

# Getting Canadian Work Experience

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



Vancouver Public Library



Canada

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## 1. The “Canadian Experience” Challenge

### *Introduction*

Many newcomers in their search for work are faced with a challenge when a potential employer insists upon “Canadian Experience.” How can someone acquire Canadian experience if no one will give them a job in the first place? This expectation can be very discouraging, but it can also be accomplished through a variety of strategies.

This guide explores different methods of acquiring Canadian experience, which can be beneficial for both you and your future employer. The whole process can be a positive experience because there may be opportunities to build relationships, find mentors, contribute to one’s new community, and even help decide if a particular career is still interesting and desirable to pursue.

These book titles offer advice and direction in regards to obtaining Canadian experience, and finding stable work:

- **The Back Door Guide to Short-term Job Adventures** / Michael Landes. 2005. Central Library, Level 4. 331.124 L25b2
- **Get Wired, You’re Hired! : The Canadian Internet Job Search Guide** / Mark Swartz. 2006. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 S973g2
- **How to Find a Job in Canada** / Efim Cheinis and Dale Sproule. 2008. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 C51h
- **No Canadian Experience, Eh? : A Career Success Guide for New Immigrants** / Daisy Wright. 2011. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 W94n1
- **“No Canadian Experience”: How and Where to Obtain “Canadian Experience”** / Obi Orakwue. 2005. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 O63c

## 2. Volunteering

### *Introduction*

To volunteer one's expertise and time to an organization means that there is no financial gain for the individual. And yet, this approach may result in new contacts, new skill sets, long-term employment, and be proof of "Canadian experience."

When you commit to volunteering the expectations may vary from one hour to a full day each week, for one day only or long term. Before beginning your search it is wise to assess your personal needs and how much time you might be able to offer. Some organizations may require an interview, just like a regular job. Use the experience as an opportunity to develop your interviewing skills.

### *Considering a Volunteer Role*

When you are browsing potential volunteer opportunities, keep in mind that there should be work-related elements that will support your future career path. The position does not have to be directly related but it can still be relevant if, for example you are developing office skills, welcoming or serving people, contributing to a website, etc. As well, you will enjoy your volunteer experience if it is connected with something you are interested in.

If you feel that an organization is taking advantage of you and your time, there is no obligation to continue. It is still respectful to communicate with your volunteer co-ordinator of your departure plans.

A good place to start if you have a particular career in mind is with a professional association as there may be conferences and committees for you to contribute to. You can search for national, provincial and local associations with the Associations Canada database and several directories.

- **Associations Canada**

[https://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/a](https://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/a)

Go to "Associations Canada" link, and check the Associations Canada box. Enter a keyword such as "nursing" into the search box, followed by location, such as province, and then click the red "Search Now" button. A list of associations will provide further contact information, including a website.

Available from the VPL Online Articles, Encyclopedias & More page.

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- **ASAE Gateway to Associations Directory**  
<http://www.asaecenter.org/Community/Directories/AssociationSearch.cfm>  
Contact information for numerous associations. Can narrow search by province/city.
- **BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network**  
<http://www.bcitp.net/>  
The purpose of BCITP Net is to help build associations and networks among internationally trained professionals.

### **Searching for a Volunteer Role**

Every community has a need for volunteers, particularly non-profit organizations, charities, and the arts community. It is advised to become familiar with your community, such as up-coming events and fundraisers, and be alert to postings in local newspapers calling for volunteers in the "Classified ads."

You may also want to pursue a specific type of organization by checking the "Yellow Pages" telephone directory, or use a database like "Reference Canada," (see instructions below) which can create a customized list of organizations and companies for you to contact. As well, there are many websites that post volunteer opportunities to recruit your assistance.

- **Reference Canada**  
[http://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/r](http://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/r)  
Go to the "Reference Canada" database and look for "Canadian Businesses" at top of page and choose the "Custom Search" tab. Select "Business Type" and click on "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" and then enter keywords, for example, enter "animal shelter" and click LOOKUP and then select appropriate headings. You can combine these headings with a location by clicking on "Geography", select the province, choose the cities and click the "View results" button at top left side of page.

