

**BC  
PEOPLE  
FIRST**



# **Member & Supporter Handbook**

**FREEDOM CHOICE RESPECT DIGNITY INCLUSION**

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## Dear Members and Supporters,

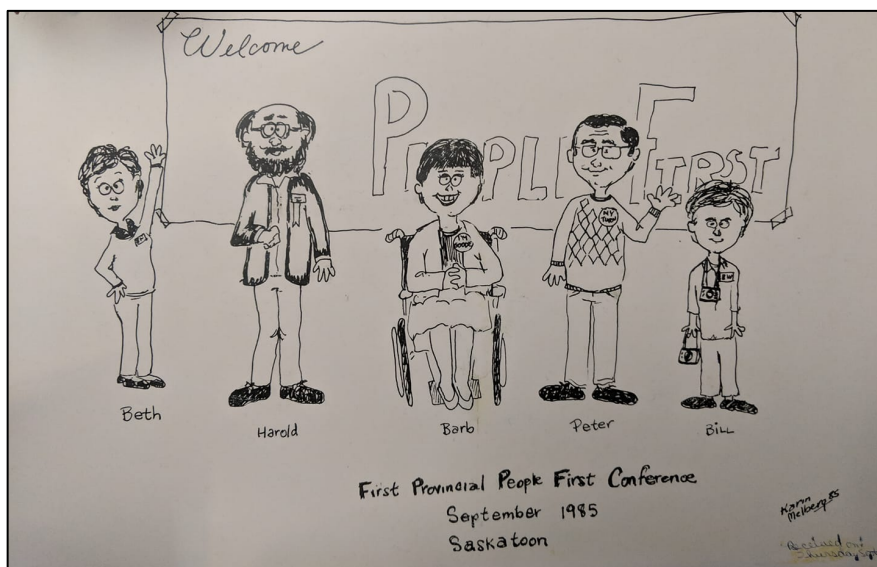
BC People First welcomes you! We hope you enjoy being part of the People First movement and that you gain valuable experiences.

This handbook is for BCPF Members and Supporters. It contains important information about being a member or volunteering with BC People First Society (BCPF). Members run our non-profit society. Supporters of BCPF are anyone who volunteers or works with BCPF in some way other than being a Member. The Provincial Program Coordinator and the Membership & Self-Advocate Liaison are staff.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email us anytime at [hello@bcpeoplefirst.com](mailto:hello@bcpeoplefirst.com).

Thank you for your commitment to the People First movement in British Columbia!

Sincerely,  
The BCPF Board of Directors



## **BCPF MISSION & VISION**

BC People First Society (BCPF) is a provincial non-profit organization. We are part of the international People First movement. We are a society made up of a group of Members from across British Columbia. We want to make sure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included and respected in our communities as full citizens. We do this by supporting each other to speak up for ourselves and by sharing advocacy skills with each other.

Our vision is a diverse community where all people are:

- Included and involved
- Honoured and respected
- Appreciated for their abilities
- Supported to participate

Our values at BC People First are:

- Freedom
- Choice
- Respect
- Dignity
- Inclusion

At BCPF we want to stop the stigma surrounding intellectual and developmental disabilities. We unite our Members' voices in the fight to be considered People First. The fight to not have people speak for

us or down to us. And to help everyone in society understand what "nothing about us without us" really means and why it matters.

Here are some of the things our Members do together:

- Write letters, emails, and make phone calls for local issues.
- Complete online surveys together for plain language support.
- Do presentations to schools, youth groups, companies, government officials, and service providers about the importance of self-advocacy, human rights and the C.R.P.D. And the issues that affect our Members and people with disabilities.
- Host forums, educational events, and networking events for self-advocates and people with disabilities.
- Host focus groups and policy discussions to help make changes.

We advocate for all people to be seen as equal citizens and for issues that matter to our Members. These are just some of the things that matter most to us at BCPF right now:

- Employment and fair wages - equal work for equal pay, small business grant support for people with disabilities, and closing "sheltered workshops" in Canada.
- De-institutionalization - getting people out of living in institutions and into the community. Home should not be like jail.
- Affordable housing - everyone should have a good, clean home and choice in where they live.
- Equal disability benefits and gender equality – reducing the unequal rates of misdiagnosis and delay in diagnosis for women with disabilities. Better understanding intersectionality.
- Relationship rights – the right to date, get married without losing benefits, and have children of our own.

