

Blog #1

<https://beachunitedchurch.com/2019/07/beyond-the-script/>

BEYOND THE SCRIPT

Sometimes, all it takes is a project to have a lightbulb moment, and working on the new website of Beach United is what did it for me. What started as a journey to understand what needs to be part of the website and what doesn't turned out to be much more than that. In fact, during a brainstorming session with Minister, Karen Dale, I realized that we are not what you call a conventional charity or even a church for that matter.

Our repertoire has expanded, and we have taken on many new projects over a few years. These include our environmental initiatives such as the Solar Energy for Beach Cooperative Inc. (a not-for-profit renewable energy co-operative, incorporated for the purpose of generating and selling renewable energy in order to support Beach United Church ministries.), Gardening Group and a fully accessible green parking lot which helps reduce flooding and sewage back-ups after heavy rainfalls, a significant breakthrough with regard to sustainability.

These initiatives in addition to existing projects such as The Beach Cares, Knitting for Shivering Children Group, Interfaith Lunch Program and Out of the Cold Program have helped us raise the bar in terms of giving back to the community.

Now, this may not seem like a big deal, but for those who have read up on the state of churches in Canada, BUC's involvement in the community is like a breath of fresh air. Recently the National Trust of Canada estimated that 9,000 religious spaces in Canada would be lost in the next decade. The reasons for this are mainly rising maintenance costs and shrinking membership in congregations.

However, our story is different. Not only have we grown our community of faith due to constant engagement especially with the younger demographic through our Young Adults Program, but also we have successfully raised funds through a variety of initiatives such as the Christmas Market and Fair Trade Fayre, where we partnered with Fair Trade Vendors to sell organic products.

We have thus gone beyond the conventional understanding of a church and truly gone beyond the script.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Communications Coordinator

Blog #2

<https://beachunitedchurch.com/2019/05/a-day-at-beach-united-church/>

A DAY AT BEACH UNITED CHURCH

It is 10 a.m., and as you enter you can see Cate Duff, the office administrator busy designing a poster for the next event. To the left, David Lewis, the Operations and Rental Manager is making sure that the event calendar is in order and easily accessible to readers. A phone next to him is ringing off the hook; the caller is probably looking for a place to rent for an event.

In the conference room, which is seemingly nondescript but always bustling with activity, Nicole Tanti, our Community Engagement Coordinator is brainstorming ideas with Karen Dale, the Minister whose plate is full with everything and anything under the sun, including the responsibility of overseeing events promotion and outreach.

I know what you are thinking; is it that busy at a church? The answer is yes, it always is, especially at Beach United Church.

It is not your conventional church, but a congregation that recognizes the importance of human values and invests a lot of time and energy in exploring faith and building relationships with God, people, and the earth.

So how do we manage to do this? We raise money through our events, donations and reinvest them into communities. I had a glimpse of this at the Christmas Market, which is held annually with support from local businesses. We raised a whopping \$9,000 selling ethical products, homemade goodies, and Christmas decor.

The church also hosts music events featuring some of the heavyweights in the music industry including Organist, Zoe Li, Jazz Pianist, Danae Olano, Folk Singer, Claire Coupland and more. All thanks to the efforts of Steven Webb, the Director of Music.

In addition, our social impact initiatives include the Out of the Cold Program (an initiative aimed to provide shelter to people who are homeless), Interfaith Lunch Program (a drop-in lunch program for people with low income) and The Beach Cares (a sponsorship program for Syrian refugees).

So, if you are still wondering what we do and if you should press the donate button or not, stop wondering and [donate now](#). Even better, if you want to participate in our events, visit our website at www.beachunitedchurch.com. If you want to rent our space for your own event, celebration or an ongoing program, shoot us a quick email at operations@beachuc.com.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Communications Coordinator, April 23, 2019

Blog #3

<http://www.mcislanguages.com/blog-post/interest-sign-language-piques-canada/>

INTEREST IN SIGN LANGUAGE PIQUES IN CANADA.

Often, actually very often you see someone on the street with a disability, but this time it was different. A man walked over to me last week and handed over a card on the train. It said, "Hello, I am a Deaf and a Hard of Hearing person selling these cards to support my family. Pay any price you wish. Thank you for your kindness," As he walked over to everyone handing out the card, he had a smile on his face. You could see that people were benevolent to him.

As someone gave him a loonie, he walked away. I looked at the card, which had a bunch of basic ASL signs frequently used by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. "Pretty neat," I thought to myself. It also got me thinking about the number of people interested in learning sign language. For starters, in Canada there are two types of sign language used by people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing which include American Sign Language (ASL) and la Langue des Signes Quebecoise (QSL).

Over the past few years, a number of people have started joining Meetups to learn and practice sign language in Toronto. Many are visiting the neighborhood public library or taking certificate courses in sign language too. According to a survey by Statistics Canada, in 2011, the number of people who reported using sign languages at home was nearly 25,000. In 2016, this jumped to 27, 510 people.

Interestingly, according to a recent report by the National Post, in a bid to remove communication barriers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the federal government is also giving some serious thought to making sign language the official language along with English and French.

As a language service agency, we want to [remove communication barriers](#) for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which is why we work with only active members of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC). We encourage all current active AVLIC members to join our roster to ensure that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing have access to legal, healthcare and social services.

