



2019–2020 Annual Report

Welcome to a new decade.

COVID-19 has transformed our community and non-profit landscape. Without doubt, these experiences will drastically shape the next ten years of volunteerism in Toronto.

Please read this digital report, summarizing our 2019-2020 year ending in March 2020 and join us in reflecting on the importance of volunteers and Volunteer Centres in our society.

A Message from Volunteer Toronto



Welcome to a new decade.

Many of us had other plans for 2020. Instead, we're responding to the all-encompassing pandemic that is COVID-19. And this response will last longer than a handful of months. Yet, the discomfort we're experiencing right now will act as a catalyst for broader change. Our sector must innovate how and where we deliver support to help those in our community who need it most.

Just like our founders nearly a century ago, we're rolling up our sleeves. But this time, it's going to take more skill to rehabilitate the sector. And it will take more than technology to manage the supply and demand of volunteer participation. We've got a new baseline we're fighting to improve. In Canada, 43% of non-profits have laid off volunteer engagement staff or have reduced their hours, resulting in millions of volunteers dismissed from roles on the frontlines. As a result, 50% of pandemic response in Toronto is happening at the grassroots level. We've seen a surge of new volunteer managers and new small-scale initiatives stepping in to meet growing needs. We must enable them, and lend our platforms to those fighting for equality.

For most of the last decade our research and programs have focused on jobseekers, new immigrants, and youth because volunteering is a critical access point to economic and social opportunities. We have always strived to be what's needed, and we can now say our values reflect this perspective. Our recent history means we also step into 2020 with a foundation to innovate from.

A Message from Volunteer Toronto

We've put our hand up to build better systems for volunteerism. Only a couple of years ago, Volunteer Canada asked us to help roll out the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. Just before that, we ran a multi-year capacity building project for grassroots groups in the Province. And most recently, we've dug into helping non-profits by sub-sector in both rural and urban contexts. In 2019-2020, we also supported the most volunteer seekers ever through partnerships with key city-wide agencies, like the Toronto Public Library, to increase access to volunteer experiences.

However, it's now time to evolve. And what was relevant a hundred years ago, a decade ago, or even a year ago, will not be what's needed in 2020. It's time we recognize that volunteerism is not a "nice to have" in Canada. And frankly, neither is a Volunteer Centre. Our social services are reliant on volunteers, the equivalent of more than 850,000 full-time jobs in 2018. It is our founding during the Great Depression, not dissimilar to today, that reminds us of when we are needed most.

Communities across Toronto continue to offer valuable and needed services through the efforts of volunteers. As we meet the needs of our neighbours and work together to be there for each other, take a look around your own neighbourhood and see how you can help too. We know you'll gain so much more than you'll give.



Maryann Istiloglu
Board Chair



Joanne McKiernan
Executive Director



Our COVID-19 Response

Our sector has undergone a massive upheaval in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. And at the tail end of our fiscal year, March 2020, we began to ramp up a response that will continue beyond the publication of this report.

We now have data to explain the major shift in labour that our teams felt on the frontlines. Millions of volunteers were dismissed from their roles at non-profits and 43% of staff that supported them were laid off or saw a reduction of hours. Yet, communities were crying out for food, healthcare, and employment support, the type that volunteerism often enables. Suddenly, we knew our role—to manage the supply and demand of volunteer labour when it's needed most.

8,650+

**Joined our Volunteer
Response Team**

2,300+

**Supported by Remote
Volunteer Advisors**

800,000+

**Webpage views from
April-June 2020**

To harness new volunteer interest in response to the pandemic, on March 19, 2020, we launched a —within 24 hours, more than a thousand individuals signed up to help. The team, now nearly 10,000 strong, receives Alerts with in need roles and training opportunities focused on response and recovery.

“

As racialized communities were being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, both directly and indirectly, we wanted to immediately bring attention to these disparities. As a small organization, we needed to increase our capacity very quickly and Volunteer Toronto's support came at the right time. Over 100 volunteers expressed interest within a few days of posting. This helped us run a three-month campaign highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities.

”

—Nathan Sheehan, Executive Director
Urban Alliance on Race Relations

Our COVID-19 Response

Before the pandemic, ten of our dedicated Volunteer Advisors provided services to the public during in-office shifts. As volunteerism experts, they share information on non-profits and grassroots groups, navigating VolunteerToronto.ca, volunteer postings, and application processes. In mid-March 2020, in only one week, the Advisor team adapted to provide remote services conducted from each volunteer's home.

