Older Voluntarism and Rural Community Sustainability: A Case Study of a Volunteer-based Rural Library

A Thesis Submitted to Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Science

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Abstract

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With regards to building knowledge about rural aging, there is a gap in understanding of the diversity of older rural people’s experiences and the interaction between older rural people and the development trajectories of aging rural communities. One way to examine these experiences and interactions is through voluntarism; the activities of volunteers and voluntary organizations, which are pivotal for supporting aging in place in often-underserviced rural communities. To address this gap, this thesis features a community-based case study with a volunteer-based rural library in Ontario, Canada and was aimed at understanding the experiences of older library volunteers, examining the challenges of a rural library volunteer program and exploring how they contribute to rural community sustainability. Through surveys (n=87), interviews (n=48) and focus groups (n=6) with library volunteers, staff, board members and community leaders the findings demonstrate how older voluntarism is felt through the lived experiences of individual volunteers, poses interpersonal, operational and structural challenges, and can potentially contribute to the sustainability of rural communities. The thesis contributes to our understanding of the rural, older voluntarism and provides recommendations for ways to sustain library volunteer programs.

Keywords: Voluntarism, rural aging, sustainability, rural library, community-based research, case study, Canada
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“It’s not just about books. It’s everything else that we give to the community.”

Selwyn Public Library volunteer

Population aging has become a key process of change in the 21st century, predominately in small towns and rural regions around the world (Scharf et al., 2016). With regards to building knowledge about aging in rural areas, there is a call for a greater understanding of the diversity of older rural people’s experiences and the interaction between older people and the development trajectories of aging rural communities (Keating et al., 2011). One way to understand these experiences and interactions is through voluntarism; that is, the role and activities of volunteers and voluntary organizations (Skinner, 2014).

As aging rural communities continue to develop, there becomes an increasing demand for services catered towards older adults and it often falls on the voluntary sector to deliver these services within rural communities (Hanlon et al., 2014). With the voluntary sector playing a pivotal role in coping with the needs of aging rural communities, voluntarism can be seen as a means to achieve positive community sustainability, as the interactions with the individuals and communities alike help to facilitate age-friendly communities and services (Joseph & Skinner, 2012).
1.1 Research problem

While rural areas are typically under-researched, they can serve as critical foundations for understanding the diverse and complex experiences of aging (Keating et al., 2011). Within the rural context, voluntarism plays a pivotal role in understanding these complex experiences of aging and in recognizing how rural communities cope with change (Joseph & Skinner, 2012). ‘Voluntarism’ refers to the activities of volunteers and voluntary organizations who are involved in providing services, but are not part of the state, are not for profit and have a significant degree of volunteering (Milligan & Conradson, 2006). The ‘voluntary sector’ includes non-profit and voluntary organizations, community groups and individual volunteers who are involved in a variety of activities, such as library services, the basis of the thesis. In Canada and internationally, of particular concern is the aging of the volunteer base in rural communities and the challenges older voluntarism poses for the sustainability of aging rural communities (see contributions to Skinner & Hanlon, 2016). ‘Older voluntarism’ is conceived here as the activities of individual volunteers who are in later life, normally 65 years and older, and voluntary organizations who feature an older volunteer base and/or provide services and supports in aging communities. Examining the role of older voluntarism allows for an insight into its transformative potential as it acts as a pathway for integration between older people and aging places, which in turn, creates the potential for positive community sustainability (Skinner et al., 2016).
1.2 Research goal and objectives

The goal of the thesis is to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability of aging rural communities. Through a case study of a volunteer-based library in an aging rural community, the specific research objectives are to:

1. Understand the experiences of older library volunteers;
2. Examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program;
3. Explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability.

These research objectives are pursued across three different scales of inquiry—individual, program and community—within the study site of the Selwyn Public Library in rural Ontario, Canada. Focusing on the under-researched context of public libraries, the case provides a foundation for building a more thorough understanding of the role of voluntarism as it relates to older rural people and their aging rural communities. Coupled with the intellectual goal of the thesis is the applied goal of contributing to a community-university partnership between the Selwyn Public Library and Trent University.

1.3 Conceptual foundations

In order to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability of aging rural communities, the thesis draws together key debates and concepts related to aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability as foundations for the research. Understanding these concepts provides context for the findings and allows for a deeper understanding of how these ideas intersect in the framework of rural communities.
Rural communities are dynamic and complex. They feature rapidly aging populations due to the out-migration of younger cohorts of residents and the in-migration of urban retirees, coupled with rural residents aging in place (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993). In order to keep rural communities “good places to grow old” (Keating, 2008 p.1), they rely upon voluntarism (the role and activities of volunteers and voluntary organizations) to ensure services run in order to cater to their aging population and to support them aging in place (Hanlon et al., 2016).

Voluntarism also offers a window through which to view the dynamics and complexities of rural areas, and the experiences of aging in rural communities. The thesis uses older voluntarism in this capacity, as it uses it as a way in which to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, but also to examine how older library volunteers and volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. Drawing upon the work by Skinner and Winterton (2018) regarding contested spaces of rural aging, the thesis’ concluding discussion presents contested spaces of older voluntarism as a means to more thoroughly understand the complex relationship between aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability. It does so by examining the conflicts that arise at the individual, program and community level that shape the individual experiences of voluntarism, the challenges of sustaining rural voluntarism and how volunteers contribute to rural community sustainability.

1.4 Broad approach to research

The thesis took a community-based research approach to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability of aging rural communities. It was undertaken as part of a collaborative partnership between the Corporation of the
Township of Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors and the Trent Centre for Aging and Society, led by Dr. Mark Skinner, Trent University Professor and Canada Research Chair in Rural Aging, Health and Social Care, in order to create a research project that was informed by the organization in order to have the ability to implement change. The partnership originated due to the uncertainty expressed by a past board member about the sustainability of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program. The board member grew concerned due to the age and abilities of the current volunteers and wanted to study ways in which to sustain the program and ensure the continued success of the library.

1.4.1 Introduction to case study

The research featured a case study of the Selwyn Public Library. Unique within the provincial library system, which is mostly staff based, (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2016), the library is a rural, volunteer-based library (174 volunteers), catering to the residents of the three communities of Selwyn Township, Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield. Incorporated in 2001, and comprising of small towns, villages and disposed rural settlements, established by colonial settlers in the early 1800s, Selwyn Township is typical of a rural community in Canada, as it features a rapidly aging population. Peterborough County, in which Selwyn Township resides (see Figure 1.1) features one of Canada’s most rapidly aging rural population, with one-fifth of residents over the age of 65 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Using Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library as the case study allowed the thesis to explore the nature of older voluntarism in aging rural communities by understanding the experiences of older library volunteers, the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and how library
volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability.

(adapted from Wikipedia)

**Figure 1.1 Map of Ontario, indicating Peterborough County**

1.5 Thesis organization

The remainder of the thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 introduces and discusses the theoretical and conceptual approaches that inform the research. It discusses aging in place, voluntarism and rural community sustainability in order to provide a foundation for understanding the transformative process voluntarism has on aging individuals and rural communities. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach to the research and the methods used to carry out the case study. It details the community-
based research approach while describing the community-university partnership that helped to inform the research design. Chapter 4 provides context of the case study site and the library volunteer program. It situates rural, Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library in the context of rural community change and provides descriptive findings from the survey results that present a demographic profile of the research participants. Chapter 5 outlines the experiences of older library volunteers, the challenges of sustaining rural library volunteer programs and how library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. It also sheds light on the narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability interwoven throughout the findings. The concluding chapter reflects upon the research to provide a discussion on the narratives within the thesis and the emergent threads of inquiry regarding older voluntarism. It also reflects upon the limitations and future research directions to be taken to expand the understanding of the role of older voluntarism in aging rural communities.
Chapter 2

Aging in Place, Voluntarism and Rural Community Sustainability

In scholarship on aging and community sustainability, the rural context is generally under-researched; however, it serves as a critical window for understanding diverse and complex experiences of aging. The rural context boasts a very dynamic landscape, as it has seen cycles of change that have led to both opportunities and challenges alike. This chapter seeks to examine these cycles of change, to demonstrate how they have attributed to an aging population within rural communities, and to use voluntarism as a window in which to view the experiences of aging in rural communities and how voluntarism and aging communities become fundamental processes of positive and sustainable community development.

Drawing upon rural studies, geographical gerontology and voluntary sector research, the chapter is structured in a way to showcase the narrative and interconnectedness between changing rural communities, rural aging, the evolving role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability. It begins by providing an examination of rural communities and the local and global changes that attribute to its rapidly aging population. The chapter then discusses the process of rural aging and the context of aging in place by reviewing the challenges facing rural communities and providing an understanding of what it means to grow old in them. The chapter then forms a connection between aging rural communities and voluntarism, and how voluntarism and voluntary
sector activities are critical in delivering support and services to older residents aging in place.

To understand the transformative role of voluntarism, the chapter then discusses rural community sustainability. It presents the four pillars of sustainability used to explore the concept and demonstrates the way in which voluntarism is a pathway for integration for older people and aging places. The chapter then discusses the importance of place-based approaches and community-based research and concludes with an avenue for looking forward at the relationship between changing rural communities, rural aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability by offering insight into further research opportunities that help round out the key themes and fill in the gaps.

2.1 Changing rural communities

‘Rural’ is a complex term. An idyllic view of the rural context may spark traditional, countryside environment imagery. However ideal the imagery, there are many conflicting narratives of rurality that challenge that idyll. Shucksmith and Brown (2016), offer two conflicting narratives that shape the perception of rurality. The first being the pastoralist narrative, where rural areas are repositories of cultural values, with the second being the modernist narrative, where rural is seen as a backwards environment in need of transformation and development to allow for the residents to have modern services. Whatever the narrative, rural communities are areas that have undergone and are still undergoing considerable amounts of change.

Historically, rural communities were focused primarily on agricultural production and resource extraction. However, two trends at the regional level began to emerge that
effected rural spaces, the expansion of the countryside under the urban influence and the
decoupling of rural communities from their service centre roles in regions of primary
production (Bryant & Joseph, 2001). These trends led to functional shifts in the way rural
livelihood was carried out, as there became increased access to metropolitan areas and an
increased access to information and technology (Bryant & Joseph, 2001). These shifts in
rural livelihood brought on considerable change for rural communities in the 20th and
early 21st centuries. Similar to the narratives of the characteristics of rural settings,
Shucksmith and Brown (2016) introduce six narratives of rural change; agri-centric
change, urban-rural access, competitive economy, rural as place left behind, amenity-
based economy and society-nature interrelationships. Each narrative of rural change
offers a unique understanding of the various transformations underway in rural areas and
demonstrates the diversity amongst rural communities. However, complex the narrative,
at the core, rural societies can be seen as being shaped by the people that live within them
(Argent, 2016). These changes are attributed to social, cultural and economic
relationships within rural settings, such as the change in demographics and living
conditions. Changes also occur on various scales, from the local level such as mobility, to
the global level such as modernization, industrialization and urbanization (Argent, 2016).

To provide additional understanding of the changes within rural communities,
academics point to both short and long-term cycles of change that shaped rural areas
are categorized as decline in population due to both migration trends and settlement
patterns (Joseph & Skinner, 2012). One factor attributing to these changes is technology.
In one way, rural depopulation was driven by successive innovation in production and
transportation technologies (Skinner & Joseph, 2007). Due to the innovation of such transportation technologies, rural areas began to witness the consolidation of services away from villages and smaller towns into larger urban centres (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005). The increase of mobility in this sense, where there was a new need to travel outside of rural areas to access services and resources, also led to smaller rural services risking closure, which resulted in loss of local jobs as well as local identity (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005).

Mobility in a different sense, has also led to changes within rural areas. Mobility, in the form of migration, affected population size and makeup in many rural communities (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993; Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005; Skinner & Hanlon, 2016; Scharf et al., 2016). Common within rural communities is the out-migration of the younger cohort of residents to seek employment and education opportunities in larger urban centres (Bryant & Joseph, 2001). In contrast, in-migration of ex-urban migrants to the countryside is common as well. This form of migration is typically done post-retirement, and is amenity-driven, as retirees from urban areas seek the natural features offered by rural settings. Lastly, is the cohort of residents remaining in rural areas and choosing to age in place (Bryant & Joseph, 2001).

Accompanying the long-term cycles of change discussed above, are short-term cycles of change within rural communities. In addition to technology and mobility, short-term cycles of change are characterized as the economic and social restructuring of the welfare state (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005). According to Joseph and Cloutier-Fisher (2005), restructuring “provided a platform for government downsizing and centralisation, rationalisation and privatisation of services as a means of spurring flagging economies
and reducing deficits” (p.134). This level of restructuring changed the rules under which people experienced rural society (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). These short-term cycles of change were felt across all communities but felt predominately in rural settings, where there was a heavy reliance on public sector investment to support primary industry and rural services (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005). Under the health service umbrella, restructuring created gaps in service delivery, such as deficiencies in transportation, mental health services, palliative care and respite care (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005).

In response to the long-term cycles of change, namely the migration patterns of residents into rural areas, the short-term cycles of change presented a series of challenges, as the shift in rural social policy began to promote healthy aging and aging in place as the older population of rural communities rapidly began to increase (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005; Joseph & Skinner, 2012).

2.2 Rural aging and aging in place

As mentioned in the previous section, rural communities are rapidly aging (Keating & Phillips, 2008). ‘Elderly migration’ into rural communities is adding to the number of older residents already choosing to age in place and the out-migration of the younger cohort of residents are creating a more concentrated demographic of older people in rural areas (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993). These various migration patterns make up three scenarios of aging compositions for rural areas. The accumulation scenario is characterized by net out-migration of young and net in-migration of old, the congregation scenario shows net in-migration of old and low levels of net in-migration of young, and lastly, the re-composition scenario is characterized by net out-migration of young and aging in place of old (Hanlon et al., 2016).
Along with migration patterns, Scharf et al. (2016) identified three factors associated with the growing interest in rural aging research; the environmental context of aging has become a central theme in social gerontology, environmental experiences are being shaped by globalisation (migration and mobility, new information and communication technologies, welfare state retrenchment), and that demographic aging intersects with other long-standing challenges facing declining and under-serviced rural communities such as how older residents contribute to resolving those challenges.

As mentioned in the previous section, due to the restructuring of the welfare state, an increasing challenge of rural communities is to provide health and social services to support their older residents choosing to age in place. This challenge speaks to what Joseph and Cloutier-Fisher (2005) call a double jeopardy, where “vulnerable older people are living in vulnerable rural areas” (p.137). In this context, the vulnerability of rural communities is due to the lack of community services, lack of transportation and lack of access to specialized care. The vulnerability of the older rural residents is due to the likelihood of ill-health, low income levels, impaired mobility, lack of social supports and social and geographical isolation (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005). In rural communities, the lack of service and support delivery is across the continuum of health care. In formal care settings, as discussed above, the welfare state restructuring in rural areas has led to the closure of many local community services aimed at helping people age in place. In informal care and support settings, the reliance is now on family, friends and neighbours to provide those forms of care (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993; Joseph & Skinner, 2012). This reliance away from formal care settings proves to be difficult for in-migrants to rural communities who left their families behind in urban centres and may not be
familiar with their neighbours (Joseph & Skinner, 2012). However, it also proves to be difficult for long-term residents aging in place as well, as the out-migration of younger cohorts sees younger families no longer living in proximity to their older family members; thus, not being as frequently accessible and available to provide in-home care and support (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993; Joseph & Skinner, 2012). Whatever the challenge may be, it is central to note the importance of ‘place’ in healthy aging and what aging in place can provide to the older person (Wiles et al., 2012). Allowing older residents to remain in their communities and in their homes as they age promotes personal well-being, offers consistency, meaning, control and security to their lives, helps maintain independence, helps facilitate adjustments to life/care and helps to maintain positive self-image and identity (Winterton & Warburton, 2012).

Another important factor attributing to rural aging is the diversity of aging in these contexts and the importance surrounding understanding and valuing these experiences, as there is no singular way to look at rural aging. Keating and Phillips (2008) discuss the role of human ecology as a lens through which to view rural aging, by explaining, at the surface, to understand the diversity, it requires an expanded consideration of aging in various contexts. In the context of rural, older people live in interaction with both the physical and social environments in which they live. Therefore, older people help to shape their own experience of aging by interacting with their own physical and social environment.

One example of a way in which older people can shape their own experience of aging in rural communities is through their relationship with access to power and resources. Skinner and Winterton (2018) highlight the intersection of rural citizenship
and population aging that create ‘contested spaces of rural aging.’ These areas of contestation are “geographical locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources/access to power” (p.16). In the rural context, these conflicts emerge over the negotiation over rural citizenship, which encompasses the rights and entitlements to the symbolic, geographic and social spaces that make up rural space (Skinner & Winterton, 2018).

To understand this in the context of rural aging, Skinner and Winterton (2018) offer five processes and outcomes that give rise to these contested spaces.

1. Contested spaces of rural aging are created because of competing policies and practices relating to healthy aging and rural governmentality, and changing rural demographics;
2. Contested spaces of rural aging emerge over competing discourses over the rights to rural symbolic, political and cultural space in older age;
3. Contested spaces of rural aging emerge over competing discourses relating to the right to age in place within rural communities;
4. Contested spaces of rural aging are created through active and passive interactions between diverse older adults, wider community members and rural organizations and policy;
5. Contested rural spaces can both create and reproduce inequality within rural communities for older adults

In identifying these complex process and outcomes of contested spaces of rural aging, Skinner and Winterton (2018) advocate for an approach to develop contextualized studies
of rural aging spaces that account for the diversity and complexity of rural areas and the people aging within them. They present a framework that offers guiding questions for rural aging research, policy and practice that allows for a further understanding of the diversity. Questions such as ‘how is the perceived right to age in place within rural contexts contextualized among different groups of rural older adults and within different communities?’, ‘What forms of contestation within rural aging spaces produce positive outcomes for rural older adults and communities and which generate negative outcomes for specific groups?’, and ‘Which characteristics of contested spaces of rural aging contribute to enhanced agency along older rural populations?’ allow for a deeper understanding of the diversity of experiences of aging in rural communities.

The concept of ‘contested spaces of rural aging’ provides the thesis with a foundational framework in which it situates an expanded view of contestation, ‘contested spaces of older voluntarism’. The thesis builds upon the work of Skinner and Winterton (2018) by demonstrating how contested spaces are also formed at the intersection of aging and spaces of voluntarism, which dispute the right and responsibility to volunteer, at the individual, volunteer program and community level.

The discussion in the above section has outlined challenges of aging rural communities in relation to providing services and support to their older residents, as well as noted the importance of understanding the diversity in which older people experience aging in rural communities. A window through which to view these experiences of aging is through voluntarism and voluntary sector activities. These activities also act as a foundation for positive rural community development and sustainability by providing
important community services, to fill in gaps created by the restructuring of the welfare state-a concept this chapter will discuss in length in the proceeding section.

2.3 The changing role of voluntarism

As mentioned in the previous section, voluntarism, or the activities of voluntary sector organizations and volunteers done willingly, without expectation of monetary gain (Hanlon et al., 2016), is one way in which rural communities respond to the changing roles and responsibilities surrounding the provision of health and social support services. As stated by Joseph and Skinner (2012), voluntarism is a “local, community response to the changing roles and responsibilities of the state and civil society whereby NPOs, community groups, family members and individual volunteers take on a more central role in meeting the needs of people aging in place” (p. 381). By strengthening local capacity to respond to the social as well as the economic changes, voluntarism can help to retain local services that support residents to age in place (Skinner et al., 2014). Voluntarism is a critical process at the intersection of the large and short-term cycles of change mentioned above, where these specific cycles of change effect the provision of health and social care in rural communities (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). It can be understood as a mechanism and mediator of the local dynamics of change in care provisioning system and communities.

The changing dynamics of voluntarism began to emerge when change (migration, mobility, restructuring) started to be felt in rural communities (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). The provision of health services was being carried out by community groups and informal caregiving was placed on the shoulders of family members and individual volunteers. With this increase in responsibility came the expectation that voluntary sector
providers could help overcome the challenges of sustaining rural health and social community services, thus, aiding in sustaining rural communities (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). To further understand the role of the voluntary sector organization within rural communities, Skinner and Joseph (2011) outline the local dynamics, or the interactions among various voluntary service providers. They first discuss voluntarism as a barometer of change, where the increased demand for voluntarism is a direct manifestation of change in health and social care systems. The high demand for new forms of care delivery increased the downloading of care responsibilities to voluntary sector organizations and individual volunteers. The increase in responsibilities, at times, exceeds the capacity and abilities of rural communities and their volunteers, which increases the risk of burnout and feelings of burden and guilt. Secondly, voluntarism is viewed as a mechanism of adjustment. In this view, voluntarism is a mediator of restructuring at the local level, as there is an expectation of voluntary organizations, community groups, family members and individual volunteers at facilitating adjustments to change within their local communities. In rural communities, voluntary sector organizations begin to recruit older residents to accommodate for the high dependence on rural voluntary sector organizations and the small pool of younger residents willing to volunteer. With voluntarism as a service delivery agent, it helps to maintain the integrity of communities and the independence of its aging residents, alike (Skinner & Joseph, 2011). Lastly, Skinner and Joseph (2011) discuss voluntarism as a space of resistance, as it is seen as working in active opposition to policies.

To illustrate an example of the role of voluntarism, Skinner (2014) conducted a case study of Community Care Peterborough, a non-profit community support
organization, to understand how this voluntary sector organization and its volunteers are coping with the increased reliance on voluntarism to meet the needs of Peterborough’s aging population. Community Care is an organization in Peterborough with 800 volunteers who participate in various community support service activities such as friendly visiting, health and wellness clinics, meal programmes and transportation services. One finding from the case study suggests that there is an importance of place within voluntary sector organizations. In the case of Community Care Peterborough, there was a general lack of professional staff and volunteers, which poses a constraint on service delivery. This lack of personnel is linked to the general lack of local human resources available to Community Care as they are dependent upon individual’s personal decisions to work, live and grow old in Peterborough, all while wanting to participate in voluntary sector activities. A second finding from Skinner (2014) was there was a place-embeddedness to volunteering for Community Care Peterborough, as volunteers enjoyed the community aspect to volunteering and felt they were contributing to their local communities.

