

Chapter 6

Canada



Katie Misener and Kristen Morrison

Abstract Volunteers are the backbone of the nonprofit and voluntary sector in Canada. The act of volunteering represents an important tradition in a country which projects a powerful global image of inclusion, diversity, and policy innovation. Volunteering offers individuals of all ages an opportunity to foster meaningful engagement and create community change. Volunteers are central to the operations of amateur sport organizations and events in Canada where sport volunteers get involved for many reasons such as helping their sport and/or community, using their skills and experiences, and because they are often passionate about the sport themselves or are parents of children who participate. Sport volunteers take on many diverse roles, such as coach, referee, official, or administrator, and offer their time and dedication in episodic or continual roles. This chapter reviews the characteristics of Canadian sport volunteers and the key factors shaping the volunteer experience.

6.1 The Meaning of Sport Volunteering

Canada is a country of approximately 37 million people spanning ten provinces and three territories stretching from the Arctic Circle in the north to the United States-Canada border in the south (Statistics Canada [n.d.](#)). Canada boasts of its diversity as a cornerstone of the country's identity, with two official national languages (French and English) and a society of mixed religions, cultures, and interests. With immigration playing a leading role in Canada's population growth (Statistics Canada [2018b](#)), the country projects a powerful global message of inclusion, policy innovation, and prosperity (Momani and Stirk [2017](#)). Many Canadian government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations are taking leadership to instill these values in

K. Misener (✉) · K. Morrison
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada
e-mail: k.misener@uwaterloo.ca; kristen.morrison@uwaterloo.ca

the Canadian workforce and throughout communities to build a more involved, cohesive Canada. Indeed, connections and engagement are two critical elements of developing a sense of belonging where people are more likely to take action with others for common purposes (Vital Signs Report 2015). As captured in the Vital Signs Report published by the Community Foundations of Canada, “Communities need to send signals of acceptance and inclusion; and individuals need to cultivate connection with other people and engagement in the community” (p. 1). These notions of meaningful engagement and the opportunity to create community change underpin the voluntary sector in Canada.

In general, volunteering is understood as a pursuit that offers individuals the opportunity to contribute their time and work together with others to have a direct impact on organizations, communities, and the lives of other Canadians (Doherty et al. 2014). Volunteering in Canada is defined as participation in any activity, without monetary compensation, for a group or organization, such as sport or community associations, religious organizations, or schools (Vézina and Crompton 2012). Across Canada, volunteering is recognized to be linked with social networks as an important way to build social capital and community attachment (Wang et al. 2017).

However, the understanding and meaning of volunteering may vary based on an individual’s cultural background. For example, Quebec, the French-speaking province of Canada, uses the term “le bénévolat” to refer to the activities that individuals undertake that is intended to contribute to a philanthropic or community-based cause (Fortier, Thibault and Leclerc 2015; Thibault 2002). While the meaning of “le bénévolat” is similar to that of the English term “volunteering,” French-speaking people in Quebec are less likely than English-speaking people in Quebec to volunteer formally for an organization or association (Wang et al. 2017). Instead, French-speaking people in Quebec are more likely to help in an informal role by caring for children and older adults than English-speaking or other language-speaking people in non-Quebec areas (Wang et al. 2017). This suggests that French-speaking people residing in Quebec may view their role in giving back to their community differently than English-speaking people. Similarly, Aboriginal people in Canada view volunteerism as an inherent part of their culture and as a result give back to their communities through less formal activities (Edwards 2011; Volunteer Alberta 2004). In fact, there is no term for “volunteer” in most Indigenous cultures and is instead best understood as “helping out” and caring for others (Edwards 2011). This cultural understanding of volunteering is derived from the historical need to share resources and care for others in order to survive difficult environments (Edwards 2011; Little, Auchterlonie and Stephen 2005).

Despite the cultural differences that influence the understanding of volunteering in Canada, volunteerism plays an important role across the country, offering many benefits for both the individuals who volunteer and the organizations that they volunteer for.

6.2 Volunteer Workforce in Canada

In Canada, the number of volunteers has grown faster than Canada's population between 2004 and 2010 (Vézina and Crompton 2012). In fact, 12.7 million Canadians 15 years and older volunteered in 2013, contributing their time, skills, and energy to helping groups and organizations without monetary compensation (Turcotte 2015). In other words, more than four in 10 Canadians over 15 years of age volunteered in 2013. Overall, in 2013, Canadians volunteered an average of 154 hours (Turcotte 2015). See Table 6.1 for a summary table.

