer outside of their community. Because there is more variety of things that you could learn if you really get out there and get connected. Learn more skills. Although the stuff that you learn without that is just as important but you can learn more I think. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*One lady came to our office, but when she heard it is volunteering position she refused even though that position would have led to a paying position. After she left a program started she could have been the coordinator of, she missed the opportunity. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

## 3- Attitudes towards and Perceptions about Volunteering

### 3.1 Parents' perceptions about volunteering

For a couple of parents/community members volunteering was waste of youth time and young people should better look for some paid activities to support their parents/families. They compared the situation with their own countries of origin where they did not have to volunteer to get a job. Some parents wanted their children to do some job that would bring money.

*To me volunteering was a waste of time I didn't understand the importance of networking, I didn't care. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*The whole networking part the parents do not understand because I guess back home that is not how it was done. You study and you get a job. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*My mom says it is bad, why don't you get a job and make some money. I want to volunteer because I am bored or something and she is like why don't you go get a job instead? Why do something for free. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

However the majority of the youth participants found that the parents were quite supportive of volunteering and encouraged their children to do volunteer work.

*My parents see it as a very positive experience. They like it a lot, they think of it as contributing to the community. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My parents have supported me, they want me to go and volunteer to gain more experience and gain more skills. I didn't want to work for free but my dad sat with me down and said it was really important in this country, that I will get nowhere without volunteering. Now I know he was right. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My mom supports me. If I want to volunteer outside of Kitchener Waterloo she will drive me there. (Youth Key Informant)*

Many parents would want their children to volunteer but with certain conditions such as the place of volunteering should not be far from their homes, particularly in case of female youth.

*My parents want me to volunteer at some place they know about and because I am the only child they are protective so they want to make sure it is a safe place for you to volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*They want me to volunteer somewhere that it is not too far away. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Parents must trust the places where their children volunteer to know if they are safe. Parents are asking me where their children can volunteer, is the place safe and good, especially if it is a girl. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

### **3.2 Community's perception about volunteering**

The youth described community's perception about volunteering as generally positive. Their communities considered volunteers as role models for others to follow.

*They [community members] think you are a Saint, "aww look at that" (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*They consider those people bad who do not volunteer. ....'oh why can't you be like this person...look at what they are doing?' (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

### **3.3 Perception about volunteering at 'external' places/communities**

Some key informants and participant of the youth focus groups felt that some young people, especially recent immigrants, would feel more comfortable volunteering for their own cultural community than others.

*Some feel more comfortable in their community. Some of my friends that are Indonesians that just arrived here a few years ago, they find it more comfortable to be surrounded with people of the same region. Some of them are not comfortable assimilating with others. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I would like to volunteer more in my community because I have friends mostly in my own community. (Youth Key Informant)*

*If you are volunteering with your cultural group you meet more people from your own culture and makes you feel at ease in Canada. (Youth Key Informant)*

Majority of the youth, however, noted that it would be difficult to generalize whether individuals belonging to a particular ethno-cultural background would prefer working only in/with their communities or for other communities as well.

*I don't think that the Greek community as a whole will or won't volunteer outside their community I think it is an individual thing. For example, I coach a soccer team, not within my community, my neighbourhood. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think it really is a personal thing, like you can have people in a community who volunteer and also have people who individually go out and do these things outside their community. It just depends on the person and the way they were raised. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I have friends from my same cultural background and they volunteer everywhere, but there are some who volunteer only with the cultural community. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Some of the ethno-cultural youth in fact were keen to volunteer outside of their own cultural community to learn from other people and to introduce their own culture to the wider community members. They, however, wanted that such opportunities should match their interests.

*Whatever interests me despite of how different they are in terms of its culture or understanding or customs; if it is something that interests me I will go for it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think I should start volunteering outside of my community because now I am living here so I think I should understand the culture I am into, as well as the one I am from. (Youth Key Informant)*

Research participants, especially parents and community members, found that volunteering at 'external' or renowned organizations would be much more helpful for the youth than volunteering for cultural community.