Appointments with our **Remote Volunteer Advisors** were booked two-weeks in advance for the first three months of the pandemic. During this time, the team provided advice to 1,250 volunteer seekers looking for meaningful opportunities to help in their community. None of this would be possible without our superstar volunteer, Samah Abdelaziz, as Remote Advisor Team Lead.

“To help with this influx the charity, which connects 400,000 volunteers with about 1,000 organizations each year, has also set up a team of remote volunteer advisors who will be available by email or phone to answer questions and provide assistance starting Monday, March 23.”

TORONTO.COM

To meet increasing needs from vulnerable community members, many non-profits and grassroots groups are **ramping up service delivery** and redeploying or engaging more volunteers. New programs, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) delivery and essential good shopping ensure people get the things they need while staying safe and practicing social distancing.

Other cultural institutions, such as the Harbourfront Community Centre and Young People's Theatre, are going virtual. This allows them to keep volunteers engaged in their mission while in-person services are paused. With guidance from Volunteer Toronto, some are planning to develop **virtual programming** for the long-term.

Our COVID-19 Response

In the spring of 2020, we began to host **sector forums** for volunteer managers on the frontlines, leading discussions on barriers to ramping up volunteer participation. Staff that manage volunteers in meals on wheels, food banks, tax clinics, housing, mental health, seniors support, and employment programs, were invited to share solutions and problems with their peers—these forums have continued throughout Summer 2020.

It is now with emergency funding support from the United Way Greater Toronto, three Volunteer Centres: Volunteer Toronto, Volunteer MBC, and Volunteer Markham, are working to address identified barriers to ramping up volunteer engagement. Together, a GTA-wide approach will be deployed for urgent recruitment, enhanced volunteer screening, and new training interventions to help programs adapt.



Thank you to the City of Toronto, United Way of Greater Toronto, the Toronto Non-Profit Network and Volunteer Canada for hosting calls for community agencies, all of which have held a significant role in prioritizing our response efforts. We continue to collaborate with community leaders to advocate for the meaningful management of volunteer labour.

Read the below Opinion Editorials for more of our observations during COVID-19:

OPINION: Pandemic Inspires Upwell in Volunteers that Must Be Tapped Into

by Joanne Mckiernan for Toronto.com (published June 2, 2020)

OPINION: A Perspective of Privilege: Volunteer Engagement is a Non-Priority (Pg. 29)

by Joanne Mckiernan for Foundation Magazine (published August 2020)

2019 - 2020 Impact Dashboard

Our programs and engagement tactics have increased access to volunteer experiences for youth, job seekers, seniors, and new immigrants. Our non-profit interventions have improved the quality of volunteer engagement at non-profits in the City of Toronto.

We've supported a record number of people in 2019-2020. Access quick metrics for our core program and engagement initiatives:

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

12,500

Attended
informational events

2,516

Volunteer Advisor
appointments

9,000

Youth engaged in
programming

989

Potential board
members trained

NON-PROFIT ENGAGEMENT

493

Non-profit subscribers

2,750

Resource downloads

859

Attended training
sessions

67

Attended the Game
Changers conference

COMMUNICATIONS

407,298

Users visited
VolunteerToronto.ca

7,800

Subscribers to our
volunteer newsletter

1,450

Subscribers to our
non-profit newsletter

40,950

Social media
followers

2019 - 2020 Impact Dashboard



Joanne McKiernan on TVO's *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin

In December 2019, Volunteer Toronto's Executive Director joined a panel on TVO's *The Agenda*. As one of four experts on volunteerism, we discussed the implications of precarious work, screening processes, and the critical role of volunteers in our social infrastructure (pre-COVID-19).

Watch the episode

Volunteer Toronto would also like to thank the below media outlets for profiling our programs, data, and leaders during 2019-2020.



toronto.com



Empowering Non-Profit Leaders

3 million

webpage views on roles

As Toronto's most visited volunteer portal, non-profits rely on our recruitment support as a critical part of the volunteer management cycle. In 2019-2020, thousands of roles were posted on VolunteerToronto.ca earning millions of webpage views.

859

training participants

Our resource development team is constantly evolving our knowledge mobilization interventions to help non-profits engage diverse volunteers in more meaningful ways. We've learned that the most effective way to forge positive change in volunteer programs is through in-person training sessions, like bootcamps.

