



Volunteer Acknowledgments: Trilby McGaw,
Volunteer Programs Manager (Excerpts)

For many years now, we've spent a fair amount of time recognizing the important contributions made by MOSAIC's volunteers during our annual general meetings. But this year, we've decided to do things a bit differently.

Over the next 6 months, I'll be working with the Board to develop an annual event dedicated to appreciating our volunteers that will coincide with National Volunteer Week at the end of April each year. These events will be significant for us and for our volunteers because as they say "feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it".



I'd like to try and quantify the value of volunteer contributions to MOSAIC for you. In recent years, it's become popular within non profit agencies to measure value in monetary terms. This is a subjective task but according to standard methodology, one volunteer hour is worth about \$16 in BC. Together, our volunteers contributed about 10,000 hours over the past year which gives them a combined estimated worth of \$160,000. That's more than half of our budget for all of the volunteer programs combined. I think this is pretty impressive and that as an organization we need to continue valuing our volunteers.

But it's important to not only think of volunteer contributions in terms of dollar value because this conceals the heart and soul of those contributions. We now have three successful English programs in Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster that are run by volunteers for newcomers who are not eligible for ELSA classes. In total about 80 students have received access to free of charge English classes over the past year through these programs. The students are largely visitors, refugee claimants and temporary workers, all of whom need help to develop their language skills but who have limited to no access to other affordable options. I've heard many students in these programs brag about their involvement because they enjoy the classes and their teachers so much. And I've seen students grow immensely in their English speaking and listening skills and thus in their confidence.

Through our community bridging programs, volunteers have supported about 100 newcomers to settle across the Lower Mainland by providing informal support in the form of encouragement, practicing English, learning about Canadian culture as well as helping them meet new people and volunteer in Canada. Every week, we hear newcomers say that their volunteer partners are like their guardian angels or their siblings. They say they feel like they've learned a lot about life in Canada and that they have more confidence to go out and try new activities.

We've been able to help many newcomers develop their office skills, gain Canadian work experience, spend time in an English speaking environment, connect with others and help other newcomers by helping out in our volunteer office. Though we can't help as many as we would like in this way, this year we helped 10 office volunteers who all feel like they've gained a lot from the experience and feel better prepared to seek full-time work.

So I'd like to end with a simple and symbolic gesture: to value, acknowledge and celebrate the work of our volunteers over the past year by giving them a big round of applause.