



Good morning to all. Thank you to the Older Adults Centers Association of Ontario for inviting Men's Sheds Canada to speak to you this morning. I see that men are outnumbered by women this morning. Yet I will ask you all to raise your hands if you have a man at home, be it a father, grandfather or unemployed husband or brother.

Thank you. I'm sure you are going to find the following hour or so of personal interest.



It's a question being asked by a growing number of men in our society. To those of you that have not heard of Men's Sheds we hope you will find the following presentations interesting.

I'm David Steventon. 72 years old, citizen of Canada and living with my wife in Mississippi Mills in the Ottawa Valley. Retired two years ago after a 54-year career with the UK Automobile Association and the Canadian Automobile Association. On the day of my retirement on December 23, 2017, I had the same passion and sense of enjoyment with my work as I had on my first day on the job back on September 3rd, 1962.

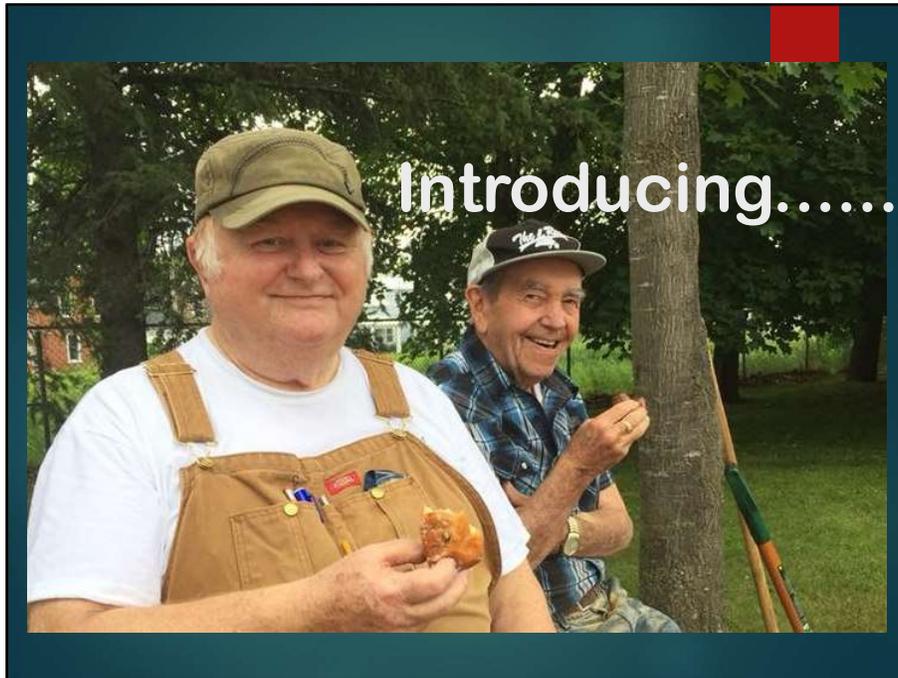


The Facts

Through the benefit of on-line media, we are kept acquainted with important facts, relating to the senior's crisis in Canada.

like:

- Statistics Canada predicts by 2030, the year in which the youngest baby boomers will reach 65, close 25% of people in Canada will be that age or older; compared to 15% in 2013. One could describe it as a tsunami of need.
- In the Mayo Clinic Editorial on Male Depression and Suicide, we are told that although women attempt suicide more often than men; men are more likely to complete suicide. That's because men:
 - Use more effective methods, such as guns,
 - Tend to act more impulsively on suicidal thoughts, and
 - Show fewer warning signs, such as talking about suicide.
- Surveys reveal over half of older people remain silent regarding their loneliness.
- From across the pond in the UK we learn that more than 11,000 people, mostly senior citizens, are using men's sheds to stay active and engaged in their communities.
- We all need to know that there is a difference between loneliness and solitude. The first is to be avoided, the second is to be sought.



Not long into my own retirement the horrible feelings of depression, feelings of low value and worth began to surface.

I had lost a family of workmates, with whom I spent as much time as my family. Those promises from associates of, "Don't worry David, we will keep in touch" never materialized. From the "somebody" who knew more about the auto-club business than anyone else; the go to person regardless of the question on automotive matters to the "nobody" that everyone seemingly could get along without.

Interests like the ones I planned for while I was working, changed in retirement.

The mandatory kitchen makeover took about the first six months of this imposed leisure time thanks to the flat pack solution from IKEA.

But almost immediately, for the first time I was invading my wife's space. Hard for her to adjust to a husband suddenly under her feet 24/7/365.

In myself I could sense the onset of feelings of depression.

Thankfully for me things changed in March 2018 when I happened view a CBC report on a new Canadian phenomenon called Men's Sheds. It seems that a group of guys from my municipality were considering launching one in the community.

One year later by some miracle I'm still leader of the newer Mississippi Mills based Men's Shed. It is one of over 2000 worldwide. Not a bad growth since the first ones started about ten years ago in Australia.

Question. Hands up who knew about Men's Sheds and their purpose prior to this event?

When I ask this question, it's common to get the blank look and shrug of the shoulders. At that point, for me, the greyhound is out of the gate and yours truly delivers a condensed brief on Men's Shed to the vulnerable recipients like a born-again pastor delivering his evangelical message. Each time, when we part, I leave them amazed at the Men's Shed progressive approach. And they always walk away with my Men's Shed business card. By the way, yours can be found on the table over there.