493

non-profit subscribers

We have established relationships with non-profits and grassroots groups in every sub-sector in Toronto. Our subscribers access targeted recruitment support, learning opportunities, research insights, volunteer recognition, and other benefits that enable meaningful volunteerism.

“

I think sometimes you feel alone in the role, but having a network of other people who manage volunteers means you can express stories, you can ask how people are doing things differently that maybe you can incorporate into your program. Someone always has a great idea, like a training video, or screening sheets, that can be shared.

— Syliva Bergmann, Volunteer Coordinator

”

Empowering Non-Profit Leaders



In partnership with the **Toronto Association of Volunteer Administrators**, we co-hosted a sold-out conference in February 2020 to boost the problem solving, strategic thinking, and relationship building skills between Toronto's volunteer engagers. The theme, “**Game Changers**” drew a crowd of 67 professionals, hosted in a donated space by one of our research partners, the University of Toronto Scarborough.

In our first session for the day, we challenged volunteer managers to reflect on how they could make land acknowledgements more meaningful. **Lindy Kinoshameg**, member of the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, facilitated the session virtually.

In another session, attendees received a free copy of Volunteer Toronto's new volunteer training resource, EngageME, to find the right “training equation” for their programs using the informational and activity-based cards.



Game Changers keynote speaker, Rosita Hall, entrepreneur, speaker, coach and Canadian best-selling author, motivates attendees to walk unapologetically into their authentic truth each day.

Empowering Non-Profit Leaders

Every incorporated non-profit in Toronto must have a board of directors. Our Becoming a Board Member program prepares diverse individuals to apply for skilled volunteer positions that align with their passions. Nearly 1,000 individuals attended sessions in 2019, many of whom went on to apply for leadership roles with non-profits through VolunteerToronto.ca.

“

Very complete walk-through of the steps to research, apply, and succeed in a board member role for the non-profit sector.

”

“

The information was presented in a way that was understandable and approachable. The content flowed very well.

”

— **Becoming a Board Member feedback from sessions in 2019**

Last year we revamped our **Board Training 101** sessions and ran a pilot program over the Summer of 2019. Feedback from the pilot will be applied to new digital programming for board members in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

Connecting in Community

407,300

users visited
VolunteerToronto.ca

Our website is home to the largest and most diverse portfolio of volunteer roles in Toronto, so it's no surprise we get a lot of web traffic from volunteer seekers. Our data tells us that each month at least 30,000 people visit our website and more than half go on to search for available roles.

12,500

attended our events

We supported a record number of volunteer seekers in 2019-2020. Our Volunteer Advisors, Ambassadors, and summer students were core drivers as they held appointments, attended events, and hosted presentations in the community.

2,515

one-on-one appointments

Our 40-year Volunteer Advisor program has helped guide thousands of volunteer seekers every year through in person, phone appointments, and email support. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, ten dedicated Volunteer Advisors provided advising services during three hour in-office shifts from Monday to Friday.

In an expanded partnership, our **Volunteer Ambassadors** were deployed to Toronto Public Library branches across the City to present to groups of 15-40. For newcomers and jobseekers, the sessions provide clarity on how to access volunteer experiences that benefit their personal journey.

“This partnership provided a great opportunity to help library customers learn more about engaging and volunteering in their community, and develop the necessary skills and strategies they need to succeed. In addition, it provided us with the opportunity to share information with participants about our programs, services and resources available in libraries across the city. TPL is proud to work closely in partnership with Volunteer Toronto and their Volunteer Ambassadors to host these sessions!”

— John Neil, Volunteer Services

Connecting in Community



As tradition, every fall Volunteer Toronto hosts our city's largest **volunteer fair**—the Youth Expo. This year the fair once again expedited the recruitment of youth volunteers by filling Roy Thompson Hall. More than 1,300 parents and students showed up and 76 diverse non-profits shared on-the-spot information and held pre-interviews for roles.

Volunteer Toronto is renowned for our annual Legacy Awards ceremony. As a bold pilot in April 2019, we expanded the event as an official kick-off celebration for National Volunteer Week.



This time, we invited more people, including all of our non-profit subscribers, Legacy Award nominating organizations, all nominees, and their families, to join us for the recognition of exceptional volunteers. Also new for 2019, were the five award categories that reflect our core values in addition to a Lifetime Achievement Award.