With voluntarism as a mediator of change, it is important to understand what makes voluntarism in a rural context so dynamic and integral. Rozanova et al. (2008) discuss why rural communities are good places to participate in voluntary activities by outlining that it is easy to develop connections due to smaller community dynamics and more stable populations, as rural residents seem to grow up and grow old together within the same community. However, a critical look at rural landscapes can also reveal their exclusionary characteristics. Exclusion in rural areas can come in the form of social, material resources and service exclusion and can occur through older residents not being
familiar with their neighbours, especially if new migrants, older residents may not be financially stable enough to participate in voluntary activities and lack of public transportation may make it difficult for some older residents to access voluntary sector activities (Rozanova et al., 2008). Rozanova et al. (2008) also notes the influence of rural community characteristics on social participation of older adults. The first characteristic is the remoteness from an urban centre. It is here where it becomes the responsibility of voluntary sector organizations to fill in for missing services if the rural area is located at a distance from an urban centre. The second characteristic is the population density of the rural area. Less dense populations may not be able to provide critical public services to their community such as firefighting, postal services, health care and public transportation. A less dense area also tends to have fewer formal voluntary sector organizations due to low levels of membership and/or high overhead costs associations. In rural areas with a low population density, volunteers tend to be concentrated in religious affiliated groups, service clubs, sports organizations, school groups, and neighbourhood and civic organizations. Due to the out-migration of younger residents, the changing population size of rural areas can influence social participation within rural communities. Due to this migration, rural areas lose membership in their voluntary organizations. As well, as previously mentioned, voluntary sector organizations take on the role of filling in gaps in services and infrastructure due to local municipalities not being able to keep pace with the population influx of older migrants into these areas. However challenging keeping up with the aging population may be, the population of older adults creates opportunities for social participation in rural areas as they create a volunteer pool of retired residents with a variety of skills and experiences. As well,
Rozanova et al. (2008) note that people in mid to late life are more likely to make substantial contributions to their community and use voluntarism as a means to make these contributions. The proportion of highly educated rural residents also have an impact on social participation as they tend to be more aware of the needs to people in their communities and social networks, and like the pool of retired volunteers, educated residents also provide a broad skill set to use in voluntary organizations.

Along with the preceding rural characteristics influencing social participation within voluntary organizations, Joseph and Martin-Matthews (1993) note that migration patterns also have an effect on the level of participation in rural voluntarism, as the migration of people in and out of rural areas can limit the involvement with voluntary organizations. Migrants moving into rural areas, who often have higher socio-economic status, may affect voluntarism as those needing the services delivered by voluntary organizations are dominated by the residents choosing to age in place. This divide between new migrants and long-term residents can create and/or increase already developed polarization between the two resident groups, as one is seen to age successfully in rural areas, and the other heavily relying on the service delivery of voluntary sector organizations. Along with the migration patterns into rural areas, migration out of rural areas in winter months can affect voluntarism. Seasonal migration, or ‘snowbirds’ leaving cooler climates in the winter to find warmer climates in the south is an activity taken on by young, healthy and affluent older people. Therefore, in winter months, that leaves older, frail and less affluent people to take on more of the responsibility of voluntary sector activities, in a season where winter puts added pressure on service delivery in rural areas (Joseph & Martin-Matthews, 1993).
Up until this point, this chapter has discussed how voluntarism aids in the sustainability of rural community by providing services to the community necessary to meet the needs of its older population who wish to age in place. Along with this, however, it is important to note the implications of volunteering on the older individual who is participating in voluntary activities. As noted by Warburton (2015) older people choose to volunteer in ways that are meaningful to them. Other motivations also include the opportunity to help others, to build or maintain social networks, to do something worthwhile and to provide personal satisfaction. Along with personal motivations, volunteering in later life is linked to productive aging, as there is a new attention to the positive contributions of older people, rather than seeing them as burdens to society. This assumes that the skills, expertise and experience of older people are currently under-utilized, and thus, volunteering is a way in which to use and capitalize on these skill sets (Warburton, 2015). Volunteering can also be linked to healthy aging, as it is seen as an avenue to maintain better health in later life. Benefits include reduced mortality, higher life satisfaction, improved psychological health, less depression and improved functioning levels. Paired with these benefits, volunteering is also used as a role replacement in later life by providing a sense of purpose and gives life meaning after retirement. This purpose is increasingly important in marginalized population, such as people with different cultural backgrounds and women who had limited involvement in paid work previously in their life (Warburton, 2015).

Volunteering in later life can also counter the arguments made earlier in the chapter around social exclusion by fostering inclusion of older people in rural communities. As noted by Warburton (2015), voluntarism is seen as “a process to ensure
that everyone, regardless of their life experiences or circumstances, can achieve their potential in life” (p. 349). In rural areas, older people are at high risk of social isolation/exclusion due to various life course factors such as retirement, widowhood and ageism. However, by participating in voluntary activities, older adults can build their social networks, connect with their community, thus, limiting their risk of becoming isolated.

With the rural voluntary sector playing a pivotal role in sustaining rural communities by mediating change, it is important to note that there is also increasing uncertainty surrounding the voluntary sector itself. Ryser and Halseth (2014) demonstrate some barriers that can impede the renewal of the rural voluntary sector. One barrier is attitude. This constitutes the readiness to change within voluntary sector organizations. Both the need and the capacity to change is integral for the renewal and sustainability of voluntary sector organizations. Operational barriers to renewal include the lack of attention to renewing roles, mandates, policies, procedures and tools. Communication barriers refer to disrupted and infrequent communication strategies due to the large workload and limited human resources commonly found in rural voluntary sector organizations. Financial barriers to renewal and sustainability include the lack of funding provided to rural voluntary sector organizations. Ryser and Halseth (2014) note that larger funding agencies do not understand the rural context and what organizations require to meet the needs of their rural populations. This funding barrier makes it difficult to provide essential services as well as to secure paid staff. Limited human resources provide a barrier to the renewal and sustainability of rural voluntary sector organizations as smaller population sizes offer small pools of volunteers to access skills wanted in grant
applications. Those volunteers who are participating are busy running the day-to-day functions to promote innovation and collaboration within the community. Ryser and Halseth (2014) also discuss infrastructure barriers, primarily outdated technologies, which can impede the renewal of rural voluntary sector organizations. A successful organization requires the most up to date operating systems and connections, and with limited funding, this can be a challenge. Lastly, policy provides a barrier to renewal as policy is used to reduce the level of risk to central governments rather than to provide a more supportive policy environment. It is within the concept of place where these discussions around renewal and sustainability can begin to be debated and change can begin to be implemented.

2.4 Rural community sustainability

Underlying the discussion of changing rural communities, rural aging and voluntarism are concerns for the sustainability of rural communities. As rural communities continue to undergo cycles of change, the sustainability of the social make up of these regions has become of concern to policy makers and community leaders alike. As defined in the Brundtland Report, sustainability refers to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Decades on from this report, sustainability in the context of the thesis refers to meeting the needs of older, rural populations in terms of livelihoods, economies, social service systems and human and natural environments.

With a ‘double jeopardy’ of vulnerable older people living in vulnerable older places (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher 2005), the apprehension rests in how to keep these older residents and aging communities sustained. In addition, the high demand on the voluntary
sector to provide services to rural communities becomes concerning as the reliance on the voluntary sector puts in increased stress on the volunteer and thus can have repercussions on the sustainability of the voluntary sector organization.

In sustainable community development research, there is a gap in the literature that focuses on the rural context. While examining sustainable community development, the rural context is seen as simply ‘not urban’, rather than a complex and dynamic setting with different histories and trajectories of development (Markey, 2012). In the rural context, looking at sustainable forms of development are important in order to address fundamental issues of restructuring and community vitality, as it provides the solution of keeping rural communities viable and livable, as Markey (2012) states, “rural sustainability is rooted in a commitment to livability that may then become a foundation for future viability” (p. 24).

One way to understand sustainable forms of development is through the “four pillars of sustainability”; cultural, social, economic and environmental (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012). Cultural sustainability refers to the cultural vitality of communities, which Choe et al., (2007) describes as “the need to advance development in ways that allows human groups to live together better, without losing their identity and sense of community, without betraying their heritage while improving quality of life” (p. 202). The social sustainability of communities refers to strengthening the sense of community and sense of place, with an emphasis on social equity and justice (Dempsey et al., 2011). This can be done through the promotion of civic participation, localized empowerment and social interaction (Dempsey et al., 2011). Economic sustainability refers to sustaining capital, whether it be natural, human or social (Moldan et al., 2012). Lastly,
environmental sustainability represents both the natural and human environments and sustaining those for future generations (Moldan et al., 2012). These four pillars are compatible and mutually supportive as they can be used in tandem of one another to understand and analyze the entire breadth of sustainable development within rural communities (Boström, 2012). The thesis uses these pillars as themes in which to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability (cultural, social, economic and environmental) of aging rural communities.

Within this field, rural community sustainability has begun to be seen as an outcome of the interactions between older people and aging places. Skinner et al. (2016) discuss a key component missing from debates on rural aging, “a comprehensive understanding of how interactions between older people and place influences both the experiences of individuals and the development trajectories of their communities” (p. 39). Voluntarism is an identified process through which such interactions occur, as outlined in Figure 2.1. This figure illustrates the transformative relationship between older people, aging places and voluntarism; a relationship that this thesis explores in the context of a volunteer based-rural library, older library volunteers and rural community sustainability.

Following Skinner (2014) older people are seen to be both the sources of and solutions to the challenges of aging in place, and voluntarism is used a mediator and process used in which to cope with the challenges. It is the acts of volunteers that help to facilitate successful and healthy aging in place and promote sustainable community development. As well, it is the vitality of rural voluntary sector organizations that act as indicators of community development and their ability to cope with change (Skinner, 2014).
Figure 2.1 Place-based approach to explore the role of older voluntarism in aging rural communities (adapted from Skinner, 2014 p.164).

As defined by Skinner (2014), place is a “mutually constituted site of structure and agency through which broad-scale sociodemographic, economic and environmental changes materialise and from which people experience and transform their outcomes” (p. 162). In the context of this thesis, place is an important concept as it can help to explain how and why voluntarism is manifest quite differently among and within geographical contexts, particular to this case, rural contexts. In research, the need for place-based approaches is key to understanding older voluntarism as a process that shapes and is shaped by the interaction between older people and their communities.

An important aspect within place-based approaches to research is the importance of community, as a focal point for applied research. Place-based research provides a sound foundation for community development and allows communities to respond to changes and crises (Markey et al., 2012). As well, place-based approaches can aid in building community capacity within rural areas. Community capacity can be developed through investments in service provision in the voluntary sector, fostering the recognition
to provide health and support services in a manner that recognizes the realities of rural life, and ensuring participation of community members is at the forefront, as community members need to care enough about their community to give back and keep it viable. In addition to community capacity, place-based approaches can also be beneficial to building social cohesion within communities in the form of the interactions that create partnerships, networks and relationships that are sustained by that interaction (Markey et al., 2012).

An applied aspect of place-based approaches to research which helps showcase the transformative process outlined in Figure 2.1, is community-based research (also called ‘CBR’) (Markey et al., 2010; Halseth et al., 2016). This approach places an emphasis on participation and empowering social change. In the rural context, community-based research is used to investigate the critical issues within context. In the context of aging rural communities, it is used to investigate the ways in which voluntarism is a mediator of change and allowing older people to age in place (Markey et al., 2010). Furthermore, community-based research is important in rural communities due to its flexible and sensitive look on rural dynamics. This approach to rural allows researchers to work with rural areas undergoing dramatic and rapid restructuring and provides an explicit link to the prevalence of place-based development and territorial policy as a response to the restructuring. In addition, conducting community-based research in rural communities helps to bridge any physical separation between rural institutions and rural organizations, it helps to ground the research process in the local community and it provides involvement from the community towards action (Halseth et al., 2016).
2.5 Summary

Using research from rural studies, geographical gerontology and voluntary sector studies, this chapter has discussed the connection between rural communities, aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability and the mutually transformative relationship between them. By examining the changes underway in rural communities, including migration and mobility of older people, the changing demographic of rural communities comes into view, as do the challenges and opportunities posed by an aging population. In a response to the changes underway in rural communities and to the challenges posed by a rapidly aging population, rural communities as seen to often turn to voluntary sector organizations and individual volunteers to meet the needs of the community and to provide the necessary services to keep rural residents aging in place and to keep the communities sustainable. Embedded throughout is the importance of place, thereby making place-based approaches fundamental to building a greater understanding of the role of volunteers in the sustainability of aging rural communities. In addition to place, the four pillars of sustainability and the concepts of community-based research are presented. These notions are embedded throughout the thesis as they provide foundations for the conceptual and methodological frameworks used.

In addition, aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainable are reviewed and positioned in the chapter. Introducing these overarching narratives provides a foundation for the following chapters, as these three concepts are embedded in the remainder of the thesis to aid in the understanding the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of aging rural communities.
In reviewing such concepts and arguments surrounding aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability, gaps in the literature begin to emerge, as do lines of future research that could be taken to add to the breadth of aging rural voluntary studies. One notable gap that this thesis addresses is the lack of community-based research on rural community services. Primarily, research on rural voluntary sector organizations is focused on rural services providing health and social care services (Skinner, 2014) and how the voluntary sector contributes to community economic development (Halseth and Ryser, 2007). However, research on volunteer-based public services, such as rural libraries, provides an insight into the role of volunteers and volunteer organizations in the sustainability of rural communities in a different capacity.

One way to fill this gap is to continue the methodological approach in research by conducting qualitative, community-based case studies. Conducting research in this manner will allow for a continuation of the work promoting community vitality by allowing the communities to be involved in the research; however, it is important to expand the case study focus outside of health and social service delivery and community development to include public services that provide services to the entire rural community.

Informed by the importance of place-based approaches, the thesis features a community-based case study of a volunteer-based rural library, a public service that is integral to the community, to fill in the gap and explore the role of older voluntarism in sustaining aging rural communities. To do so, informed by the three narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability, the thesis
examines the experiences of older library volunteers, the challenges of a library program and the contributions of older library volunteers make to their local community.
Chapter 3
Research Design and Methods

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and methods used in the study of the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of aging rural communities. Firstly, it describes the research framework to provide an overview of the concepts, methodology and methods used in the research. Secondly, the chapter further details the methodology and methods used in the research. It outlines the nature of the community-based partnership, describes the case study site and reports on the methods used to conduct the research. Thirdly, the chapter discusses how the data was collected and analyzed. Lastly, the chapter outlines the organization of findings presented in the following two chapters.

3.1 Research framework

As discussed in Chapter 2, the narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and community sustainability are prevalent themes within scholarship on the rural context. As the literature suggests, aging and voluntarism are mutually transformative concepts, as they are seen as pathways of integration, which contribute to positive rural community sustainability. As shown in Table 3.1, these three concepts act as a framework in which to situate the research.
Table 3.1 Research Design Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Conceptual Framework</th>
<th>Methodological Framework</th>
<th>Research Objectives</th>
<th>Methods, Data &amp; Scale of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of aging rural communities?</td>
<td>Aging in place</td>
<td>Community-based, case study of a volunteer-based library and older library volunteers</td>
<td>Understand the experiences of older library volunteers</td>
<td>Survey administered to library volunteers and board members as well as interviews with participating volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The changing role of voluntarism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with a volunteer-based library and older library volunteers</td>
<td>Examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program</td>
<td>Interviews with library volunteers, staff members, members of the Board of Directors and township stakeholders. Focus groups with selected participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Community Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer program contribute to rural community sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in Table 3.1, the research design is linked through these conceptual frameworks. Stemming from the overall research question of, what is the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of aging rural communities, the thesis uses aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability as concepts that informed the rest of the research.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a rapidly aging population and the importance of voluntarism for service delivery are characteristics of rural communities. Using these concepts, the thesis undertook a community-based approach to the research in order to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the rural communities of Selwyn Township. Additionally, Chapter 2 outlines the role older voluntarism has in the sustainability of rural communities, as they fill in service gaps in order to deliver services to the residents in order to keep residents aging in place. Using this concept of rural community sustainability, the thesis conducted a case study of the Selwyn Public Library and its volunteers in order to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and to explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. In addition to the intellectual goals, the thesis has the applied goal of reporting back to the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors on these concepts and to be able to provide recommendations on how to sustain the volunteer program. The following section will outline in detail the methodology undertaken and the methods used in the research.
3.2 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used within the research. It will begin by discussing the community-based research approach undertaken, which outlines the importance of community-based research and how working collaboratively with a community organization informed the research. It will then describe in detail the partnership with the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors and Trent University, and describe Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library in order to showcase the uniqueness of the volunteer model they utilize. The section will then discuss the case study of the Selwyn Public Library and their volunteer program and will end with a discussion of the research ethics protocol undertaken.

3.2.1 Community-based research

The thesis took a community-based research approach, as it worked with the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors in order to produce a research project that suits their needs and will help implement change for them as a community organization. As defined by Halseth et al. (2016), community-based research is research that is conducted by, for or with community members. In addition, they describe the goal of community-based research as producing new knowledge that can support change in communities.

As Halseth et al. (2016) describe, community-based research involves partnerships with communities at various levels of engagement. These partnerships are mutually beneficial for researcher and community as firstly, they can help to improve the credibility, validity and usability of the data and, secondly, the results from community-
based research can produce direct community benefits as it involves the community in the production of knowledge.

The thesis was developed as part of a collaborative partnership between the Corporation of the Township of Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors and the Trent Centre for Aging and Society, led by Dr. Mark Skinner, Trent University Professor and Canada Research Chair in Rural Aging, Health and Social Care. The idea for the project originated in 2015 when a member of the library board at the time, approached Dr. Skinner after hearing him give a public lecture in Selwyn Township on rural aging and voluntarism, to inquire about conducting a community-based research project with the Selwyn Public Library. The board member was concerned regarding the sustainability of the volunteer program at the library, as many of the long-term volunteers were aging into their 80s and they feared what would happen operationally, structurally and economically when they were no longer able to commit to volunteering. After writing a community-university collaborative proposal titled, *Sustaining Volunteer Involvement: Aging Volunteers and the Selwyn Public Library*, which included topics of interest such as the sustainability of the volunteer program and the desire to keep local seniors engaged in their community, the proposal was adapted into a thesis project by the researcher in 2016 as part of the Masters of Arts in Sustainability Studies program.

Through open communication via e-mails, as well as invited meetings, the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors were consulted throughout the conception of the research, as shown in Table 3.2. Consultations were held regarding the research design and the adaptation of the objectives of the original proposal into M.A. thesis objectives.
In addition, the board was actively involved in the conception, design and review of the research instruments and the dissemination of the findings.

**Table 3.2 Timeline of community-based partnership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Researcher recruited to take on community-university research proposal “Sustaining Volunteer Involvement: Aging Volunteers and the Selwyn Public Library”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>Initial meeting with Selwyn Public Library board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sign partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss research details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Presentation of research proposal to Selwyn Public Library board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review of research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review of research instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Attended Selwyn Public Library volunteer appreciation dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presented project to volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distributed survey packages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Progress presentation for Selwyn Public Library board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Research update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presentation of preliminary findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Thesis oral defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Community report presented to Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors, staff and volunteers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.2 Case study

As discussed in the previous section, this thesis took a community-based research approach, using an on-going collaborative partnership between the Corporation of the Township of Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors and the Trent Centre for Aging and Society. Through the community-based approach, the thesis conducted a case study of the Selwyn Public Library in order to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the
sustainability of aging rural communities., Flyberg (2018) defines a case study as an intensive analysis of an individual unit, which allows for the research to present detail, richness, completeness and depth of the individual unit of study. To complement this definition, Baxter (2016) adds the element of studying a particular phenomenon of the individual unit, that allows for the study of the contextual influences on and explanations of the phenomenon. In practice, the thesis conducted a case study of the Selwyn Public Library and looked particularly at the phenomenon of older voluntarism within the library and in relation to the sustainability of the communities of Selwyn Township.

Selwyn Township is located within the broader geographical region of Peterborough County which features one of Canada’s most rapidly aging rural population, with 1 in 5 residents over the age of 65 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Located one hour northeast of Toronto, Ontario (pop. 5.5 million), the largest metropolitan region in Canada, Peterborough County features a population of 57,000, and is comprised of eight rural townships as well as two First Nations communities (Nicol et al., 2009), as shown in Figure 3.1.

The Township of Selwyn, adjacent to the City of Peterborough, is the most populated municipality in Peterborough County. Brought together by two amalgamations in 1998 and 2001, the Township of Smith, the Township of Ennismore and the Village of Lakefield became the Township of Selwyn in 2013 (Township of Selwyn, 2014).

Located within Selwyn Township, the Selwyn Public Library is a community organization that holds a long-standing position within the three communities of the Township; Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield as detailed further in Chapter 4. With a branch in each of the three communities, the library caters to the entire township, as their
mission statement suggests, “The Selwyn Public Library supports and enriches the community by providing resources and opportunities for meaningful connections, lifelong learning and personal and cultural development” (Township of Selwyn, 2015).

Figure 3.1 Map of Peterborough County, indicating townships

To provide these enriching opportunities, the Selwyn Public Library provides library services to the communities of Selwyn Township. Services such as interlibrary loans, genealogical and local history resources, printing and faxing, access to public computers and Wi-Fi, print collections and e-books for borrowing, as well as online resources are available in the Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield branches. In addition to the library
services, they also offer public programming, which includes kids and teen reading programs, as well as programming for adults, such as book clubs, movie night, technology workshops and poetry night (Township of Selwyn, 2015). The personnel makeup of the Selwyn Public Library is outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Breakdown of Selwyn Public Library staff and volunteers by branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>Coordinators</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td>Bridgenorth Librarian</td>
<td>CEO/Chief Librarian</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennismore</td>
<td>Ennismore Librarian</td>
<td>Children’s Programming Coordinator</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakefield</td>
<td>Lakefield Librarian</td>
<td>Technology and Training Coordinator</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3.3, the Selwyn Public Library is comprised of seven board members, six staff members and 174 volunteers. Volunteers work on a shift basis, coming in an average of once per week to perform various duties for the library which include circulation desk, cataloguing, memberships and reservations, to name a few (for more information on the library volunteers, see Chapter 4).

