

Men's Sheds Canada Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE:

President's message

Robert Goluch

MS Ontario: No one said it was going to be easy!

John Peters and Nick Fry

Shed Spotlights:

Lac Brome Shed ,QC

Bruce Men's Shed, ON

Research Initiatives:

Andy Tamas

A Remedy for Loneliness:

Robert Goluch

Notes About Men's Sheds

Across the World:

Punch Jackson

Men's Shed Opera Music

From Wales

Travel Shots

Message from the President:

As we embark on our fourth edition of the Newsletter, I'm pleased to share the significant strides Men's Sheds Canada (MSC) has taken since our last update in August 2023. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated board members, our Program Manager and volunteers whose unwavering commitment propels our MSC initiatives forward.



Charitable Status Application: In November 2023, MSC submitted its Charitable Application to Canada Revenue Agency, with a decision anticipated between the end of March and mid-May. We are now actively preparing for a potential transition from our current Agreement with Health Age Canada/United Way of BC to a new Agreement with the Private Philanthropic Group (PPG) by the end of March. With the acquisition of Charitable Status, MSC will directly assume the responsibility of administering PPG funding, necessitating the hiring of personnel to manage its expanded funding responsibilities. CRA's strict charity rules will continue to apply to MSC as it has with HAC/UWBC.

In-Person Board Meeting: MSC welcomed three new board members, Audrey Fennema, Robert Elhen and Andy Tamas, who have joined us since the September 29, 2023 AGM. In addition, Brian Sawyer has transitioned from the role of Director to assume the position of Program Manager with MSC. On November 27-28, 2023, MSC hosted an in-person board meeting in Vancouver with discussions ranging from developing a Transition Plan to outlining a multi-year Operational Plan and Budget. Valuable input was received from officials of HAC, UWBC and the Private Philanthropic Group.

Funding Application to PPG: Following the in-person board meeting, MSC submitted a Concept Paper and subsequently a detailed 5 year funding proposal to the Private Philanthropic Group in early January, 2024. This proposal underscores the critical importance and complexity of securing a robust financial foundation for the future sustainability of MSC. We eagerly await a decision by early March, 2024. *(cont'd next page)*

Advocacy Efforts: In late January, meetings in Ottawa occurred with senior policy advisors from three federal ministries – Health, Mental Health and Addictions and Seniors and Labour. Despite recent personnel changes due to a Cabinet shuffle, MSC remains committed to promoting Men’s Sheds across Canada. I extend our gratitude to my local MP, Patrick Weiler, for his invaluable assistance in facilitating meetings with these officials and for wholeheartedly championing our Men’s Shed cause.

MSC Committees: Our commitment to growth and impact is reflected in the establishment of several Committees. With well-defined Terms of Reference and the recruitment of highly skilled volunteers, these committees cover Finance, Communications, IT Services, Fund Development, Research and Policy Development. Committees are led by MSC Directors. Our ability to undertake numerous initiatives is enhanced by these volunteers with diverse expertise. We appreciate their service and contribution to MSC.

National Webinar on Mental Health: In collaboration with MSABC, we joined forces with Dr. John Ogrodniczuk, Professor of Psychiatry at UBC and Sam Tutanuak, Senior Advisor with the Gov’t of Nunavut, to host a national Webinar on November 8, 2023. This impactful event, which was well attended, aimed to raise awareness of male suicide as an urgent public health issue. Continuing to offer webinars on men’s Mental Health and Well Being remains crucial, ensuring valuable support and resources are accessible to all Sheddors.

Regional Gathering of Sheds: A Meet and Greet with the MSC President was organized and hosted by Alouette President and Vice-President, Everett Crowdis and Richard Simonson, on October 24 in Maple Ridge, BC. Twelve Sheds from the surrounding area were invited to attend this face to face meeting with the President. The gathering provided an excellent opportunity to share updates on MSC initiatives followed by a Q & A session, fostering lively exchanges and engaging discussions among our members. A similar outstanding regional gathering was held in Vernon, BC on May 12, 2023 hosted by David Friesen and Vernon Men’s Shed current President, Ray Verlage. MSC embraces regional gatherings as they offer valuable opportunities for direct interaction with MSC, facilitating the exchange of ideas and fostering meaningful connections within our community.