Being What's Needed

Tom McFeat

Tax Clinic Volunteer with
Woodgreen Community
Services



Positive Change

Jagger Gordon

Founder of the food security
initiative: Feed it Forward



Connection

Jessica McDougall

Volunteer with Emily's
House, Toronto's only
child hospice



Inclusivity

Lisa Cherry-Cherniak

Co-founder of Artists
Against Racism



Growth & Learning

Youdon Tsamotshang

Volunteer with Tibetan
Children's Project Canada
and Free Tibet Canada



Lifetime Achievement

David Lockett

Volunteer leader and
non-profit founder for over
30 years

[Click here to see the celebration, and 2019 Legacy Awards, come to life](#)

Research and Key Findings

Meaningful volunteerism takes resources, skills, and dedicated expertise to enable. Our research and key learnings from 2019-2020 continue to inform innovations in our program and engagement.

“

It was fascinating to study the effect of important events, such as physical distancing policies and Volunteer Toronto's COVID-19 response, as they were being implemented to help inform the organization's work in real-time.

”

— **Michael Lebenbaum, Research Volunteer**



Pre-COVID-19, we were lucky to harness the skills of a talented researcher to study the cycle of volunteer role postings on VolunteerToronto.ca. What roles are always recruiting? What roles are re-posted throughout the year? And what predicts a post's popularity? Shortly after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, Michael Lebenbaum pivoted the focus of his research to analyze interventions that promoted new types of roles in response to new needs in the community. Through this research we've learned that our **COVID-19 Response Team** and agile messaging were extremely successful in sustaining volunteer interest during the early part of the crisis.

Together, we have submitted a co-authored paper to a peer reviewed journal on the impact of physical distancing measures on the supply and demand for volunteers in Toronto.

Research and Key Findings



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

During the Winter 2020 term, research students from the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources took on two key research topics to help inform pressing needs identified by Volunteer Toronto:

#1: How effective is volunteering as a stepping stone to employment?

We learned that youth, newcomers, and racialized individuals benefit most from volunteering as an access point to social and economic opportunities.

#2: Will seniors continue to be a powerhouse of the voluntary sector?

Seniors volunteer the most hours in Canada. Research revealed that seniors face barriers too, and micro-volunteering might also be the way of the future for this demographic.



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH

In our second year of an ongoing partnership, the University of Toronto Scarborough provided evaluations expertise to collect primary research with past participants of our programming.

The research surveyed newcomers who had attended our Volunteering for a Newcomer information sessions or who had an appointment with a Volunteer Advisor. Insights from this research tell us where we need to improve our programs while identifying roadblocks newcomers are experiencing when they apply for volunteer roles.



Newcomers face barriers to accessing volunteer roles very similar to paid roles in the employment sector. Many participants compared the process of applying to a volunteer role as applying to a job.



Volunteer managers do not have the capacity to provide more feedback, and often even a response, to unsuccessful applicants. Some participants also expressed a wait time of several weeks before hearing anything from the non-profit contact after applying to a role.

Research and Key Findings



Participants expressed an interest in other programs to help secure a volunteer role, including housing assistance, resume formatting, mock-interviews, and basic language training.



It was recommended Volunteer Toronto translate materials to improve access to learning. Students also recommended we provide accreditation or pre-screening services to skilled newcomers, and work with non-profits to reduce the intensity of application processes for securing a role.

A special note of appreciation goes to Deloitte and the dedicated team of volunteer consultants that helped our organization innovate and evaluate program and revenue development opportunities during a 4-month project from February-May 2020.

The Deloitte logo, featuring the word "Deloitte" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by a small green circle.

We continue to leverage new data to inform our decisions. Access further insights on the volunteer sector during COVID-19:

NEW Data: 99,600+ Volunteers in Toronto Support COVID-19 Response Efforts
published on April 20, 2020 by Toronto.com

Data Release: 43% of Volunteer Managers at Non-Profits Have Been Laid-Off or Have Seen a Reduction of Hours
published on July 3, 2020 on VolunteerToronto.ca

125,000 People Visited Our Portal from April-June 2020
published on July 27, 2020 on VolunteerToronto.ca

Funders and Financials

For over 40 years, our organization has received funding from government partners and community foundations to facilitate meaningful volunteering. We are immensely grateful for this ongoing commitment to enabling ethical volunteerism, something that Volunteer Toronto, and other Volunteer Centres, have the responsibility to lead. We continue to foster strong relationships with funders to advocate for pressing community needs during COVID-19.