Volunteer rates differ across Canada. In 2013, the highest volunteer rate for individuals 15 years and older was seen in Saskatchewan (56%), followed by Manitoba (52%), and Nova Scotia (51%). In contrast, Quebec, Canada's French-speaking province, had the lowest rate of volunteering, where approximately 32% of the population over the age of 15 volunteered. Rural and less urban regions typically have higher rates of volunteering (Turcotte 2015).

However, the likelihood of volunteering may change based on a person's life stage, due to changes in their interests and obligations. For example, younger people have to juggle different responsibilities than working parents or retired empty nesters. More than half (66%) of younger Canadians aged 15 and 19 volunteered in 2013. In comparison, 42% of Canadians between 20 and 34 years of age and 48% between ages 35 and 44 reported volunteering. Individuals aged 55 and older were slightly less likely to volunteer; pre-retirees (aged 55 to 64) had a volunteer rate of 41%, while seniors (aged 65 and older) had a rate of 38%. However, older adults

Table 6.1 Canada's volunteer characteristics

Characteristic	Status quo in Canada
Population size	37 million (2018) ^a
Official languages	English and French
Volunteer rates (year)	44% (2013)
Existence of voluntary sport clubs	Yes
List of large-scale events hosted in the last 10 years	Olympic Games (2010) Paralympic Games (2010) Pan American Games (2015) Parapan American Games (2015)
Sport volunteer rates	n.a.
The word for volunteering	Volunteering; <i>le bénévolat</i> ^b
The meaning of the word	Participation in any activity, without monetary compensation, for a group or organization, such as sport or community associations, religious organizations, or schools ^c
Events/occurrences that have influenced volunteering	Vancouver Olympic Games (2010); Calgary Olympic Games (1988); Pan American Games (2015); Wildfire in Fort McMurray, Alberta (2016); Syrian refugee crisis (2011)

Source: ^aStatistics Canada (2018a); ^bThibault (2002); ^cVézina and Crompton (2012)

generally volunteered more hours than younger adults, with seniors aged 65 to 74 reporting an average of 231 volunteer hours in 2013 (Turcotte 2015).

Household income is another factor associated with differing volunteer rates in Canada. Individuals with household incomes of 100,000 CAD or over were more likely to volunteer than those with lower household incomes. While individuals who are employed outside of the home reported a higher volunteer rate than those unemployed or not in the labor force, on average, they also reported less volunteer hours (Vézina and Crompton 2012). Although employed individuals typically are in the age range where approximately half of Canadians volunteer (25-54 years), the time constraints of their job may partly explain why they volunteer less hours (Vézina and Crompton 2012).

Gender, education, marital status, and having children are also factors that influence volunteer rates and hours. Women were slightly more likely than men to volunteer (Turcotte 2015). Additionally, Canadians with at least some postsecondary education were also more likely to volunteer, and those who obtained a postsecondary credential volunteered more hours of their time on average than those who did not graduate from postsecondary school (Turcotte 2015; Vézina and Crompton 2012). Moreover, individuals who were single and never married were more likely to volunteer (47%) than those who are married or in a common-law relationship (42%; Vézina and Crompton 2012). Canadians who were widowed were less likely to volunteer (32%), which may be partly explained as widows or widowers typically comprise an older age group. Having school-aged children between the ages of 6 and 17 years considerably increased the likelihood of volunteering (Vézina and Crompton 2012). This may be due to the fact that many school-aged children participate in before- and after-school activities, including sport that may not occur without parental involvement. Notably, those born in Canada are more likely to volunteer than their immigrant counterparts, yet both groups are similar in their propensity for informal volunteering by providing informal care to others (Wang et al. 2017).

6.2.1 Older Adult Sport Volunteers in Canada

In Canada, the aging of the baby boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) means that 16.8% of Canada's population is 65 years of age or older (Statistics Canada 2017). For the first time in census history, Canada has more seniors aged 65 years and over than children under 15 years (Statistics Canada 2017). Although Canada's population continues to age, many baby boomers continue to work longer than previous generations. While the 1980s and the early 1990s saw a trend toward early retirement, the employment rate of individuals 55 years and over has increased between 1997 and 2010, suggesting that some Canadians are choosing to work longer, delaying their retirement (Carrière and Galarneau 2011). This trend of delaying retirement may help to explain why seniors, aged 65 and older, are less likely to volunteer than other age groups, yet those who do volunteer generally contribute

more hours than younger adults (Turcotte 2015). Older adults who are retired may seek to find meaning in their lives in other ways beyond work commitments and as such may turn to volunteering as a meaningful leisure time pursuit.

