

Dianne: Hi, my name's Dianne Boston-Nyp and I work at the Volunteer Action Center in Waterloo Region. And I'm hosting these lovely panels, as you will see throughout the modules for the University of Waterloo Renison College program on volunteer management in the non-profit sector. I'm really pleased today to be hosting a panel with two presenters that you may have already seen one of their works. And will see another one later on both module three and module eight of the 12-part series. So, if you're curious and you want to look at another module with these fantastic folks, please look ahead. Module three is talking about the basics of the Canadian code for volunteer involvement. And it's something that we've really relied on from our partners in crime at Volunteer Canada. I'd like to introduce our panelists today. Deb Pike, of Volunteer Canada for several years and Marisa Gelfusa also working on contract with Volunteer Canada at this time. They're both going to give us a little bit more background about themselves because the, the journey to volunteer Canada is rich with experience, and I'd, I'd like everyone to learn a little bit more about both of you, if you wouldn't mind that. Deb, would you start?

Deb: Sure. Thanks so much for having us, Dianne. And it's a pleasure to be here to be able to share on today's panel. My name is Deb Pike and I've worked in the non-profit sector since I was 15. I started out as a water safety instructor and that got me interested in volunteering and in working in the non-profit sector. And that's something that I continued, volunteering and have been volunteering for all of my life, I think. And that turned into can I do some work in the non-profit sector? And indeed, I started with the Canadian Red Cross in program development and worked across Atlantic Canada in various roles with the Canadian Red Cross. That's an organization, national organization that has the opportunity for you to work in different locations across the country. So, that worked really well for me. And then I moved into a variety of roles with different types of organizations in research and development. In fund development and with small grassroots organizations, start-ups along all the way to national pan-Canadian initiatives, including the voluntary sector initiative where I was part of the secretariat for the funding table at that time. And through all of that, I was introduced to Volunteer Canada and felt really that that might be a place where I could contribute. So, I was fortunate enough to take on a role during the voluntary sector initiative- the later stages. And that's helped me to continue in different roles at Volunteer Canada throughout the years. So, there are lots of opportunities in the non-profit sector. I like to think I've had my toe in many of them, and that's led me to be able to continue my work all the way through in the non-profit sector. So, where I am with again, with Volunteer Canada today.

Dianne: Wow. That's great. It's totally about the journey and you certainly have the lived experience that we need in leading all of us through our mucky waters in the non-profit sector. How about you, Marisa?

Marisa: Great. So, I started working at the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal when I was in my twenties and I stayed there for a good long time. And I really had the opportunity to evolve in different roles. I came in as a liaison. And then, I, it actually really helped me to focus on my role in terms of learning and knowledge development and dissemination. And that ended up being the focus of my career. So, I went on to work in, at Volunteer Toronto and also at, in

volunteer management at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. And, and so, all through those commitments obviously just did a lot of community facilitation, community development, but also collaborated with Volunteer Canada on a lot of projects. So, right there from the beginning of the screening initiative from the big binder to the different formats you've both seen those changing, those changing formats. So and, learning and facilitation and accessibility to learning and facilitation is a big focus of mine. And I'm actually doing a masters in that area, right now at Concordia University. Yeah.

Dianne: Never ending learning curve.

Marisa: No.

Dianne: And I guess that's what you pinpointed really well is, first of all, what is Volunteer Canada? It's, it's referred to so many times throughout this program that we're, we're putting together, that you should give yourself some more time to talk about this organization when it started perhaps, and, and if you know, any other history. Because I think it really will put the platform to this, this document that we're going to talk about as well- the Canadian code for volunteer involvement. So, Volunteer Canada- as a volunteer center, know what it does, and I know how much it helps us when it comes time to gathering information and having a bit of a guide. But how did volunteer come about? Do you have that kind of history depth that you can share a little bit?

Deb: Well, it actually started in 1977 and has grown out of the volunteer center movement. So, we've been around that long and that is probably the strongest and closest network that we work with. We work with different stakeholders, but that's where Volunteer Canada grew and developed from- the network of volunteer centers. And we work very closely to this day with volunteer centers. I mean, overall, we provide national leadership and expertise on volunteerism in general. And the goal of that is really to increase participation and quality and diversity of volunteer experiences across Canada. And as I mentioned, one of the key stakeholders that we work with is the network of more than 150 volunteer centers across the country. And as that, over the, the years that has evolved and we work with other stakeholders as well- with other non-profit organizations outside of volunteer centers. With businesses particularly those who have employee volunteers who, who volunteer with the support of their employers in community. With government departments, with educational institutions, and of course with volunteers. So, that's really where we came from and we support organizations particularly with training and resource development, all with that goal of building stronger and more connected communities through volunteerism.