Provincial Associations (PAs): MSC has achieved a significant milestone by advocating successfully with its funder to allocate resources aimed at strengthening the infrastructure of Provincial Associations. The objective was to support the initiation of as many new sheds as possible within each province. We were delighted to announce that three PAs – British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario- responded to this initiative by submitting grant applications, each of which was subsequently approved. These grants, each amounting to \$20,000, reflect a substantial investment in the growth and development of Men’s Sheds at the provincial level, further reinforcing our commitment to expanding the reach and impact of this vital community.

Infrastructure Technology: Kevin Ford, MSC’s dedicated volunteer lead for IT initiatives, is gearing up to launch Phase 11 of the Higher Logic platform within the next two months. This initiative will kick off with testing in local Ottawa sheds. Once the testing proves successful, we look forward to seeing how these benefits will be implemented across the Men’s Sheds community. Kevin will soon provide more detailed information on this promising IT initiative, further enhancing our technological capabilities and fostering a more connected and efficient community.

In closing, these initiatives mark significant strides for MSC. As we move forward, let’s continue to build a resilient and thriving community, united in our mission to promote well-being and camaraderie among shedders nationwide.



Robert Goluch, President

Provincial Spotlight: Men's Sheds Ontario

by John Peters and Nicholas Fry of the MSO Operations Team

Two years ago, based on the perceived success of the provincial associations in the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, Ontario decided to form its own association, Men's Sheds Ontario.

That was the easy part. We now had a name and a small group of Sheds and a purpose: to strengthen, support and facilitate the creation of new Sheds in Ontario.

However, as we progressed, we discovered that there were issues that needed attention and it was at a launch meeting in Aurora that our first issue was addressed. The secretary to the Deputy Minister of Health who was in attendance approached us and informed us that we were on their radar, and they would welcome a discussion if we were incorporated.

Incorporation became a focus since it brought into play several advantages: a legal entity that could talk to the government as well as NGOs. Plus, it was an advantage when arranging affordable insurance (a stumbling block for our sheds) on a provincial level.

However, incorporation proved to be a clear case of haste makes waste. We were enthusiastic about getting the ball rolling and we heard that our bank and its affiliate, OWNR, could do this easily. We initiated the process and waited for it to complete. On completion, we discovered that OWNR can only do business incorporations and we were not registered as a not-for-profit. So we are now in the process of reversing that incorporation in order to register as a not-for-profit. Although we got our initial outlay of money for the first incorporation refunded, we are now looking at legal fees to do the process properly.

But before this turns into a story of doom and gloom, we have had successes too. For one thing, the insurance proposal is in place, awaiting incorporation, that will offer liability insurance at a reduced rate to any Shed that wants a policy.

Plus, over the last two years, we have grown from five Sheds in the Ottawa Valley to over twenty Established or Emerging Sheds provincially. This past summer saw John Peters and Nick Fry, with the assistance of a grant, travel in and around the Toronto area promoting Sheds. This effort resulted in the creation of several new Sheds and interest in those communities. It also led us to investigate different travel scenarios. We did our first visits in a cluster near Acton, Ontario and to save on accommodation, camped out of a small travel trailer.

In another case, a new Shed benefited from an inquiry that MSO received offering tools. We were able to connect this donor to the new Shed which now has tools to work with.

And sometimes we get surprised. Recently we heard that a community where we wanted to stir interest in Shedding had someone wanting to start a Shed. Following up on this lead, we now have someone to work with and, as a bonus, that community is hosting a trade fair to which we have been invited to promote Men's Sheds. MSO will be represented at this trade fair by ambassadors from a neighbouring, newly formed Shed.

Also, don't doubt the power of the media. We have been interviewed by radio shows in Owen Sound and Kitchener as well as Amanda Pfeiffer on CBC's "Ontario Today". And an interview with the Globe and Mail resulted in a well written article that has resulted in a flurry of inquiries about Men's Sheds. We certainly have our work cut out for us since many of these individual inquiries come from communities without a Shed – yet!