*Have you ever looked upon the difference between volunteering for example, Tamil Association or the Hospital? My impression would be that they would choose the hospital [for better employment prospects in future]. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*I think that probably a letter from an ethno cultural community association would not hold the same importance as let's say a letter from a hospital or some business company. When you're applying for a job I'm sure the hospital one would have more weight rather than the one from the cultural community. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

### **3.4 Ideal volunteer opportunity (important aspects of volunteering opportunity)**

Youth focus group participants identified certain criteria for an ideal volunteering opportunity. For some, the opportunity should be physically accessible and should provide flexibility in terms of time and number of hours.

*I want it to be flexible and work around my schedule because like I can't just cancel my job you know. It helps me out a bit. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

The youth groups noted that the volunteering opportunity should enhance their learning and skills and it should relate to their future career goals.

*You don't want to do something that has no meaning to you. You want to do something that improves your skill or learn something new that you can possibly use. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I'd say maybe like making handbags for someone. I would like to do that. That would also help me because I want to be a designer and that would also be working towards what I want to be in the future. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

The youth would prefer volunteering in an organization which had people working from diverse backgrounds and where they would feel valued for their work and contribution.

*[The organization] should have people from different cultures working there. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Race is a big issue and I know that some youth belonging to visible minority said I would volunteer more in mainstream organizations if there were more people like me. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*Volunteers should be appreciated and loved; everyone should have respect for each other. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

Some participants were interested in activities most suited to their interests or career. The youth key informants, especially, wanted that the volunteer activity should also help the people in distress.

*If I could create my own volunteer position I would like to reach out to people who are vulnerable because of war or AIDS and people who are having problem in their families. (Youth Key Informant)*

### **3.5 Participants' level of satisfaction and experience with volunteering in 'external' organizations**

Most of the participants found their volunteering experience to be enriching and self-fulfilling. They enjoyed volunteering and felt valued and included. They developed friendships with people they had worked with.

*I liked it because I got to work with another friend which made it fun. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It was nice helping people and see appreciation on people's faces. It felt good. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I volunteered at an old people home and it was really nice. I saw the appreciation in these people faces. It was good and I really liked it, felt good making other people feel happy. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I felt appreciated. I liked it because the jobs were easy and I felt successful and appreciated and they would always say "I cannot believe you finished everything so quickly". It made me feel good. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*They made me feel so accomplished and appreciated. They even gave me a certificate and letters of reference. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Being able to experience something new and hadn't done before so that experience was really nice. (Youth Key Informant)*

Some participants appreciated flexibility that the volunteer position provided to them and the new skills they learned. They also made friends and met new people through their volunteer positions.

*The hours were very flexible; the place was near my school so I would go after school when I wanted. There was no problem. The location was near my school and within walking distance. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I learned so much, my skills improved all the staff were Canadian mostly older ladies and I got along with them very well. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I feel like I made connections that I am going to keep. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

However, there were few participants who felt that the organizations they were volunteering for did not provide them necessary support and they felt stressed out.

*The organization didn't help at all [when I had to deal with complaints]. No one helps you with anything. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*The more negative side of volunteering would be that it definitely adds stress. One of my responsibilities is to organize social events for the students. And it's a lot of effort and it does get stressful and sometimes things go wrong...I hate that I am doing this. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*More support to complete all that I have to do, more help would allow me to stay in this position. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

### **3.6 Barriers and challenges to volunteering**

The youth groups identified **time** constraint as one of the main barriers to volunteering. They found it difficult to commit to many different things at a time—home, school, friends, family and in certain cases work as well. In particular, the young recent immigrants had to work to meet their daily needs.

*If you go to school and have a part time job you don't have a lot of time. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Some people decide to have part time job than volunteer. Like after school some students go to work and have no time to volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Some have their sports and favourite things to do and so they don't volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I want to be in the sports. I don't have the time to do it during the week and I really don't want to do it during the weekend. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*And sometimes like immigrant, they come a little bit older like 18 and so when they come they have no time to volunteer. They have to focus on what they need, they have to pay money to live and they have to go to school and don't have time to do that. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*My friend is 17 and is working, he would volunteer, but he doesn't have time, and that is because he needs the money for university and that doesn't fit his time, schedule to volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Volunteering is not something they [youth] think about. They are preoccupied with other things like studying, doing well in school. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*Not every family coming here has the money to bring with them and it becomes a challenge so they would rather have the youth have a part time job. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

**Language** was identified as another significant challenge for diverse ethno-cultural youth to volunteering. This was a challenge for the organizations too-- placing the volunteers with limited English language skills in positions that required interaction with other people.