Volunteering is a rewarding and beneficial leisure activity for older adults and offers many benefits. Indeed, volunteering reflects an active lifestyle during later life and is one way for older adults to engage in meaningful social roles, connect with others, and gain new skills (Chambre 1987; Gill 2006; Price 2007). Volunteering in a formal capacity, such as within an organization or a club, has been associated with increased confidence and self-esteem and a stronger sense of purpose in life (Li and Ferraro 2005; Warburton 2006). Being active through formal volunteering also provides older adults with increased social interaction which works to counter isolation and loneliness (Warburton 2006). Overall, volunteering has many positive links to physical, mental, and social well-being of older adults.

6.2.2 *Economic Contribution of Volunteers*

In 2013, over 12.7 million Canadians, 15 years and older, volunteered almost 1.97 billion hours or the equivalent of approximately one million full-time jobs (Turcotte 2015). However, most of the volunteer work is done by the few, with just 10% of volunteers contributing over half of the volunteer hours provided to nonprofit and charitable organizations (Vézina and Crompton 2012). The top 10% of volunteers each volunteered for more than 390 hours in 2010 – the equivalent of working a minimum of 10 weeks at a full-time job (Vézina and Crompton 2012).

Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) also represents a new dimension of the volunteering landscape in Canada, providing an important economic contribution in the form of volunteer labor. Employer-supported volunteering is any activity undertaken by an employer to encourage and support volunteering in the community by its employees. Some examples of employer-supported volunteering include pro bono work (Allen 2012; e.g., offering consulting services to nonprofit organizations), mentoring, and team or group volunteering. ESV was once considered to be an exceptional and uncommon practice among corporate Canada, but has recently emerged as a more mainstream practice (Volunteer Canada 2016). A representative survey of 990 businesses across Canada found that 53% of respondents either encouraged their employees to volunteer during work hours or worked with their employees to accommodate their volunteering activities (Easwaramoorthy et al. 2006). Other companies support employees who volunteer their personal time through paid time off or flextime (flexible time). While these companies are “doing the right thing” by encouraging and supporting employee volunteer efforts, businesses acknowledge that their support is often part of an overall organizational strategy (Hall et al. 2007). Some benefits that an organization may realize through its support of employee volunteering include being able to attract top talent, improve employee engagement and retention, and strengthen relationships with the local community (e.g., clients, customers, partners; Volunteer Canada 2016).

6.3 Volunteer Management in Sport

The sport and recreation sector remains one of the most likely places for Canadians to volunteer (Sinha 2015). Canadian sport volunteers get involved to help their sport or community and use their skills and experiences or because they have been personally affected by the organization/cause (Harvey et al. 2005; Lasby and Sperling 2007). Interestingly, most people (93.8%) who volunteer for a sport organization do not do so to improve their own job/employment opportunities (Harvey et al. 2005). However, Canadians who volunteer their time in sport-specific roles are often passionate about the sport themselves or are parents of children who participate in the sport. While most sport and recreation volunteers (86.4%) have a background in sport participation themselves, they also indicate that they first became involved as volunteers because a child or spouse was involved (51%; Harvey et al. 2005). Additionally, some sport and recreation organizations themselves have compulsory volunteer work that participants or their family must complete as a condition for their involvement in the organization (Reilly and Vesic 2002/2003).

Although most volunteers focus on helping just one or two nonprofit or charitable associations, sport and recreation organizations receive the most volunteer support, with 12% of people over the age of 15 volunteering their time to these organizations in 2010 (Vézina and Crompton 2012). In fact, these dedicated people volunteered an average of 120 hours to sport and recreation organizations (Vézina and Crompton 2012). However, most of the volunteer hours dedicated to sport and recreation organizations are contributed by the same volunteers. For example, 25% of volunteers contribute 78% of the hours volunteered for Ontario sport and recreation organizations (Lasby and Sperling 2007).

Sport and recreation organizations are more likely than other nonprofit and voluntary organizations to report challenges in recruiting and training suitable volunteers (Lasby and Sperling 2007). Additionally, medium-sized organizations, which comprise the majority of amateur sport organizations, are more likely to report capacity issues with respect to volunteers (Lasby and Sperling 2007). Sport and recreation volunteers tend to be 25 years and older and are often involved because they have children who participate with that organization (Vézina and Crompton 2012). According to the 2010 General Social Survey, parents were involved in their children's sport as sport administrators (7%), coaches (5%), or referees (2%; Canadian Heritage 2013).