- Reducing stigma in society about disability – stopping the judgements from others about the labels they give us and stopping diagnosis terms from being used as insults.
- A livable income for all - everyone deserves a guaranteed livable income and no one deserves to live in forced poverty.
- Access to quality services - all government and disability services should be individualized, person-centered, helpful, and hopeful. Nothing about us without us!
- Accessible transportation and passageways - society and communities should be made for everyone not just some.
- Inclusive, non-segregated communities - everyone should be part of the community on their own terms and not segregated based on labels.
- Healthcare that covers full body health – mental health and dental should be included in our provincial health care. Assistive devices should be way easier to get. Access to healthy food and the right to cook and shop for ourselves.
- The right to be ourselves and be respected for who we are.

## **What do we mean by labeled?**

We want to explain that People First groups around the world use the term “labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability” because someone else has given us that label. Maybe it was a doctor or a teacher. But somewhere, we have been given this label.

You might hear us refer to labeled people, or people with an intellectual or developmental disability. And non-labeled people, people without an intellectual or developmental disability.

It is important for everyone to understand that labels are not a diagnosis. Labels can be harmful stereotypes used to justify abuse, exclusion, and discrimination in our society. Any word can become a label when it is used as a way to deny people their human rights. This is one of the things we stand up for in our society, to stop the judgements from others about the labels they give us. The only person that can define your or label you is yourself.

## **BCPF BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

BC People First is run by a volunteer Board of (5-10) Directors, all identifying as Self-Advocates and people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Board of Directors represents the province by region and on the Executive Board. Director positions are usually 3-year terms. Any Director must first be a Member of BCPF.

Executive positions are voted on every year, but with the President taking a 2-year term. BCPF Members who want to get more involved are invited to join the Board as positions become available. Members can also join Committees led by the Board of Directors.

BCPF is unique because we practice Nothing About Us Without Us at all times. People First groups around the world are some of the only organizations for people with disabilities where the Board of Directors are ALL people with disabilities.

This is so important and a key part of the People First movement. As a non-profit society in BC, we cannot operate without our volunteer Board of Directors. We thank all Directors, past and present!

## **BCPF MEMBERSHIP & CHAPTER INFORMATION**

BCPF Membership is currently free and is for anyone in British Columbia who:

- Identifies as having a disability
- Supports our advocacy efforts for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Wants to learn self-advocacy skills and human rights
- Wants to share advocacy skills and tips with others

In Canada, the People First movement began in 1973 when people who identified as Self-Advocates came together from all over North America to talk about their rights. For people in the first Canadian group, the main issue was their right to live in the community – to get out of being forced to live in institutions.

By 1974, the first People First Chapter was up and running here in British Columbia. This first group was made up of men and women who lived in an institution and wanted to get out. They wanted to live in the community and have their voice, their choice, and their rights. For the next several years, People First groups began to form in

provinces, territories, and communities across the country and these groups continue to grow and thrive.

To this day, BC People First still advocates for the rights and needs of our Members and all people. Such as affordable housing, relationship rights, increasing PWD rates, community accessibility, ending ableism and disability stigma, plus much more.

Members who enjoy public speaking can join our BCPF Presentation Team to talk about these issues that matter to us. Doing formal presentations and sharing stories and experiences at panel events. Plus, there are community activism and social networking opportunities for BCPF Members who want to get more involved.

**BCPF Membership includes:**

- A copy of “People First Advice For Members”
- A lapel pin and stickers sent to your mailing address.
- Regular e-newsletters with self-advocacy tips and resources from Self-Advocates around the province.
- Voting rights at the Annual General Meeting.
- Having a say in what we advocate for in our communities and across BC.
- Peer mentorship and self-advocacy support.
- Plain language support for filling out online surveys.
- Members-only social events.
- Members-only education events.