As you can see, creating a provincial association has not been a smooth process, but, for a group of volunteer men in their senior years, it has also been rewarding. **The pluses outweigh the cons.**



Spotlight on Lac Brome Men's Shed in Quebec

adapted with permission of Sam Greenwood of Boys to Men

In this article, I share about Men's Shed, an international movement to create supportive and engaged social groups for retired men. This article goes more in depth with the Lac-Brome Men's Shed, my local chapter!

Men's Shed is an international movement that has taken root in Canada. The movement found its way to Lac-Brome in 2019 and engaged men in my community such as Danny Williams and Robert Elhen.

While Danny Williams is the man who started the Lac-Brome initiative, his counterpart, Robert Elhen has now taken on a big task as the Men's Shed Canada ambassador for Quebec - growing the movement in Quebec!



In general, a Men's Shed is a group where men can get together and socialize. The main audience is retired men who want to break isolation, feel good, and stay engaged in their community. Issues like male suicide, loneliness, and lack of purpose are all too common for today's retired men. As Robert Elhen says, "Retired men don't always have much to do." So the Lac-Brome Men's Shed is a place to solve that problem.

Here is one shining example of what the Men's Shed can do: The Men's Shed were contacted by a local social worker and asked to help a displaced father and his family move. Robert Elhen took the lead and reached out to some local moving companies.

De Luxe owner Carl Séguin volunteered a truck and three men to help move the large things. Several Men's Shed volunteers - and myself! - helped move the smaller things. Together, we completed the move in one FUN afternoon and put the family into their new home. Robert even made a follow-up call to check-in with the family.

Other examples of the Lac-Brome Men's Shed in action include: picking up someone's bike from a nearby town, hanging a mirror, repurposing old tools, fixing frozen pipes in the winter, and hosting a Games Night for the whole Lac-Brome community. The Lac-Brome Men's Shed has now established itself as a non-profit, secured a permanent "shed" location, and connected with hundreds of people in the Lac-Brome area. The main participants tend to be retired men who are looking to socialize and keep using their still-sharp skills. Many locals can see the Men's Shed members engaged around Lac-Brome and the wider area!

To learn more about Men's Shed and the local chapter in Lac-Brome, please join the group on [www.Facebook.com/groups/2645264645520508](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2645264645520508) or contact Robert Elhen at robert.e@lacbromemensshed.org or 514-824-9508.

This article is written by Sam Greenwood. Sam works with Boys To Men Canada, a Canadian charity that supports teenage boys in their journey to becoming good men. If you would like to contact Sam about the topics of this article or to know more about his work, please reach him at sam@btmcanada.org.

No Fixed Address, No Problem –

The Story of Bruce Men's Shed (Ontario) - adapted from an article published by Help Age Canada

In April 2023, the Bruce Men's Shed found its roots on the Bruce Peninsula, providing a welcoming space for older men to gather, exchange stories, enhance their skills, and form long-lasting friendships.

The Shed doesn't have a dedicated meeting space yet, but for the Shedders, their Shed goes beyond four walls – it's about being together and sharing experiences, wherever that may be. The group of men meets regularly and actively participates in community activities, like going on hikes (a popular pastime in the Bruce Peninsula!), building bat boxes to support the local wildlife, or joining in Tobermory's annual Chi-Cheemaun Festival.

We spoke with a few members of the Bruce Men's Shed – Peter (73), Ross (70), Geoff (77), and Gerry (63) – to learn more about their Shed and why the group is so important to them. When asked what their favourite activity so far has been, Peter shared “The main activity I've participated in has been the hikes – I am very much looking forward to other adventures. I have also come to really enjoy our monthly meetings and meeting in-person.”

“It's nice to have a group and meet some people that you wouldn't ordinarily meet. I really believe there will be side friendships that develop from there, which is certainly a plus! Whether it's a breakfast or supper meeting, I think they're all enjoyable – I look forward to them whether it's a general meeting or something specific,” said Ross.