Over two million Canadians reported volunteering as an administrator for an amateur sport organization, representing approximately 7% of the population. Although men are more likely to report involvement in this capacity than women, this gap has shrunk since 1992. In 2010, 8% of Canadian men indicated that they volunteer in amateur sport administration versus 6% of Canadian women (Canadian Heritage 2013). Interestingly, Canadians between the ages of 15 and 19 as well as between the ages of 35 and 55 are more likely to report involvement as an amateur sport administrator. Canadians who possess a university degree, as well as those with a household income of 80,000 CAD or more, are also more likely to be involved as a sport administrator.

Despite the overall trend within the broader voluntary sector for women to be more likely to volunteer than men, men were more than twice as likely to coach in amateur sport than women. However, since 1992, the proportion of women participating in coaching activities has slowly grown (Canadian Heritage 2013). Other factors related to the likelihood of involvement in amateur coaching include a person's level of education, family income, and the primary language they spoke during their childhood. For example, Canadians with a university degree are more likely to be involved in coaching than those without a degree, and those with a household income of 80,000 CAD or more are also more likely to volunteer as coaches. Canadians whose primary language is English are more likely to be involved in coaching (6%), compared to Canadians who are Francophone (4%), or those who grew up speaking another language (3%).

Between 2005 and 2010, the number of adult Canadians involved in amateur sport as either a referee, official, or umpire has increased by 25%. In 2010, close to 600,000 Canadians reported being involved in sport as a referee, official, or umpire (Canadian Heritage 2013). Similar to the trend seen in amateur coaching, women are becoming more involved in the officiating of amateur sport. Approximately 3.1% of male Canadians reported acting as a referee, official, or umpire, versus 1.1% of females.

6.3.1 Older Adult Sport Volunteers in Sport

Volunteers are the backbone of many community sport clubs and take on multiple roles, such as coach, trainer, administrator, and committee member. However, the typical sport volunteer profile is not the older adult; rather, most sport volunteers are younger (35-44 years of age), male, and employed full time outside of the home (Doherty 2005). While older adults may not fit to this "typical sport volunteer profile," those older adults who do volunteer in sport organizations have much to give these community organizations as they bring personal sport experience, having participated in sport organizations as athletes themselves or as coaches. Research on this demographic in Canada has found that volunteering provides older adults with a way to give back to sport, a leisure activity that has often been a large part of their life (Hamm-Kerwin et al. 2009; Lyons and Dionigi 2007).

There are several contextual factors that influence whether older adults engage as sport volunteers. Hamm-Kerwin et al. (2009) position these factors within a framework of structural, cultural, cognitive, and situational dimensions of volunteering behavior. For example, demographic variables such as gender and marital status and former employment status have been found to represent key structural factors which increase the likelihood of volunteering. Cultural factors that encouraged older adults to volunteer in their local sport clubs included their previous involvement in sport, whether they volunteered in the past, and whether they had family/friends who volunteer both within and outside of sport (Hamm-Kerwin et al. 2009). Cognitive factors included key reasons for volunteering in sport such as the opportunity to use

their skills, to build social connections, and to stay active. Finally, the situational dimension included factors of everyday life that either prevent or increase the likelihood of volunteering such as the quality of one's health, spouse's employment status, and awareness of volunteer opportunities (Hamm-Kerwin et al. 2009). This multidimensional investigation provided key insight into the many complex factors which older adults navigate through their sport volunteer roles.

6.3.1.1 Benefits for Older Adult Sport Volunteers

Older adult sport volunteers experience many benefits through their involvement. For example, older adult sport volunteers often find meaning in their ability to contribute to youth development in their communities and interact with children through their involvement in sport clubs (Misener et al. 2010). Additionally, the multiple roles that older adult sport volunteers take on allow them to interact with people, which can be particularly meaningful during retirement (Misener et al. 2010). Further, the friendships that they developed while volunteering at sport clubs became another reason for older adults to remain involved (Lyons and Dionigi 2007; Misener et al. 2010). Volunteers who take an active role in sport clubs in later life also benefit from living an active, healthy life. Not only does the activity keep them exercising, but their volunteer roles help to keep their minds active while decreasing or preventing them from getting bored, particularly postretirement (Misener et al. 2010).

From an organizational perspective, older adult sport volunteers may provide sport clubs with skills based on experience, availability, and greater loyalty and confidence (Gill 2006). Research has found that older adult sport volunteers made a positive contribution to their sport club through their attitudes and beliefs, such as their perseverance, positivity, hard work, and sense of humor (Misener et al. 2010).