In addition to the Selwyn Public Library, volunteers also participate voluntarily at one of the three thrift stores in partnership with the library. Causeway Treasure Trove (Bridgenorth), the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop (Ennismore) and Renewed
Classics (Lakefield), are second-hand stores that collect community donations of clothing and housewares to resell for fundraising purposes. Renewed Classics collects profits strictly for the Lakefield branch to support their children’s programs whereas Causeway Treasure Trove and the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop are run in partnership with Community Care Peterborough, a non-profit community support organization. In these instances, the profits of the two thrift stores are split 50/50 with the local Community Care Peterborough office and the Bridgenorth and Ennismore branches of the Selwyn Public Library. Similarly, for the Causeway Treasure Trove and the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop, volunteer recruitment is done through the local Community Care Peterborough Office, where recruitment for Renewed Classics is done through the Lakefield library branch.

Through the description and discussion of both Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library, it becomes evident why this organization situated in this place was chosen for a case study on the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of rural communities. Firstly, Peterborough County, in which Selwyn Township is situated within (see Figure 3.2), features one of Canada’s most rapidly aging populations. Coupled with the rural aging demographic is the uniqueness of the Selwyn Public Library’s volunteer model. According to the 2016 Ontario Public Library Statistics put out by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the average number of volunteers for libraries in populations between 15,001 to 30,000, is 23 (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2016). With the Selwyn Public Library having 174 presently, they use 8 times the number of volunteers than an average library in the provincial system. This speaks to the uniqueness of the volunteer model and the reliance the library has on their volunteers, as they make up 94%
of their personnel. The combination of Selwyn Township as representative of rural settings in Canada (rural recreational, agriculture and small town) and of rural voluntarism in Canada (older volunteers) makes the Selwyn Public Library a fruitful site to study the role of older voluntarism in rural community sustainability.

3.2.3 Research ethics

The research was approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board on May 30, 2017 (see Appendix A). Due to the nature of small town, rural communities, the researcher was not able to guarantee absolute privacy of the research participants as their participation in the project may have been known by other participants and community members. However, to ensure confidentiality of personal information, throughout the research process, the research participant’s identities are anonymous. Throughout the presentation of findings in Chapter 4 and 5, research participants are referred to according to their participant group of either volunteer, staff, board member or township stakeholder.

In addition, informed consent was taken prior to any research commencing. In the surveys, a statement of implied consent was included in the introduction to instruct respondents of the nature of their participation (Appendix B). For interviews and focus groups, participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix C and D) prior to the interview and/or focus group beginning.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection involved three phases. Beginning on June 5, 2017, data collection in the form of surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups began in order to
gain information to fulfill the research objectives of understanding the experiences of older library volunteers, examining the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and exploring how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. For a timeline of the data collection process, see Table 3.4 below.

### Table 3.4 Timeline of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Ethics Approval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.3.1 Surveys

The first research method that was implemented was a survey. According to McGuirk and O’Neil (2016), surveys allow the researcher to pose standardized, formally structured questions to a group of individuals. Surveys are useful for gathering original data about people, their behaviours, experiences, social interactions, attitudes and opinions. In addition, McGuirk and O’Neil (2016) discuss the strengths of using surveys in qualitative research. Firstly, surveys allow the research to reach large populations. In
the case of this research, administering surveys to the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and board members allowed for the possibility of all 174 volunteers and seven board members to participate in the research. Secondly, surveys act as complimentary to other qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups. In practice, the surveys were designed in order to compliment the interviews and focus groups by collecting preliminary data on experiences and voluntary activities of the respondents. They were also used to provide a descriptive statistical overview of volunteer characteristics for the board.

The survey was introduced to the Selwyn Public Library volunteers at the volunteer appreciation dinner on June 5, 2017. At that time, the researcher distributed survey packages to all interested library volunteers and board members. Survey packages included a copy of the survey (see Appendix B), as well as a mail-back envelope that included postage and the return address of the researcher, so the respondents could mail the survey back once complete. The survey was modelled on the Statistics Canada General Social Survey Giving, Volunteering and Participating. Using this national survey as a design guideline allowed for the survey results to be referenced to the national results in order to describe potential trends, similarities and differences (see Chapter 4).

The survey (see Appendix B), began with a statement of implied consent which informed the participant that by completing the survey, they give consent for their responses to be used in the research. They were also informed that their identity will remain anonymous and that their participation is entirely voluntary. The question component to the survey was divided into five sections. It began by asking questions about the respondent’s background information such as age, gender, household income,
cultural identity, area of residency and education and employment. The second section asked questions regarding the respondent’s interaction with the Selwyn Public Library. Content in these questions included how long the respondent had been volunteering on behalf of the library, which branch did they commonly volunteer at, how often they volunteer on behalf of the library, the types of voluntary activities they performed while at the library, how they found out about the opportunity to volunteer for the library, the reasons for volunteering at the library and their interest in volunteering more on behalf of the library.

The third section of the survey asked questions about volunteering within the community. This section featured questions about formal volunteering for a group or organization other than the Selwyn Public Library and informal volunteering for friends, neighbours and/or relatives. The fourth section of the survey had questions referring to any barriers the respondents faced when it comes to volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library or at other groups or organizations. The section also included questions related to missed or cancelled voluntary activities, length of travel to voluntary activities and additional support they felt they required as a volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library. The final section asked the survey respondent if they would be interested in participating in a follow up interview to further discuss their experience as a Selwyn Public Library volunteer and a volunteer within their local community.

3.3.2 Interviews

Once surveys began to be collected and survey respondents indicated they were interested in participating in an interview, the interview process began. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, which allowed for the researcher to ask pre-determined
questions to the interview participants but allowed for the interviews to be flexible in terms of pace, order and nature of the questions (Dunn, 2016). A reason for doing interviews in qualitative research is to gain information on events, opinions and experiences as it gives voice to the interview participant, as well as interviews fill in gaps that other methods, such as surveys, are not able to bridge (Dunn, 2016).

The purpose of the interviews in the thesis was to collect information on the experiences of volunteering, information on the sustainability of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program and information on the connection between the Selwyn Public Library, the volunteers and the communities of Selwyn Township. Where the survey was designed to be answered by volunteers and board members exclusively, interviews recruited participants from various groups, including volunteers (n=33) and board members (n=5), Selwyn Public Library staff (n=7) and a select number of township stakeholders (n=3), for a total of 48 interviews.

Recruitment for the interviews happened through two methods. Firstly, volunteers and board members were recruited to interview through their survey, where they were asked to provide their name and contact information if they were interested in participating in an interview. Recruitment for staff, township stakeholders and board members who did not complete a survey, was done through e-mail. An initial introductory e-mail was sent to all potential participants, which contained a letter of recruitment (Appendix E) and provided an overview of the purpose of the project and the purpose of the interviews.

Once participants accepted the request to interview (no matter the recruitment method) a date and time was set. Beginning in June 2017, interviews took place at a
location that was most convenient for the participants, which included the library branch in which they volunteered at, Trent University, or their personal homes. The interviews began once the participant read, understood and signed the consent form (Appendix C). The consent form detailed that the research had been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board, that their participation in the research is voluntary, that their identity will remain confidential and they will remain anonymous, however, there is a minimal risk that their participation will be known to other participants and community members. In addition, the participant signed off on the interview being audio-recorded with the use of a digital voice recorder for transcription purposes.

The interview was designed in order to address the three research objectives: 1) to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, 2) to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and 3) explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. Using the three objectives as a basis, the interview guides for all participant groups were developed using different sections (Appendix F, G, H, I). The first section was used to gain background information on the interview participant, including information on how long they have been affiliated with the Selwyn Public Library and what their roles are in terms of their affiliation. The second section involved questions regarding their experiences of volunteering at the library. Questions in this section involved the participant’s experiences with either volunteering at the library or their experiences interacting with the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and discussing the challenges associated with volunteering at the library. The next section in the interview guide involved questions surrounding the sustainability of voluntarism at the Selwyn Public Library. The questions
in this section asked about changes in the volunteer program, what challenges the library is facing in terms of their volunteer base and ways in which the library could overcome those challenges. The following section asked questions about the connection of the Selwyn Public Library, the volunteers and Selwyn Township. Questions asked how local volunteers contribute to the communities of Selwyn Township, how Selwyn Public Library volunteers specifically contribute to their community and how volunteering could be further supported in Selwyn Township. The final section acted as a conclusion, asking participants if they had any suggestions for further interview participants, and recruited interview participants to take part in a focus group.

3.3.3 Focus groups

Following the interviews with Selwyn Public Library volunteers, board members and staff, focus groups were held. Focus groups work in tandem with other qualitative research methods as they allow for participants to interact with one another to learn and engage in order to explore different points of view (Cameron, 2016). This synergistic effect between participants allows for a deeper understanding of experiences and opinions, which adds to the rigour and depth of research (Cameron, 2016).

The purpose of the focus groups in the research was to expand on the findings from the interviews to allow for participants from similar participant groups to discuss as a group their experiences of volunteering, the challenges of sustaining the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program and their connection as volunteers to the sustainability of the communities of Selwyn Township. In addition, the focus groups allowed the participants to validate the preliminary interview results.
Focus groups began in September 2017, following the completion of the interviews. A total of six focus groups were held with 27 participants; a focus group for Lakefield volunteers (n=5) at the Lakefield branch, a focus group for Bridgenorth volunteers (n=5) at the Bridgenorth branch, a focus group for Ennismore volunteers (n=5) at the Ennismore branch, a focus group for staff (n=6) at the Bridgenorth branch, a focus group for board members (n=4) at the Bridgenorth branch and a focus group for thrift store volunteers (n=2) at Trent University. Focus group participants were recruited through their response in the interviews when asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group.

Each focus group began once all participants read, understood and signed the consent form (Appendix D). The consent form informed the participants that the project was approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board, that their participation in the project was entirely voluntary, that their identity and personal information will remain anonymous, however there is a minimal risk that their participation in the project will be known to other focus group participants and community members. In addition to the focus group participants and the researcher who facilitated and monitored the discussion, the focus groups involved a Trent Centre for Aging & Society Research Assistant who took notes on key themes and discussion points.

Similar to the interview guide, the focus group was designed around the three objectives of the thesis (Appendix J). With the intent of promoting interaction and discussion between participants, the focus groups were intended to use various interactive activities in order for the participants to discuss key themes amongst one another. The first exercise was created for participants to choose three themes or issues that have
implications on the individual volunteers at the library. The chosen themes/issues were placed on a large flip-chart and a discussion was facilitated about the reasoning behind their chosen theme/issue.

The second exercise had focus group participants in small groups of two or three to discuss issues or themes that have implications for the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteer program. Once each small group had identified their themes or issues, a discussion was facilitated where participants further explained their chosen theme or issue and commented on the others presented. The third exercise was a group discussion surrounding the contributions the Selwyn Public Library volunteers make to the communities of Selwyn Township. Here, focus group participants discussed the ways in which they felt volunteers at the library contributed to their local community. The final exercise was used to validate the preliminary findings from the interviews. Here, a list of preliminary findings from the surveys and interviews was presented to the participants, and as a group, they decided which themes were touched upon in the preceding group discussions. This validation process informed the accuracy of the analysis of emergent themes.

3.4 Data analysis

Once data collection was completed, the researcher began the data analysis phase. Data analysis in the form of systematically inputting and coding survey results and performing a thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts was conducted in order to analyze and interpret the results.
3.4.1 Survey data

Using the data collected from the surveys, the researcher conducted a descriptive statistical analysis. A descriptive statistical analysis allowed the survey results to be described and summarized to reflect the findings dataset (Burt & Barber, 2009). Using the collected, paper copies of the returned surveys, the data was manually inputted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Using the completed dataset, the results were summarized in order to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as their interactions with the library and with their local communities through volunteering. The descriptive statistical results are presented in Chapter 4.

A descriptive statistical analysis was chosen over a more comprehensive statistical analysis as per consultations with the Selwyn Public Library Board. Upon consulting with the board over the rationale for the survey, they indicated that for their purposes of the community-university partnership, a more descriptive and summative analysis of the survey results would yield the most use for them.

3.4.2 Interview and focus group data

Data analysis for the interview and focus groups began with transcription. For the interview data, with the help of a Trent Centre for Aging and Society Research Assistant, each audio file was transcribed in order to portray the spoken words of the interview. For the focus group data, the notes taken by the Research Assistant during the focus groups were transcribed to portray all key themes and points of discussion, as well as verbatim quotations heard by the Research Assistant at the time of the focus group.
Using the 48 interviews and 6 focus group transcripts, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the qualitative data. A coding structure was created to distill key themes from the dataset, in order to act as a framework for the codes (Cope, 2016). Key themes were identified, in accordance with the three research objectives (to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and to explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability) and then analytic codes were created in order to reflect these themes. The coding structure contained both pre-determined and emergent codes, reflective of information in the literature as well as areas of importance discussed by participants. Using analytic codes allowed for the detail provided by the participants to inform the research as they allow for the analysis to dig deeper into processes and context of the interviews and focus groups (Cope, 2016).

3.5 Organization of findings

The findings are presented in the following two chapters. Chapter 4 provides the context of a volunteer-based rural library. It provides background information on the history and legacy of both Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library and presents the results from the survey in order to describe the demographics of and issues facing the individual volunteers. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the interviews and focus groups as they discuss how the individual experiences of older library volunteers, the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and library volunteers and library volunteer programs speak to aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability. The final chapter acts as a discussion and conclusion as it
reflects back on the research objectives and the research approach and identifies the limitations and contributions of the research.
Chapter 4

Volunteer-based Rural Library Case Study

“It just makes it a richer community when you have participation in it. I think people take more pride in their community if they’re involved in it.”

Selwyn Public Library staff member

With a large portion of residents aging in place, coupled with the changing role of voluntarism to aid in the sustainability of rural communities, rural communities in Canada are undergoing drastic changes. This chapter examines changes within the study site, Selwyn Township. It first situates the township in the context of rural community change by discussing how an amalgamation of three long-standing rural townships led to the present-day makeup of Selwyn Township. It then discusses how the Selwyn Public Library, an integral community service within the township, underwent similar restructuring and the challenges and implications associated with those changes. Understanding the historical-geographical context of Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library will provide context for the following chapter, which presents the findings from the interviews and focus groups in relation to the objectives of the thesis 1) to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, 2) to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and 3) to explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. The chapter also addresses the aim of the community-university partnership by providing a demographic and statistical description of the current state of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers.
4.1 Selwyn Township

To understand the relationship between the Selwyn Public Library and its volunteer program, the volunteers and their communities, it is important to situate these concepts in the broader context of rural community change, as discussed in Chapter 2. Examining Selwyn Township and understanding the three wards in which it is comprised (see Figure 3.1), allows for an understanding of the diverse experiences and interactions of the library volunteers and their connection to their communities.

Selwyn Township, located on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabe in the territory covered by the Williams Treaty (Migizi & Kapyrka, 2015), was established through two municipal amalgamations and is comprised of the formerly known Smith Township (est. 1819), Ennismore Township (est.1829) and the Village of Lakefield (est. 1874). In 1998, Smith and Ennismore Townships amalgamated to created Smith-Ennismore Township and was joined in 2001 by Lakefield to make Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Township, until it changed names to Selwyn Township in 2013.

Table 4.1 offers a historical representation of the population changes seen in Selwyn Township since its initial establishment as Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Township in 2001. Historical population data predating 2001 is absent for the three individual Townships of Smith, Ennismore and Lakefield, however, since the establishment of Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Township in 2001, contemporary population data can be found and analyzed. Akin to the trends in rural population aging discussed in Chapter 2, the population of Selwyn Township is shown as rapidly aging, with its population of residents over 65 more than doubling (67%) from 2001 to 2016.
Table 4.1 Population changes in Selwyn Township from 2001 to 2016, to reflect the years following amalgamation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population change from previous year</th>
<th>Population over the age of 65</th>
<th>Percentage of the population over the age of 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17,060</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16,846</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>3,490</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>17,027</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>16,414</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2,825</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table shows data from Statistics Canada beginning in 2001 to reflect the year of the newly amalgamated Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Township.

Table 4.2 summarizes the three wards that presently make up Selwyn Township according to characteristics such as primary settlement, population, rural topography and service sector. As with the changes undergone elsewhere in rural Canada, the wards (then townships) of Bridgenorth (Smith), Ennismore and Lakefield have experienced changes in their rural typology and primary service sector that have led to their present-day makeup and role within the broader township and county (Brunger, 2009; Delledonne, 1999; Galvin, 1978; Selwyn Township, 2015; Willcox, 1998).

Bridgenorth was established in 1818 as a Protestant, Irish hamlet that has transitioned from an agriculture settlement, to milling town, to bedroom community and cottage destination (Willcox, 1998).
Table 4.2 Characteristics of the Wards of Selwyn Township

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Bridgenorth</th>
<th>Ennismore</th>
<th>Lakefield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>6,606</td>
<td>4,959</td>
<td>6,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Settlement</td>
<td>Hamlet of</td>
<td>Hamlet of Ennismore</td>
<td>Village of Lakefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population over age</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of</td>
<td>21.9% (increasing)</td>
<td>23.2% (increasing)</td>
<td>26.6% (increasing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population over 65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Typology</td>
<td>Rural-recreation</td>
<td>Rural-agriculture</td>
<td>Small town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Agriculture Community</td>
<td>Retail/Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement History</td>
<td>Formerly Township of Smith</td>
<td>Formerly Township of Ennismore</td>
<td>Formerly Village of Lakefield</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presently, Bridgenorth serves as a bedroom community for the larger urban centre of the City of Peterborough by offering many services to its permanent residents as well as its seasonal residents who come to the region for recreation opportunities offered by Chemong Lake, which is part of the Kawartha Lakes cottage region. Today, Bridgenorth hosts the Bridgenorth branch of the Selwyn Public Library, which acts as a joint facility with a Community Hall, located adjacent to the local elementary school.

Ennismore was established in 1822 as an Irish, Roman Catholic hamlet with deep roots set in agricultural production (Galvin, 1978). Since its establishment, the growth of many crops was the driving catalyst of change in the township of Ennismore, with the causeway across Chemong Lake being created to aid in the ease of transportation of crops into larger urban centres and to connect Ennismore with the broader region, including the adjacent Curve Lake First Nations Community. Today, Ennismore has the lowest population of the three wards of Selwyn Township. However, it is still rich in agricultural
production, and in community recreation as it hosts the Ennismore branch of the Selwyn Public Library and community recreational services such as a community arena, and a large Shamrock Festival.

The village of Lakefield (est. 1874), is the most populated ward within Selwyn township and the second largest urban centre in Peterborough County (Brunger, 2009). As a ‘small town’, Lakefield provides many local services to its residents, which is a testament to its past role as a service town for the surrounding farming areas and industrial sites specializing in milling (Delledonne, 1999). Presently, the Village of Lakefield, with a population of 2,753 and 32.8% of that population over the age of 65, is facing the challenge, like the challenge of rural areas across Canada as discussed in Chapter 2, of catering its services to the needs of its aging residents to keep them aging in place.

Due to the proximity of these communities to the City of Peterborough, population numbers began to decrease due to the migration away from rural areas to seek employment. The influence of urban centres caused the closure the industries rural communities relied upon, thus, becoming the service, recreational and agricultural centres they are today (Nicol et al., 2009).

4.2 Selwyn Public Library

As discussed in the previous section, Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield are rural communities, providing community services to cater to their residents. One community service that is an integral part of each community is the Selwyn Public Library (est. 2001). Comprised of a Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield branch, as
well as three associated thrift stores, the Selwyn Public Library, “supports and enriches the community by providing resources and opportunities for meaningful connections, lifelong learning and personal and cultural development” (Selwyn Township, 2015).

Unique to the Selwyn Public Library and the provincial context of libraries is the volunteer model in which it runs. Across the Selwyn Public Library, there is one CEO/Chief Librarian, a children’s programme coordinator, a training and technology coordinator, and a librarian for each branch. Apart from the six staff, the library is run by 174 volunteers, who perform the daily functions of the library including, but not limited to, circulation desk, inter-library loans, cataloguing, shelving items and duties at the thrift stores. The evolution of the three library branches is outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Description of library branches from independent libraries to amalgamation into Selwyn Public Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Grew from small book club, to larger, volunteer run library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Amalgamation of Smith and Ennismore joined the Bridgenorth and Ennismore libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Moved to its current location and became a joint library and community hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennismore</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Demonstration library sponsored by Lake Ontario Regional System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Became permanent within community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Moved to its present location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Amalgamation of Smith and Ennismore joined the Bridgenorth and Ennismore libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakefield</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Received grant from Ontario government to create Lakefield Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Moved to its current location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Amalgamation of Lakefield and Smith-Ennismore library led Lakefield library to adopt volunteer model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bridgenorth Library (est. 1974) began in the basement of the local church and at that time, was staffed by Lakefield Library Staff. As the community began to embrace the library, the staffing makeup changed, and the Bridgenorth Library began to be run by community volunteers. Soon after, it moved to different locations within the community, before moving into its present location in 2009, which is now a joint library and community hall.

The Ennismore Library (est. 1970) began as a ‘demonstration library’ sponsored by the Lake Ontario Regional System and quickly became incorporated as an official municipal service. Due to its official designation, a library board was appointed in 1972 to oversee the structure and overall duties of the library. The library was located in the Parish Hall, until it moved into the renovated fire hall. From there, it moved to its current location, adjacent to the Ennismore Community Centre and Arena in 1982. Following the amalgamation at the municipal level, in 1998, the Bridgenorth and Ennismore libraries merged to create the Smith-Ennismore Library.

In contrast to the Bridgenorth and Ennismore libraries, which were volunteer run, the Lakefield Public Library (est.1895) was an individual entity, when it received a grant from the Ontario government to form a library in the community, located in the townhall. As the Lakefield Public Library, at the time, was run by paid staff, when it amalgamated with the Smith-Ennismore Library in 2001 to create the Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Public Library, and then the Selwyn Public Library in 2013, it was forced to adopt the volunteer model of the other library. According to present day volunteers, having been run by paid staff up until that point, the amalgamation became a point to contention as
some of the paid Lakefield Library staff lost their jobs because of the continuity of the volunteer model across all three branches.

As discussed in Chapter 2, rural communities underwent restructuring changes at the local level, which resulted in the downloading of service delivery onto the voluntary sector organizations and individual volunteers. As outlined above, through the amalgamation of the townships and the subsequent amalgamation of the libraries, the responsibility of providing library services to Selwyn Township fell and still currently falls on local volunteers, most of whom are older.