35% Province of Ontario

27% City of Toronto

23% United Way of Greater Toronto

6% Subscription Fees

5% Special Projects

2.25% Other Revenue

2% Training and Consulting Fees

0.3% Donations

Total \$844,820



34% Engaging Organizations

32% Community Engagement

12% Engaging Leaders

11% Special Projects

10% Engaging Youth

Total \$844,456

Funders and Financials

Through community partnerships we have had the privilege of accessing expertise, space, and digital advertising to further enable our programs and research. Thank you!



Community Profiles

Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

It takes the dedication of volunteers, volunteer managers, and community partners to build a thriving and engaged community. We're proud to feature six key players in the volunteerism space that have impacted our programs in 2019-2020 or have led the evolution of volunteer engagement in response to COVID-19.

Samah Abdelaziz: Superstar Volunteer Advisor Helps Team Go Virtual

When the pandemic hit, it was Samah who stepped up to support Volunteer Toronto's entire Advisor team as we shifted to remote services.



Dawn Ashford: PPE and Essential Goods Delivery Volunteer Program

Watch to see how Dawn, Volunteer Coordinator for VHA Home Healthcare, has engaged volunteers to meet new COVID-19 needs in the community.



Ryan Singh: Harnessing Youth Volunteers to Run a Virtual Drama School

Young People's Theatre has 40 active volunteers, a large percentage of whom are youth under 18. By engaging them in new virtual programs, such as their Virtual Online Drama School, YPT is still providing robust opportunities to learn and grow.



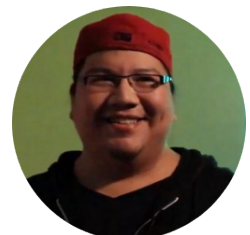
Sylvia Bergmann: Meals on Wheels Deliveries for Isolated Torontonians

Watch to see how Sylvia, Volunteer Coordinator for TransCare Community Support Services, has continued to engage volunteers for food deliveries that reach seniors and others isolating during the pandemic.



Lindy Kinoshameg: More Meaningful Land Acknowledgements

Hear from Lindy Kinoshameg, a proud Odawa from the Pike clan, as he hosts a virtual land acknowledgement session for volunteer managers attending our 2020 Game Changers conference.



Nino Vakhtangishvili: Volunteer Ambassador Helps Newcomers

Nino, who was once a newcomer from Ukraine, delivers presentations at Toronto Public Library branches on the benefits of volunteering as a newcomer or jobseeker and the steps to getting involved.



Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Samah Abdelaziz



“Volunteering is a way of living that is giving and receiving. After a shift I feel humbled and accomplished. It's also a process of reflection and growth. During the pandemic, volunteering has connected us all to this positive energy instead of being pessimistic or anxious. We as Advisors have grown to know each other better through COVID than in the entire year before. We laugh, we joke, we talk about other things beside the pandemic. We also talk about serious stuff that has affected us. We are there for each other. And I then share stories with my family, connecting them to that positivity like a ripple effect.”

— Samah Abdelaziz

Samah has been a dedicated volunteer since arriving in Toronto three years ago, and another five years before that in Jordan. After being asked to help with the logistics of a support group for mothers with special needs kids, she says she fell in love and found herself. As a stay at home mom she relished the opportunity to use her skills. Once in Canada, Samah says she had more time but lacked the work experience needed to secure a job. That's when she found Volunteer Toronto and attended a Volunteer Ambassador workshop. Since then, she's given back as a gift wrapper, a photographer for Coldest Night of the Year, a KidCoach, and as a Volunteer Advisor on Friday mornings.