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### **Canadian Websites:**

- **Charity Village**  
<https://charityvillage.com/directories/volunteers/find-volunteer-listings.aspx>  
Many charitable organizations post both job and volunteer opportunities through this website. To search the listings select "Quick Search" and provide keywords and location, or for a more specific search use the "Advanced Search" tab to choose duration, type, audience, and more.

- **Craigslist** <http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites/>  
Cities from around the world, including those in Canada often have a “Craigslist” website where anyone can post an advertisement for free. There is an element of risk considering that the ads are from anonymous people, and yet, an interesting opportunity may be posted. Check the volunteer listings below the “Community” heading.
- **Go Volunteer** <http://govolunteer.ca/>  
This website acts as a search engine for volunteer opportunities, using keywords and geography settings. For example, typing in “cancer research” in Vancouver resulted in positions to help fundraising, web programming, and creative campaigns, followed by contact information.
- **Volunteer Canada** <http://volunteer.ca/>  
In this national website, a directory of volunteer centres is listed by province, as well as volunteer support, advice and inspiration.

#### British Columbia Websites:

- **Volunteer BC** <http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/>  
This website is a portal for promoting volunteerism throughout the province, including a list of volunteer centres in each city.

#### Vancouver Websites:

- **Alliance for Arts and Culture** <http://www.allianceforarts.com/volunteer>  
Vancouver is a culturally diverse city and there is often a need for volunteers at festivals, art galleries, museums, and cultural events. This website contains a job board, arts competitions, and a volunteer list, which includes internship opportunities. Internships will be discussed in a later chapter.
- **City of Vancouver – Green Volunteers**  
<http://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/green-volunteer-opportunities.aspx>  
To encourage environmental or “Green” activities, the City of Vancouver has created this list of organizations that involve community volunteers.
- **Red Book** <http://redbookonline.bc211.ca/bc/goHome?langInd=E>  
The lower mainland, including Vancouver has many social service organizations to serve people in the community. This website, hosted by BC211 is a search engine for these organizations, which often require volunteers. For example, a search on “mental health” in Vancouver, BC will provide a list that you would then need to contact.
- **Vancouver Charity Events** <http://www.vancouvercharity.ca/volunteer>  
A listing of volunteer opportunities in Metro Vancouver for special events.

### ***Networking and Volunteering***

It is beneficial to get to know the other staff members of your volunteer site and build relationships. Volunteer Co-ordinators may be able to offer you a letter of reference when you apply for paid work, or be aware of paid job opportunities. Sometimes when an official job does become available within the organization, you may be considered a top candidate for the position.

### ***Other Tips***

- Be clear with the organization about your availability, whether it is limited or open, and when you plan to end your volunteer experience, just like a regular job.
- Attend social events for volunteers, as it is another great way to make friends and build your social network.
- Non-profit organizations often rely upon volunteers to survive. It is honourable to volunteer and always reflects well on your resume.
- Always remember to include your volunteer experience on your resume, and how this experience is relevant to the paying job you are applying for.

### 3. Temp Agencies and Temporary Work

#### *Introduction*

Temporary work is a short term job or contract, to serve an organization that has a need that must be filled immediately. "Temp Agencies" or "Temporary Staffing Services" are companies that place you in this temporary work setting, from construction sites to business offices.

The benefit of this style of work, besides getting paid is that you can be selective about your schedule. While the jobs may be short term, sometimes they can lead to permanent work, and it will provide you with Canadian experience in the work force. Your temp agency receives a commission from the company for successfully providing them with workers.

#### *Finding an Agency*

Temp agencies are often listed in the "Yellow pages" telephone directory, through an online search of companies in your city, or using the Reference Canada database (see above) with the Business listed under "Employment Agencies" and "Employment Contractors – Temporary Help." The most direct route for finding an agency is through our national association.

- **Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services.** <http://www.acsess.org/JOBSEEKERS/advanced.asp>  
The ACSESS website is a reputable source for finding temp agencies, and it allows you to select your location, and specify your interest area before providing a list of agencies to contact and their websites.