4.3 Selwyn Public Library volunteers

As mentioned in the previous section, the Selwyn Public Library is a unique library as it heavily relies upon local volunteers to provide library services to the three wards of Selwyn Township. Where many libraries in Ontario operate in unionized staff environments (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2016), the Selwyn Public Library’s volunteer model sees that the daily functions of the library such as cataloguing, membership, circulation desk, shelf reading and managing reservations are done by volunteers who support the library by attending an average of one or two, three hour shifts a week. A total of 87 surveys were returned over the course of two months, giving the survey a 48% response rate. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of survey respondents by branch and board. Using the results from the survey administered to volunteers at all three branches, as well as board members and volunteers at the community thrift stores this section will describe and provide context regarding the respondent’s demographic information and discuss their connection to the library and their connection to Selwyn Township, which will be further elaborated on in the following findings chapter.
Figure 4.1. Survey respondents by branch and board compared to the total number of volunteers per participant group

The chapter provides selected figures in order to illustrate the key survey results. A complete survey data table is available in Appendix K.

4.3.1 Volunteer and board member demographics

A typical volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library, according to the results from the surveys is a married or widowed, Canadian female, 65-74 years of age, who holds a non-university certificate or diploma, has worked in the education sector and makes $60,000 to $80,000 annually. Survey results demonstrate there are more female volunteers than male volunteers, which is seen as a trend across the entire Selwyn Public Library as well as within each individual branch and across the Board of Directors as well. In addition to gender, 76% of the survey respondents are between the ages of 65 and 84 (see Figure
4.2). Also, survey results indicate that 71% of volunteers are married or in a common law relationship and 89% identify as Canadian.

![Figure 4.2 Age of survey respondents](image)

*Figur 4.2 Age of survey respondents (n=85)*

According to the survey results, Selwyn Public Library volunteers and board members primarily have an annual income of $60,000 to less than $80,000 (23%), $40,000 to less than $50,000 (19%), $20,000 to less than $30,000 (13%) and $50,000 to less than $60,000 (13%).

In terms of ward of residency of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and board members, 16 reside in Bridgenorth, 25 reside in Ennismore, 27 reside in Lakefield, three reside in Douro-Dummer Township and 15 reside in the City of Peterborough, as shown in Figure 4.3. Regardless of the location, 78% of survey respondents indicated they have lived there for 10 years or more.
The educational background of volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library and board members vary, with 28% indicating they have received a non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP, school of nursing, etc. Similar results are seen in the past and/or present employment of volunteers, with 28% of survey respondents indicating education as their employment sector, as well as 33% indicating ‘other’ and responding that past and/or present employment was in health care or that they are presently retired.

### 4.3.2 Volunteer connection to the Selwyn Public Library

This section illustrates the results from the surveys regarding the connection the volunteers and board members have to the Selwyn Public Library. The findings from the survey suggests a longstanding commitment from volunteers and board members alike, in terms of length of volunteering, with 51% of survey respondents stating that they have
been volunteering on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library for 10 years or more, followed by 26% volunteering for five years to less than 10 years. Volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library is indicated to happen for volunteers once a week, and once a month for board members, with an average for the library of 6.5 hours volunteered weekly.

The type of voluntary activities performed by Selwyn Public Library volunteers varies, with common activities indicated by survey respondents from all three branches being circulation desk (67%), reservation of library materials (44%), helping with internet/computers (38%) and memberships (35%). 17 survey respondents indicated they volunteer at the thrift store, with 11 through the Bridgenorth branch, four through the Ennismore branch and two through the Lakefield branch, as well as all survey respondents from the Board of Directors indicating they sat as a member of a committee or Board, along with two survey respondents indicating they fundraised as well (see Figure 4.4).

Similar to the trend in voluntary activities, volunteers across all three library branches as well as board members indicated that word of mouth was the primary method in which they were recruited to volunteer for the Selwyn Public Library. As well, results regarding the reasons for volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library were similar across all participant groups.
Survey respondents from the Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield branches as well as board members indicated their reasons for volunteering on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library were, to make a contribution to the community (91%), to network with or meet people (55%) and to use skills and experiences (53%) (See Figure 4.5). Whatever the length of volunteer commitment, or the reason for volunteering, when asked if they were interested in volunteering more often at the Selwyn Public Library, 72% responded no, and 23% responded yes.
Figure 4.5 Reasons for volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library *(n=86)*

### 4.3.3 Volunteer connection to Selwyn Township

This section presents the results from the survey that demonstrate the connection the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and board members have with their broader communities. The results show that library volunteers participate in both formal and informal volunteering opportunities outside of the Selwyn Public Library. Formal volunteering opportunities taken up by survey respondents across all three branches as well as board members include fundraising (46%), organizing, supervising or coordinating activities or events (42%), teaching, educating, or mentoring (40%) and collecting, serving or delivering food or other goods (33%) (see Figure 4.6) once a week (47%) and for an average of 22.1 hours per month.
Similar to the results discussed above surrounding the length of volunteer commitment to the Selwyn Public Library, the results indicate that 53% of survey respondents have been formal volunteering for 10 years or more.

Informal volunteering activities taken up by survey respondents include working at someone’s home such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, maintenance, painting, shovelling snow or car repairs (48%), work at someone’s home with health-related or personal care (48%), and working at someone’s home with shopping, driving someone to
the store or other appointments (43%) (see Figure 4.7) and for an average of 23.6 hours per month and for an length of 10 years or more (55%).

![Figure 4.7 Informal volunteering activities performed by survey respondents in the past 12 months](chart)

*(n=61)*

### 4.3.4 Barriers to volunteering

This section illustrates the results from the survey that outline the barriers to volunteering felt by the survey respondents. Barriers of importance include did not have time (43%), personal or family responsibilities (39%), gave enough time already (23%), health problems or were physically unable (21%) and unable to make long-term commitment (17%), as shown in Figure 4.8. Due to these barriers, volunteers cancelled voluntary activities once or twice (44%), or never had to cancel (33%). In terms of distance volunteers were required to travel to volunteer, survey respondents indicated that travel time was less than 15 minutes (40%) or 15 to 30 minutes (35%).
Along with addressing the barriers to volunteering, the survey respondents also indicated what further support they would like to see from the library. Of the survey respondents who answered, 61% indicated that the current amount of support was adequate. For instance, one survey respondent stated, “The support for volunteers at the library is fantastic. I can’t think of any way they could better support the volunteers.” In reference to an annual volunteer appreciation dinner the library holds in honour of the volunteers, another survey respondent stated, “They support us all the time, with a lovely dinner once a year and presenting us awards.”
Some 34% of survey respondents provided suggestions for further support they would like to see from the library. Suggestions include ensuring there are meaningful tasks to perform, as a respondent stated, “ensure there are meaningful tasks to perform which contribute to the library's goals in the community.” Additional suggestions include further computer instruction and training, cleaning support in the thrift stores and more volunteers to aid in the burnout felt by on-call volunteers, as a respondent stated the library needs “more volunteers so that the same people are not always asked to cover shifts.”

4.3.5 Comparing survey results to Canadian national survey

Along with providing a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the volunteers, their connection to the Selwyn Public Library and to Selwyn Township and the barriers to volunteering, the survey results can also be used to make a descriptive comparison between the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and the results from the Canadian national survey on volunteering (Hall et al., 2009). With an understanding of the different population size of the two surveys, as well as without having done significant tests on the results, the comparison between the Selwyn Public Library volunteers and the Canadian national survey results are purely descriptive in nature.

Using an adaptation from Skinner (2014) who conducted a case study of Community Care Peterborough, a volunteer-based community support service as context, Table 4.4 outlines the comparison of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers to the Canadian national average using the most recently available census data (Hall et al., 2009). In contrast to the national average, as outlined in Table 4.4, the survey indicates that the Selwyn Public Library has a larger proportion of women volunteering (86%), and
older people aged 65 and over (89%), and who have been volunteering for a long
duration of time (76% five years or more). This variation, however, is consistent with the
profile of volunteers within the community services sector, especially in rural areas,
where volunteers are predominately older women (Cook et al., 2013). In addition, the
comparison shows the range of formal and informal volunteering activities conducted by
volunteers, along with the library, which will be further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 4.4 Profile of Selwyn Public Library volunteers, in reference to national
survey of volunteering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics (sex, age)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years or older</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of volunteering</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more years</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal volunteering (activity)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing and delivering food</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising activities</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and driving</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee membership</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal volunteering (activity)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving and shopping</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking and cleaning</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care and bathing</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations for volunteering</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to the community</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canadian national data from Hall et al. (2009)
4.4 Summary

This chapter provided context on the case study of a volunteer-based rural library. Selwyn Township, comprised of a hamlet, small town and village boasts a rural setting typical of that seen in Canada, with a rapidly aging population. Each community of Selwyn Township (Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield) provides an individual history and settlement pattern that speaks to the dynamic and complex nature of this rural setting. The Selwyn Public Library is an institutional public service with a long-standing history in each of the communities of Selwyn Township, as each individual branch was once a community public library before merging in 2001.

In addition to providing the historical-geographical context of Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library, the chapter also presented the descriptive survey results, which provided demographic and statistical information on the current Selwyn Public Library volunteers. What we can describe from these survey results is that the typical volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library discussed in the above sections differs from characteristics of the typical volunteer in Canada’s community support sector. The gender characteristic matches the Canadian data, as older volunteers are generally women, however, the Canadian data demonstrates that volunteer rates decrease as the individual volunteer ages (Cook et al., 2013). This is contrasted by the survey results, as they show that 89% of the volunteer base at the Selwyn Public Library is over the age of 65.

In addition, as reviewed in Chapter 2, volunteering in later life has many positive benefits to the volunteer, including building and strengthening social networks as well as creating personal satisfaction. After analysing the survey results, it can be described that the survey respondents experience those benefits through volunteering at the Selwyn
Public Library, as many expressed that developing social connections and utilizing their skills and experiences were large contributing factors for why they volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library.

Both the historical-geographical context of Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library and the survey results provide foundation and context for the remainder of the thesis. As previously discussed, the three narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability allow for an understanding of the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of aging rural communities. The following chapter presents the findings from the interviews and focus groups to provide an additional understanding of these narratives as well as to provide the foundation for the recommendations to be presented to the Selwyn Public Library board.
Chapter 5
Perspectives on Older Voluntarism

“What a great opportunity it is to have this sort of symbiotic relationship when you’re serving the community but you’re also benefiting yourself because it’s so rewarding”

Selwyn Public Library volunteer

Building upon the historical-geographical context of Selwyn Township and the Selwyn Public Library, and the descriptive findings from the volunteer survey presented in Chapter 4, this chapter uses results from the qualitative interviews and focus groups with Selwyn Public Library volunteers, staff and board members as well as township stakeholders to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability of aging rural communities. Woven throughout the presentation of results are the three narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability (introduced in Chapter 2), which aid in telling the story of the library, the volunteers and the communities of Selwyn Township.

This chapter is organized around addressing the three objectives of the thesis 1) to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, 2) to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and 3) to explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability (see Table 5.1). The first section uses the lens of lived experiences to discuss the individual experiences of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers. The chapter then outlines the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program by discussing interpersonal, operational and structural challenges the library is facing. The chapter then discusses the
implications for the volunteers for rural community sustainability and how the Selwyn Public Library volunteers have the potential to contribute to the cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability of their local communities. Lastly, the chapter returns to the narratives outlined above to summarize how the findings relate to the understanding of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability.

Table 5.1 Thematic summary of analytical frames and themes used to examine the role of voluntarism in rural community sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Frame</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual experiences of older volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>• Burden of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>• Community relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and well-being</td>
<td>• Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Burden of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of sustaining rural library volunteer program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal challenge</td>
<td>• Aging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational challenge</td>
<td>• Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural challenge</td>
<td>• Organizational relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for rural community sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural sustainability</td>
<td>• Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sustainability</td>
<td>• Community relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic sustainability</td>
<td>• Organizational relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Burden of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental sustainability</td>
<td>• Thrift stores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Individual experiences of older library volunteers

“I’m proud to say I’m a volunteer at the library.”

Selwyn Public Library volunteer

Through the lens of the lived experiences of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers, this section discusses the individual experiences of older volunteers through emotions (the emotions they feel about volunteering), relationships (the relationships they form through volunteering) and well-being (how volunteering effects the personal health and well-being of the volunteers). Themes such as the burden of care, frustration, community and organizational relationships, as well as opportunities are representative of the personal experiences of the library volunteers.

5.1.1 Emotions

A common emotion felt by the interview participants was that there was a heavy burden of care associated with volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. Burden of care is in reference to the responsibility felt by volunteers that commit to volunteering to sustain the Selwyn Public Library and other volunteer-run community organizations. In the case of emotions, the burden of care was felt strongly by interview participants in reference to the high level of commitment required to volunteer at the library. As the volunteers’ duties include many jobs that use technology, including the operating system used to check in and out books, it is required of the volunteers to keep up with the current training and technology needed to perform such tasks. As a staff member of the library stated,
It’s difficult because there is a certain level of training they need to do the jobs. You need to commit yourself to having that training and that you’re going to be here. It’s not just a one-time thing where you can just come in.

Such regular commitments to the library is becoming increasingly difficult for volunteers, as they are choosing to migrate south for the winter, a finding that will be discussed further in the proceeding section. With some volunteers not able to commit to weekly shifts all year, they find it increasingly challenging to keep up with the changes implemented within the library and find it difficult to reintegrate back into the library when they return in the spring.

Expressed within the cohort of volunteers who identify as snowbirds who migrate to warmer climates in the winter, but also in the cohort of volunteers who remain and continue to volunteer throughout the winter, is the feeling of burnout, as the commitment required by the library becomes too much. Along with keeping up with changes in the library, the commitment required by the library is also in reference to the commitment needed by the volunteers to attend their shift so the library can function on a daily basis. As stated by a volunteer at the Lakefield branch in reference to not being able to attend a shift, “You feel like you can’t let people down. You hate to call...and that’s why I went down to just being on-call because I knew there was going to be too many times I couldn’t.” This quotation expresses feelings of guilt associated with the burnout, which was discussed at length in interviews and confirmed during focus group, as volunteers felt guilty when they were not able to attend a shift due to various personal circumstances.

As reported in Chapter 4, many of the Selwyn Public Library volunteers contribute volunteer hours elsewhere within their communities (66%), requiring them to
prioritize their volunteering activities, which at times results in the volunteers prioritizing other activities that do not require such a large personal commitment. In reference to the quotation above, the interview participant from the Lakefield branch chose to go to an on-call basis rather than have a weekly shift due to other voluntary activities that they have prioritized over the library.

Along with the burden of care and the feelings of guilt associated with the high level of commitment required of Selwyn Public Library volunteers, feelings of frustration were common within discussions in both interviews and focus groups. These feelings of frustration were rooted within the requirement for volunteers to use a variety of different technologies during their volunteering shift, such as the library operating system, the public computers located within the libraries and answering technology related questions from library patrons. With the library volunteer program containing many older volunteers, volunteers find it challenging to keep up with the technology, as one interview participant from the Ennismore branch stated, “The computer is the frustrating part.” Participants stated that the age of the volunteers contribute to their discomfort level with learning new technologies, as the older volunteers have trouble keeping up with technology within the library and helping patrons with their technology issues. Another library staff member describes this frustration by stating, “Some of the volunteers are in their 80s and late 80s. They admit that they don’t get everything all the time.”

As a result of these feelings of frustration towards using and learning new technologies within the library, volunteers expressed that they have, at times, chosen to not use technology on their volunteer shift at the library. Rather, they do tasks such as
shelf reading and filing, which does not require the use of a computer. In addition, interview and focus group participants expressed how there was adequate computer training, but there is a need for additional training opportunities. Selwyn Public Library staff discussed how additional training could be used for volunteers to be taught more up to date technologies used in the library such as the public computers and eBooks. In addition to being trained on up to date technology, library volunteers felt that additional training opportunities would be useful as it would increase their comfort level while helping patrons. Interview participants explained that at times, there are no staff members present in the library, and when a patron comes in with a technology related question, they turn the patron away as they do not have the answer. Providing these additional training opportunities could allow the volunteers to become more comfortable with technology and address the emotional response of frustration and discomfort surrounding technology.

5.1.2 Relationships

Discussions in both the interviews and focus groups shed light on both the community and organizational relationships that are built through volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. In reference to community relationships, interview participants discussed the importance of building meaningful relationships in the community through the library. One way in which they build community relationships is by volunteering for an institution of the community, as one volunteer from the Bridgenorth branch stated, “I think it’s the library and the volunteers that provide a spot where people come in and they sit down with the newspaper. We provide a welcoming place for people to come into.” In validation of this experience, focus group participants discussed the positive
interactions they have with patrons who come in to use the library and how, through those interactions, they develop meaningful relationships. Through these relationships comes friendships, and in many instances, other volunteering opportunities within the community.

As well, such positive interactions and relationships are created through the volunteers acting as community liaisons. In focus groups with volunteers and staff, participants spoke about their library branch acting as a community hub where residents come in to inquire about other community services. It is within these interactions as well that the volunteers build relationships with community members and thus, create a positive relationship between community members and the Selwyn Public Library.

In addition to the relationships built within the community, participants also expressed the importance of the relationships built within the Selwyn Public Library. Seen within the survey results reported earlier, as well as discussed in both the interview and focus groups, is the long-term commitment volunteers are making at the library. Unlike the emotional commitment discussed in the previous section, commitment here refers to the length of time in which volunteers continue to volunteer for the library. As shown in the survey results, 51% of the library volunteers have been volunteering for 10 years or longer. During interviews, participants discussed the positive and supportive environment the library provides which encourages them to continue to volunteer. In reference to this supportive environment, in an interview with a member of the Board of Directors, they stated about the volunteers, “They’re a really great group of people. They’re totally committed to what they do.”
In addition, interview participants feel that both staff and board members adequately support their voluntary efforts. In direct reference to the annual volunteer appreciation dinner put on by the board and staff for the volunteers of the Selwyn Public Library, another volunteer from the Ennismore branch stated, “They also have a very good volunteer recognition program, so they make you feel loved.”

5.1.3 Health and well-being

Similar to experiencing emotions and creating community relationships, interview participants’ experiences of volunteering also focused on the impact volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library has on their health and well-being. One way volunteering affected the health and well-being of the volunteers was through various inter-personal opportunities they gained, such as opportunities to build social relationships and opportunities to expand their personal skill sets.

Characterized as rural hamlets and a small-town village, the communities of Selwyn Township have the potential to foster feelings of isolation, as geographically, rural areas are more dispersed. Similarly, isolation can also occur after the death of a spouse/partner, which leaves the living spouse/partner alone to seek new or additional support networks. As discussed in Chapter 2, voluntarism is a means to counter feelings of isolation due to the opportunities to develop social networks and relationships. The findings from the interview and focus groups support these arguments, as a different volunteer from the Bridgenorth branch stated in reference to their experience volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library, “It’s a way to get out and socialize. You live out in a rural area and you can’t walk around...you’re more isolated so it’s socialization too.”
As with the experience shared above, there were many instances where interview participants shared their experiences of creating and maintaining social networks while volunteering. Participants described the relationships with their shift partners as being important aspects of their lives. With commitment from the volunteers being long-standing, as discussed in the previous section, participants stated that their shift partner becomes an integral component to their life. A staff member of the Selwyn Public Library stated, “Some volunteers are like people’s main support. Like, some of these people live on their own. Sometimes the volunteer on their shift becomes their main person to go to if they have no family.” Developing these relationships with fellow volunteers was described as a positive experience in both interviews, and in surveys, as 54% of respondents indicated that the reason they volunteer is to network or meet people.

In addition to the opportunity to build social relationships, interview participants described the opportunity that volunteering at the library provides to expand their personal skill sets. In the previous section, where technology was viewed as a challenge for volunteers, they also described the benefit to technology to their personal skill sets. As another volunteer from the Lakefield branch stated,

*I guess I learned a lot. The whole computer system, which I maybe never would have got into as quickly because 17 years ago I didn’t own a computer. So, that’s probably helped me along the way. You know, I’ll take a risk by clicking a button and see what happens from there.*

By being pushed outside of their comfort zones, interview participants described themselves as now being “tech savvy”; a skill they use within the library as well as with their own personal technologies at home.
Along with technology, volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library also allows volunteers to expand their skill set through other personalized tasks. As presented in Chapter 4, 67% of volunteers perform circulation desk duties on their shift. However, 17% of volunteers become specialized in specific tasks such as cataloguing new books that come into the system. Such specialized tasks allow volunteers to become experts in certain skills that become invaluable to the library, as a staff member stated, “I think about the cataloguer here for example. If she left, I mean, I don’t even know what we would do because I don’t have time to catalogue all those books.”

Where burden of care is seen as a theme in the emotional experience of volunteers, it is also a theme in the connection between volunteering and the health and well-being of volunteers. Here, the burden of volunteering is described as experiencing feelings of burnout and boredom.

As presented in the survey results, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers also participate in voluntary activities within their community in both a formal (67%) and informal manner (71%). This finding is supported by both the interviews and focus groups, as participants discussed how due to their many voluntary responsibilities, they have feelings to being overwhelmed and thus, run the risk of burnout, as a volunteer from the Lakefield branch stated, “I volunteer here at the library, I volunteer on my condo board, I volunteer with the lake association. There’s only so much you can do.”

Local voluntary organizations such as Community Care Peterborough, the Lakefield Community Food Bank, the Ennismore and District Horticultural Society and the Bridgenorth Beautification Committee as well as informal voluntary activities such as caring for an ill spouse or caring for grandchildren are many of the other activities that
interview participants stated they perform on a weekly basis. As a result, like the discussion above regarding commitment, interview participants discussed prioritizing their voluntary activities, or going to a less permanent, ‘on-call’ position at the library to allow for a more flexible personal weekly schedule.

Similar to the experience of sharing voluntary commitment amongst other community organizations, interview participants also discussed their experience with weather, which posed challenges on the volunteer on shift but also on on-call volunteers. In the survey results presented in Chapter 4, weather was not a significant barrier to volunteering, with only 5% of respondents indicating it a barrier. However, in interviews with volunteers, as well as through group discussions in the focus groups, winter weather was outlined as a challenge that inhibits volunteers from attending their shifts, contributing to a sense of absenteeism. With a policy of having two volunteers at the library at all times, weather was described as a reason for early closure of the library, if one volunteer could not make the drive in. Interview participants discussed the importance and reliance the library has on on-call volunteers in situations such as these. In the instance of a volunteer not wanting or being able to make the drive in to the library, an on-call volunteer is contacted to see if they will be able to make the drive to cover the shift in order for the library to remain open. However, on-call volunteers discussed feeling accountable if they say they are not able to make it and the library closes early, as the onus then is placed upon them to make the drive in bad weather.

