

DiversityCanada Foundation 2021 Annual Report

The following is a summary of our activities and plans in 2021.

SUPPORTING SENIORS

GOLDEN YEARS PROJECT

Duration: March 18, 2020, to March 17, 2022

Location: Elliot Lake

Funding Source: Services Canada – New Horizons for Seniors’ Program

In-Kind Support: ELNOS Corporation for Business Development; various local businesses

The Golden Years Project seeks to promote healthy aging by providing seniors with the opportunity to engage with experts and to engage on a peer-to-peer basis in discussions on subjects such as physical activity, nutrition, injury prevention, elder financial abuse, and mental health among older Canadians.

Elliot Lake has the highest concentration of seniors when compared to all other small population centers in Ontario. Therefore, creating an Age-Friendly community is a greater priority for Elliot Lake than it is for most other municipalities.

The Golden Years project addresses many needs highlighted in the Age Friendly Elliot Lake Final Report & Action Plan. It is intergenerational, connecting seniors as well as non-senior adults; provides seniors and non-senior adults with volunteer opportunities for social and civic participation; and encourages the social inclusion of seniors.

The project, as approved, was designed to provide opportunities for Elliot Lake seniors and non-senior adults to volunteer in our community to come together in person to focus on living longer and living well, and to engage in social activities to reduce the isolation of seniors.

However, due to health restrictions, all contemplated in-person activities would now be done virtually or in very small groups, where allowed. Project activities include the following:

* Senior volunteers and non-senior volunteers form an Advisory Panel to review the topics of greatest interest to seniors under the theme of living longer and living well. The Advisory Panel creates interview questionnaires so as to maximize the fruitfulness of interviews and discussions with subject experts.

* Senior volunteers lead gatherings of their peers, using the filmed interviews as the centerpiece of discussion on living longer and living well. Filmed interviews and group discussions will be included on an online portal, making the information on living longer and living well available to a wider audience.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project shifted emphasis away from in-person activities and concentrated most efforts on online activities. The original timeline (which had a March 2021 end date) had to be changed to a completion date of March 17, 2022.

Excluding just over a dozen volunteers, approximately 480 individuals have directly benefited from the Project and received regular updates and access to the project resources designed to inform and engage seniors socially during the COVID-19 pandemic as they became available.

The Golden Voices Project has allowed DiversityCanada to provide activities and information that benefit low-income seniors; socially isolated seniors; geographically isolated seniors; seniors with disabilities; and LGBTQ2 seniors.

GOLDEN GUIDES PROJECT

Duration: March 29, 2021, to March 28, 2022

Location: Elliot Lake

Funding Source: Services Canada – New Horizons for Seniors’ Program

In-Kind Support: ELNOS Corporation for Business Development; various local businesses

The Golden Guides Project aims to fill needs that have arisen as a result of the restrictions and precautionary measures made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the most vulnerable age group, seniors have a greater need to reduce exposure to the disease by avoiding contact with others. This can result in social isolation and a loss of access to various services that can only be remedied through use of the Internet.

However, many seniors have traditionally made little or no use of the Internet. The project aims to provide training in Internet usage to such seniors. As new users of the Internet, seniors are likely to be more vulnerable to crimes and harm from bad actors online. The project therefore also intends to provide online safety awareness to seniors in the rural/remote community of Elliot Lake.

An important component of the project is raising awareness among seniors of government programs available to seniors, and in particular, services that can be accessed via the Internet.

It is anticipated that 5 to 10 (five to ten) senior volunteers would receive training to serve as mentors to their peers, acting as the so-called “Golden Guides”. They would serve alongside 5 to 10 (five to ten) non-senior volunteers. These volunteers (English-speaking and French-speaking) will act as mentors to at least 3 (three) seniors each. Thus, some 30 (thirty) to 60 (sixty) seniors with little familiarity with the Internet are expected to benefit from the mentorship offered.

A key aspect of the Golden Guides Project is the creation of project outputs that will have a long lifespan. The initiative will result in videos on the subjects of using the Internet, staying safe online, and government services available to seniors, including those that can be accessed online. These videos (along with direct links to government services webpages for seniors) will remain online even after the project end date.

The project will seek to raise awareness of the filmed output of the project. This output will be available to a potential audience of 6,000 seniors in Elliot Lake, which has the second-highest concentration of seniors nationally for a population center of its size. The project output will also be available to a wider Internet audience outside of Elliot Lake (which can't be estimated).

The project will provide seniors with necessary new skills to navigate the new realities of COVID-19, and will allow them to access government services, with emphasis on those that are available online. It will serve to prevent elder abuse and fraud online, so as to reduce crimes and harms against seniors.

It will also provide opportunities for seniors (the Golden Guides) to volunteer in their community and thereby reduce isolation for both volunteers and participants, which should contribute to their mental well-being. The project will also bring together various generations (as high school students will be encouraged to serve among the non-senior volunteers as mentors and film crew).

All project activities will respect social distancing protocols in order to keep staff, volunteers and participants safe. Activities will take place online for the most part. Where in-person activities are required, they will take place in gatherings of no more than five persons (or whatever number public health guidelines stipulate).

The objectives of the Golden Guides Project included the following:

Promoting volunteerism among seniors and other generations – Seniors and non-seniors will have the opportunity to participate as volunteers providing guidance to seniors who are unfamiliar with the Internet and the availability of online government services.