*They [ethno-cultural youth] didn't really speak the language of this country and it is hard for them to express themselves to get a job or something [volunteer position]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think of the language would impact your confidence; oh no it is too hard. No one will understand me. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*The hardest part to trying to do volunteering for me is still the communicating part. Sometimes you feel afraid to use the language that you are not comfortable. (Youth Key Informant)*

*It becomes very challenging and we want to support youth that come to us who have a language barrier but it becomes a challenge to us of where do we put them? (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I think the language is a barrier as well. They [youth volunteers] have to be at a certain level to be able to speak English before they can volunteer in the hospital setting. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Some participants found the **volunteer selection process** quite lengthy and complicated. They had to fulfill many procedural requirements before they were offered any volunteer position.

*It takes time. I volunteer time at the Waterloo Public Library and it takes like 5 months for them to call and I am still waiting. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I think it [selection process] is complicated, have to send emails, prepare, get something to wear and too much, not straightforward. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It's like applying for a job; two people had to write letters before they would look at you. You might as well apply for a job and get paid for it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I know friends who wanted to volunteer but don't have the chance because there are a lot of things you have to go through to become a volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I know friends who wanted to volunteer but don't have the chance because there are a lot of things you have to go through to become a volunteer. (Youth Key Informant)*

However, a couple of young people thought that the selection process was justified and should be followed for recruiting volunteers.

*I think they interview you to see if you can handle that kind of stress, especially in Canada where everything is so fast paced and everything has to be done and there is such a small amount of people, you can't just put anyone in who can't handle that type of stress. If there is a screening there is a good reason for it. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

A few participants found that many volunteering places or organizations were located at a **distance** from their houses and it would cost them a lot to commute frequently. The parents of some youth also had concerns if their children would volunteer at far off places.

*[Traveling on buses to volunteer] would mean a lot of money coming out of your pocket or you would need a bus pass. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Sometimes the transportation here can be a little bit of a difficulty based on the schedule and time. It can take a lot of time to get to that place. (Youth Key Informant)*

*When I first came and I made the wrong choice at that time; there was no bus going to that place [where I was volunteering]. I tried it for two weeks and then stopped as it was too far for me and I didn't know the distance before taking up that assignment. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*One of the challenges they [youth volunteers] had that their parents did not want them to go too far to volunteer or volunteer where they were not present. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Participants cited **lack of flexibility and creativity** as another challenge to volunteering for the young people. The volunteers were told to do different tasks and were not consulted about their roles. They also found that sometimes the volunteers were given a lot of responsibilities and the organization would start depending on them, which could

be stressful sometimes for young people. Sometimes, ambiguous volunteer roles also deterred young people to take up such assignments.

*It is not like you are going there and you have freedom to choose and be creative. It is like you show up and they tell you this is what you do. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*One of the reasons my friend didn't volunteer in the hospital because they said she had to be there every single, Tuesday and Thursday and she couldn't miss one. They said if you miss more than one you are out of the volunteer position. That is pretty ridiculous. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I could understand if places were depending on you, the role might feel more significant but it could also scare people away because people don't want to do that as a volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It is kind of scary when you don't know what you are going to be doing. You don't know the particulars and then you don't like what you are doing. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

For some young people, there was not simply enough **information** available for them to know about available volunteer opportunities. Related to that was the credibility of organizations. Parents also lacked information about the organizations their children would be interested in volunteering.

*I don't really know any other project outside my community that will encourage me to get involved and participate. (Youth Key Informant)*

*The challenge they [youth volunteers] found was that the parents were so scared, what is going to happen to their child. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Parents and the community members, in particular, noted that their children faced **discrimination** which had been a big challenge for the ethno-cultural youth to join mainstream organizations for volunteering.