Dianne: And that certainly has taken its evolution in stride, and it's not an easy sector to maintain even keel. It's a team effort. So, it, it really is great that we can contribute and get the knowledge networking that you're talking about. Marisa, did you want to add anything else about your reflections on Volunteer Canada?

Marisa: I think that one of the really important things that I realized working within a volunteer center for so many years was that- I really appreciated that Volunteer Canada, I always felt kind of broadened our perspective. You know, when you're working in a community, in a sector, on a project, things can get kind of narrow. And so, I just really appreciated that broad perspective about where volunteering fits, not just in my community, but in the country, in democracy, in how it's working to build and how it contributes. And also, the evidence-based approach I found really, really excellent. Right. And, yeah, so I found that, that kept me and me, myself and my colleagues in the individual volunteer centers, to keep a kind of an even keel and have a good view of the whole landscape rather than having a narrow view. And that helped us to better serve our community and better contribute to the larger vision. Yeah.

Deb: I think one of the things just to build on that, we, we do as a national organization have the ability to provide that voice, as Marisa said, for all of the partners and collaborators that we work with. So, it's not only our voice, but our voice comes from all of those that we work with across the country, that network of 150 volunteer centers who are that local and regional voice for volunteerism and capacity building in their communities. We work with all of those partners to be able to hear what is going on across the country, what are the trends that we are seeing and hearing, and bring a voice to that. And then provide others with all of the supports that they need to better serve their communities and support and engage volunteers. But that voice comes from all across the country. We may be amplifying that voice, but it comes from all of the work that we do and the expertise that lives in all of the communities across the country. That is, that's a joint expertise. That's, that's something that we all build together and we work at it in that way. And that's a very important part of the way that our voice comes about and is heard.

Dianne: That seems to be the model of our sector too, is there's one-of-a-kind organization that's dealing with one piece, but yet there's a network of learning that's happening underneath. And I think each volunteer center replicates that as well. And I think the lights went on when Volunteer Canada really embraced and, and was, was able to pinpoint how best they could help volunteer centers- which may bring us to the Canadian code for volunteer involvement, which was what module three was supposed to be about. And it is about, I should say. So, what is the CCVI? We use those, it looks like Roman numerals, but it stands for the Canadian code of volunteer involvement. How did that come about and did it have a starting date? I know there's upgrades all the time. It used to be 13 principals, now it's 10. So, it's evolved as well. When did it all start? Did you want to start to Deb or is it a little too noisy in your neighborhood? Actually, Marisa's going to start us off.

Marisa: Yes. So, the Canadian code for volunteer involvement, excuse me, was developed in 2001 with the, with the advent of the international year of the volunteer as decreed by the United Nations. But before that, and Deb help me out here, here was it Liz Weber? Who, who had, she started the ball rolling. I think she was in a master's program and this was part of her focus. And so, and then it was picked up and in 2001, we had, the CCVI as we kind of know it today. But the thing about the Canadian code for volunteer involvement is it's a living document and because it speaks to organizations and the value of volunteerism and because

volunteerism is a, is a changing, living movement, the Canadian code for volunteer involvement is constantly updating, changing, adapting the language. Because first and foremost, what we don't want the Canadian code for volunteer involvement to be is a dusty document on a shelf, right? So, if it, if it is not relevant, excellent. So, if it is not relevant, then, then we failed, right? So, it's, essentially what it is, is it's a guide for involving volunteers in an organization in a very integrated manner. And it pro, it provides- it's three distinct parts, which are the value of volunteering, the principles, and the standards of practice. Those are, those seek to support discussion and provide also some guidelines. So that people can at least begin talking about what is the role of volunteers and why are they key to our mission? Again, this, sometimes what can happen in organization is it can get very siloed. So, the person who works with the volunteers is the only one who really knows what they're doing and how they're contributing. And at the end of the year for the, for the annual report, someone will put in how many hours and what have you. And the Canadian code for volunteering is, volunteer involvement says, actually this is an ongoing conversation that must be integrated right from the board of directors right to the volunteers themselves. And everybody has a role to play in keeping this involvement integrated, productive, and keeping the communication going.

Dianne: It has been the basis of a lot of our programs here at the volunteer action center and other volunteer centers. I know we've utilized it in workshop development and conversations as you said. Deb, did you want to add some?