Along with experiencing feelings of burnout, participants also discussed experiencing feelings of boredom. These feelings were in association to being asked to
perform monotonous tasks on their weekly shift at the library, which hinder the experience for the volunteer and leave them feeling unfulfilled.

With many of the library volunteers being retired professionals, they come to the Selwyn Public Library with unique experiences and skills sets. However, volunteers, as well as staff and board members, feel that the skills and experiences of the volunteers are not being utilized during their time volunteering at the library. Monotonous tasks such as shelf reading, while important to the daily functions of the library, is not viewed as a value-added task for the volunteer. To enhance the experience for the individual volunteers, discussions in both interviews and focus groups spoke to the importance of open communication between volunteers and staff members to allow for the transfer of ideas regarding new tasks that may be more suited towards individual experiences and skills. Regarding utilizing the skills of the volunteers, during a focus group, a library board member stated, “We also need to be proactive about using their skills because they'd feel like somebody paid attention to their past and they would feel valued.” Supporting the volunteers by providing opportunities for them to showcase their skills and experiences would provide a more meaningful experience for the volunteers.
5.2 Challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program

“They are aging. They are going to eventually age out of doing these jobs that we rely on them to do...It’s hard to say what’s going to happen for us in the future.”

Selwyn Public Library staff member

Looking at various organizational challenges, this section uses interpersonal, operational and structural dimensions as a lens to discuss the issues surrounding the sustainability of the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library. Findings from both the interviews and focus groups suggest that interpersonal challenges, referring to the individual volunteers, operational challenges, referring to the internal operations of the library and the volunteer program impede the sustainability of the volunteer program, and thus, the Selwyn Public Library and structural challenges, referring to the external relationships of the library. Themes such as aging, recruitment, training organizational relationships and policy implementation, speak to these challenges and shed light on how these challenges influence the volunteers, the volunteer program and the library.

5.2.1 Interpersonal challenges

Within the library lies challenges surrounding the volunteers and their interactions with each other and with the volunteer program. Findings such as the aging volunteer base at the library and issues surrounding commitment and time shed light on these challenges to understand how they affect the sustainability of the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library.

Supported by the survey results presented in Chapter 4 is the finding that the volunteer base at the Selwyn Public Library is aging, with 89% of the volunteer base over the age of 65. Similarly, in Chapter 2, the literature supports the notion of volunteering at
an older age, as it provides both physical and mental benefits to the older volunteer. However beneficial, the interview participants discussed at length the challenges surrounding volunteering in later life. Most notably, participants discussed that as they age, they are no longer physically able to volunteer, with a volunteer from the Ennismore branch stating, “I don’t know how many more years I’m going to be able to do it...I’m getting more and more stiff with arthritis.” Similarly, an interview participant from the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop recounted a volunteer who, at the age of 96, had to stop volunteering due to age and mobility.

These issues surrounding the continuation of volunteering in older age poses challenges on the library volunteer program, as staff member of the library states, “They are aging. They are going to eventually age out of doing these jobs that we rely on them to do...It’s hard to say what’s going to happen for us in the future.” As the volunteers continue to age, the library expresses feelings of fear and uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the volunteer base and thus, the sustainability of the library.

Paired with the physical challenge of volunteering in later life, interview participants also described the challenge of committing to volunteering due to personal circumstances. Several interview participants described having an ill spouse/partner, or just recently dealt with the death of a spouse/partner, and how during those hard times, they had to take time away from the library. As a volunteer from the Causeway Treasure Trove stated,

*The reason I had to quit...is because my husband is not well. I had to be around more. I was away from home a lot. I was either at the church, or somewhere else and not home enough. He needs me now. His heart is very, very bad.*
While interview participants discussed the support they received from the library when time off to care for an ill spouse/partner is needed, they still discussed the guilt associated with taking time off, as the interview participants are aware of the repercussions on the library if their volunteer spot is not filled.

Along with the physical and personal challenges associated with age, participants in both the interviews and focus groups discussed time as being a challenge and barrier to volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. As mentioned above, volunteers are typically over the age of 65 and are retired. Interview participants who stated that they were newly retired have been putting activities such as travel and time with grandchildren at the top of their priority list. Participants discussed the commitment and loyalty they felt towards the library, however, they prioritized other social activities. Due to the desire to participate in other activities, participants suggested the library create a more flexible volunteer model to allow for individuals who would rather volunteer in short bursts, rather than having to commit to a weekly, pre-determined shift.

As the Selwyn Public Library volunteers refer to themselves as newly retired, many take this new work-free situation and develop a new lifestyle of migrating south for the winter months, or to become a ‘snow bird’. With many volunteers taking on this lifestyle of leaving for four to six months, the library struggles to replace those volunteers, with interview participants describing volunteer availability reducing by 50% as the winter weather deters volunteers from staying in the region. This challenging drop in volunteer numbers is experienced in both the library and the thrift stores, with another volunteer from the Treasure Trove Thrift Store stating, “In the winter time, when they go away, when the snow birds go, it makes it difficult.” Where winter weather was discussed
earlier as a challenge in attending shifts, winter weather in this sense is seen as a factor that inhibits a large portion of volunteers from committing to the library in the winter months.

To replace the migrating volunteers, both the library and the thrift shops have enhanced their recruitment to fill in the gaps in the volunteer schedule. However, participants who self-identify as snow birds, discussed their experience upon returning in the spring. They revealed it as being awkward when they want their regular shift back, but a new volunteer has filled that role for five months. This conflict alludes to a large sense of ownership volunteers have over their weekly shift, which makes it difficult for scheduling.

In addition to aging and commitment is the organizational relationships that are formed between the volunteers and the library which pose challenges for sustaining the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program. One organizational relationship that was identified by interview participants as a major challenge for sustainability was the territoriality felt amongst thrift store volunteers. Specific to the thrift store volunteers is a feeling of being protective of their branch, in terms of their relationship to the library, as well as in terms of their relationship with their primary supportive body, Community Care Peterborough. Due to these feelings, interview participants expressed a disconnect between the thrift stores and the library. A township stakeholder discussed this disconnect by stating the following,

We think of them as library volunteers because their efforts support the library. But, I don’t think they identify so much with where the bottom line of their operation goes. They think of themselves as thrift shop volunteers. I know the Renewed Classics in Lakefield, I think they’re even more removed. They see themselves as operating a store. They’re volunteering, they don’t get paid but
they’re retailing goods, they’re helping the community out, they’re providing quality used clothing to people who need it. At the end of the day, if the money goes to the library, that’s great.

This excerpt reveals how the thrift store volunteers consider themselves independent of the library. Although proceeds from the sales at the thrift stores go to the library to support children’s programming, the volunteers see themselves strictly as thrift store volunteers and, thus, do not have a relationship with the library.

There is a sense of territoriality within the thrift store volunteers at the Causeway Treasure Trove Thrift Store and the Ennismore Community Thrift Store. As described in Chapter 3, volunteers at these two thrift stores are recruited through Community Care Peterborough and the proceeds from the sales at these two thrift stores are divided 50/50 with the Selwyn Public Library. Due to these circumstances, Community Care Peterborough has possession over the organization of these two thrift stores, which has caused feelings of territoriality among the volunteers. The conflict between Community Care Peterborough and the thrift store leads to confusion regarding the role of the Community Care Peterborough volunteer coordinator and the role of the volunteers. A volunteer for the Causeway Treasure Trove Thrift Store stated, regarding the confusion, “She’ll come in when [the store manager] is not there and go through the books and really, you know, it’s not her place. We’re doing a good job.” Similarly, another interview participant from the Causeway Treasure Trove stated, “If we were left alone we’d be fine. If we had more control over our own store, we’d be fine.” These expressions of a “leave us alone” attitude were very common in the interviews with the thrift store volunteers, as they expressed their ability to run the store by themselves and
the feelings that they do not need external support from the Community Care Peterborough volunteer coordinator.

Similar to the expressions of territoriality among thrift store volunteers is the feeling of loyalty within the library volunteers. Seen within the interview and focus groups results is a deep-rooted loyalty felt by volunteers to their branch, the library staff and their shift partner. As stated by a volunteer at the Bridgenorth branch,

*There’s a lot of pride in their branch. That again, is one of the reasons why they are such loyal volunteers, is that Bridgenorth is their library, Ennismore is their library. They’re very proud of it and they want to keep it separate.*

As loyalty shows dedication, in this case, loyalty is also seen as a challenge to the sustainability of the Selwyn Public Library. The loyalty shown by the volunteers, especially in relation to their branch, fosters a general sense of resistance to change, as when asked in the focus group if they would consider volunteering at a different branch, many participants stated “they would not”. With smaller branches, such as Ennismore, interview participants state that there is usually a need for more volunteers. On the contrary, larger branches, such as Bridgenorth, have turned down volunteers on occasion since all their volunteer shifts are filled. However, even with an influx of volunteers, the loyalty to the branch inhibits volunteers from traveling to another branch to fill in for a shift at a different branch. Interview participants described this loyalty as hindering the unification of the library, as the quote above describes, the vocabulary used is in reference to the ‘Bridgenorth Library’, rather than Bridgenorth being one of three branches of the Selwyn Public Library.
5.2.2 Operational challenges

In addition to interpersonal challenges are the challenges associated with the internal operations of the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteer program. Firstly, interview participants discussed the challenge of recruitment for the Selwyn Public Library, a finding validated through the focus groups. In general, participants describe the sense of urgency in reference to recruitment. Participants stated that there is a general lack of volunteers, primarily in their desired demographic of newly retired. As discussed in Chapter 4, survey results indicate that the primary recruitment method at the Selwyn Public Library is word of mouth (66%). If that finding is coupled with the previous section regarding an aging volunteer base, many participants fear the lack of sustainability that provides to the volunteer program, as a board member stated, “I think what happens is that friends meet friends and people, you know, this is kind of how it works and it does work, but I'm not sure how sustainable that is in the long term.” In reference to the word of mouth recruitment method, this interview participant is expressing fear for the future, if all the older volunteers continue to recruit their older friends.

Participants stated that the preferred and desirable cohort of new volunteers would be newly retired adults, who do not have many travel plans. However, interview participants feel this is not happening, with a township stakeholder stating, “We’re not getting young volunteers. That’s a huge issue. So, where are we going to get them in the future?” When asked in the interviews and focus groups what the consequences would be if the library volunteer program was not sustained, the consensus was that the library would close, or hours the library branches are open would be cut drastically. Participants
understood that without a sustained volunteer base, the library would not be able to support itself, a sentiment that was described as being unthinkable, as a staff member of the Selwyn Public Library stated, “I feel like, when I say to people ‘you know, your library wouldn’t exist without [the volunteers]’...It’s such a taboo thing to say...But it’s the truth, so why are we tip-toeing around that?” Interview participants believe that if volunteers and community members alike understood the role of the volunteers in the library, they would hope that would encourage new volunteers to join and volunteer.

In terms of recruitment, interview participants feel like the volunteer base will naturally replenish itself. As stated by another volunteer from the Bridgenorth branch,

There is always someone retiring. There are some young volunteers but most of them are retired people. There are some that are still working that just come in the evenings, but I think there is always somebody. Especially in this community.

As eluded to in this quotation, interview participants feel that Selwyn Township is a desirable retirement community, thus, participants think that many new migrants retiring in the area will want to find a new activity and hopes that they will choose volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. However optimistic, this process is problematic when thinking of the challenging impact the snowbirds play on the retention of library volunteers. There may be migrants coming into the area, however, they too may choose to leave for a long duration throughout the winter.

Similar to the sentiments of the library volunteers, interview participants from the thrift stores discussed a lack of recruitment of new volunteers for the thrift stores. Having a similar demographic in terms of their volunteer base, many participants discussed the need for more volunteers at the thrift stores to replace the older volunteers who are no
longer able to volunteer. Where the volunteers at the Renewed Classics Thrift Store in Lakefield are recruited through the library, the thrift store volunteers at the Causeway Treasure Trove in Bridgenorth and the Ennismore Community Thrift Store in Ennismore are recruited through the local Community Care Peterborough office. Participants from the Community Care affiliated thrift stores discussed in length how Community Care does not actively recruit volunteers from the community and puts applications from new volunteers on hold for so long that the eager volunteer loses interest.

Similar to the consequences at the library, the thrift store volunteers discussed how when there are not two people available to volunteer during a shift, the thrift store does not open. This poses challenges for community members, as the hours of operations become dependent upon the volunteers’ commitment and availability to volunteer. However, many interview participants from the thrift stores discussed how with more volunteers on their roster, the less likely closure will happen.

Along with recruitment, training was identified as an operational challenge within the Selwyn Public Library. When discussing the training provided to volunteers, the participants expressed that due to the inconsistent training, there is a general lack of consistency within each library and between branches and between shifts. During a focus group, a volunteer at the Ennismore library stated, “I think a lot of it is learning on the job and that’s fine, but then you follow what you’ve been taught.” In reference to the training, this quotation describes how the onus of training new volunteers falls on the volunteers already on that shift and questions if that seasoned volunteer does not train the new volunteer appropriately, how is the new volunteer to know that is not the way of correctly doing thing?
The lack of consistency is described as difficult for the patrons of the library as well, as if they utilize the library on different days, they could have two different experiences due to the lack of consistency of the training of the volunteers. A township stakeholder stated,

*I think the flavour of the volunteer group that’s in on a particular day may change how the library is. I could see that two ways. One, it’s great. Two, it could be a little difficult for the user...so that consistency might be a little bit of a challenge.*

When discussing this challenge of training and the consequence of lack of consistency within the library, interview participants expressed the urgency for a solid set of policies and procedures for volunteers across all branches and for enforcement of such policies, a finding that was validated and discussed further in the focus groups. Participants also discussed the need for a staff member of the Selwyn Public Library to focus on training and coordinating the volunteers, as they feel that the onus should not be on them to train the new volunteers.

### 5.2.3 Structural challenges

Along with interpersonal and operational challenges, the participants also discussed structural challenges at the Selwyn Public Library regarding the external relationships of the library. Legislatively, libraries within the Ontario Public Library system follow the Public Libraries Act, which regulates the individual library’s Board of Directors and provides acting guidelines for the operations of public libraries (Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44). In addition to the Public Libraries Act, the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries has the Ontario Public Library Guidelines in its seventh edition, which provides community-based norms for public libraries in Ontario.
Guidelines include recommendations on policies, resources and services that library board and staff are welcomed to follow to achieve accreditation (Ontario Public Library Guidelines, 2017).

Following both the Public Libraries Act and the Ontario Public Library Guidelines, the Board of Directors create policies for their individual public libraries. In the context of the Selwyn Public Library, the Board of Directors created policies under which the library runs in order to manage the day-to-day operational tasks of the library. Policies include, but are not limited to the Safety, Security and Emergencies Policy and volunteer policies which include recruitment, training, supervision, recognition, dismissal, death, the role of volunteer coordinator and store manager, resignation, leave of absence and record keeping (Selwyn Public Library, 2015). Within these legislative and policy frameworks, structural challenges centering on mediating organizational relationships and policy implementation are evident.

In reference to the relationship between the library and the thrift stores, interview participants discussed a polarization between the two institutions. Interview participants from both thrift stores and the library alike, as well as discussion in focus groups referred to a divide between the volunteers, which is said to be attributed to the volunteering tasks performed and indicative of a level of uncertainty in policy implementation. A volunteer from the Causeway Treasure Trove Thrift Shop stated,

*I hate to use the word uppity because that’s not a very nice word, but they just feel they’re a little more superior in their role. They’re more literate, they’re looking after the library. We’re just selling second hand clothes. How uncool is that.*
Similarly, interview participants also eluded to the fact that volunteers generally are unaware of the connection between the thrift stores and the library. Interview participants from the thrift stores explained that at times, their interactions with library volunteers regarding their connection was full of confusion, as library volunteers did not know how the thrift stores supported the library. Through this discussion, interview participants observed the importance of knowledge sharing and how having a mutual understanding and clarity of policy between the thrift store volunteers and the library volunteers could lead to integration and mutual respect and recognition.

Likewise, interview participants expressed a challenge in terms of the polarization between thrift stores and the Selwyn Public Library involving recruitment policies. Following provincial legislation (Bill 113, Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, C.30) both the Selwyn Public Library and Community Care Peterborough require volunteers to obtain a police and vulnerable sector check prior to beginning volunteering. However, due to the polarized nature of the organizations, when volunteers wish to volunteer for both, there is no file sharing system in place that allows for one police check to be used for both organizations. Another Causeway Treasure Trove volunteer stated regarding the hassle,

“The only criticism I have...when I applied here at the library, I went through all the police checks and all that which was kind of onerous and they take time and what not. Then, when I applied to the thrift sore, even though I did it only a couple of months sooner, I had to go through the whole rigmarole again. I’m thinking, if you’re under the same umbrella, then one should do for the other.”
As eluded to by the participant, a collaborative approach to recruitment between the Selwyn Public Library and Community Care Peterborough in terms of a file sharing system could alleviate the hassle and encourage inter-organizational volunteering.

In addition to the external relationship with the thrift store, structural challenges were also found within the external relationship to library policy. The first policy which results in challenges for the volunteers is the policy of when the staff member is absent, there must be two volunteers at the library at all times. This is seen as a challenge as it causes sentiments of guilt when a volunteer is not able to make a shift and cannot find a replacement, because in that circumstance, the library would close. However, the policy is generally responded to well, as a volunteer from the Ennismore branch stated,

*I think it’s probably quite responsible of them to say ‘no we should not open unless there are two volunteers’ especially given the fact that a lot of the volunteers are older and it’s not likely to be the place where there would be a disruption in terms of a person coming in with a knife or something untold.*

**5.3 Implications for rural community sustainability**

*“This is kind of how it works and it does work, but I’m not sure how sustainable that is in the long term.”*

Selwyn Public Library board member

Along with the library, Selwyn Public Library volunteers contribute to the sustainability of the communities of Selwyn Township. Both the library and the volunteers have the potential to contribute to the cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability of their local hamlets, and small-town villages in various reasons. Through the need for more diversity, as well as continued community relationships, organizational relationships, the burden of care and the role of the thrift
stores, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers help to keep their communities resilient and places to live and grow old.

5.3.1 Cultural sustainability

As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural sustainability refers to sustaining the cultural vitality of communities by advancing development to allow human groups to retain their identity, sense of community and heritage. However, participants expressed concerns that there is a general lack of diversity within the Selwyn Public Library, as a board member stated, “It’s not a diverse volunteer base and I think we need to have diversity...I’m talking about gender and race and everything to be a public institution that represents our public.” In reflecting back to the survey results presented in Chapter 4, the demographic data supports this homogenous nature of the volunteer base and interview participants fear that residents who do not fit the mold of the volunteers may feel excluded from volunteering or even utilizing the library and its services.

In addition to lack of diversity within the volunteer base, participants also expressed that they see the lack of diversity also in the programing offered by the Selwyn Public Library. With Selwyn Township directly adjacent to the Curve Lake First Nation Community, participants expressed feelings of frustration that the library does not offer any sort of indigenous programing. A focus group with volunteers outlined the sentiment that diversity within the programing offered would attract a more diverse user group to the library and would allow for cross-cultural sharing of knowledge and skills. Along with a lack of indigenous programing, interview participants felt that programing the library current offers is excluding older age demographics. Currently, many of the programs offered by the library are children’s programs. Interview participants discussed
the benefits of having these programs, but also highlighted the lack of programing offered specifically for adults or older adults. Similar to the effect of including cultural programs, interview participants feel that adding additional programing to cater to older age groups would diversify the library patron group.

5.3.2 Social Sustainability

In addition to how the volunteers and the Selwyn Public Library could positively affect the cultural sustainability of the communities of Selwyn Township, they also influence the social sustainability. Social sustainability refers to strengthening the sense of community and sense of place, with an emphasis on social equity and justice. Through community relationships and service delivery, the library volunteers support and sustain their social environments to keep them thriving socially.

Through developing a relationship with the community itself, interview participants describe the connection they began to have with their community once they began volunteering for the Selwyn Public Library, as well as the numerous other organizations they volunteer for. This connection stems from the sentiments interview participants have towards giving back to their community and contributing positivity to its sustainability through volunteering. As a volunteer from the Causeway Treasure Trove Thrift Shop stated, “When I decided to retire, I knew I didn’t want to just sit at home and twiddle my thumbs. I wanted to do something in the community.” As this quotation alludes, and as supported by the survey results presented in Chapter 4, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers work on behalf of many other organizations within their local communities, such as Community Care Peterborough, the Lakefield Community Food Bank, the Ennismore and District Horticultural Society, The Bridgenorth Beautification
Committee and local churches. A volunteer from the Lakefield branch exemplified the commitment of the volunteers by stating, “They’re volunteers with a capital V. They do it everywhere!”

Interview participants described the reason for volunteering within their community was to give back and contribute to the community in which they want to grow old in. In addition, as supported by the survey results presented in Chapter 4, 78% of survey respondents have been living in Selwyn Township for 10 years or more; volunteering is seen as a way to take pride in their local community. To reiterate this point, a staff member of the Selwyn Public Library stated, in reference to volunteering, “It just makes it a richer community when you do have participation in it. I think people take more pride in their own community if they’re involved in it.”

In addition to connectivity within the community, volunteers also contribute to the social sustainability of Selwyn Township by providing essential services to the community. As discussed in Chapter 2, the restructuring of health and social services in rural areas has led to many gaps in services and it has fallen on the shoulders of volunteers to fill in these gaps in services. This is seen within the findings from the interviews and focus groups, as participants described that they knew there was a need within the community, and they saw volunteering as a way to address that need, as a volunteer from the Ennismore Community Thrift Store stated, “I see that we need them desperately or things just wouldn’t happen.”

Interview participants described the need in their community as services that cater to older people and described these services as ones that will benefit them as they continue to age and will serve them in later life. An interview participant who also
volunteers for Community Care Peterborough as a volunteer driver described their motivation for volunteering there as, “I live out of the city, so, I’m going to eventually need their help. If I work now, then I know that I won’t feel guilty of phoning them and asking them for help when the time comes.” Sustaining these community services, which includes the Selwyn Public Library through volunteering, allows older residents of these community to continue to age in place and be able to be self-sustained due to the help of these organizations and the volunteers that keep them running.

Additionally, as discussed in the previous section regarding experiences of relationships for the individual volunteer, the library is described as a place where community connections are made. These connections add to the social sustainability of Selwyn Township, as they foster social relationships between the library, volunteers and community members.