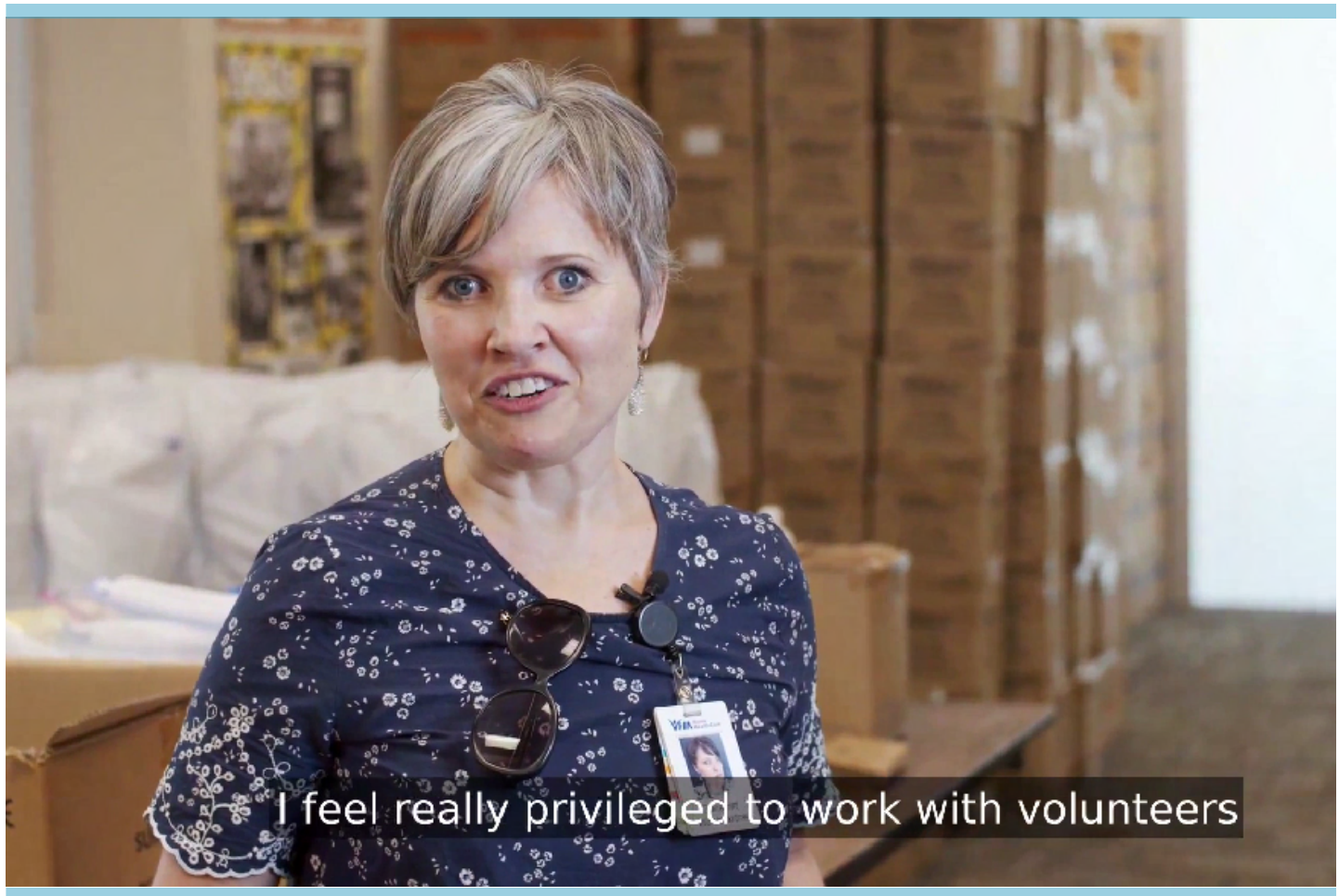
When the pandemic hit, it was Samah who stepped up to support the entire Advisor team as we shifted to remote services. Now she hosts weekly check-in sessions over Zoom, manages the team's shifts, and identifies trends or issues that should be addressed to improve the volunteer seeker's experience. Samah has gone above and beyond to learn new skills during the pandemic and is on her way to becoming an exceptional volunteer manager. Read our [**COVID-19 Case Study featuring Samah here**](#).

Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Dawn Ashford



Dawn Ashford, Volunteer Coordinator for **VHA Home Healthcare**, has engaged volunteers to meet new COVID-19 needs in the community.



Thank you Uloma and Beth, VHA Home Healthcare Volunteers, for delivering essential goods during the pandemic!

Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Ryan Singh



“Youth volunteers bring such unique experiences—seeing them lead and motivate our participants makes my job easy. Our volunteers, placement and co-op students, and interns bring a vital dimension to our work and I'm proud to get the chance to work and interact with them regularly.”