Deb: I did. I wanted to say to that- again, speaking to the partnership piece and how everyone contributes to the development of a living document. It was developed in 2001 and as Marisa quite rightly said it needs to evolve and change over time. It reflects changing demographics. It reflects changing social innovations-, all kinds of things related to volunteer engagement and our society in general. And in 2006 with the first update, since a little bit earlier than that, we started working with the Canadian administrators of volunteer resources, which is now volunteer management professionals of Canada. And in 2006, the first update was a consolidation of the Canadian code in its first iteration and the standards of practice from CABR now VMPC. And that partnership has continued through the life of the document and will continue every time that we look at updates and revisions. We work in partnership because they're working directly with volunteer managers. And so, they have that input into what is working, what are the skills and expertise needed to be able to contribute to updating the document. So, that's an important piece too, as we, as we work to evolve the document over time, is that partnership with the volunteer management professionals of Canada.

Dianne: It's become a profession like I don't think people realized it, you know, that many years ago before the documentation started to get solidified that this was actually a course of a career, career choice that was very fulfilling- especially for many passionate women who were out there doing the good work. You know, it's majority women, I'm sorry to put that on all of us. But it really is something, a passion has to be sparking volunteers to get motivated into the work that they do. So they, the organization of it has always been the challenge. No matter what your resources, you still have to have the similar sort of considerations. So, how would you adapt this? Like the, the code has many things to do. Can you speak a little bit about how it

would vary between the different types of organizations, like an example of how you might be able to implement a small scale versus larger scale?

Deb: That's one of the things about the code when it was designed. It's not strictly that you must, must do all of these things to this level in each organization in order for an organization to say that they've adopted the code. And that's part of the reason why is the sector is so diverse. And we know that for example, more than 50% of organizations are, have no, there, they're smaller and are mostly volunteer led. So, we're looking at a range of very small organizations to very large organizations, urban organizations, rural organizations, different focus and mission of organizations as well. So, the code was designed to be adaptable to all of those contexts. So, what we say in terms of looking at how will the code fit? How does our organization fit? Will we be able to adopt a code, the values, the principles, and the standards of practice? And the first piece there is to review the code. Usually that's with the volunteer engagement folks who are most tied to volunteer engagement and volunteers as their primary role. To review that and see, do the values align with our organization's values and the principles that are there about recip, reciprocal relationship between the volunteers and the organization? And then take that to the leadership of the organization, the board and your senior leadership, to make sure that that is in alignment and that they agree and support the value of volunteer involvement within the organization. And that's your starting point. As, as Marisa said, a way to start a discussion about the value of volunteer involvement for your organization achieving its mission. And so, once you have that alignment on those two things, you can have that discussion and the board can decide that, yes, we agree and we would like to adopt the code. There's your starting point and many organizations at that point develop a statement about the value of volunteer involvement. And they post that either hard copy in their offices or sometimes on their websites just to promote and say to the world and to potential volunteers. We value volunteer involvement here in this organization, and that's their starting point. And if we're lucky, we also ask them to let us know so that we know that, that you're working on implementing the code. And then it comes to the standards of practice. And there are standards of practice in, in several different areas related to volunteer engagement. And we asked for organizations to take a look at their current practices related to volunteer engagement and look at them against those standards of practice. And to start working on them. It's not a requirement to fulfill all of the standards of practice to a certain level to adopt the code, but it is, as Marisa said, an evolving document and that process is evolving and we ask that dif, and different organizations are going to have capacity to work on them to different levels within their organization. So, that's what we asked and that they work on those. And let us know that they've adopted the code. We also provide some additional supports beyond the code and that listing of standards of practice to help them and give them some guidance on, what does it mean to impl, implement a standard of practice? So, there are a couple of things that organizations can do. Another resource that we have on our website is called putting the code into action, which is exactly that. And what we want people to do is not just look and read, but how does it live within your organization? And what do we do to implement the standards of practice in a way that fits with the mission of our organization and our capacity to do that. So, those are checklists for each of the standards of practice that organizations can look at. And they have a range of ideas of ways to implement those standards of practice. And

we encourage that if there are pieces that fit with your organization, send them to us. Let us have a look at that because as it's evolving, those checklists can evolve as well. And, indeed, they have, as we've looked at different lenses to put on volunteering engagement related to implementing those standards.

Dianne: Like the pandemic lens, for example.