For the Bruce Shedders, **it's not just about what you can gain from the Shed – it's also about what you can give.** The group comes from all walks of life, and speaking to their breadth of experiences and strengths, Gerry noted “We all have something different to offer! One of our members has a wood lathe, and he likes to turn wooden bowls – there are so many different activities that each of us have been involved with over time, and if somebody has a project they want to do, there [are] people we can easily reach out to.”



The men are excited for what the future holds, and for now, they strive create a welcoming space for new and existing Shedders alike. If you visit Bruce Men's Shed, you'll be sure to meet a friendly face: “I make a point of trying to sit beside or at a different table each meeting, to talk to different people and get to know the different members of the group. Sharing different interests, chatting a few minutes after a meeting, you can really see some connections forming,” Ross said. Summer is a busy time for everyone, and the Shed is looking forward to winter, when they'll have more time to get to know each other even better. “Whether it's getting a couple guys together to watch a hockey game or play cards or coffee, I think there will be some very strong relationships developing out of this Men's Shed.”

Bruce Men's Shed's next big goal is a simple but monumental task: get a dedicated space to host the meetings. They hope that once they have a meeting space locked in, they'll be able to welcome more members into their group and grow the Shed. That being said, the group appreciates the Shed that's blossomed out of spontaneous meeting spaces and activities. The Shed is whatever the men want it to be, and to become, according to Ross: “What I like and what I've seen so far is that there are no perceived ideas of what it should be or how it has to be – it will be what we make of it. It's like a big ball of clay that's been given to us, and we can work it in and mold it into whatever we think works best for us.”

When asked what advice the Bruce Shedders would give to someone who is looking to join or start a Men's Shed, their answer was clear: *“Come on in – what have you got to lose?”*

You can find Bruce Men's Shed on [Facebook!](#) HelpAge Canada offers Men's Shed Start-Up grants for groups of two or more men looking to start a Shed in their community – launch your own Shed today!

MSC Research Initiatives

Andy Tamas, MSC Director and Laura Kadowaki, United Way of British Columbia.

This is a report of recent work by MSC's Research Committee, and a summary of other initiatives on its agenda.

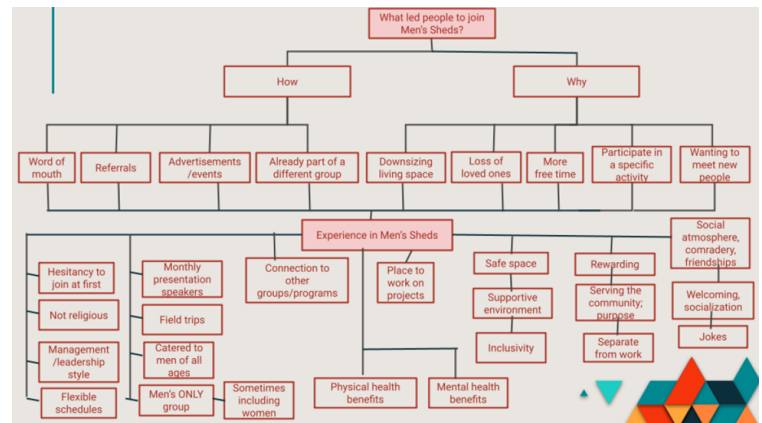


Barry Golding, the author of two influential books on the global Men's Shed network, said that the Australian government's implementation of a policy to support Men's Sheds was the result of considerable lobbying supported by effective research. Men's Sheds Canada (MSC) is pursuing a similar objective — policies for sustainable government support for Sheds across the country — and our research initiatives are directed toward that goal. These initiatives have two broad lines of inquiry: one is to gather information on government policies to support older men, and the other is to obtain information on the needs of older men and to identify factors associated with Sheds' ability to address those needs.