*My sister used to volunteer at the hospital and there was an older white gentleman who did not want my sister near him. Racial issues I would say are also a big factor. I remember having henna on my hands and they would ask me if I touched something dirty. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*I have to say something that race is a big issue and has been a barrier to youth interested in volunteering in mainstream organizations. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

## 4- Strategies for Engagement

Participants proposed a number of changes to be made in schools, KW community and organizations in order to make it easier and meaningful for the young people interested to volunteer.

### **4.1 Outreach/market volunteer activities to youth, parents and their community**

Participants suggested that information about different volunteer opportunities should be more visible and accessible for youth. They found that at present they have to search and look for such opportunities. Moreover, it was felt that they should be educated about the importance of volunteering and what they would be gaining out of it.

*Advertise [volunteer opportunities] at schools, classes or offices and show what kinds [of volunteer options] are there. You now you have to go and find it or search for it [volunteer opportunity]. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*There is a company that actually introduce volunteer opportunities to people. I think that would be like very, very helpful but it needs to be known. I don't know where it is and I didn't even know there was something like that. (Youth Key Informant)*

*Seems like most teenagers don't want to volunteer but my friends would love to volunteer but they just kind of don't know where to go. (Youth Key Informant)*

*It is important to have the information accessible for the parents but also for the children. Especially when they are in high school, and the parents want to know where their children are and how safe the place is. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*They should be explained about the volunteer position so they will have a bit of an understanding of what they can be gaining out of it. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

For few participants, educational institutions (e.g. schools) could effectively communicate about different volunteer options to the youth.

*It is good to have posters in schools. Also announce it [any volunteering opportunity] during class time. (Youth Key Informant)*

However the participants found informal contacts and communication to be more effective than school announcements or other formal means such as flyers.

*School one I don't even remember. It is in the announcement and it comes and goes and don't listen to that most of the time. But for friends when they tell you [about some volunteer opportunity] I listen to it. (Youth Key Informant)*

*The word of mouth helps more than somebody announcing or advertising through a poster. (Youth Key Informant)*

It was also considered important to make information more visible and accessible for parents and communities as well. The parents and the community members should be explained the value and reward of volunteering for their children. This would require providing information in different languages that parents could understand easily.

*Have more info for parents, tell them your kid is going to learn, get experience, give them confidence, the parents need to be way more informed. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*[Print] flyers in different languages so that the kids understand them when they read it but more importantly can take it home to their parents and their parents will understand it too and encourage or allow their kids to volunteer. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Also having somebody with a good volunteer experience from the youth's specific community give presentations to parents, teach by example, share success stories and say "Hey look how much I learned volunteering and how I now have a job, that could be your kid too, so encourage volunteering. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Educating the communities about the importance of volunteering, make it meaningful to the kids, that they want to go and get something out of it so parents can say yes it is a good thing. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant))*

*There is also the importance of the parents knowing and understanding the importance of volunteering. Then they would be willing to find time to explain the use of it to their children so that they could both find those programs useful. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*It would make a difference if the parents are invited to an information session and educated about what their son or daughter was going to. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*Having parents be invited and if you take that piece of paper and send a letter to the parents it means nothing. One, it is in English and that is number one. Second, most don't really look at it, it is unfortunate but they don't. So I always suggested one thing, either call and talk directly with the parent or invite them. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*When I say I need diversity I go out and have to do presentations in different areas and community. We should not expect them [volunteers] to knock on our door but go to them and recruit. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

Some of the community members and parents found that there was a lack of volunteering role models for youth within their communities. They suggested identifying

people from their communities who had volunteered in the past to share their stories with youth to motivate them for volunteering.

*We don't have the role models to show to them [youth] because we came here young and we have never seen the way it is done, so there is that disconnect maybe what we need to do is show them role models show them people from the community who are engaged, and volunteered. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*Maybe if it is possible to find someone who is a volunteer and speak to the community and explain. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.2 Explain about volunteering to recent immigrants**

It was pointed out that recent immigrants would require a lot of explanation and information about the volunteering opportunities-- its purpose and value, etc. It was suggested that such information should be provided and explained to them in their own language and organizations should not only rely on flyers. Many youth participants recommended that face-to-face explanation would work far better than formal means of communications.