Deb: Well, that's one of the things that we've looked at. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is another one. So, these things evolve over time and that's how the code evolves too. Newcomers. There's all different lenses. How do we involve youth? There could be all different areas that would, would be relevant to your organization and implementing those standards of practice and, you know, to others as well. So that's why we asked to share with us so that then again, we can share that out. And the, the implementation of the code and the resources that we have become richer from the experience of the organizations that are on the ground, implementing that. The other piece that members of Volunteer Canada can do is to take the code audit. And that's a more interactive tool that's available to our membership, where they can go in, and look at those standards of practice and sort of examine where they are now and put a level of where they think they are. And then once they've completed that tool, they will get a report back that gives them some resources to support their development in each of those areas of the standards of practice. So, that's again an evolving tool that can help them to develop their programs. And it's also a great regular check-in to look at how are we doing? Where are we? Have we moved ahead on different standards of practice compared with when we did the audit tool before? So, these are some of the things that we have in place to be able to support organizations to implement and adopt the code within the context of their organization.

Dianne: Well, I don't know if Marisa can add, but I know if she can there's a lot of stories behind the scenes.

Marisa: I certainly would like to. I just wanted to build on something that Deb was saying, which is, the, the checklist, which is very, very helpful. And the checklist sometimes people hesitate to undertake the process of adopting the tool because it might seem like you have to be perfect. Like we don't even- if you don't have a, a manager or an administrator of volunteer resources, how are we going to ever, you know, do all of that? The thing is that the checklist will also tell you the things that you are already doing. You know, if we want to be solution focused, like what are you already doing that's working? What can you do more of? So, that's one thing. And the other thing is again just to add to what Deb was saying about the adaptability of the, of the code- even informal organizations, small groups, it's such a great tool to articulate what our values are, what our mission is, whether you're five people in a neighborhood that's checking in with the seniors or who's making, making sure that the parks are clean or whatever it is. You know, sometimes when groups get together informally people have separate ideas because sometimes there's not an enunciated and articulated mission that we can all focus on. The code is a fantastic discussion guide. Like what is the most important thing that we want to do amid all these priorities? How will we do it? And so, it's about having a discussion and aligning and

looking at some of the ways that other people have found work to be effective and to value that contribution. So really, it's across the spectrum. I would really encourage. I was kind of- non-formal organization or I guess, I guess that's what we'll call them. Or so grassroots or volunteer led to really have a look at the code and not be dissuaded or think that, oh no that's for people who have a big infrastructure. Yeah.

Dianne: It's the spectrum. Look it, I've got the spectrum page.

Deb: I would also say too that we're talking about how organizations implement the code. And one of the things, when we talk about the guiding principles and we talk about the reciprocal relationship, there are two parts, there are two partners in that relationship. And one is the organization that has needs in order to fulfill its mission and volunteers can support and, and help organizations to accomplish that mission. But they come with their own needs and expectations to a relationship as well as we all do. And so, the code provides that framework so that if a volunteer is coming to an organization, they can look at that. And if an organization has adopted the code, it can give a volunteer a good sense of how they will be treated when they come and contribute their time. Within the framework and within that organization. So, it's, it's for both- it's to support organizations, but it also recognizes that, that that's a reciprocal relationship and that volunteers come with needs and expectations and talents to contribute to support the mission of an organization. So, it recognizes that there are, there are pieces in the code that, that support both of those- the volunteers and the organization. Yeah.

Dianne: It is like we're, we're doing an infomercial for this guide, but I.

Deb: A little bit, yes. That's a good thing.

Marisa: The phone number will start scrolling at the bottom of the screen in a minute.

Dianne: Call us.

Marisa: Call now and get two codes.

Dianne: Get your first standard of practice, here. Yes. Your badge. Well you both have your badge. And I think that this, the opportunity to talk about our work has been reaffirming to all of us that know it requires an organized person to run and manage volunteers much like human resources. And the board is the feature that's really unique about the non-profit sector. So, we'll be talking about board involvement later, but it's really been magnified to me that the board is very important to start with because all boards are volunteers. So, it's the most awkward group to actually engage because you need expertise, but you need to also treat them as volunteers and you have a professional. It's a very interesting relationship. So, I'm sure our listeners are going to learn more in the board level one, but the cycle of the volunteer management- all of these things are really great tools for a board to be aware of. Like, like you have stated very clearly. So, I don't know. Anything else you want to add to this particular conversation or do you think we've covered everything, Marisa?