Engaging seniors in the community through the mentoring of others – Senior volunteers, called “Golden Guides” will mentor their peers in the use of the Internet, in keeping safe online, and in accessing government programs and services, particularly those available online.

Expanding awareness of elder abuse, including financial abuse – The project will highlight elder abuse in the form of Cybercrime and aims to equip seniors who are new to the Internet with knowledge to help them recognize cyber threats and understand how to avoid becoming a victim of Cybercrime.

Supporting the social participation and inclusion of seniors – The project will allow both the Golden Guides (senior volunteers) and their peers to engage with each other and younger generations, mostly online, and where necessary, in person, thereby promoting social participation and inclusion of seniors.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Duration: Execution: Aug 2020, to Nov 30, 2020; Closure Letter from Funder: March 30, 2021

Location: Elliot Lake

Funding Source: Canadian Red Cross – COVID-19 Emergency Support for Community Organizations Fund

The project provided 213 vulnerable seniors with food security support, with distribution conducted under strict COVID-19 protocols. DiversityCanada established partnerships with the City of Elliot Lake, the ELNOS Corporation, the Lions Club, the Masonic Lodge, the Order of the Eastern Star, and local groceries to deliver this aspect of the project. The project was highly oversubscribed, receiving close to 800 applications.

The project also saw the revamping and relaunch of GoldenVoices.com with expanded capacity to serve as a platform for seniors to share their views and opinions and connect with their peers. The site has over 500 active members as many of the applicants for the food security support indicated they wanted to have an account on the website.

While all activities of the project were completed by November 30, 2020, the website developers made themselves available to respond to any issues that became known through real-world use of the online platform at no extra cost. The Red Cross said it could accommodate such activities through an extension of the project end date. After submitting a final report, we received the project Closure Letter as of March 30, 2021.

Subsequently, in early July, DiversityCanada received an additional disbursement in recognition of successfully completing the Project undertaken to support those who are most vulnerable to the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19, and in recognition of the substantial indirect costs incurred to deliver the project. These additional funds have been contributing to the maintenance of legacy resources from the project.

ROUND 2: COVID-19 EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Status: Not approved

Proposed Duration: January to February 2021

Location: Elliot Lake

Funding Source: Canadian Red Cross – COVID-19 Emergency Support for Community Organizations Fund

As DiversityCanada had received nearly four times the request for support from seniors than the original project had the capacity to provide, we submitted a proposal to address this unmet need when a second call for proposals was made by the COVID-19 Emergency Support program. This, unfortunately, was not approved for funding. The published list of Round 2 projects revealed that only a handful of organizations funded in the first round received grants again in the second round, and their second-round projects seemed to target different populations than did their first. With the funding agencies appearing to prioritize directing funds to geographic areas and communities not reached in the

first round, our second application could hardly compete. Although this outcome was received with much disappointment when related to our community, it was entirely understandable.

SUPPORTING YOUTH

CANADA SUMMER JOBS

Project I

Duration: October 19, 2020, to February 09, 2021

Location: Algoma District

Funding Source: Services Canada – Employment and Social Development Canada

Project II

Duration: April 26, 2021, to February 26, 2022

Location: Algoma District

Funding Source: Services Canada – Employment and Social Development Canada

Due to COVID-19, work that would typically have been conducted during the summer could not be undertaken during that time frame.

Approval was therefore granted by the Federal government for the summer job projects to take place outside of the traditional summer school break. For CSJ Project I, the project period ran from October 2020, to February 2021; and for CSJ Project II, activities were approved to occur from April 26, 2021, to February 26, 2022.

The one position available for CSJ I was filled by a high school student. For CSJ II, one position was filled by a high school student and the other by a college graduate. All youth were/are working from home to support the activities related to the project under the COVID-19 Emergency Support for Community Organizations Fund.

The CSJ program provides a wage subsidy and the entire budget is devoted to paying wages and covering mandatory employment-related costs.

The original approved budget covered wages under the then-existent Ontario minimum wage rate. However, the minimum wage rate was subsequently increased. The Federal government has committed to cover the added expenses for the increase, up to the rate due to adult workers working on-site.

However, there are additional expenses that the Federal funding does not to cover. Ontario legislation requires that employees working from home receive a higher wage than on-site workers. These extra costs (of a few hundred dollars) were/are covered through the funding from the COVID-19 Emergency Support for Community Organizations Fund.

It is fortunate that the Emergency Support funds were available as the COVID-19 restrictions prevented DiversityCanada from organizing any large community events; we had previously depended on such occasions to raise funds to cover costs not covered by grants.

SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY CANDIDATES

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

DiversityCanada continues to engage in the following through its own resources:

Workforce projects

- Providing career information to help equity job seekers become job-ready and act as a bridge to link job seekers with equal opportunity employers
- Operating DiversityCanada.com, which features a job search engine for equal opportunity offerings by Canadian employers, as well as an online career handbook to help candidates develop job search skills

WAGE SUBSIDY AND FUTURE PLANS

Under the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program, DiversityCanada was slated to received support for 2021. At the end of 2021, this support was contemplated to be dedicated to hiring personnel in 2022 to extend our work in support of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.