*Immigrants need more information, I was lucky I had a dad who understood but we need to have them explain it to us, if my English was bad and I could not have understood everything. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*It would have been nice to have flyers about volunteering in different languages, about where to go. You have to find it for yourself and it's hard to get through all the information when you first come to Canada. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Immigrants should know why it [volunteering] is important to volunteer how they will learn and grow so much and how it will help them get a job in the future. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*I guess instead of a poster if a person comes up and tells me [that would be helpful]. (Youth Key Informant)*

#### **4.3 Provide support in selecting volunteer options**

Participants recommended that to sustain the interest of youth in volunteering, they should be provided guidance about different available volunteer options which could help them decide about the opportunity that would best suit their expertise and interest. Interested youth should also be provided training in their upcoming volunteer placement.

*Have people who can sit down with students and explore their volunteer options, guide them through it, as oppose to just having aimless information out there. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Also teach them the basics of the activity they choose to volunteer for. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.4 Provide support to enhance language skills**

It was highlighted that a number of youth belonging to different ethno-cultural background faced language barriers. Lack of English language skills deterred them to participate in many volunteer opportunities that they would have otherwise participated. They suggested supporting them in overcoming this barrier. They also commented that staff in different organizations should be sensitive enough to the cultures of immigrants and should not interact with them based on pre-conceived notions or stereotypes. Participants found it important to provide cultural competence trainings for the organizations to have a better acceptance and support for immigrant youth volunteers.

*Address Language Barriers at volunteer places. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*In the volunteer position, [organization should] try to have someone who speaks their language who can help them so they can ask questions. Someone you feel comfortable with. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*Increase cultural understanding and support within organizations. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*For recent immigrants who want to volunteer, the people who are actually guiding them need to be open minded and patient because you don't know where they come from, how things worked back in their country, you can't just simply start by saying you do this wrong, that will just turn them off completely away from you. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.5 Create flexible volunteer options**

Some participants wanted to have flexible volunteer hours. Participants also suggested offering volunteer options after school hours for interested youth.

*Allow flexibility as people fear being committed. Having to put in 5 hours per week makes it [volunteering] restrictive. (Youth Focus Group Participant)*

*A lot of the [volunteering] programs are during the day, but during the day you're in school. There is no such activity or program they [my children] can be part of after school hours. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.6 Make volunteer selection process open and transparent**

Few of the young participants voiced their concern that they had not received any information from certain organizations they applied for volunteer positions. They suggested that for them it would be good to know why they were not selected for a certain opportunity so they could improve themselves when they would apply next time.

*Technically I satisfied their requirements and I was eligible. But I could not get I and don't know why. (Youth Key Informant)*

#### **4.7 Support and recognize volunteering in cultural community**

A number of research participants, particularly parents and community members, emphasised the need to recognize and support the unpaid 'voluntary' activities of youth in their cultural communities. They found that for youth who were not able to find volunteer opportunities in recognized agencies/organizations or who did not feel comfortable working with others, especially the recent immigrants, the ethno-cultural communities should be supported to provide them with such opportunities.

*They [youth] are doing something that is volunteering but is not really recognized as that in the society. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*They [youth] are probably doing more than 40 hours as a volunteer work but its not mainstream agencies for example. Sometimes the parents are asking me, if the children can do some volunteer work, but the children are involved in many volunteer activities. I think there is a need to know, how the communities are seeing volunteering.*

*We would love if in the future we could create ethno-cultural funding in the community so we can focus and help them [youth] to grow. If we have a place we will encourage them to come and do volunteering and establish contacts with schools.*

#### **4.8 Partner with other organizations to better support volunteers**

Volunteer accepting organizations pointed out the need to create a partnership among various organizations, including cultural community organizations, to help in their recruiting and to provide better support to ethno-cultural youth volunteers.

*Another thing we should be doing better is partnering. If our organization needs Chinese volunteers, if I called [name] and say do you have anybody in your group? (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*We were talking about how we might need to connect with all the volunteer coordinators and have a meeting together because maybe I am looking at 18 and older and you are looking at under 18. When somebody calls in it would be nice to call so and so and say would you be interested in them. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*I don't have any experience with other cultures myself on a personal basis. So what I would do is just be there to provide support and a listening ear and probably contact other organization and see if they have any assistance that they could provide. (Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.9 Recognize and encourage efforts of volunteers**

Most of the participants recommended that the volunteers would need a lot of support and encouragement to remain involved in volunteering. There were a number of different ways that the organizations could support the volunteers including providing them bus

tickets to cover for the transportation cost, engaging them in activities matching their interests, verbal encouragements, etc. Recognizing the contribution of volunteers in different ways was also considered important.