#### *Temp Agencies*

There are several large temp agencies that have a good reputation for their services, including those listed below:

- **Adecco Employment Services** <http://www.adecco.ca/EN/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Hunt Personnel and Temporarily Yours** <http://www.hunt.ca/>
- **Manpower** [http://manpower.ca/mp\\_ca/en/Job-Seekers.htm](http://manpower.ca/mp_ca/en/Job-Seekers.htm)
- **Placement Group** <http://www.pgstaff.com/>
- **TES The Employment Solution** <http://www.tes.net/>

#### *What to Expect*

A temp agency will often advertise jobs on their website for you to apply to by creating an online account and submitting your resume. A representative will then contact you and verify your resume. This person will often re-connect with you to ensure that your temp experience is going smoothly.

Other temp agencies may prefer you to contact their company by phone or in-person. They will then connect you with a representative who will match you with temporary jobs.

When you arrive at a temporary job setting, still consider the role as an opportunity to connect with potential long-term employment. Introduce yourself to your co-workers and represent yourself and your skills in a professional manner.

***Other Tips***

- Be sure to verify the hourly wage in advance of accepting a job.
- Most temp agencies provide a “Frequently Asked Questions” or “FAQ” section in their website regarding expectations, wages and benefits.
- Confirm a contact person at your new job site and their address.
- Plan your transit route, so that you can arrive on time to a new location.
- Note that a “recruiter” is different than a temp agency, because this person works for you for a fee to find you a specific job.

## 4. Employment Programs and Internships

### *Introduction*

To encourage skilled immigrants who need Canadian experience in specific fields, there are a variety of employment programs and internship opportunities. These programs are often a combination of study and practical experience, and some offer financial assistance to support newcomers, and even cover tuition costs if Canadian certification is required.

If you are applying to Canadian colleges and certification courses, check to see if the program offers internships or “co-ops,” which will place you in a real work setting and connect you with individuals already in the field. If you see a posting in a job board for “internship,” expect this to mean an opportunity that is either for limited or no pay, for a short term. And yet, the company maybe using the internship to train and assess the intern for a long term hire.

### *Employment Programs*

Employment programs are short-term solutions, but they still show that the individual is taking initiative towards acquiring Canadian experience. These programs are also known as “Bridging Programs,” because they act as a bridge leading into work. There is usually an application and placement process.

Bridging programs are especially helpful if you are in a “regulated” occupation that requires a Canadian license because they can speed up the process and help you prepare for examinations. To determine if your career is regulated, check this listing from the Welcome BC website:

[http://www.welcomebc.ca/local/wbc/docs/immigration/Regulatory\\_Organization.pdf](http://www.welcomebc.ca/local/wbc/docs/immigration/Regulatory_Organization.pdf)

- **Career Bridge Program** <https://www.careeredge.ca/en/job-seekers/career-bridge>  
This national program connects participating companies with skilled immigrants who have been in Canada for less than three years. The individual must complete an educational credential assessment that will validate an international university degree for the employer. The program involves paid work in mid-level careers such as Business Analyst and Program Manager.
- **Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC)** [http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online\\_resource/employment\\_programs\\_and\\_community\\_services/epbc/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/employment_programs_and_community_services/epbc/)  
A formal referral to this program is required by the Ministry of Social Development through a WorkBC employment centre (see the link below for locations). This process involves a client needs assessment and will result in individualized service and job search strategies.

- **Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Program**  
<http://www.credentials.gc.ca/jobs/what-you-can-do/internship-program.asp#cn-nav>  
The FIN program offers temporary work experience and training opportunities with government departments and other public and private sector organizations. The interns work for 90 days as casual employees, which may be extended, in careers such as policy, administration, project management, and computer science. A post-secondary degree is required.
- **Industry Training Authority BC** <http://www.itabc.ca/immigrants-trades/overview>  
The ITA provides immigrants with training opportunities and apprenticeships for over 100 trades in British Columbia from aerospace to horticulture. You may be eligible for tuition funding, along with career counseling and an introduction to employers. The programs are a combination of on-the-job training and classroom study.
- **Welcome BC – Skills Connect for Immigrants Program**  
<http://www.skillsconnect.ca/seeking-employment>  
The Skills Connect program assists individuals from all industry sectors and aims to advance the careers of immigrants (less than 5 years) by upgrading skills and acquiring Canadian credentials. Participants receive mentorship, job shadowing opportunities, and employment support.
- **Work BC – Employment Programs Listing and Centres**  
<http://www.workbc.ca/Education-Training/Programs/Pages/Employment-Programs.aspx>  
<http://www.workbc.ca/Work-BC-Centres/Pages/Work-BC-Centres.aspx>  
Work BC Services Centres are located throughout the province, and support staff will help determine what programs and support you may be eligible for.