**Members who want to get more involved can:**

- Attend meetings at a local BCPF Chapter or we will help you if you want start a Chapter in your own area.
- Join one of our BCPF Committees to work on advocacy and community projects (Advocacy, Fundraising, Membership Engagement, Policy, Accessibility, etc.).
- Join the BCPF Presentation Team or Plain Language Translation Team. Honorarium for approved and scheduled presentations.
- Submit advocacy stories for the BCPF blog or get support from BCPF to write your own blog post. Honorarium for approved blog posts provided up to two times a year, depending on BCPF funding and donation levels.
- Members can volunteer to be a Director on the Board when positions open. Our Board and Society is run by Self-Advocates!

Members can be involved as much or as little as they choose. Signing up as a BCPF Member is a great way to support the People First movement. Because by joining the movement you are joining hundreds of people across BC who unite our voices to end the stigma around disability. To fight for “nothing about us without us” and the full implementation of the CRPD in our society.

Members volunteer their time for Board of Directors meetings and BCPF Committee planning and society governance. Members don't have to volunteer on a Committee, this is optional. But keep in mind, BCPF is a volunteer-run membership based non-profit society for self-advocates to network and solve problems together. BCPF would not be able to operate without a team of dedicated and passionate volunteers who help lead the self-advocacy movement in BC.

Some involvement roles allow for honorariums, allowances, or contractor wages, including:

- Honorarium provided for presentation speakers and event MC's up to 5 times a year. Presenters must be people who identify as having a disability and are usually BCPF members.
- Honorarium provided up to two times a year for members who write an approved blog post for the BCPF Member Blog.
- Contractor wages provided for work done on the Plain Language Translation Service team. The team consists of the the Provincial Coordinator and up to 3 members for each translation project.
- Contractor wages for the position of Self-Advocate & Member Liaison, held by someone who could also be a member and must be a person with a disability.
- Contractor wages for the position of Provincial Program Coordinator, held by someone who is not eligible to be a member and has certification in business administration.
- Travel allowances for the Board of Directors to meet in-person once a year.
- Event allowances for hosting member networking or learning events in areas around the province.

Honorariums and any wages or allowances provided to any member or supporter, by BCPF, are subject to funding levels held by the society and any grant requirements. Anyone receiving an honorarium is responsible for reporting any income to CRA on their own.

**Members are expected to:**

- Complete a Membership Enrolment Form.
- Update name and contact information when it changes.

- Come to the Annual General Meeting, if possible, in-person or by video or phone.
- Attend BCPF educational or social networking events when they want.
- Never engage in any form of harassment, discrimination, unfair or disrespectful treatment of others while representing BCPF.
- Treat other Members with respect, be considerate of the feelings of others, respect each other's differences, use good manners, and never use threats to get a point across.

Most important, BCPF belongs to the Members!

And here are a few more important guidelines from the People First movement for the society to uphold:

- Only Members get a vote.
- People First follows a democratic process. This means it is ruled by the members. It means that all members get a vote. It means that the leaders are elected by the members.
- People First has Advisors. Advisors offer guidance and support. They are volunteers. They do not vote.
- Advisors are chosen by the Members.
- All members must be given the chance to learn. They must be given space to take part to the best of their ability.
- People First members mentor new members and help their self-advocacy skills to develop.
- People First is a peer group process. Over time, each person learns or gets involved at their own pace.

## **Starting a Chapter as a Member:**

- Chapters should be started to give BCPF Members a place to talk about issues that matter to them in their area or work on advocacy projects together in-person or in a local area.
- Any BCPF Member can start a Chapter – we can help you get started.
- Each Chapter must have:
  - A Chairperson/President
  - A Vice-Chairperson/Vice-President
  - And at least 5 BCPF Members involved.
- Chapter Members are usually all from the same city, town, or First Nation (but sometimes from two or three towns combined).
- Chapters should meet monthly or quarterly. By phone, video conference, or in-person following all public health guidelines.
- The Chapter Chairperson needs to make sure their contact information is kept up-to-date with BCPF and the Regional Director on the Board responsible for area location with the Chapter.
- The Chapter Chairperson needs to make sure meetings are in a safe place, such as an office, library, coffee shop, public park, or other public space approved by all Chapter Members. Or at a Supporter Organization office location if the Chapter has a Supporter Organization as a Sponsor.
- Chapters need to send a report to BCPF once a year with some basic details about the Chapter, such as Member names, number of meetings, how many Members, Chairperson name, and a summary of your events or community projects.
- Chapters are eligible for funding from BCPF to host advocacy, networking, or training events, usually 1 or 2 events per year,

depending on the funding limits of BCPF. Usually one event per year but it depends on how much funding BCPF has.