— Ryan Singh, Community Volunteer Coordinator

Young People's Theatre has over 40 active volunteers, a large percentage of whom are youth under 18. By engaging them in new virtual programs, such as their Online Drama School, YPT is still providing robust opportunities to learn and grow. The only difference is that their volunteer program is currently done online over Zoom. Much like an in-person drama class, volunteers are tasked with leading activities, working with students in small groups on games or scenes, and supporting the teacher day-to-day with leadership and positive energy.

Initially, volunteers had some hesitation, but have since found themselves just as involved as when they were volunteering at YPT in-person. And the response has been incredibly positive. Most summer volunteers are returning for fall, and both participants and their parents/guardians have expressed that they love the virtual classes. Teachers were also thrilled with the live-stream studios YPT built to enable their programming, giving them an opportunity to explore more creativity in teaching.

Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Sylvia Bergmann



Sylvia Bergmann, Volunteer Coordinator for **TransCare Community Support Services**, has continued to engage volunteers for food deliveries that reach seniors and others isolating during the pandemic.



Thank you Shannon, Meals on Wheels Driver, for stepping up to help fill Toronto's most in need volunteer role!

Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Lindy Kinoshameg



“ We all have the collective responsibility to decide how we care for, share and use the land. In the immediate future, we may not be able to reverse the process of having a piece of paper tell us who owns that specific square footage of land, but we can decide and take action on how we use that land. Can we find ways to create space for Indigenous People within our buildings? Or is every square inch imperative to making money? Is naming a nation we don't know how to say in our land acknowledgment enough? Do we have a relationship with the earth below our feet? Or is it far too deep beyond the concrete and steel?

”

— Lindy Kinoshameg

In February 2020, volunteer managers from non-profits across the city came together for the Game Changers conference co-hosted by Volunteer Toronto and the Toronto Association of Volunteer Administrators. We were joined by Lindy Kinoshameg, a proud Odawa from the Pike clan who was raised in Wiikwemkoong Unceded First Nation.

Lindy led a virtual land acknowledgement session where he challenged attendees to dive deeper into how they're protecting our land and strengthening their connection to Indigenous Peoples.



As part of Lindy's session, volunteer managers wrote post-it notes sharing how they personally and professionally can meaningfully acknowledge the land and Indigenous Peoples.

Want to learn more? Read about **INDIGENizeUS Workshops**, professional development training designed by Lindy Kinoshameg and Leslie McCue through the Young People's Theatre.

Community Profiles: Volunteers and Sector Leaders in Toronto

Nino Vakhtangishvili



“It’s such a small thing just to share information, but it felt like I was giving attendees something that would immediately make them inspired and motivated. Some newcomers need Canadian references, so being a good volunteer, being a regular volunteer, gives them that opportunity. Most of all though, they want the experience to connect and learn about culture through volunteering. Many would personally say thank you and at the end of every session I felt like I’ve done something so incredible. It was a highlight of my week every single time.”

— Nino Vakhtangishvili



Nino, who was once a newcomer from Ukraine, thinks her role is the perfect way to help people who are now in a very similar situation as when she moved to Canada. As an Ambassador, she delivers presentations at Toronto Public Library branches on the benefits of volunteering as a newcomer or jobseeker and the steps to getting involved.

She started her volunteer journey in Calgary giving back by cooking and serving food as part of a drop-in program. Later, she volunteered on the board of the Toastmaster’s Club, a core stepping stone to developing her presentation skills. In what she now describes as a perfect match, Nino was an active Ambassador with Volunteer Toronto for one year before the program was halted due to COVID-19.

Our Team

Board of Directors and Staff

Board of Directors



Maryann Istiloglu

Chair

*Executive Director, Ontario
Association of Mental
Health Professionals*



Heidi Reinhart

Secretary

*Partner, Norton
Rose Fulbright
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Colin Druhan

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*Executive Director,
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*Manager -
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Sarah Llewellyn

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*Senior HR Professional,
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Danielle Mandell

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*VP, People Innovation &
Volunteers, Multiple
Sclerosis Society of
Canada*



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Niranjala Mariathas

Manager, Operations

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Olivia Sonnenberg

Senior Coordinator, Engagement

Jess Gillis

Assistant, Marketing & Communications



We are profoundly grateful to you—our extended family of volunteers—who bring skill, compassion, and kindness to our community members navigating the volunteer journey. You are the heartbeat of this organization, and the architects of a stronger, more caring Toronto.

— Joanne McKiernan, Executive Director



**167 volunteers gave
3,788 hours in
2019-2020**