An initial step in this research agenda was recently completed in collaboration with the University of Alberta's School of Public Health. Last year a team of MPH students carried out preliminary inquiries into the two areas noted above. Their survey of government policies in Canada indicated there were none that specifically addressed the needs of older men. This is a significant finding, in that older men are known to be a vulnerable population, with problems including a suicide rate considerably higher than the national average; the lack of policies shows there is a gap that needs to be addressed. The MPH team also gathered data on

factors associated with effective and ineffective Sheds, and provided summary findings that will be built upon to strengthen the Shed network's ability to meet the needs of its members. Based on findings from five focus groups plus supplemental interviews with shedders, a number of positive qualities of men's sheds emerged, including offering valuable activities and events, providing workshop space, having flexible schedules, and providing a supportive environment and positive social atmosphere. Some challenges and areas for improvement also emerged for sheds, including increasing diversity, securing more funding for sheds, increasing awareness amongst community about sheds, and building more connections amongst sheds. Figure 1. shows a visual depiction of the findings that the students prepared. Their research reports will be available from MSC's web site. MSC is continuing its relationship with the University of Alberta — follow-up studies are being planned for the next cohort of MPH students to carry out. We also plan to offer a practicum placement for more in-depth analysis of key issues related to strengthening the Shed network.



There are other research initiatives underway that are relevant to the national Shed movement — scholars at University of Toronto, SFU, HelpAge Canada and elsewhere are pursuing lines of inquiry that can support MSC's institutional development initiatives. There also has been considerable research over the past decades that relates to the needs and characteristics of older men. We are known to be a difficult sector of the population to serve, in spite of high levels of loneliness and isolation among our people, and means need to be developed to address this reality. MSC is exploring the possibility of creating a database of relevant research which can be accessed by scholars, policy makers and others who have an interest in the area.

Other initiatives in the planning stage include staging an annual symposium of scholars, policy makers and others to showcase relevant research and other initiatives related to the needs of and services for older men, and establishing a research grant fund that can be accessed by interested parties to further relevant lines of inquiry. These will generate data and support the development of a broad-based community of concern that will contribute to policy development and sustainable government funding to address the needs of older men, and the Shed network in particular.

We look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues to better understand and address the needs of older men, and to strengthen the Shed network's ability to address these needs.

Men's Sheds – A Remedy for Loneliness and Social Isolation

By Robert Goluch

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently declared loneliness as a global public health concern. Dr. Vivek Murthy, Surgeon General of the United States, in his inspirational book “Together” identifies loneliness as a major killer and responsible for more sickness, suffering and death than anything else. He also offers a prescription about what we can do about this epidemic. The antidote is better connections with our community, family and friends - kindness and caring for each other. I recently listened to an interview with Dr. Jeremy Nobel, Harvard University, founder of Project UnLonely. He also stressed the importance of community engagement in addressing the loneliness epidemic. He spoke of how the arts and creativity can empower us to greater social connection.

In Canada, the National Institute on Aging reported that 58% of Canadians over 50 have experienced loneliness. Men, especially older men, are particularly vulnerable. As men age, they may face significant life changes such as retirement, loss of family members, close friends, health issues and geographical separation from their families (adult children relocating). Traditional masculine values often discourage men from openly expressing emotions or seeking social support. Men over 65 have among the highest suicide rates in Canada. Loneliness has serious consequences including the risk of early death. Research indicates that it can increase the risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease as well as anxiety, depression and dementia.



Men's Sheds, originally started in Australia, have gained global recognition for effectively combatting isolation among men, particularly older men. Sheds offer more than just physical space; they promote and cultivate social interaction, skill sharing and emotional support. Sheds provide an opportunity for men to engage in meaningful activities. Canada is home to 3.7 million men aged 50 to 64 and 2.16 million aged 65 and over, according to Stats Canada's July 1, 2022 data.

As loneliness continues to exist globally, the significance of initiatives like Men's Sheds cannot be overstated. Governments, healthcare providers and communities must recognize and support these initiatives as a critical part of public health strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of social isolation. The remedy to loneliness lies not solely in medical intervention, but in nurturing social connections. Men's Sheds emerge as vibrant sanctuaries where every member can find solace and purpose.

Robert Goluch



'Men's Sheds Across the World'

By Punch Jackson

Men's Sheds Across the World started in about 2012 out of a desire to create awareness of Men's Sheds in different parts of the world. Hoping that seeing articles from far and wide would create awareness, stimulate sharing, and generate ideas.