- Chapter Members should be volunteering their time to attend Chapter meetings (but can still be paid Members of the BCPF Presentation Team who get speaker honorariums for doing presentations or writing blog posts for the BCPF Member Blog).
- Chapters can get help from BCPF to make flyers for events or promote events online and with our Community Partners.

## **VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT & TASKS**

Board Members, Committee Members, and Volunteer Advisors usually volunteer a minimum of 4 hours and a maximum of 10 hours per month.

Members and Supporters who volunteer with the BCPF Board, BCPF Committees, or other BCPF projects are expected to:

- Attend all (or most) of the meetings from start to finish, sending apologies to the group or Chairperson for missed meetings
- Prepare for meetings by reading the agenda, relevant documents, and any unread committee emails before the meeting.
- Participate in the meetings and committee business.
- Display reliability and remain accountable for all choices, behaviour, and actions.
- Be fair, considerate, and honest in all dealings when representing BCPF.

- Be sure that all committee members are given time to express opinions, and that all opinions are thoughtfully considered.
- Respect the confidentiality of information, especially with personal matters and sensitive information.

Volunteer events usually last 1 hour to 3 hours long and may include taking part in planning meetings and attending other events such as:

- Community outreach events at fairs or exhibits
- Advocacy and education events such as presentations, forums, and panels
- Community partner events as a BCPF representative
- Committee projects around fundraising or member engagement

### **What is a BCPF People First Advisor?**

Advisors are volunteers with BCPF who are not also eligible to be Members. Advisors are people BCPF Members can trust and feel comfortable with.

Advisors are supporters and allies of the movement – Members are leaders of it!

Advisors are appointed by the Board of Directors or a BCPF Committee or Chapter and are expected to:

- Empower BCPF Members by being supportive and understanding
- Help a Board Member or Chapter Chairperson in a specific region of the province or with a specific Committee

- Assist Board Members to receive information in a form that allows them to understand what is happening at meetings, events, and in the operations of BCPF.
- Support Board Members to understand the issues affecting them and help BCPF educate people in the province about these issues (CRPD).
- Want to be included and involved in the organization by supporting BCPF Board Members with advice and suggestions when needed but do not take over any lead roles from the Board or Members. Advisors do not make decisions for the Board Members, they want to support the decision making process for the Members.
- Attend either monthly Board Meetings or Committee meetings (no meetings in August or December).
- Attend the BCPF Annual General Meeting.
- Support activities such as presentation planning, speaking note prep, and recording meeting minutes, when needed.
- Help evaluate and coach advocacy skills when asked and enjoy helping to build others up.
- Focus on people's strengths and advocacy goals. Advisors encourage Members to have their say and may help ensure no one is left out at meetings or events.
- Understand the term "nothing about us without us"

The goal is for Board Members to make decisions by themselves - the Advisor is encouraged to share their opinions and knowledge for the purpose of helping Board Members to understand the consequences of decisions both good and bad.

Good Advisors help but don't tell the Members what to do. It is about empowerment and trust.

## **MEETING RULES**

Meetings work best when everyone has a fair chance to participate and meetings stay organized and respectful.

BCPF meetings and events usually follow an agenda so the group can stay on topic, manage time fairly, and make sure important items are discussed.

Members, volunteers, staff, and Board members are encouraged to:

- Follow the meeting agenda and directions from the Chairperson or meeting facilitator
- Stay on topic during discussions
- Help meetings move forward respectfully and fairly
- Be mindful of how long they are speaking so others also have time to share
- Respect speaking turns and avoid interrupting others
- Support a welcoming environment where everyone can participate

BCPF understands some people may communicate differently or need extra support, reminders, breaks, or accommodations during meetings. Accessibility and inclusion remain important parts of all BCPF activities.

## **DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION**

The People First self-advocacy movement believes in democratic participation. BCPF meetings and committees are guided by the idea that every member's voice matters.

