

# PREFACE

For over thirty years, Volunteer Grandparents Society has been a leader and trendsetter of intergenerational bonds among the young and old in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The Society was formed in 1973, a decade when educators and social workers in Canada began to notice the prevalence and problems of age-segregation in our society. In continuing Volunteer Grandparents' mission to *bridge and enrich the generations*, this book illustrates the growing needs of the generations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are living in a time when children and youth are becoming increasingly isolated from their communities and surrounding environment as a result of their overly-busy lives, their stressful home life, and fast-paced technological world. In addition, being a senior or older adult is definitely not the same as it was three decades ago. The older segment of the population now find themselves in large numbers but with little resource and support to achieve holistic well-being in Canada. Both the young and old thus continue to struggle to navigate their way through life.

After receiving the funding from YWCA and YMCA's Youth Eco Internship Program (YEIP) to work for Volunteer Grandparents, I designed this book project to raise awareness about forming healthy multi-age relationships to achieve ecological sustainability, from an individual to a global level. My main role as the Environmental Legacy Program Coordinator was to weave together the connection among intergenerational relationships, community, and environment. After much thought and feedback from my colleagues, I decided to pursue this project by conveying its message through the voices and stories of our contributors.

The mission and values of Volunteer Grandparents truly resonate with my own personal experience, as I never had my own grandparents around when I was growing up as a child. My dad and mom migrated from Hong Kong to Prince George, British Columbia, in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. However, due to financial constraints, it would be impossible for the rest of my uncles, aunts, and grandparents to migrate as well. Yet, because of my family's involvement with the local Chinese community and Chinese restaurant businesses, I was given a chance to form multi-age connections with the elderly and younger generations. My mom taught me the importance of learning the wisdom of our elders, and helping the younger ones pave their way through life as much as I can. All of us are teachers to each other in one form or another. While having these

intergenerational values instilled within me, I hope to contribute my passion, skills, and energy to the growth of my local, national, and global communities. I believe that the world in which we live really needs strong intergenerational bonds between people to share resources to better handle social, cultural, political, and environmental challenges. I see Volunteer Grandparents as one of the myriad of steps toward achieving that vision.

I named this book *Growing from the Roots* to simply reflect the grassroots nature of Volunteer Grandparents, as the image of roots often symbolizes a strong and steady foundation, from which only goodness can grow. Our book serves as a medium for our volunteers, families, and children to communicate their wisdom and experiences of social isolation, multi-age connections, and a human yearning to love and to be loved. After all, these people *are* the roots of our organization. Sharing their stories and reflections not only empowers them but also brings awareness to the importance of closing generation gaps in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Partial preview. For more information on how to order a copy of *Growing from the Roots*, please contact Volunteer Grandparents at [info@volunteergrandparents.ca](mailto:info@volunteergrandparents.ca).**