### **Internships**

Some companies offer internships for new immigrants so that they may acquire on-the-job training and expand their knowledge of a career before entering the workforce full time. It can be frustrating for newcomers who already have university degrees to go through this process, but it can also be a time of growth, learning and opportunity.

There are even companies that collaborate with universities, and pay for the individual's certification course fees, if they sense long-term commitment and value. The concept is that once the courses are completed, and the person is fully licensed, they will be considered for permanent positions.

- **2012 Winners of “The Best Employers for New Canadians”**  
<http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/>  
Mediacorp produces this list of the top Canadian employers for new immigrants based upon their efforts to recruit and support new immigrants, and provide internship opportunities and long-term work.

- **Career Cruising**

[https://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/c](https://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/c)

Go to the "Career Cruising" link, click the "Employment" tab and select the Advanced Search page under "More Options." This job search will allow you to select different job types using a drop-down menu, including Part-time, Contract, Internship and Temporary. The "Education" tab also describes and lists Apprenticeship opportunities, which combine schooling and paid on-the-job work experience.

Available from the VPL Online Articles, Encyclopedias & More page.

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- **Eluta.ca**

<http://www.eluta.ca/search-new-canadians>

Eluta is a Canadian job search engine that has created a search box for targeting companies known to be receptive to recruiting and hiring newcomers.

### **Other Tips**

- When applying for an employment program, check to see if there are fees attached to the courses and if you can apply for financial support.
- Use every opportunity as a means to network with others and to showcase your professional abilities.
- Do your research on the leading Canadian companies in your industry, and inquire about initiatives to support new immigrants.
- Expand your job search to include internship and apprenticeship options.

## 5. Work Placement

In some industries there is a deficit of Canadian workers, which requires companies to consider sponsoring or nominating individuals to move to Canada and work. To acquire such a work placement is a challenge because the employer must prove that there is no one locally with a specific skill-set to hire. As well, there is an application process that the employer must initiate through the BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP).

If a Canadian company posts their positions for a PNP work placement, there may be a delay due to the application process. And yet, to arrive in Canada and be welcomed with a job is an ideal situation. This program can also be initiated after you have arrived in Canada and the company recognizes your long-term potential.

- ***BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)***  
[http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/come/work/about/strategic\\_occupations/skilled/who.page](http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/come/work/about/strategic_occupations/skilled/who.page)  
Using the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system of identifying job titles and duties, the employer must determine which category their job description is found and if the overseas candidate fulfills the requirements. A PNP application is submitted, and then based on a "Labour Market Opinion" it is decided if the job vacancy should be filled by someone out of country. The employer must also prove that they have made an effort to first fill the vacancy with residents of British Columbia.

## 6. Part-time Work

Finding full-time work in a specific industry can be a full-time job in itself. Skilled immigrants in Canada must sometimes resort to a combination of certification study, job search and part-time work to survive. To allow yourself time to conduct a thorough job research, consider taking a part-time job to acquire some Canadian experience and funding.

Most job search engines provide an option to narrow your search to part-time work, through Advanced search selections.

- ***Work BC – Advanced job search setting***  
<http://www.workbc.ca/Jobs/JobSeekers/AdvancedJobSearch.aspx>
- ***Working in Canada - Advanced job search setting***  
[http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca/advanced\\_search.do](http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca/advanced_search.do)

As well, there are some roles in Canada that do not require a work permit and a creative newcomer may be able to cultivate "Canadian experience" by acting in these roles. Such jobs are listed here in the Government of Canada site:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/apply-who-nopermit.asp>

## 7. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Try these following resources:

- **BC Job Search Guide** / Christian Saint Cyr. 2012. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 S13t.  
The guide includes a whole chapter dedicated to British Columbia Recruiters for both temp agencies and paid recruiters, as well as specific websites and strategies for finding work.
- **Canadian Immigrant Magazine**  
<http://canadianimmigrant.ca>  
This free monthly magazine features articles, advice, resources and websites tailored for new immigrants. It is available at the Vancouver Public Library.

*Questions? Please ask the Information Staff on Level 4, Central Library or telephone 604-331-3624.*