This means:

- Members should have equal opportunities to speak, share ideas, ask questions, and participate
- Important group decisions should be discussed openly and respectfully
- Voting and decision-making processes should be fair and understandable
- Different opinions can be shared respectfully
- No one person should control conversations, meetings, or group decisions

BCPF encourages members to work together cooperatively, listen to one another, and support respectful group decision-making. Safety, accessibility, dignity, and equal participation are important values in the People First movement.

## **RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR**

BC People First wants all members, volunteers, supporters, staff, and Board members to feel safe, respected, welcomed, and included at meetings, events, conferences, and projects.

BCPF understands that everyone communicates and expresses themselves differently. Members are welcome to be themselves, including using accessibility tools, taking breaks, stimming, moving around, asking questions, using support people, or communicating in ways that work best for them.

At the same time, everyone is expected to help create a safe and respectful environment for others.

This means:

- Treating people with kindness and respect
- Listening to others and sharing space fairly
- Respecting personal boundaries and consent
- Using respectful language and behaviour
- Following meeting agendas, group guidelines, and safety instructions
- Helping meetings and events stay organized and on topic
- Giving everyone a fair and equal chance to speak, share ideas, and participate
- Being mindful of how much time you are speaking so others also have time to talk
- Working together in a cooperative and professional way during meetings, projects, and public events

The following behaviours are not acceptable at BCPF activities or events:

- Bullying, harassment, threats, or intimidation
- Discrimination or hateful language
- Repeatedly interrupting or preventing others from participating

- Unsafe behaviour that could harm yourself or others
- Pressuring people for personal information, money, or private contact details
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol in a way that affects safety or participation

If a safety or behaviour concern happens, BCPF staff, Board members, or event leaders may step in to support the situation and help keep everyone safe.

BCPF believes people can be both professional and fully themselves. Accessibility, dignity, inclusion, equal participation, and safety are important parts of the People First movement.

## **EMAIL AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION SAFETY**

BC People First uses email and online communication to share information about meetings, events, projects, and member activities. BCPF wants everyone to stay safe when using email and online communication tools.

For your safety:

- Only open emails and links from people or organizations you trust
- Be careful about clicking on links or downloading attachments you were not expecting

- Never share your passwords, banking information, or private personal information by email
- BCPF staff and Board members will never ask you for your password or private banking information
- If an email feels suspicious, confusing, or makes you uncomfortable, do not reply right away
- If you are unsure if a message is really from BCPF, contact the Provincial Coordinator or your Regional Director to confirm

Members should also remember that email is not always private. Other people in group emails may be able to see your email address and replies.

BCPF encourages respectful, safe, and kind communication in all emails, online meetings, and digital spaces. Bullying, harassment, scams, threats, or inappropriate messages are not acceptable.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Members and Supporters should take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and that of other people, when volunteering or taking part in events.

Here are some examples:

- Do not attend any in-person events if you feel sick or are displaying flu-like symptoms.

- Please inform Event Supervisors or the Provincial Coordinator of any hazards, if needed.
- When volunteering outdoors with BCPF remember to wear sturdy shoes and be prepared for the weather.
- If you are going to be out in the sun remember to wear a hat, sunscreen, and bring lots of water to drink.
- If you are going to be outside in the rain or cold remember to wear warm layers of clothing, a top layer that is waterproof, and waterproof footwear.
- If you get asked to do a task that you are unsure of or use a tool you have not been trained to use, please contact the Event Supervisor. They can show you how to properly and safely carry out the assigned task or use the piece of equipment.
- You do not have to do any tasks that make you feel unsafe.
- Members and Supporters should not perform duties alone and will always be scheduled in pairs or groups.

## **ACCIDENTS**

The Provincial Coordinator needs to complete an incident report within 48 hours of all injuries and accidents that may occur at BCPF events. If you are injured while volunteering please report to the Event Supervisor or the Provincial Coordinator as soon as possible.

If you are unsure if any occurrence should be reported, please speak with the Event Supervisor.

If someone is seriously injured do not attempt to move them. Remain calm and call 911 immediately or send someone to call 911 for you. Be prepared to remain on the phone with emergency services and follow their directions. Report to the Event Supervisor and the Provincial Coordinator as soon as possible. It can also help if you take note of the injured person's name, phone number, and an emergency contact, if possible, so we can better help them after the event.