6.3.1.2 Challenges for Older Adult Sport Volunteers

While older adults typically describe their sport club volunteering experiences as positive, some may experience negative aspects. In particular, some volunteers may experience negative interpersonal relations with other club members that cause tension, anxiety, or disappointment (Misener et al. 2010). Relatedly, if a sport club does not have enough other volunteers, those who do contribute their time to the club may feel as if their volunteer role is more of an obligation requiring extensive time commitment beyond desirable expectations (Misener et al. 2010). While sport clubs have a difficult time recruiting and training skilled or experienced volunteers, the older adults who do volunteer may find that the extensive time commitment required due to limited "helping hands" is frustrating (Misener et al. 2010). Additionally, as sport clubs are beginning to formally outline requirements and credentials that potential volunteers must first meet, such as first aid certifications, coaching courses, and police checks, in order to ensure a safe and fair atmosphere, older

adult volunteers may feel as if their previous hands-on experience is discounted in favor of new policies and procedures (Misener et al. 2010).

Clear communication, purposeful recruiting of skilled older adults who are passionate about sport, better coordination among various roles within organizations, and job sharing may be ways to improve the older adult sport volunteer experience (Misener et al. 2010). Encouraging clubs to monitor the experience of these valued contributors is imperative to ensuring that the volunteer experience remains positive and attractive to additional volunteers. Opportunities abound for future research in this area in order to provide new insight related to enhancing the meaning-making opportunities for this demographic within the sport context.

6.3.2 Sport Event Volunteers

While volunteers are critical to the day-to-day operations of amateur sport organizations, they are also key to the overall operations of many sport events. These sport events may be episodic in nature, occurring only once a year, such as the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, or may be one-time events without expectation that they will reoccur, such as the Pan American Games hosted in Toronto in 2015. These events vary by size and may have different volunteer bases that they can draw upon. For example, large-scale events, such as the Pan American Games, may be able to draw upon volunteers that reside outside of the host city, while small-scale sport events, such as a local canoe/kayak race, may be limited to volunteers within its local community (Kerwin et al. 2015).

Canada has hosted mega-sporting events a number of times over the last five decades, with recent examples including the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver and the Pan American Games in 2015. These mega-events relied heavily on volunteers. For example, at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, of the 55,000 workforce members for the Games, approximately 25,000 were volunteers (International Olympic Committee 2010). Some of these volunteers (6,500) also contributed to the Paralympic Winter Games that occurred immediately following the closing of the Olympic Games. Almost 3,000 of these volunteers (14%) were bilingual, which was an important consideration by VANOC, the Vancouver Organizing Committee. As the Department of Canadian Heritage provided funding for the Vancouver Olympics, services had to be offered to the public in both official languages, English and French. However, one of the Vancouver Olympic Games' failures was not having enough bilingual volunteers at some venues (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 2010). This highlights both the need and difficulty of recruiting volunteers able to assist with sporting events who hold the necessary skills, such as language fluency.

The Pan American Games have been held in Canada three times, including twice in Winnipeg, Manitoba (1967, 1999), and once in Toronto, Ontario (2015). Both the 1967 and 1999 Games relied on substantial volunteer effort; the 1967 Games only created 12 paid jobs and relied on volunteers to run the rest of

the Games (Field and Kidd 2016). The 1999 Pan American Games relied on approximately 20,000 volunteers (Field and Kidd 2016), while the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games set a goal of assembling more than 23,000 volunteers (Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games). Volunteer responsibilities continue to grow with each iteration of the event. For example, each of the volunteers for the 2015 Pan American Games was asked to contribute 12 shifts over 18 game-time days, while the Parapan American Games volunteers were asked to volunteer for six shifts over nine days. Volunteers were assigned to one of over 50 functional areas, such as sport competition (e.g., referee, announcer, scorer), event services (e.g., host, team lead), transport (e.g., driver), and medical (e.g., first responder, massage therapist), based on their availability, geography, and skills.

While not classified as mega-events (see Müller 2015), other events such as the annual Rogers Cup (tennis) and Invictus Games (hosted in 2017 for wounded and injured veterans) have also been held in Canada, offering specialized sport volunteer experiences.