So, if you run into or are struggling to communicate with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing person, and do not have the time to learn the language, give us a call. We may be able to provide you with a qualified sign language interpreter who can help with all your needs.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Toronto, Ontario, August 06, 2017

Blog #4

<http://www.mcislanguages.com/blog-post/changing-montreal/>

THINGS ARE CHANGING IN MONTREAL

Where do you want to go again? Do you know how to get there? Looks like my app is not working,” as the Uber driver asked me these questions on the busy streets of Montreal, I gave him a puzzled look as every anxious traveler should. “Could you restart it again?” I asked nervously. I had ten minutes to catch my train and the situation was not helping.

The driver turned around and then said assuredly, “I can drive you there for free if the app does not work again. It is fine.” “Wow! Free ride,” I said to myself. As it is with most rides, I started talking to the driver. I asked him a clichéd question, “Where are you from?”

“I am from Iran but have been here for quite some time. There are many Indians here too. Many of them are finishing their Master’s degree. This place is truly diverse.” I told him I noticed that, and by that time the app started working, I started thinking about the changing demographics of Montreal.

A 2016 census report says that language diversity is growing in Canada. In fact, one out of every five Canadians said at home, they speak a language other than English or French. You can literally see this change in Montreal; while historically their main immigrant groups have been Italians, Greeks, Portuguese and people from the Caribbean, today that has changed. Incidentally, the fastest growing languages in Montreal are from India-Malayalam, Telugu and Marathi. Laval has also seen an increase in Tamil and Bengali speakers. Farsi is now widely spoken in the suburbs of Montreal.

As a [leading language service provider](#), we understand the importance of understanding changing demographics not just in Montreal but across Canada. This is why we have revamped recruitment all over Canada and hired additional qualified interpreters and translators. Our extensive roster has over 5,000 language professionals who are available 24/7/365.

So, do not hesitate to give us a call if you run into a Spanish or Farsi speaker on the streets of Montreal, we promise to get you an interpreter as soon as possible.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, August 16, 2017, Toronto, Ontario

Blog #5

<https://www.mcislanguages.com/blog-post/canada-and-the-child-labour-problem/>

CANADA AND THE CHILD LABOUR PROBLEM

“Ever wondered who makes the shoes you wear? It is probably a small child working in a factory somewhere,” an activist friend of mine once scornfully said, during a dining table conversation. As the feeling sunk in, things became clear; as a community, we are as much responsible for the child labor problem as a socio-political system which allegedly chooses to look the other way when children suffer in silence.

The recent World Vision report titled ‘Canada’s Labour Problem’ reiterates the issue and throws light on a variety of issues related to forced labour. The report says that “85 million children-nearly triple the population of our country suffer in exploitative, hazardous labour.” The report adds, “Most Canadians can’t believe that children and adults today are held against their will, trafficked or forced to work off a debt bond.”

The report also observes, “Canadians are at risk every day unwittingly purchasing products made through the child or forced labour.” In fact, the total value of Canadian imports of the 50 risky goods assessed in the report totaled \$34 billion in 2016. The goods included everything from food to clothing to electronics. The report makes another disturbing observation, “Many Canadian companies seem ill-prepared to address the possibility of child and forced labour”

As a non-profit social enterprise, which makes every effort to create a positive social impact, we take forced labour and human trafficking issues very seriously and provide language solutions to victims.

With a grant from the Province of Ontario and the help of the Ministry of Attorney General’s Ontario Victim Services, we developed a highly successful [online training initiative to address human trafficking](#).

We encourage frontline social service providers, victim services staff, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, labour inspectors and professionals who may come across trafficked persons to take this training.

So, if you provide services to vulnerable populations, and would like learn about how to recognize and assist a victim of human trafficking, then we encourage you to go online and check us out.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, June 14, 2017

Blog #6

<https://www.mcislanguages.com/blog-post/why-we-shouldnt-typecast-refugees/>

WHY WE SHOULDN'T TYPECAST REFUGEES

“They don’t look like refugees,” a friend of mine remarked when she saw a picture of a refugee family at the airport.

I decided to dig a bit deeper. “Why do you think so?” I asked her. “Sorry, I had a different image of refugees in mind. This family looks so relaxed and carefree,” she said. I don’t blame her, nor do I blame those who believe that refugees look a certain way; haggard, shabby and desperate, all thanks to popular culture and millions of such images trickling down to us every day. That said, it is essential to not categorically dismiss these images, since they are a reflection of the refugee reality.

Contrary to popular belief, many of the refugees who come into Canada are educated, and open to new learnings. Several success stories of refugees in the recent past have corroborated this.

A recent report of the Forced Displacement and Development Study Group talks about a different approach while dealing with refugees. It says, “The scale and urgency of the refugee crisis presents a window of opportunity for donors, humanitarian and development agencies, host countries, the private sector, and civil society to forge new partnerships that give refugees and host communities a chance to thrive together. Evidence shows that when policies and programs promote refugees’ self-reliance and integration into host countries’ development plans, the short-term costs are outweighed by refugees’ longer-term economic and social contributions.”

Here at MCIS, we take the refugee issue seriously and make it a point to support refugees by not only removing language barriers at a subsidized cost, but also providing them with the right resources. Recently, we sponsored a Syrian family of four, whose case needed to be expedited. The family has arrived and is now being helped by the MCIS team.

So, if you come across a refugee who does not look like a “refugee”, think again. They might not look like they need your help, but your help matters. So, pick up the phone and give us a call to get them the assistance they need.

-Vivek Vijayapalan, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, June 22, 2017