## **PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY**

Sometimes at events or meetings, you may hear information regarding BCPF Members that is confidential. Panel members and speakers often share personal stories. Please respect people by letting them share their own experiences – do not share someone else's personal information without their permission.

If someone outside BCPF, such as a journalist or government official, questions you on information about the society you believe to be confidential, please politely refer them to the Provincial Coordinator or the website contact page.

Only the elected BCPF Board of Director media representatives (usually the President and Vice-President) are allowed to provide information on any and all BCPF activities to the media.

## **ONLINE SAFETY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION**

BC People First wants members, volunteers, and supporters to stay safe when communicating online, by phone, or in person.

For your safety:

- Never share your passwords, banking information, credit card numbers, or personal identification numbers (PINs) with other members, volunteers, supporters, or people you do not know well
- Do not send money, gift cards, e-transfers, or financial information to anyone unless you fully trust the person and understand why the money is being requested
- BCPF staff, Board members, and volunteers will never ask you for your personal passwords or private banking information
- If someone asks you for money, passwords, or private information and it makes you uncomfortable, contact the BCPF Provincial Coordinator or your Regional Director before responding

BCPF encourages everyone to respect personal boundaries, privacy, and online safety. If you are unsure about a message, phone call, email, or request for money or information, it is okay to ask for help.

## **DRESS CODE**

While representing BCPF at professional and community events, Members and Supporters are expected to maintain a business casual

dress standard. But it is also important that you feel comfortable so please wear whatever feels right to you for the occasion.

If you are given an identification shirt, badge, or vest you must ensure that you are wearing it at all times for that specific event.

BCPF promotes a fragrance-free environment to minimize the allergic and/or medical reactions that fragrances can cause for some people.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

The disciplinary procedure exists to make sure that issues are solved as quickly and with as much fairness as possible. Disciplinary action may be taken when the work, behaviour, or actions of a Member or Supporter causes harm, or, negatively impacts the society or another Member.

A BCPF Member or Supporter can be dismissed without warning when gross misconduct takes place. Gross misconduct includes, but is not limited to, major theft, physical assault, negligence due to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and sexual harassment.

BCPF will work with all volunteers to find committees and projects that best suit the strengths of each person. We aim to accommodate individual abilities and learning styles. The following disciplinary

stages apply to unsatisfactory handling of work or conduct when other options such as retraining and coaching have not been effective:

- Stage 1 – Verbal Warning
- Stage 2 – First Written Warning
- Stage 3 – Second Written Warning
- Stage 4 – Termination

## **MEMBERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION**

BC People First collects contact information from members to support membership services and to meet legal requirements under the BC Societies Act.

This information may include your name, mailing address, phone number, and email address.

Your information is only used for official BCPF purposes, including:

- Keeping membership records
- Sending notices about meetings, voting, and events
- Sharing newsletters, updates, and important information
- Supporting communication between members and BCPF staff
- Inviting members to BCPF group emails, meetings, committees, projects, and activities

If you join a BCPF group email, meeting, or project, other participants may be able to see your email address or name as part of group communication. You can choose whether or not to participate.

Your home address and personal contact information will never be shared with other members, volunteers, supporters, or outside organizations unless:

- You clearly give permission, or
- BCPF is legally required to do so

BCPF takes privacy seriously and works to protect member information in a respectful and confidential way.

If you have questions about your information or want to update your contact details, you can contact the BCPF Provincial Coordinator or your Regional Director.

**If you move:**

Please update your mailing address with BCPF. If you change your phone number or email, please let us know. Email us at [hello@bcpeoplefirst.com](mailto:hello@bcpeoplefirst.com) or fill out a new membership form.

Sometimes we need to contact all Members about important events, such as the Annual General Meeting. As a Member, please make sure your contact information is up-to-date.

## **MEMBER RESIGNATION**

Please let the BCPF Provincial Coordinator or the Regional Directors for your area of the province know if you wish to leave your BCPF volunteer position or resign from membership with the society.

Reference letters for BCPF volunteers are available by request and may depend on the length of volunteer service. Please contact the Provincial Program Coordinator when needed.