**5.3.3 Economic sustainability**

In addition to cultural and social sustainability, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers also contribute to the economic sustainability of Selwyn Township. Here, economic sustainability refers to sustaining the natural, human and/or social capital of a community. Through organizational relationships and the burden of care, the volunteers and the library provide an economically feasible way to meet the needs of the rural community and to keep it economically viable, as the library represents a public service and economic amenity that contributes to the local and regional economy of Selwyn Township.
In this section, organizational relationship refers to the relationship amongst branches. As discussed in Chapter 4, an amalgamation occurred in the late 1990’s/early 2000s that caused three distinct libraries to become three branches in one unified library system. As the unified system is a positive for the community, where residents of Peterborough County can borrow books at any of the three branches, the amalgamation did not come without challenges. A township stakeholder discussed this challenge by stating, “It’s two different communities. You’ve got a smaller community, you’ve got a rural retirement cottage lake community that you’re putting together into one system and that was a challenge I think.”

Another challenge the library faced during the amalgamation was the fact that the Lakefield Public Library was forced to adopt the volunteer model previously used by the then Smith-Ennismore Public Library (see Chapter 4). Still today, this is a point of contention among volunteers, primarily those from the Lakefield branch, as the volunteer model led to the loss of paid staff members. A volunteer from the Lakefield branch explained the transition and their frustration by stating,

*Over time, as we went through the amalgamation with Smith Township...there was a lot of controversy over that because we had paid positions in the library and there was the attitude of Smith people was that ‘we don’t need paid staff. You should follow too.’ I find that very hard because really, you’re putting someone out of work basically and you’re replacing them with somebody who already has a pension and has worked so, it’s kind of a sore point for me.*

Although amalgamating the libraries created an economically feasible and unified library system, the contention remains today regarding the forced adoption of the volunteer model on the Lakefield branch.
Although the Selwyn Public Library views itself as a unified library with three distinct branches, the amalgamation of the townships of Smith, Ennismore and Lakefield in 2001, created divided communities that interview participants describe as resulting in polarized library branches. A volunteer from the Ennismore branch describes this polarization by stating,

_There is a library group in Lakefield, there is one in Bridgenorth and there is a group here and they are not interrelated in any way. It’s still a very separate thing, and I think you can see that in the township._

With a feeling of polarization and otherness in reference to other branches, the interview participants expressed the need for staff to step forward and act as a process of integration between the branches. Interview participants are hopeful however, as a new CEO in the library as of August 2017, has been tasked with liaising between branches.

In addition to the economic sustainability brought on by amalgamating the three library branches, the burden of care is seen here as another way in which the volunteers create economic sustainability in Selwyn Township. Like the previous section on social sustainability, in this sense, volunteers feel morally responsible to volunteer to provide services to their community. As stated by a volunteer from the Ennismore branch,

_I think the isolation helps because if you want it done you’ve got to get it done. So, I think people pick up the slack and so it’s because we want our parks to be clean, we want our gardens to be lovely, we want our library to work and we realize in a more isolated community that if you don’t pick it up, you’re not going to have it._

Speaking about the isolation commonly found in rural communities, this interview participant described the feelings of many others of “stepping up and stepping in” to keep services running.
5.3.4 Environmental sustainability

Along with cultural, social and economic sustainability, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers, more specifically the thrift store volunteers, play an active role in the environmental sustainability of the communities of Selwyn Township. In this sense, environmental sustainability refers to sustaining both natural and human environments. Interview participants from the three thrift stores associated with the Selwyn Public Library discussed the importance of the thrift stores in the community as an outlet for residents to bring in their used clothing and household items. Having an establishment like the thrift stores in each of the communities of Selwyn Townships allows for second hand items to be redistributed back into the community instead of being thrown out and ultimately going into a landfill. An interview participant from the Causeway Treasure Trove in Bridgenorth described this service by stating, “It’s a place where they can drop off their discarded, not wanted items, and know it’s going to be recycled somehow, some way.”

In addition to sustaining the natural environment (recycling), the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteers contribute to the sustainability of the social environmental contexts in Selwyn Township. Through the description of the findings in this section, the ways in which the library and the volunteers contribute to the cultural, social, economic and natural environmental helps to sustain a positive environment for aging and positive community development.
5.4 Summary

The chapter presented findings from the interviews and focus groups to examine the experiences of older volunteers, the challenges of sustaining rural voluntarism, and how volunteers and volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. Throughout these findings are three narratives, which are threaded through in order to help tell the story of the Selwyn Public Library and its volunteers.

Aging in place is seen within the findings as an underpinning reason these older volunteers contribute expansively to their community. Through examining the emotions and age of the volunteers, their commitment levels and all the organizations in which they volunteer for, it is evident that they are doing what they can to keep their communities viable, sustainable, and “good places to grow old” (Keating, 2008). Choosing to volunteer at the library but also at organizations within the community is key to keeping services running in rural communities to cater to the needs of the older residents, but as the findings show, volunteers are choosing these organizations that will serve themselves in later life as well.

The narrative of the changing role of voluntarism is seen throughout the findings in reference to the changes needed to be made at the library to cater to the mobile lifestyles of newly retired volunteers. Even though volunteers are committing to the library for 10 or more years, as described in Chapter 4, the findings in this chapter showcase the changing wants and needs of older people, and subsequently, older volunteers. With a desire from volunteers to travel for both long and short periods of time, as well spending time with family, and volunteering for several other organizations
within the community, the Selwyn Public Library is going to have to adapt their volunteer model to meet the needs of these volunteers to sustain their volunteer base.

The changing role of voluntarism narrative is also seen within the issues of territoriality between volunteers and organization and the training and recruitment at the Selwyn Public Library. With sentiments of territoriality being expressed by thrift store volunteers, it becomes evident that for these volunteers, their wants and needs are to become more independent from Community Care Peterborough. Training and recruitment reflect the changing role of voluntarism as the volunteers see these as integral processes that will aid in the sustainability of the volunteer model.

Lastly, the narrative of rural community sustainability is seen throughout the findings, as the Selwyn Public Library volunteers largely contribute to their local communities. Through the desire for diversified programming and volunteers, the moral responsibility of providing local services and the environmental sustainability efforts of the thrift stores, the findings suggest that the library volunteers and the Selwyn Public Library have the potential for contributing to the cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability of Selwyn Township.
Chapter 6
Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4 and 5 as well as a conclusion that reflects upon the contributions of the research and provides future research directions. It is organized into seven sections beginning with a summary of how the findings relate to the fulfilling the thesis objectives 1) to understand the experiences of older library volunteers, 2) to examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and 3) to explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability. Next, it discussed key aspects of the thesis as they relate to the three narratives of aging in place, the changing role of voluntarism and rural community sustainability. The third section builds upon the literature in Chapter 2 by conceptualizing the Selwyn Public Library as a ‘contested space of older voluntarism’ and how the relationships associated with the library are contested in related to experiencing voluntarism. The fourth section outlines the contributions the thesis makes conceptually, empirically and at the community level, including specific recommendations to the Selwyn Public Library board on ways to sustain the volunteer program. The next section presents a critical reflection on the research, providing the limitations and future research directions. Lastly, the chapter sums up the thesis with some concluding comments regarding the research and the connection between older voluntarism and rural community sustainability.
6.1 Summary of findings

The following section discusses how the findings from Chapter 5 shed light on these three objectives and how they relate back to the overall goal of the thesis. Understanding these three objectives in more depth allows for the goal of the thesis, to explore how older voluntarism contributes to the sustainability of aging rural communities.

6.1.1 Objective 1: To understand the experiences of older library volunteers

The first objective focused on the experiences of the individual library volunteer. The findings explored experiences, through the lens of the lived experience of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer, which were both positive and negative in nature, but reflect the feelings and motivations behind volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. Key findings included the frustration the volunteers felt in terms of the reliance on technology and commitment required of the volunteers as well as the burnout associated with the responsibility are experiences that are negative but show the high commitment the volunteers feel towards the library. Although they experienced frustration in regards to technology, and the lack of knowledge around new technology, the volunteers persisted through and continued to volunteer regardless of their frustration. In reference to the responsibility and subsequent burnout that comes from the high commitment levels asked of the volunteers, the volunteers continue to want to provide support to the library, regardless of the consequences. Snowbirds explained that even though they were unable to volunteer during the winter, they were eager to continue once they got back in the spring and summer months.
In addition to negative experiences, positive experiences included the relationships built between volunteers and between volunteers and the community. These social and organizational relationships were discussed as positive aspects that enhanced their experience of volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library. As presented in the survey results, these relationships show that community is at the forefront of the experience of the individual library volunteer. The experience with their relationship to their local community allowed them to feel more connected to other community members and other community services that created not only relationships, but also some other volunteering opportunities for participants. In addition to community relationships, the volunteers also experienced positive social interactions between other volunteers. As presented in the interview and focus groups results, this was a predominate part of their experience of volunteering at the library as many volunteers become friends and a support in each other’s lives.

Understanding the experiences of the individual library volunteers sheds light on their motivation to volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library and what drives them to continue to volunteer within the library, but also speaks to their volunteering experiences within the community as well. Through the findings presented in Chapter 5, regarding the experiences of the individual volunteers is a strong sense of place. The individual volunteers experience a connection to their community enough to counteract feelings of frustration, to continue to commit to the library and to continue to develop relationships within and outside of the library.
6.1.2 Objective 2: To examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program

The second objective focused on the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program. Interpersonal, operational and structural challenges are used to discuss the issues surrounding the sustainability of the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library. Challenges presented in the findings were the aging volunteer base, organizational relationships, recruitment and training, which all in some ways impede the sustainability of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program.

In terms of these challenges, although they impede the sustainability of the volunteer program, it is important to reflect on them as ways to learn and adapt in order to promote positive sustainability. In reference to the aging volunteer base, the library will have to adapt to the volunteer’s needs as they continue to grow older but continue to want to actively volunteer at the library. Training and recruitment must be adapted in order to create consistency across branches, so the volunteers are able to deliver consistent service across branches and shifts. The challenge of organizational relationships, which includes polarization, territoriality and loyalty are learning tools to learn from the past to pave the way for a more unified future, between library branches, and between library and thrift stores.

Creating sustainability in the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program can help to promote sustainability within the community. Creating a stable volunteer base allows for the library to remain open and be able to continue to provide the community services it provides to the residents to Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield.
6.1.3 Objective 3: To explore how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability

The third objective focused on how the library volunteers contribute to the sustainability of rural communities. Using the four pillars of sustainability (cultural, social, economic and environmental), the findings describe the ways in which the Selwyn Public Library volunteers have the potential to contribute to the local communities of Selwyn Township. The interview and focus group findings examined diversity, or lack thereof, relationships, the burden of care and the role of the Thrift Stores to present the ways in which the volunteer directly contribute to the sustainability of the communities.

Through the presentation of findings associated with this objective, it is evident that through acts of volunteering, there is a potential contribution made to the sustainability of the community, whether it be through cultural, social, economical or environmental contexts. Although dependent on role and individual experience of volunteering, the findings presented in the thesis showcase the ways volunteering can act as a catalyst for positive community sustainability.

The Selwyn Public Library volunteers, during their time volunteering at the library, but also during their time volunteering for other community organizations, see to that their local communities are able to have local services, whether it be community services, or health and social services, for their residents.
6.2 Discussion

In addition to speaking directly to the three objectives of the thesis, the findings presented also speak to the three narratives discussed in Chapter 5 that are interwoven as threads of inquiry throughout the thesis. The following section discusses these narratives and reflects upon them in relation to the findings.

6.2.1 Aging in place

As reviewed in Chapter 2, rural communities have undergone cycles of change that are attributed to a rapidly aging population and a general lack of services within the community that cater to the needs of the older residents (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005; Joseph & Skinner, 2012). Rural communities rely on voluntarism to fill in the service gaps and provide essential services to the community. In terms of the first narrative, aging in place refers to aging at home or in a community safety and independently. In order to age in place in rural communities, residents rely on these volunteer-run services to help them age safety and independently in their home (Skinner et al., 2014).

As shown in both the survey results and the findings from the interviews and focus groups, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers are older. They themselves are experiencing aging and are aging in place in a rural community. This acts as a personal motivation for the individuals to volunteer in order to sustain volunteer-run organizations in later life. In direct reference to the interview and focus group findings, participants stated that they volunteer for organizations such as Community Care Peterborough, so they will not feel guilt when the tables turn, and they are the ones needing to utilize services. In addition, volunteers have a deep-rooted sense of community and, thus,
volunteer to keep organizations running that cater to the needs to the older residents of their community and create “good places to grow old” (Keating, 2008).

### 6.2.2 Changing role of voluntarism

As Chapter 2 states, voluntarism is a way rural communities respond to the changing roles and responsibilities surrounding the provision of health and social support services. Voluntarism helps to strengthen the local capacity of rural communities to respond to changes in order to keep the communities vibrant (Skinner, 2014).

Upon reflection, the findings from Selwyn Township support this changing role of voluntarism. As discussed in the preceding section, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers fill in service gaps in their communities by volunteering at multiple voluntary organizations to support aging in place for community residents and for themselves. However, along with the role of voluntarism, the wants and needs of the individual volunteer are also changing. In the case of the thesis, these changes are attributed to the older age of the volunteer and where they are in their life course (retirement).

The findings presented in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 suggest that once the volunteers retired from their particular field of employment, they are not wanting to step into a long-term retirement commitment, something that is assumed of them by older, more long-term volunteers. Newly retired volunteers stated that they began to prioritize other things, such as spending time with family, volunteering for multiple organizations and traveling, both short term and seasonally, over a regular, long-term volunteering commitment at the Selwyn Public Library. The changing role of voluntarism in this respect is critical for the library to understand in order to adapt to the changes to ensure
sustainability of the volunteer program for continued success as a community organization.

6.2.3 Rural community sustainability

The third narrative interwoven within the findings is that of rural community sustainability. In Chapter 2, older voluntarism is mentioned as a way to help facilitate successful and healthy aging in place, as well as a pathway of integration between older people and aging places, which in turn helps to promote positive rural community sustainability (Skinner et al., 2016).

These actions, of facilitating aging in place and integrating older people and aging places are evident within the findings. While discussing the two other narratives, it is evident that the Selwyn Public Library volunteers facilitate aging in place. By volunteering to fill in service gaps, they are providing necessary services to older members of the community, so they can age in place successfully and healthily. The findings suggest that the volunteers feel the personal responsibility to keep these local services running, as they are aware of the repercussions of these types of services closing would have on the community. With themselves, as they age, and the community in the forefront of their minds as motivation, the Selwyn Public Library volunteers contribute to the sustainability of their local communities by keeping them culturally, socially, economically and environmentally vibrant.

The following section presents a critical examination of the relationship between aging, older voluntarism and rural community sustainability by reflecting upon ‘contested spaces of older voluntarism’ as a means of further understanding the complexity of rural
aging. The five dimensions are presented within the individual, program and community scale.

6.3 Contested spaces of older voluntarism

Discussed in Chapter 2 is the concept of contested spaces of rural aging. Here, contested spaces are locations where conflicts engage actors whose social positions are defined by the control of resources and/or access to power (Skinner & Winterton, 2018). These conflicts relate to both the rights and access to different spaces and the future trajectories of the spaces. In the case of rural aging, contested spaces form at the intersection of rural and aging spaces. Using the work of Skinner and Winterton (2018) as a foundation, an additional view of contested spaces can be seen as emerging from the findings, as the findings present dimensions of “contested spaces of older voluntarism”. Here, contested spaces are formed at the intersection of aging spaces and spaces of voluntarism that challenge the right and responsibility to volunteer. This section highlights five dimensions of the contested spaces of older voluntarism, which are seen on the individual, program and community scale.

6.3.1 Individual

At the individual scale, the experiences of volunteers are both shaped by and contribute to contested spaces of older voluntarism. The first dimension is that contested spaces of older voluntarism emerge through the feeling of responsibility. This feeling of responsibility is seen within the individual volunteers, as they believe they, as community members, bear the responsibility of providing services missing within their communities. Volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library, but also at many other volunteer-based
community services allows the individuals to provide to their community something that would not otherwise be available. These feelings of responsibility are contested, however; as firstly, the age of the individual can begin to conflict the increased feeling of responsibility. As noted in the findings, the individual volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library are aging. Although the volunteers are still able to volunteer, as they continue to age, their ability to volunteer may decrease. Additionally, the responsibility of volunteering is contested through the level of commitment of the individual volunteer. The volunteers feel they have a responsibility to their community; however, the high level of commitment to volunteering for multiple organizations can leave the individual volunteer feeling burnt out. Attention should be paid to the ability of the volunteer and the commitment they are providing to the organization in order to ensure a positive environment to experience voluntarism.

A second dimension of contested spaces of older voluntarism emergent at the individual level is that contested spaces of older voluntarism are dependent upon the aging life course. Here, conflict is created dependent upon where the volunteer is at in their life course. The findings discuss how volunteers in the different stages of life course (from newly retired, to older volunteers) have challenged views of what successful voluntarism is. Volunteers who are in the older stage of life are the ones who are able to commit to the level of volunteering required from organizations, such as the Selwyn Public Library. It is the newly retired individuals, after migrating from another community who prioritize traveling and spending time with family over long volunteer commitments.
6.3.2 Volunteer program

In addition to contested spaces of older voluntarism emerging at the individual level, they also present themselves at the volunteer program level, in the case of the thesis, the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library. A third dimension is that contested spaces of older voluntarism are created as a result of local territoriality. The findings from the thesis allude to this dimension of contested spaces of voluntarism in the discussion involving the relationships between the thrift stores and their governing organization Community Care Peterborough. Conflict emerges in these discussions as the volunteers at the two Community Care/Selwyn Public Library thrift stores (Causeway Treasure Trove and the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop) begin to express their right to volunteer at the thrift store by contesting the administrative authority from Community Care. Volunteers indicated that they would rather be left alone to handle the day to day operations of the thrift stores themselves and that they did not appreciate when Community Care’s volunteer coordinator imposed themselves on the store. By expressing their right and responsibilities of volunteering at the thrift stores, the volunteers begin to dispute the nature of the volunteering by challenging the power Community Care has over the thrift stores.

A fourth dimension in the volunteer program level is that contested spaces of older voluntarism emerge over the right to volunteer. The right to volunteer in this context becomes contested due to the nature of volunteer recruitment. As indicated in Chapter 4, the primary means of volunteer recruitment at the Selwyn Public Library is word of mouth. This proves to be an exclusive form of recruitment, as it is usually the friends of the older, women volunteering who become new volunteers. This is in contrast
to the need for diversity within the volunteer program and conflicts the rights of any individual who wishes to volunteer, as if they do not previously know a volunteer, their chances of becoming a Selwyn Public Library volunteer are slim. By expanding recruitment methods beyond word of mouth, volunteer organizations such as the Selwyn Public Library will have the ability to include a diverse group of volunteers, rather than the ones previously known by a volunteer.

6.3.3 Community

A fifth dimension to contested spaces of older voluntarism at the community level is contested spaces of older voluntarism are created through interactions at the local level. This speaks to the polarization of volunteering within the Township of Selwyn. Here, volunteers ignore the larger township and refer to the importance of volunteering in their local community only (Bridgenorth, Ennismore or Lakefield). Volunteers understand the importance of volunteering and the contribution it makes to their community but create conflict when referring to their individual community rather than the township as a whole. Although the amalgamation of Smith, Ennismore and Lakefield Townships did not present itself as a challenge in the thesis, these notions of loyalty to past townships still hold true in volunteers referencing communities, as community is on a local level, rather than thinking of the municipality.
6.4 Contributions

This section will outline the contributions the thesis makes, conceptually, empirically and at the community level.

6.4.1 Conceptual contributions

The findings from the thesis contribute to the concepts of and debates on aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability, which were identified in Chapter 3 as the core conceptual framework under which the thesis operates. Firstly, the thesis contributes to the concepts of voluntarism and rural aging as it demonstrates the ways older voluntarism is a way to experience aging in rural communities. The findings expand on the discussion in Chapter 2 surrounding the personal benefits of volunteering on the older individual by providing examples of these benefits on the Selwyn Public Library volunteers.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to the concept of rural community sustainability as it shows first hand how older voluntarism has the potential to be a catalyst for positive community sustainability. As presented in Chapter 2, the concept of rural community sustainability is mentioned as an outcome of voluntarism integrating older people and aging places. In the case of the thesis, the findings suggest that the older people interact with their aging community through voluntarism at the Selwyn Public Library but also through other community organizations, which in turn creates positive rural community sustainability.

Thirdly, the thesis contributes to emerging debates on the ‘contested spaces of rural aging’ (Skinner & Winterton, 2018). As voluntarism can be viewed as a window
through which to experience and transform rural aging, critically examining the contested spaces of older voluntarism in aging rural communities allows for a deeper understanding of the experiences and processes that create the conflicted spaces. By articulating five new dimensions of contested spaces, the thesis further elaborates on the connection between older voluntarism and rural community sustainability.

6.4.2 Empirical contributions

Along with conceptual contributions, the thesis also makes empirical contributions. Firstly, the research provided demographic context on the Selwyn Public Library and their volunteers. As described in Chapter 4, the data provides context into the typical Selwyn Public Library volunteer that is a married or widowed female, 65-74 years old, who holds a non-university certificate or diploma, has worked in the education sector and makes $60,000 to $80,000 annually. In addition, the data demonstrates the commitment of the library volunteers to the library and other community organizations and demonstrates their motivations to volunteer and the barriers that hinder them from volunteering more.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the understanding of rural communities in Canada regarding volunteering. The data shows first hand that rural communities in Canada are facing an aging population and it is the older residents who are taking on the responsibility of volunteering in order to provide services to their communities.

Lastly, the thesis demonstrates, methodologically, an example of a successful community-based research project. From the initial consultation, the researcher worked with the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors to develop a project that would fill
their needs and encourage change through the community contributions and the recommendations provided in the follow section.

6.4.3 Community contributions

The thesis also contributes to the community, both at the township level and for the Selwyn Public Library community. Firstly, it shows the connection between the Selwyn Public Library and the broader community, as it demonstrates the intersection of library volunteers and their volunteering roles in other organizations. As demonstrated in the findings, it is these volunteers and their commitment to their communities that make Selwyn Township a sustainable rural community for their older population.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to the understanding of the volunteer-based model in which the Selwyn Public Library operates for rural libraries in Ontario, and elsewhere. As previously mentioned, the volunteer-model used by the Selwyn Public Library is unique within the provincial library system, with the average number of volunteers in public libraries in populations of 15,001 to 30,000 is 23 (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2016). The findings show that the 174 volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library successfully contribute to the daily functions of the three branches.