*It would be good if there were some encouragements like providing the bus tickets for the students, or pizza day, anything that would make them find it also interesting and rewarding. (Parent/community Focus Group Participant)*

*I think recognition is a big thing and it is definitely different for students compared to our older volunteers. Older volunteers like to have a social event where you can come out and have a dinner. Students don't have time for that so they prefer educational workshops and certificates. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

#### **4.10 Connecting Youth with Youth from similar culture (mentorship)**

A number of participants suggested connecting youth with other youth from a similar culture, language background. For them it would help overcome a number of different barriers including language. Some of the organizations had already been involving and this support to new volunteers.

*Mentorship is very important especially with youth because they also have that sort of role model there to help out and someone they can rely on. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*People come from different culture and families and don't know if there is a mentor or role model, so it is nice to have someone that is in place to model and support. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

*We do that. When a new volunteer comes on we have a mentor for them that they can talk to. (Organizations Focus Group Participant)*

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

For the youth, volunteering means helping other selflessly without any financial reward. Some considered an element of choice as an essential part of volunteering. Within their own cultural communities, diverse ethno-cultural youth were involved in helping parents, community or neighbourhood members, siblings and extended family members. Parents and community members expected youth to help in their religious and cultural activities. Many of the youth participants, however, did not consider it 'volunteering'. They considered it as their moral duty to help their parents and families.

The discussions with different stakeholders indicated that, unlike Canada, there had not been much emphasis on volunteering in ethno-cultural youth's countries of origin. With few exceptions, parents were supportive of youth to do volunteer work. However, they wanted volunteering places closer to their homes. Different cultural communities were also generally positive about youth volunteering.

Most of the youth volunteered at 'external' places. While few would like to participate in activities within their cultural communities, the majority of the youth participants wanted to volunteer at external places especially with the big, renowned organizations. This was considered important for their future career.

Youth participants learned about volunteer opportunities through a number of different channels such as internet, schools, newspapers, etc but word of mouth or informal means of communication was considered to be the most effective medium.

Generally participants were satisfied with their volunteer experience, however, a few of the youth participants expressed that they could have been better supported by the organizations they were volunteering with.

There were a number of motivations for ethno-cultural youth to volunteering. Some of the motivations included enjoying and feeling happy by doing volunteer work, chances to meet new people, understanding Canadian culture, increasing self-confidence, practising and improving English language skills and for many of them it was building resume for future employment.

It was discussed that youth volunteering had certain benefits for the cultural community too such as enhancing public image of cultural community and volunteering could bring new skills/knowledge into the community. The volunteer accepting organization had also benefited from ethno-cultural youth volunteers. The organizations learned about new cultures and diverse cultural youth volunteers helped them fulfilling the needs of different cultural group clients. Moreover, these volunteers served as a bridge to connect organizations with different cultural communities. Another factor that, in many cases, compelled youth to volunteer was the mandatory 40 volunteer hours school requirement.

With these benefits, there were a number of challenges or barriers as well. Some of those barriers included time constraint, language barriers, complicated or lengthy volunteer selection process, transportation cost, lack of flexibility and involvement of youth and lack of information available to youth about different volunteering options.

Parents/community members mentioned discrimination as one of the barriers facing youth from diverse ethno-cultural background.

Research participants suggested a number of actions to effectively encourage support and engage youth interested in volunteering. They included:

- Organizations to outreach/market volunteer activities to youth, parents and their community
- Organizations to provide face-to-face explanation about the importance of volunteering and volunteer positions to recent immigrants
- Organizations to provide support to enhance language skills of youth volunteers
- Organizations to create flexible volunteer options
- Organizations to simplify their volunteer selection procedures/criteria
- Organizations and schools to support and recognize volunteering in cultural communities
- Organizations to build partnerships
- Organizations to match youth with 'experienced' youth volunteers from similar background (mentorship)