The platform that was used had been developed by a group of young Swiss program developers, I used it for other "news papers" for recreation, Recreation Canada and for Public Libraries. The program had everything wanted in a newspaper; a content generator, various formats, full editing features, the ability to pull in articles off the web, an archives and ad space. In MSAW ad space was utilized for logos/links to the National Men's Shed Associations, events being promoted and organizations that supported Men's Sheds.

All the Men's Shed countries were included—Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, USA and Canada. There are more Sheds in Europe and Iceland, a topic for another article. The use of UK always confused me when trying to get accurate Shed numbers. During its evolution Sheds were discovered in Denmark, Iceland, and Kenya. Part of the content hunting involved use of Twitter, Facebook, and Email tipsters. That process found two Sheds in Estonia and the developing Sheds in South Africa and Japan.



Many of the stories follow similar themes, getting grants, new Shed locations, testimonials, the types of Shed physical structures, the celebrations, the tragedies, government support and policies. While the themes may be similar the gold lies in how the stories are told. The words and phrases used can be mined for our own use in creating awareness.

The photos in the articles tell their own stories. The appearance of the men and women in the photos, the pride in their faces, the activities of the Shed, the range of Shed structures from modest pallet wood frames to massive metal structures. The evolution of a Shed, the Inverclyde Shed in Scotland is a fabulous story.

The benefits of Men's Sheds Across the World have not been validated by survey but the feedback through email, Facebook and X(Twitter) have been enough to keep me motivated. I believe it has benefited readers by bringing them easily accessible articles that can motivate them in many ways.

About five hundred Shedders subscribe but the reach is far greater with the postings in Facebook, X(Twitter) and LinkedIn. The sharing and resharing of the paper are not counted anywhere. I am not into the analytics so it will take a bored student to come up with a formula to calculate the real reach.

At the high point of X(Twitter), articles and research were targeted at politicians, policy wonks, influencers, complementary organizations, and the private sector. I know full well that politicians don't read everything on social media but someone in their office might.

Learnings? It means a lot to a small Shed in the backcountry to see their story shared across the world, Men's Shed stories must be told and retold a great many times before the messages sink in with men, families, policy makers and allied organizations. Men's Sheds can not be silos in the community, they must build relationships everywhere to multiply the voices preaching the benefits of Men's Sheds.

Many thanks to Shedders in Canada that have shared their stories, photos and newsletters.

Sadly, in February of 2023 the folks at Paper.li in Switzerland decided to close their "news paper" platform that had been an absolute joy to work with. Over the years the developers built positive relationships with their users, responding to our every whim. Now this spoiled curator cobbles together editions that are far from the Paper.li days. Still looking for a replacement..... PJ

Men's Shed Opera Music from Wales

forwarded by Robert Visintainer of Men's Sheds Cymru to Punch Jackson

"A sneak preview of the anthem for the opera 'Shoulder to Shoulder' written by Swansea City Opera and based on Men's Sheds. Music composed by Lenny Sayers, words by Brendan Wheatley, performed by Only Men Aloud."

here is the Youtube link: [Men's Sheds Song - YouTube](#)



Travel Shots

A few photos of MSC folks out and about



Robert G. with team of federal government Senior Advisors from Ministries of Health, Mental Health and Addictions and Seniors



Robert G. with Dr. Vincent De-Paul at Queen's University (Kingston) Men's Shed



Brian S. addressed a Morinville, Alberta community gathering to promote Men's Sheds.



Jim M.'s photo of his Port Moody Shed attending a presentation on Birds and Bees... (Mason Bees, to be precise)



Andy T. relaxing with fellow Arnprior Shedders.



Audrey F. supervises husband Jan and fellow Fraser Lake Shedders

Last note: Some of our Provincial Associations partners are having great success on social media. Find out more at these links:

Men's Shed Association of British Columbia: <https://www.facebook.com/menhelpingmen1>

Mensheds Manitoba Inc.: <https://www.facebook.com/menshedsmanitoba>

Alberta Mens Shed Association: <https://www.Albertamenssheds.ca>