Small-scale sport events also offer important ways for citizens and sport fans to get involved in hosting others and showcasing sport within local communities. In these cases, sport event volunteers often assume several roles due to the limited catchment of volunteers within the local community (Kerwin et al. 2015). It is important, however, for all sport event volunteers to understand what tasks they are supposed to undertake and how they have to do them (means-ends/scope ambiguity), and understand where they fit in within the event operations (performance outcomes ambiguity; Rogalsky et al. 2016). This knowledge is related to volunteers' perceptions of their role performance, satisfaction with their role, overall satisfaction with their volunteering experience, and their intention to volunteer in the future (Rogalsky et al. 2016). These factors continue to shape the volunteer experience and determine whether individuals and communities will bid to host sport events in Canada in the future and showcase the assets of the country through the spectacle of sport.

6.4 Volunteering, State, and Civil Society

Most provinces and territories across Canada have policies in place that require or recognize volunteer hours toward high school course credits. Of the six provinces and territories that mandate community service as a requirement for high school graduation, most require students to complete between 25 and 40 hours of volunteer work. Quebec, the French-speaking province in Canada, requires only 10 hours of mandatory community service as a requirement for high school graduation. Other provinces and territories, such as New Brunswick, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Nunavut, offer specific courses that incorporate community service hours and count toward high school graduation.

These governmental policies and practices may help to explain why younger Canadians between the ages of 15 and 19 are more likely to volunteer than any other age group, but only contribute approximately half of the number of volunteer hours.

In 2013, Canadians between 15 and 19 years of age contributed an average of 110 hours, and younger adults between 20 and 34 years of age devoted approximately 136 hours for a group or organization. In contrast, Canadian seniors volunteered an average of 231 hours in that same time frame (Turcotte 2015).

According to one province's Ministry of Education (Ontario), the purpose of incorporating community service into high school requirements is to encourage students to develop an awareness and understanding of their civic duty and of the role that youth can play in supporting and strengthening their communities. To understand the impact of mandatory volunteering in high school, Padanyi et al. (2010) surveyed undergraduate students at two Ontario universities. They found that while Ontario's mandatory high school community service program did introduce some students to the voluntary sector, many students already had exposure from volunteering during elementary school. Further, although mandatory high school community service programs are aimed at encouraging students who likely would not have volunteered in high school in an attempt to get them to continue to volunteer later in life, Padanyi et al. (2010) found that these students were no more likely to volunteer later on than those who did not volunteer in high school. Overall, students did not view mandatory volunteering in high school as genuine volunteering and instead saw it as a compulsory activity or something that was only done for the student's own benefit, namely, the fulfillment of a high school graduation requirement. Despite this finding, Padanyi et al. (2010) also found that approximately half of the students volunteered more than 80 hours, double the Ontario high school minimum requirement of 40 hours. In fact, some high school graduates volunteered even more – in 2015, 66 students graduated from an Ontario high school with more than 999 volunteer hours (Sagan 2015).

While the Northwest Territories, one of Canada's three territories, also requires mandatory volunteering as part of its high school curriculum, it offers a unique and guided program to facilitate youth volunteering. The Northwest Territories has operated the NWT Youth Ambassador Program since 2007, offering a structured volunteer experience for its youth at various territorial, national, and international events (Proactive Information Services 2017). From 2007 to 2016, the NWT Youth Ambassador Program offered 650 participants 30 opportunities for volunteering, including major sporting events (e.g., 2007 Canada Winter Games, 2010 Olympic Games) to smaller events such as Ottawa Winterlude in 2015. Most participants reported personal growth (59%) and making healthier choices (41%) as a result from their volunteer experiences through NWT Youth Ambassador Program.

With respect to the sport sector specifically, the most recent Canadian Sport Policy (2012) sets out a framework that provides direction for Canadian governments (i.e., municipal, provincial, and federal levels), institutions, and organizations in order to promote and celebrate participation and excellence in sport, and also specifically highlights the important role that volunteers play in achieving system objectives. This is notable in a time when sport participation is declining and sport organizations compete for members and funding. The Canadian Sport Policy (2012) provides guidelines and suggested actions endorsed by federal, provincial, and territorial government representatives that sport organizers may choose to adopt.

6.5 Conclusion

The voluntary sector in Canada is vibrant and dynamic, and Canadians offer a vast amount of time, energy, and passion to the sector. Without the voluntary sector and the important role of volunteers, many social services would not exist, particularly in rural Canada (Ryser and Halseth 2014). Given the wide-reaching geographic area, multiplicity of cultures, and diverse volunteer pathways, more place-based policies are needed to support and build the capacity of the voluntary sector (Ryser and Halseth 2014).

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