In addition, the thesis provides the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors recommendations for how the sustainability of the volunteer program could be improved. Using data from the interviews and focus groups, the follow section provides insights on ways in which to continue to success of the volunteer program.
6.4.4 Recommendations for Selwyn Public Library

As mentioned in the previous section, one way the thesis offers contributions to the community is through providing the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors with recommendations. The following eight key strategies offer a means for sustaining the library volunteer program in order to ensure the success of the program and the library. The recommendations are categorized according to the three challenges as described in Chapter 5 (interpersonal, operational and structural) to allow for the recommendations to directly reflect the findings. These recommendations are also made available in a community report (see Appendix J).

The following two recommendations speak to the interpersonal challenges within the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program.

1. *Continue the positive interactions with library volunteers.* This recommendation is to ensure the volunteers are continued to be adequately trained and recognized. In terms of technology training and workshops, it is recommended that the library continue with their constant support of their volunteers. Providing ongoing training opportunities regarding the technologies used within the library as well as additional workshops on personal technology allows the volunteers to become more familiar and comfortable using technology that will translate into their role as library volunteer. In addition, it is recommended that the library continue to provide the volunteers with recognition. Informal recognition, in the form of just saying thank you to the volunteers provides them with feelings of gratitude and willingness to continue volunteering as they see their efforts being recognized on a regular basis. Formal recognition, in the form of the annual volunteer appreciation dinner, provides a larger
scale form of recognition towards all library and thrift store volunteers. This type of recognition not only allows for the volunteers to feel valued but allows them to interact with one another in a more informal way.

2. *Enhancing communication between board/staff and volunteers.* Currently, there is no formal means of communication to allow volunteers to check in and voice their concerns and opinions on library matters. Through discussions with the interview participants, they spoke to the value an open communication would have on the library. Suggestions for communication would be to implement an anonymous suggestion box in the staff/volunteer quarters of the library, where volunteers can input their suggestions for change, their opinions or any concerns they may have about their volunteer shift at the library. Additionally, regular check-ins between librarians and volunteers would prove beneficial. Having one-on-one meetings between the branch librarian and the branch volunteers will allow for issues, comments and concerns to be discussed and addressed in a private and confidential manner.

The following three recommendations address the challenges of the internal operations of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program.

3. *Creating a more unified library system.* Presently, the Selwyn Public Library is facing issues of polarization between the three library branches. Instead of being viewed as the Selwyn Public Library, rather it is viewed as the Bridgenorth, Ennismore and Lakefield libraries, respectively. Having a unified view of the Selwyn Public Library as a whole would enhance the usership across the township and would increase the movement of volunteers within the library system. In respect to the availability of volunteers, unification could be viewed if there was a position (paid or volunteer) that was focused
on this issue. Training and coordination of the volunteers could be done with a focus on inter-library volunteering, rather than having volunteers attached to one particular branch. This approach may not be feasible with long-term volunteers, rather this recommendation would be most beneficial when recruiting new volunteers to the library.

4. Revise volunteer model to increase flexibility. As discussed throughout the findings, the volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library prioritize other things in their life, like time with family and traveling over volunteering. They are no longer wanting to make the long-term commitments to the library, where they are required to attend weekly shifts. Creating a more flexible volunteer model to cater to these needs will allow community members to be able to volunteer, or current volunteer to be able to continue to volunteer but in a less structured manner. Allowing volunteers to choose a short burst of volunteering activity, such as children’s reading programs that is seasonal or a book sale that is on for one weekend presents opportunities to volunteer for those people not wanting to commit.

5. Standardizing policies and procedures across all branches. As discussed in Chapter 5, the lack of consistency between branches and between shifts pose challenges for the library and the volunteers. A standardized policies and procedures model will aid in the consistency issue, as all volunteers, whether they are new to the library or have been volunteering for 20 years, will need to follow it. In addition, a consistent training model is also recommended. To add to the recommendation outlined at the beginning of this section, having one staff or volunteer in charge of training new volunteers takes the responsibility of training off of the older, long-term volunteers who feel it is not their job and who may be improperly training.
The final three recommendations address the challenges surrounding the external structural relationships of the Selwyn Public Library volunteer program.

6. *Clarity of connection between thrift stores and library.* As discussed in Chapter 3, the thrift stores are responsible for donating 50% (Causeway Treasure Trove and the Ennismore Community Thrift Shop) and 100% (Renewed Classics) of their earnings to the Selwyn Public Library that helps to fund the library’s children’s programs. The findings suggest that there is a disconnect between the two institutions, and generally, the library volunteers do not know how the thrift stores contribute to the library. A recommendation is to use an event like the volunteer appreciation dinner where volunteers across thrift stores and library branches get together to introduce the thrift stores and to educate both sets of volunteers on their connection and how they work together to keep the library sustainable. This has the potential to increase the connection between thrift stores and volunteer. In addition, further coordination with Community Care Peterborough regarding the responsibilities of each organization has the potential to alleviate the confusion regarding roles of the organization and roles of the volunteer.

7. *Accreditation with the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council.* Using the guidelines to audit the governance, policy development, operations and services the library provides, the Selwyn Public Library could become an accredited public library which firstly, shows the local community that the library is meeting provincial wide terms. Secondly, it allows for them to provide a consistency of services with public libraries across Ontario. Lastly, conducting the audit which leads to the accreditation will allow the Selwyn Public Library to become aware of changes need to be made and appropriate development plans to become implemented.
8. *Create a full-time volunteer coordinator position.* Creating a full-time volunteer coordination position (volunteer or paid staff) allows the preceding recommendations to be addressed. Having a member of the library personnel focused directly on the volunteers allows for continued recognition, enhanced communication, unification, flexibility, standardization and mutual understanding to be achieved.

**6.5 Reflections on the research**

The following section provides reflections on the research. Firstly, it presents limitations of the thesis in the conceptual, operational and application phase. Secondly, it will discuss future research directions that derive from the limitations. These research directions provide opportunities for the expansion of this research, or additional research directions that expand on the theoretical framework of aging voluntarism and rural community sustainability.

**6.5.1 Limitations**

Throughout the phases of this research, there were limitations that presented themselves. In the conceptual phase, one limitation was the limited body of literature surrounding the role of rural libraries in community sustainability. In the presentation of Chapter 2, the literature discussed was centered on health and social care services, with libraries notably absent from the literature. This has resulted in using an exploratory inquiry into the role of libraries, as this is a novel view into the role of community services in rural community sustainability.

Two limitations presented themselves in the operational phase of the research. In the approach to the research, conducting a case study of the Selwyn Public Library
provides limitations regarding the transferability of the findings. The thesis presented findings that may be particular to this case study; therefore, generalizations regarding volunteer-based community organizations should be done with significant caution. Conducting a comparative study between different community organizations, within different rural townships in Ontario or elsewhere in Canada could provide a deeper understanding of how to sustain a volunteer-based community organization and the role of the volunteers in the sustainability of the rural community.

Additionally, the operational phase saw limitations in the recruitment of research participants. Firstly, there were limitations in who was chosen to be a participant in the research. Research participants included Selwyn Public Library volunteers, staff members, members of the Board of Directors as well as select township stakeholders. A key group of library stakeholders that were not recruited were library patrons. Due to the scope of the thesis, patrons were not included in order to maintain the timeline of the project. As well, they were not selected to participate, as the nature of the thesis was to understand the sustainability in an operational and administrative capacity, something library patrons may not fully be aware of.

A second limitation in the recruitment of research participants was the lack of participation from thrift store volunteers. Over the course of the recruitment, the researcher had a difficult time recruiting thrift store volunteers to participate in both interviews and most notably, the focus groups (n=2 participants). This could be due to the lack of understanding between the library and the thrift store volunteers. However, having a limited and uneven distribution of participants from the three thrift stores limited the data collecting specifically regarding the thrift stores could have deepened the
findings on the subject regarding the connection of the thrift stores to the Selwyn Public Library.

An additional limitation in the operational phase of the research was not conducting focus groups with townships stakeholders. This approach was taken as the other participant groups of volunteers, staff members and board members provided more in-depth understanding of the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteers, whereas the township stakeholders were consulted due to their thorough understanding of the township.

Lastly, a limitation presented itself in the application phase of the research. Due to the timeline of the thesis, as well as the nature of the community-based partnership with the Selwyn Public Library Board of Directors and the Trent Centre for Aging & Society, the thesis will not be able to evaluate the recommended changes implemented by the library board from the results of the research.

6.5.2 Future research directions

The limitations presented above address gaps in the research that can also represent future research directions. These future research directions allow the scope of the research project to be expanded in order to increase the depth of understanding on the role of older volunteers in rural community sustainability. Firstly, the expansion of the research to include additional library stakeholders as research participants. Creating a research project that focuses on library patrons allows the scope of the research to widen to understand what the perception of the volunteers and the library volunteer program is on the patrons who use the library. In addition, threads of inquiry could be to understand
if community members are interested in volunteering, and why or why not they might be thinking about volunteering, and what barriers they may face.

Secondly, a future direction of research could be to conduct a case study on a similar volunteer-based organization in another rural township or urban settings in Ontario. This could allow for a comparison between the research done for this thesis and a similar organization undergoing sustainability issues of their volunteer base to be able to provide richer recommendations that may apply to a variety of different types of organizations, in different types of settings.

Lastly, a future research direction would be to expand the thread of inquiry on older volunteers and rural communities to other rural communities across Canada, as well as internationally. There is growing international interest in the concepts of aging, voluntarism and rural community sustainability. For instance, Australia’s rural regions are undergoing similar changes as the rural Canadian context and could benefit from conducting studies similar to the thesis (Winterton & Warburton, 2012).

6.6 Concluding comments

“It’s not just about books. It’s everything else that we give to the community.”

Selwyn Public Library volunteer

Rural communities in Canada are experiencing changes, from a rapidly aging population to a gap in the provision of services. To cope with change, rural communities rely heavily upon older voluntarism in order to be resilient and to deliver the services their residents need in order to age in place. By conducting a case study of the Selwyn Public Library, this thesis explored the role of older voluntarism in the sustainability of
an aging rural community in Ontario, Canada through understanding the experiences of older library volunteers, examining the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and exploring how older library volunteers and library volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability.

While the thesis used the case of a rural, volunteer-based library, the role of older voluntarism is so much more than the services they provide to the library. As the above quote alludes to, the role of the older library volunteers and the library volunteer program extends out of the confines of the library, outside of the realm of books, and extends into their local communities where they contribute to the success and sustainability of the places they call home.
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Appendix A

Trent University Research Ethics Board letter of approval

Amber Colibaba
Sustainable Studies Program
GCS

May 30, 2017

File #: 24799
Title: Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability: A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Dear Colibaba,

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled “Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability: A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries”.

The committee strongly suggests and encourages you to encrypt any data that is being collected that contains any personal or identifying information. Please add a statement to your consent form concerning this. For help with encryption services, please contact Trent’s IT Department.

Please add a running footer to your consent form, with the date of Trent REB approval and consent revisions number (e.g., 01-Jan-12, Version 2), so that the consent form used can be easily identified in future.

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It does not undermine or replace any other community ethics process. Full approval depends upon the approval of all other bodies who are named as stakeholders in this research.

In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) your project has been approved for one year. If this research is ongoing past that time, submit a Research Ethics Annual Update form available online under the Research Office website. If the project is completed on or before that time, please email Karen Mauro in the Research office so the project can be recorded as completed.

Please note that you are reminded of your obligation to advise the REB before implementing any amendments or changes to the procedures of your study that might affect the human participants. You are also advised that any adverse events must be reported to the REB.

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.

With best wishes,

Dr. Peri Ballantyne
Acting REB Chair
Phone: (705) 748-1011 ext. 7813, Fax: (765) 748-1587
Email: periballantyne@trentu.ca
Appendix B
Survey

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

SURVEY FOR LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS

Project Overview

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Statement of Consent

By completing this survey, you give consent for the responses to be used in the above stated research project. Your identity will remain anonymous. Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from completing the survey at any time. This project has been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board.

Completing the Survey

Please complete the following survey to the best of your ability. Please fill in your answer that best reflects your personal circumstance. The survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Returning the Survey

Please insert the completed survey into the provided, pre-stamped envelope and mail back to: Amber Colibaba, Trent Centre for Aging & Society, Trent University. 1600 West Bank Drive, Peterborough, Ontario K9L 0G2

Alternate Formats

If you require an alternate format of this survey, please contact Amber Colibaba (705 748-1011 ext.7978, ambercolibaba@trentu.ca) to complete survey via telephone or by e-mail.
Contact Information

Amber Colibaba- Principal Researcher (705 748-1011 ext. 7978 or ambercolibaba@trentu.ca)

Mark Skinner- Research Supervisor (705 748-1011 ext. 7946 or markskinner@trentu.ca)

Karen Mauro- Research Ethics Officer (705 748-1011 ext. 7898 or kmauro@trentu.ca)

A: Background Information

This section will ask background questions to allow for the project to get foundational information on who volunteers for the Selwyn Public Library.

1. What is your gender?
   □ Male       □ Female
   □ Prefer not to disclose   □ Other__________________________

2. Which age category do you belong to?
   □ under 44   □ 75-84
   □ 45-64      □ 85-94
   □ 65-74      □ 95+

3. What is your marital status?
   □ Single
   □ Married/common law
   □ Separated/divorced
   □ Widowed

4. Which household income category do you belong to?
   □ Less than $10,000   □ $60,000 to less than $80,000
   □ $10,000 to less than $20,000   □ $80,000 to less than $100,000
   □ $20,000 to less than $30,000   □ $100,000 to less than $150,000
   □ $30,000 to less than $40,000   □ $150,000 to less than $200,000
   □ $40,000 to less than $50,000   □ $200,000 or more
   □ $50,000 to less than $60,000   □ I do not know

5. Which cultural group do you belong to?
   □ Canadian       □ Chinese
   □ Dutch (Netherlands)   □ East Indian
   □ English       □ French
   □ German       □ Indigenous
   □ Inuit        □ Irish
   □ Italian      □ Jewish
   □ Métis        □ Norwegian
   □ Filipino     □ Polish
6. Which ward of Selwyn Township do you reside in?
    □ Bridgenorth
    □ Ennismore
    □ Lakefield
    □ I do not reside within Selwyn Township

7. If you do not reside within Selwyn Township, where do you reside?
    □ Another Township in the County of Peterborough
        □ Asphodel-Norwood
        □ Cavan-Monaghan
        □ Douro-Dummer
        □ Havelock-Belmont-Methuen
        □ North Kawartha
        □ Otonabee-South Monaghan
        □ Trent Lakes
    □ City of Peterborough
    □ Other (please specify) ____________________________

8. How long have you resided in your community?
    □ Less than 1 year
    □ 1 year to less than 3 years
    □ 3 years to less than 5 years
    □ 5 years to less than 10 years
    □ 10 years or more

9. What is the highest degree, certificate or diploma you have obtained?
    □ No high school diploma
    □ High school diploma
    □ Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship
    □ Non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP, school of nursing, etc.
    □ Bachelor’s degree
    □ University degree or certificate above bachelor’s level

10. What is/was your main occupation/vocation?
    □ Agriculture        □ Business
    □ Education          □ Industry
    □ Homemaker          □ Self-employed
    □ Skilled trade       □ Civil Service
    □ Other (please specify) ____________________________
Section B: Volunteering with Selwyn Public Library

This section is designed to get an understanding of your roles and responsibilities as a volunteer and your history of volunteering with the Selwyn Public Library.

11. Including the past 12 months, how many years have you been a volunteer for the Selwyn Public Library branches and/or thrift stores?
   □ At least one year
   □ One year to less than 3 years
   □ 3 years to less than 5 years
   □ 5 years to less than 10 years
   □ 10 years or more

12. In the past 12 months, which branch of the Selwyn Public Library and/or thrift stores did you volunteer for? (Please check all that apply)
   □ Bridgenorth Library
   □ Ennismore Library
   □ Lakefield Library
   □ Causeway Treasure Trove Thrift Shop
   □ Ennismore Community Thrift Shop
   □ Renewed Classics Thrift Shop
   □ Other (please specify)
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

13. What other places within the community have you volunteered at on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library? For example, at a public school, at a community centre
(Please specify)
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

14. In the past 12 months, on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library, how many hours per week did you spend volunteering on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library?
(Please indicate number of hours on the line provided)
   ___________________________________________________________________

15. How often do you do any activities on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library?
   □ Daily
   □ Once or twice
   □ Once a week
   □ 3 or 4 times
   □ Once a month
16. In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following activities on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library? (Please check all that apply)
□ Circulation desk □ Thrift Store
□ Reservations of library materials □ Memberships
□ Cataloguing □ Repairing materials
□ Helping with internet/computers □ Interlibrary loans
□ Fundraising □ Skills sharing programming
□ Sitting as a member of a committee or board
□ Other (please specify)
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

17. How did you find out about the opportunity to volunteer for the Selwyn Public Library?
□ Word of mouth □ Selwyn Township website
□ Referral □ Advertisement
□ Newsletter □ Other (please specify)
__________________________________________________________________

18. What are the reasons you volunteered on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library in the past 12 months? (Please check all that apply)
□ Your friends volunteer
□ To network with or meet people
□ To improve your job opportunities
□ To fulfill religious obligations or other beliefs
□ To explore your own strengths
□ To make a contribution to the community
□ To use your skills and experiences
□ Other (please specify)
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

19. Are you interested in volunteering or participating more often on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library?
□ Yes
□ No

20. In what ways are you interested in volunteering or participating? (Please specify)
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Section C: Other Volunteering in the Community

This next section asks questions regarding any additional formal or informal volunteering you may do within your community.

21. In the past 12 months, did you partake in any of the following formal volunteering activities on behalf of a group or organization other than the Selwyn Public Library? This includes any unpaid help you provided to schools, religious organizations, sports or community associations. (Please check all that apply)
   □ Canvassing
   □ Fundraising
   □ Sit as a member of a committee or board
   □ Teaching, educating, mentoring
   □ Organize, supervise or coordinate activities or events
   □ Office work, bookkeeping, or administrative work
   □ Coach, referee or officiate
   □ Counsel or provide advice
   □ Provide health care or support including companionship
   □ Collect, serve or deliver food or other goods
   □ Work associated with maintenance or repair
   □ Volunteer driving
   □ Provide help through first aid, fire-fighting, or rescue
   □ Engage in conservation or preservation activities
   □ Other (please specify)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

22. In the past 12 months, for how many groups or organizations other than the Selwyn Public Library did you do any unpaid activities? (Please indicate number)

__________________________________________________________________

23. What are the organizations other than the Selwyn Public Library do you volunteer for? (Please specify)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

24. How often did you do any activities for groups or organizations other than the Selwyn Public Library?
   □ Daily           □ Once or twice
   □ Once a week     □ 3 or 4 times
   □ Once a month
25. In the past year, how many hours did you spend per month on behalf of groups or organizations other than the Selwyn Public Library? (Please indicate number of hours)

   □ _______________________________

26. Including the past 12 months, in how many years did you do unpaid activities for groups or organizations other than the Selwyn Public Library?

   □ Less than one year
   □ One year to less than 3 years
   □ 3 years to less than 5 years
   □ 5 years to less than 10 years
   □ 10 years or more

27. In the past 12 months, did you partake in any of the following informal volunteering activities, or helping people on your own, not on behalf of a group or organization other than the Selwyn Public Library? This includes all friends, neighbours and relatives. Exclude help given to anyone living in your household. (Please check all that apply)

   □ Work at their home such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, maintenance, painting, shovelling snow or car repairs
   □ Work at their home such as help with shopping, driving someone to the store or other appointments
   □ Work at their home such as help with paperwork tasks such as writing letters, doing taxes, filling out forms, banking, paying bills or finding information
   □ Work at their home such as help with health-related or personal care, such as emotional support, counseling, providing advice, visiting the elderly, unpaid babysitting
   □ Work at their home such as help with unpaid teaching, coaching, tutoring, reading
   □ Help anyone in any other way- not on behalf of a group or organization (Please specify)

   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

28. In the past 12 months, how many hours did you spend per month helping people on your own, not on behalf of a group or organization? (Please indicate number of hours on the line provided)

   □ _______________________________
29. Including the past 12 months, in how many years did you spend helping people on your own, not on behalf of a group or organization?
   □ Less than one year
   □ One year to less than 3 years
   □ 3 years to less than 5 years
   □ 5 years to less than 10 years
   □ 10 years or more

Section D: Barriers to Volunteering

This section asks questions regarding some barriers you may face when it comes to volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library or at other groups or organizations.

30. Please indicate if any of the following are reasons why you did not volunteer more in the past 12 months. (Please check all that apply)
   □ You gave enough time already
   □ You were dissatisfied with a previous experience
   □ Because no one asked you
   □ You did not know how to get involved
   □ You had health problems or were physically unable
   □ You did not have time
   □ Because of financial cost of volunteering
   □ You were unable to make a long-term commitment
   □ You preferred to give money instead of time
   □ You had no interest
   □ You had no transportation
   □ You had no information
   □ There were no opportunities in your area
   □ You had personal or family responsibilities
   □ The distance was too far
   □ Bad weather or inclement weather
   □ Language
   □ Age
   □ Cultural
   □ Other barriers (please specify)

__________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

31. In the past 12 months, how often did you miss or cancel unpaid activities due to any of these barriers?
   □ At least once a week
   □ At least once a month
   □ At least 3 or 4 times
   □ Once or twice
   □ Never
32. In the past 12 months, on average what is the longest you traveled to volunteer?
   □ less than 15 minutes
   □ 15 to 30 minutes
   □ 30 to 45 minutes
   □ 45 to 60 minutes
   □ More than one hour

33. What are ways in which the Selwyn Public Library can better support you as a volunteer? (Please specify)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Section E: Future Participation in Research Project

This section asks questions regarding your interest in further participating in the research project.