Dianne: I think that, just that I think that if- just to reiterate that the tool is very. It's very flexible to have a look and then to have a look again. I think you mentioned that Jane or Deb. I can't remember who said it. But it, it helps you to set things up and then it helps you to stay on track, right. And, you know, there's like 10 standards and practices but by all means they don't- you don't always, you don't have, they don't have to be perfect before you can say, I am adopting this. My intention is continuous improvement to the degree that we can implement it and this can be a guideline. I would say that's, that's- yeah.

Dianne: It's such a wide range that spectrum that you talked about. And I think just bringing highlight to Deb's points as well about all of the additional tools that Volunteer Canada is doing to support those pieces from screening, risk management, human resources development, the administration pieces. We're not forget your, we are, are aware that all of those pieces play a role. And then on top of it Volunteer Canada advocating for the profession, for the industry as a whole, is something I just like to also mention. The code is one of the tools, but Volunteer Canada has many. And so, thank you both for putting in the effort for, for module three and introducing the Canadian code for volunteer involvement. Further to module three, where we're talking about the CCVI and the Canadian code we, we kind of skipped over a really important part. And that is the spectrum of volunteer engagement, which is so nicely portrayed in the document that we're talking about. Did you want to get a little bit more about, you know, there's such a wide variety of volunteers who can participate from board level to dare we say it's a spectrum that doesn't have more or less value on either end, right? But people are involved in so many different ways.

Deb: And I think that's something that we wanted to reinforce in terms of volunteers and how they engage in community and with and through organizations. And we recognize, and the code recognizes, that volunteers and organizations too have a range of opportunities and ways that volunteers can contribute to the mission of their organization and the work of their organization. Volunteers at different stages of their lives may have more or less time, different skills to contribute in different ways, and the spectrum of volunteer engagement really recognizes that. And as you said, it's, it's a spectrum so that it doesn't place any more or less importance on the contributions that volunteers make to the work of an organization. So, it does run the range of volunteers beginning by learning about issues in their community. What's important, causes that are important to them, and how they can contribute to that and move the needle on some of those issues that are important to them. So, they may start with a very small volunteer role- either inside an organization or more informally as Marisa referenced around informal groups and how they contribute to community. Their involvement may involve more regular times. So, we know that we have volunteers who come every Tuesday from four to six to contribute to a program, to direct service delivery, to what, an administrative role within an organization on a more regular basis. And that may be fulfilling for them. And align with the time and the skills that they have and they want to contribute at a certain time. Others may find board membership or committee membership as a fulfilling way to contribute to an organization. Others may find event participation and support to be something that they want to, to do. And still others may look at skills-based volunteering as a way that they can really contribute either their professional skills or their personal skills to be able to provide skills and



expertise that are needed within an organization. So, there are so many ways that volunteers can contribute. And organizations have opportunities or thinking about opportunities within that spectrum to be able to bring in volunteers and to help them find a place that's meaningful for them and for the organization in order for them to contribute their time- at any point along that spectrum and along their lifetime. Because volunteering, we know from so many volunteers is something that they started at an early age and they do throughout their lifetime. And we know that that volunteer who starts at an early age is not doing the same thing within an organization now as they are in your teens, in their forties, in their seventies. And we have volunteers of all ranges and of all abilities and interests coming to organizations and wanting to make a contribution. That spectrum of engagement helps them find a place for their contributions in a way that's meaningful to the organization.

Dianne: They're reciprocal. for sure.

Deb: Yeah.

Dianne: Marisa, did you want to add anything? Are you a bursting with another idea?

No, that's actually very complete. Just wanted to reiterate something you said, Dianne. And that is, that is that across the spectrum- it's not about the value. If somebody can give, it's not about qualifying, what, how so, the degree to which someone contributes. It's valuing the very diverse ways, the abilities, the skills, the time that we have to offer. Yeah. That's it.

Dianne: It's just a privilege to work in the industry and have never thought about it in terms of a career. You know, I fell into it myself through 20 years with one organization and I was running a disability awareness program in schools and I had puppeteers. So, it was a really unique- just to point the spectrum was very, very challenging and very fulfilling to see it work out. And sometimes not work out. And that's the hard part too.

Marisa: Yes.

Dianne: We're dealing with people's very sensitive contributions the best they can. And we're managing the unknown and it is a good job and a good career choice for someone who likes variety and challenge. Wouldn't you say?

Marisa: Yes, I agree.

Dianne: Kudos to both of you. Thank you so much for your help unpacking the Canadian code on volunteer involvement. Talk to you later.

Marisa: Thanks, Dianne.

Deb: Bye.