34. If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss your experience as a volunteer as part of the research project, please leave your name and contact information (phone and/or email) below. This information will be kept confidential.
   Name:__________________________________________________________
   Contact Info:___________________________________________________

Thank you for participating in this survey.
Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Consent Form- Interviews

Project Overview

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township. In this phase of the research, one-hour interviews will be used to gain information relating to the experiences of volunteers, the challenges of sustaining rural voluntarism and the connection between the Selwyn Public Library, the volunteer program and Selwyn Township. The principal researcher is Amber Colibaba, M.A. Candidate in Sustainability Studies, Trent University (ambercolibaba@trentu.ca, 705 748-1011 ext. 7978) and the research supervisor is Dr. Mark Skinner, Professor, Director of Trent Centre for Aging & Society, Trent University (markskinner@trentu.ca, 705 748-1011 ext. 7946).

As a participant in the above project, I understand and agree with the following:

1. I understand that this project has been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board;
2. I have been fully informed about the nature of the research and the extent of my participation in the project;
3. My participation in this project is entirely voluntary and I am under no obligation to participate;
4. I may withdraw my participation in the project at any time without consequence;
5. The information supplied during the project will remain confidential;
6. My identity will not be used in any reports or publications;
7. My identity will only be known to the principal researcher and research supervisor;
8. I understand that there is a minimal risk that my participation will be known to other participants and community members;
9. This interview will be digitally recorded;
10. The information gained from this project will be stored responsibly by the researcher;
11. I understand that I can contact Amber Colibaba or Dr. Mark Skinner with any questions about the project, or the Trent University Research Office, (705 748-1011 ext.7896) with any concerns about research ethics;
12. I have been provided with a copy of the informed consent form for my own records

Participant Name: _____________________________________________________________
Participant Signature: ___________________ Date:___________________
Appendix D
Consent Form Focus Groups

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Consent Form - Focus Group

Project Overview
Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and associated thrift shops and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township. In this phase of the research, 90 minute focus groups with volunteers, staff members and board members of the Selwyn Public library will be used to gain information relating to the experiences of volunteers, the challenges of sustaining rural voluntarism and the connection between the Selwyn Public Library, the volunteer program and Selwyn Township. The principal researcher is Amber Colibaba, M.A. Candidate in Sustainability Studies, Trent University (ambercolibaba@trentu.ca, 705 748-1011 ext. 7978) and the research supervisor is Dr. Mark Skinner, Professor, Director of Trent Centre for Aging & Society, Trent University (markskinner@trentu.ca, 705 748-1011 ext. 7946).

As a participant in the above project, I understand and agree with the following:

1. I understand that this project has been approved by the Trent University Ethics Board;
2. I have been fully informed about the nature of the research and the extent of my participation in the project;
3. My participation in this project is entirely voluntary and I am under no obligation to participate;
4. I may withdraw my participation in the project at any time without consequence;
5. The information supplied during the project will remain confidential;
6. My identity will not be used in any reports or publications;
7. My identity will only be known to the principal researcher and research assistant;
8. I understand that there is a minimal risk that my participation will be known to other focus groups participants and community members;
9. The information gained from this project will be stored responsibly by the researcher;
10. I understand that I can contact Amber Colibaba or Dr. Mark Skinner with any questions about the project, or the Trent University Research Office, (705 748-1011 ext.7896) with any concerns about research ethics;
11. I have been provided with a copy of the informed consent form for my own records

Participant Name: _____________________________________________________________

Participant Signature: _______________________ Date: ____________________________
Appendix E
Letter of Recruitment Interview

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Letter of Recruitment- Interviews

Dear [participant],

I am writing you to request your participation in the Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability: A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries project, a Master’s thesis being completed for the Master of Arts in Sustainability Studies program at Trent University.

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

You are being contacted due to your role as [volunteer/staff/board member/township stakeholder]. I am interested in setting up an interview to learn about your personal experiences interacting with the Selwyn Public Library and their volunteer program and to discuss the relationship between the library, the volunteer program and the township of Selwyn. If you are willing to participate in the interview, your participation will be voluntary and would involve a one-hour interview at the location of your preference. There is a minimal risk that your participation will be known to other participants in the project and community members, however, your identity will only be known to the principal researcher and research supervisor and will not be used in any reports or publications that come out of this project. With your written consent, the interview will be audio recorded and all files associated with the interview will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the project. This project has been approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board.

If you are willing to participate or if you have questions pertaining to the research, please contact the principal researcher Amber Colibaba (ambercolibaba@trentu.ca, 705 748-1011 ext.7978). For questions regarding participant’s rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Trent University Research Office at 705 748-1011 ext. 7896.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amber Colibaba
Appendix F

Interview Guide Volunteer

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Interview Guide for Volunteers

Project Overview
Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Part A: Background
1. How long have you been a volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library/Thrift store?
2. What are your roles as a volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library/Thrift store?

Part B: Experiences of Volunteers
3. Tell me about your experiences as a volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library/Thrift store.
4. What are the challenges you face as a volunteer at the Selwyn Public Library/Thrift store?
5. How do you overcome those challenges?
6. What are some opportunities you have gained while volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library/Thrift store?

Part C: Sustainability of Volunteering
7. In what ways have you seen the library/thrift store and the volunteer program change since you began volunteering?
8. How do you think the library/thrift shop and the volunteers are responding to those changes?
9. What do you believe are the challenges the Selwyn Public Library is facing in terms of their volunteer base?
10. How do you think they could overcome those challenges?

Part D: Connection of Selwyn Public Library and Volunteers and Selwyn Township
11. In what ways has the communities of Selwyn changed in respect to volunteers over time?
12. Do you see the same changes in your community?
13. How have local volunteers contributed to the communities of Selwyn?
14. Specifically, how has the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteers contributed to the communities of Selwyn?
15. How could you be further supported as a volunteer in the library and in the community?

Part E: Conclusion
16. Do you have anything you would like to add that you feel is important to understanding the role of the volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library and how they contribute to the community?
17. Who else should I talk to about this project?
18. Are you willing to participate in a focus group?
Appendix G
Interview Guide Staff

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Interview Guide for Staff

Project Overview

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Part A: Background

1. How long have you been a staff member at the Selwyn Public Library?
2. What are your daily roles at the Selwyn Public Library?
3. What branch do you currently work at?

Part B: Experiences of Volunteers

4. Tell me about your experiences interacting with the volunteers.
5. What do you believe are the challenges the volunteers face?
6. How should these challenges be overcome?
7. What do you believe are the opportunities the volunteers gain while volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library and thrift stores?

Part C: Sustainability of Voluntarism

8. In what ways have you seen the library and the volunteer program change since you began working at the Selwyn Public Library?
9. How do you think the library and the volunteers are responding to those changes?
10. What do you believe are the challenges the Selwyn Public Library is facing in terms of their volunteer base?
11. How do you think they could overcome those challenges?

Part D: Voluntarism within Selwyn Township

12. How have local volunteers contributed to Selwyn Township?
13. Specifically, how has the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteer program contributed to Selwyn Township?
14. How could volunteering be further supported at the Selwyn Public Library and within Selwyn Township?

Part E: Conclusion

15. Do you have anything you would like to add that you feel is important to understanding the role of the Selwyn Public Library in the sustainability of the volunteer program?
16. Do you have any suggestions for further interview participants that you feel would benefit my understanding of the Selwyn Public Library’s volunteer program?
17. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to further discuss the sustainability of the volunteer program and the connection it has to the community of Selwyn Township?
Appendix H

Interview Guide Board Member

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Interview Guide for Board Members

Project Overview

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Part A: Background

1. What are your duties as a board member of the Selwyn Public Library?

Part B: Experiences of Volunteers

2. Tell me about your experiences as a volunteer on the board of directors of the Selwyn Public Library.
3. Tell me about your experiences interacting with the volunteers at the library and thrift stores.
4. What do you believe are the challenges the volunteers face?
5. How should these challenges be overcome?
6. What are some opportunities you have gained while being a board member of the Selwyn Public Library?

Part C: Sustainability of Voluntarism

7. In what ways have you seen the library and the volunteer program change since you began volunteering on behalf of the Selwyn Public Library?
8. How do you think the library and the volunteers are responding to those changes?
9. What do you believe are the challenges the Selwyn Public Library is facing in terms of their volunteer base?
10. How do you think they could overcome those challenges?

Part D: Connection of Selwyn Public Library and Volunteers and Selwyn Township

11. How have local volunteers contributed to Selwyn Township?
12. Specifically, how has the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteer program contributed to Selwyn Township?
13. How could volunteering be further supported at the Selwyn Public Library and within Selwyn Township?

Part E: Conclusion

14. Do you have anything you would like to add that you feel is important to understanding the role of the Selwyn Public Library in the sustainability of the volunteer program?
15. Do you have any suggestions for further interview participants that you feel would benefit my understanding of the Selwyn Public Library’s volunteer program?
16. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to further discuss the sustainability of the volunteer program and the connection it has to Selwyn Township?
Appendix I
Interview Guide Township Stakeholder

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Interview Guide for Township Stakeholders

Project Overview
Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Part A: Background
1. In what ways do you interact with the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteers?
2. For how long?

Part B: Experiences of Volunteering
3. Tell me about your experiences interacting with the volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library.

Part C: Sustainability of Volunteering
4. In what ways have you seen the library/volunteer program change since you began interacting with it?
5. How do you think the library and the volunteers are responding to those changes?
6. What do you believe are the challenges the Selwyn Public Library is facing in terms of their volunteer base?

Part D: Connection of Selwyn Public Library and Volunteers to Selwyn Township
7. In what ways has the communities of Selwyn changed in respect to volunteers over time?
8. Are you seeing the same changes across the three communities?
9. How have local volunteers contributed to the communities of Selwyn?
10. Specifically, how has the Selwyn Public Library and the volunteers contributed to the communities of Selwyn?
11. How could you be further supported as a volunteer in the community?

Part C: Conclusion
12. Do you have anything you would like to add that you feel is important to understanding the role of the volunteers at the Selwyn Public Library and how they contribute to the community?
13. Who else should I talk to about this project?
Appendix J
Focus Group Guide

Older Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability:
A Case Study of Volunteer-Based Rural Libraries

Focus Group Guide

Project Overview

Through examining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library, this research project explores how to support the older library volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program and associated thrift shops and how the volunteers and the volunteer program benefit the communities of Selwyn Township.

Agenda

Introduction and Overview (5 min)

- **Materials:** nametags, marker, handout, consent form
- Welcome everyone and explain the purpose of the focus group and go over project objectives and consent form rules
  - What is discussed today should remain here and not be discussed outside of this time
- Introduce Research Assistant
- Briefly discuss agenda for the focus group

Exercise 1: Supporting Older Volunteers (20 min)

- **Materials:** Sticky Notes, pens
- Have participants choose 3 themes/issues that have implications for library volunteers
- Each participant will write one theme per Sticky Note and stick it on the wall
- Once everyone’s themes are presented, the facilitator will begin to discuss the themes presented and begin to group similar themes together
Exercise 2: Sustaining Volunteer Program (20 min)

- **Materials:** Sticky Notes, pens
- In small groups, have volunteers decide on 3 themes/issues that have implications on the library and the volunteer program
- Each team will write one theme per Sticky Note and stick it on the wall
- Once all team’s themes are presented, the facilitator will begin to discuss the themes presented and begin to group similar themes together

Exercise 3: Implications for Communities (20 min)

- As a group, discuss what themes/issues have implications on the communities of Selwyn Township in connection with the Selwyn Public Library
- Write themes on flip chart and discuss how they relate to the volunteer program and how it connects to/enhances the community

Exercise 4: Validation of Interview Findings (20 min)

- Present the list of pre-determined themes to the focus group
- Indicate if any of the themes discussed in exercises 1-3 show up on the list
- Add any additional themes to the list

Discussion and Wrap up (5 min)

- Wrap by up thanking the group and letting them know that any further comments/ideas/questions can be directed to Amber
## Appendix K

### Data Table of Survey Results

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<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Bridgenorth</th>
<th>Ennismore</th>
<th>Lakefield</th>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Count 1</td>
<td>Count 2</td>
<td>Count 3</td>
<td>Count 4</td>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<th>Count 2</th>
<th>Count 3</th>
<th>Count 4</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1%</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>French</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*More than one answer selected by respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward of Residency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (18%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ennismore</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>25 (29%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakefield</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27 (31%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 (21%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another township in Peterborough County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asphodel-Norwood</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan-Monaghan</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douro-Dummer</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Havelock-Belmont-Methuen</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otonabee-South Monaghan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent Lakes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Peterborough</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15 (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year to less than 3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years to less than 5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years to less than 10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68 (78%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No high school diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP, school of nursing, etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24 (28%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Bachelor’s degree
- University degree or certificate above bachelor’s level:
  - Bachelor’s degree: 7, University degree or certificate above bachelor’s level: 4
  - Total: 15 (17%)

### Employment (past and/or present)
- **Agriculture**: 0 (0%)
- **Education**: 9 (28%)
- **Homemaker**: 6 (20%)
- **Skilled Trade**: 1 (1%)
- **Business**: 11 (22%)
- **Industry**: 1 (3%)
- **Self-employed**: 2 (7%)
- **Civil Service**: 0 (0%)
- **Other**: 8 (17%)

*More than one answer selected by respondent*

### Connection to the Selwyn Public Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time volunteering for the Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Bridgenorth</th>
<th>Ennismore</th>
<th>Lakefield</th>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least one year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year to less than 3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years to less than 5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years to less than 10 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average number of hours per week volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennismore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakefield</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>140</td>
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## Frequency of volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>5.9</th>
<th>6.7</th>
<th>8.2</th>
<th>2.25</th>
<th>6.5</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<td>Once or twice a week</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 or 4 times a month</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Volunteering Activities

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>5.9</th>
<th>6.7</th>
<th>8.2</th>
<th>2.25</th>
<th>6.5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circulation desk</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reservation of library materials</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataloguing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with internet/computers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting as a member of a committee or board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thrift store</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<td>Repairing materials</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary loans</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills sharing programming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*More than one answer selected by respondents*

## Recruitment into volunteering for the Selwyn Public Library

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>5.9</th>
<th>6.7</th>
<th>8.2</th>
<th>2.25</th>
<th>6.5</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referral</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selwyn Township website</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for volunteering</td>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*More than one answer selected by respondents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends volunteer</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47 (54%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To network with or meet people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve job opportunities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To fulfill religious obligations or other beliefs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explore own strengths</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>78 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make a contribution to the community</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use skills and experiences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20 (23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*More than one answer selected by respondents</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63 (72%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in volunteering more often at the Selwyn Public Library</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Connection to the Communities of Selwyn Township**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal volunteering activities other than the Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Bridgenorth</th>
<th>Ennismore</th>
<th>Lakefield</th>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit as a member of a committee or board</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching, educating, mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize, supervise or coordinate activities or events</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 (28%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Office work, bookkeeping, or administrative work**  
Coach, referee or officiate  
Counsel or provide advice  
Provide health care or support including companionship  
Collect, serve or deliver food or other goods  
Work associated with maintenance or repair  
Volunteer driving  
Provide help through first aid, fire-fighting, or rescue  
Engage in conservation or preservation activities  
Other  
Did not answer  
*More than one answer selected by respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of groups of organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of formal volunteering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4 times</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of hours per month formal volunteering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time formal volunteering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
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</table>
## Informal volunteering activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working at someone’s home such as cooking, cleaning, gardening,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintenance, painting, shovelling snow or car repairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at someone’s home with shopping, driving someone to the store</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or other appointments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at someone’s home with paperwork tasks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at someone’s home with health-related or personal care</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at someone’s home with unpaid teaching, coaching, tutoring, reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

*More than one answer selected by respondents*

## Average number of hours per month informal volunteering

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>Least</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
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</table>

## Time informal volunteering

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>One year to less than 3 years</th>
<th>3 years to less than 5 years</th>
<th>5 years to less than 10 years</th>
<th>10 years or more</th>
<th>Did not answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year to less than</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years to less than</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years to less than</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
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### Barriers to Volunteering

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<th>Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridgenorth</td>
<td>Ennismore</td>
<td>Lakefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave enough time already</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with a previous experience</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Because no one asked</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know how to get involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health problems or were physically unable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not have time</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial cost of volunteering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to make long-term commitment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to give money instead of time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transportation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opportunities in area</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal or family responsibilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance is too far</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad weather or inclement weather</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*More than one answer selected by respondents

### Amount of cancelled voluntary activities due to above barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of cancelled voluntary activities due to above barriers</th>
<th>Selwyn Public Library</th>
<th>Board of Directors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 or 4 times</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Less than 15 minutes</td>
<td>15 to 30 minutes</td>
<td>30 to 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance traveled to volunteer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15 minutes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 30 minutes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 45 minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 60 minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one hour</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L
Community Report

Older Voluntarism and Rural Community Sustainability Project with the Selwyn Public Library

Community Report

BY: AMBER COLIBABA, M.A.

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Contact Information ....................................... 9

The Project

A Case Study of the Selwyn Public Library
This project conducted a case study of the Selwyn Public Library. It was part of an ongoing partnership between Selwyn Public Library and Turing University.

Goal and Objectives
The goal of the project is to explore how older volunteers contribute to the sustainability of rural communities.

Objectives:
1) To understand the experiences of older library volunteers
2) To examine the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program
3) To explore how older volunteer programs contribute to rural community sustainability

Data Collection
Surveys
Surveys were conducted to create a demographic profile of the Selwyn Public Library members.

Interviews
Interviews were conducted with 48 Selwyn Public Library volunteers, staff, board members, and town library volunteers to discuss expectations, challenges, and contributions.

Focus Groups
Focus groups were conducted with Selwyn Public Library volunteers, staff, board members, and town interviewees.

Selwyn Public Library Volunteers

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 49</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of time volunteering at Selwyn Public Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences of Older Library Volunteers

"I'm proud to say I'm a volunteer at the library."
Selwyn Public Library Volunteer

The experiences of older library volunteers can be categorized into three levels: experiences, emotions, relationships and health and wellbeing.

Emotions
The shared sense of care and satisfaction were emotions felt by the volunteers. Bonding refers to the ability of the volunteers to connect the library and the community to the library.

Relationships
The relationships the volunteers create represent themselves as community representatives between themselves, the library and the community residents, as well as relationships within the library between all library personnel.

Health and Well-being
The health and well-being of volunteers was impacted through the social opportunities volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library provides. In addition, through volunteering at the Selwyn Public Library, volunteers experienced feelings of burnout and depression due to the stress of some tasks performed at the library.

Challenges of Sustaining the Library Volunteer Program

"They are aging. They are going to eventually stop doing these jobs that we rely on them to do...It's hard to say what's going to happen in the future."
Selwyn Public Library staff member

The challenges of sustaining the volunteer program at the Selwyn Public Library are categorized into interpersonal, operational and structural challenges.

Interpersonal Challenges
Interpersonal challenges to the sustainability of the volunteer program are the aging demographic of the volunteers, as the individual’s willingness and ability to volunteer may begin to decrease with age. In addition, there is a lack of a relationship and mutual understanding between the staff, volunteers and the library volunteers.

Operational Challenges
Recruitment of new volunteers and training new and seasoned volunteers pose operational challenges in the sustainability of the volunteer program. Issues such as the need for staff recruitment methods and the lack of training consistency must be addressed.

Structural Challenges
Structural challenges include the relationship between the library and community care, the need for change and the policy implemented within the library.

Contributions to Rural Community Sustainability

"This is how it works and it does work, but I'm not sure how sustainable that is in the long term."
Selwyn Public Library board member

The contributions of the volunteers can be classified under the four pillars of sustainability: cultural, social, economic and environmental.

Cultural Sustainability
There is concern regarding the lack of diversity within the library volunteers and the library programs offered. Increasing diversity will allow the library to reflect the representation of the community.

Social Sustainability
To contribute to the social sustainability of Selwyn Township, volunteers work for many other voluntary organizations in order to provide services to the community. Other organizations include Community Care, the Lakefield Community Food Bank, the Ontario Drug and Alcohol Treatment Society and the Fragrance Benefit Development Committee.

Economic Sustainability
The economic sustainability of Selwyn Township remains a critically feasible way to fund the needs of the community.

Environmental Sustainability
The sustainable contributions to the environmental sustainability of Selwyn Township by providing a location for residents to recycle their used clothing and household items.

Recommendations

The following actions are recommended for changes in the library volunteer program in order to sustain the program and ensure the success of both the program and the library.

1. A more unified library system
To conduct the optimization of data management and to increase the library system across the townships and the movement of volunteers.

2. An increased understanding of the connection between the support roles and the library

3. A change in the volunteer model
The volunteer model needs to adapt to the changing needs of the volunteers. A more flexible volunteer model will allow for volunteers to choose a more controlled role, or a volunteer role within the library such as reading programs or book sales.
Recommendations

4. Enhanced communication between board/staff and volunteers
A formal mode of communication between library personnel allows for open communication regarding concerns, concerns and feedback. Suggestions for communication include an anonymous suggestion box located at each branch, and regular check-in meetings between branch librarians and individual volunteers.

5. A standardized set of policies and procedures
To ensure consistency of customer service and volunteer training across library branches. A recommendation is to implement a new position (paid or volunteer) focused on the training of volunteers to ensure consistency across branches.

6. Continued positive interaction with volunteers
Positive interactions in the form of ongoing technology training and workshops as well as volunteer recognition. Encouraging these positive interactions increases the contact level of volunteers and retains they feel valued.

7. Accreditation with the Ontario Public Library Guidelines
Using the guidelines to audit the governance, policy development, operations and services the library provides, the Selwyn Public Library could become an accredited public library. This will ensure consistency of services with a public library across Ontario and allow the library to become aware of changes needed to be made and appropriate development plans to be implemented.

Conclusion

"It's not just about books; it's everything else that we give to the community."
Selwyn Public Library Volunteer

With the help and engagement of the research participants, the Selwyn Volunteer and Rural Community Sustainability project contributes to the understanding of the experiences of older library volunteers, the challenges of sustaining a rural library volunteer program and the contributions of older library volunteers and library volunteer programs in the sustainability of aging rural communities.

In addition, the project has produced seven recommendations for the Selwyn Public Library to ensure the sustainability of the library and the volunteer program, as well as an M.A. thesis for the Sustainability Studies program at Trent University.

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For More Information...

If you would like to learn more about the Selwyn Volunteer and Rural Community Sustainability project, copies of the thesis are available in the following formats...

Electronic:
Copies are available to read online at Trent's Canada Portal (www.library.ontario.ca/services/library) and at the Trent Centre for Aging & Society website (www.library.ontario.ca).

Paper Copy
A copy will be available at Trent University, Trent Library and a copy will be delivered to each of the Selwyn Public Library branches.

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