What are Men's Sheds?



The Men's Shed movement is relatively new to Canada. Several have started across the country. Several due to the single-handed efforts of the Canadian Men's Shed Association President, Doug MacKies. In Ontario we have four sheds, all located in the Ottawa Valley. This movement is aptly named because it relates to a man's popular refuge from his wife or life partner, the kids and house-work assignments. His shed! It is HIS domain. Where he and male neighbors can congregate and do and talk about guy things.

"Hi Mary, can I speak to Bob?" No, sorry Dave, he's and the bottom of the yard in his shed working on I don't-know what with guys from the neighborhood. Judging by the sound of laughter they are having a good time!"

And so it is with Men's Shed groups supported by a cornerstone of friendship, kindness and acceptance. Providing support for each other by socializing together.

To quote Doug Mackie's, "Men Sheds offers a comfortable, safe place for men to gather on a regular basis, to do hands on projects of their own choosing while working shoulder to shoulder with other men. Sheds enable men to gain new acquaintances, socialize and possibly give back to their community. Thus, combating isolation, loneliness and depression and improving their own emotional well being as well the lives of their families and the communities in which they live."



Birth of a new Shed. And so, adopting this philosophy and using the tool-kit guide downloadable from Canada Men's Sheds, (You have a fancy hard copy of it to take away with you thanks to OACAO) the Mississippi Mills group of men gathered in the spring of 2018 to form their own men's shed. And yes, for the eye of the public, this is our shed!



Based on the Royal Navy philosophy that one volunteer is better than ten pressed men, I stepped forward at that time and volunteered to lead the shed.

Here you can see some of the guys that helped launch the shed with our name-sake. I think his bronzed appearance is not due to sitting exposed to the sun.



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In the space of 12 months we have a distinctive name, thanks to the permission of the Naismith family, a logo design that suggests basketball roots, and a short and straight-to-the-point Statement of Purpose which defines our shed and why it exists a dedicated e-mail address and web-site and places to meet and “do our stuff”.

Shedders love to eat!

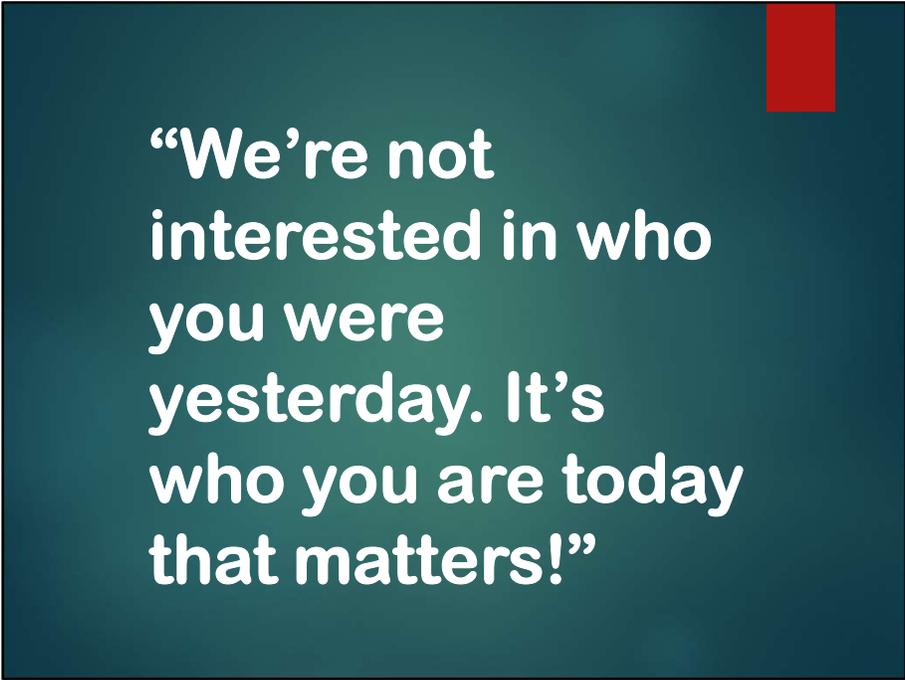


NMS, acronym for Naismith Men's Shed, meets every Thursday. On the first and third Thursdays of the month (and the fifth one whenever the calendar gifts us with one) we meet for breakfast. (Guys love their food!)

Mill of Kintail Conservation Area



On the second and fourth Thursdays we meet for a social event at the Mill of Kintail gatehouse meeting room. We also hold informal drop ins at local retirement homes where shedders can meet with men living in residence. NMS members have entered into a formal agreement with Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA), owners of the Mill of Kintail. The arrangement allows NMS shed members to be volunteers at the MoK conservation area. In return we receive free parking passes for the conservation area, have no-cost use of the gate-house meeting room as needed, enjoy liability insurance coverage and custodianship of the small shed at the corner of the MoK parking lot.



**“We’re not
interested in who
you were
yesterday. It’s
who you are today
that matters!”**

New members arrive and join monthly. Guys who have finally learned of our existence. Guys recently retired or moved to the Mississippi Mills retirement community. Guys facing tough things in their life. Either the loss of a loved one to cancer or dementia/Alzheimer’s or facing such a loss in the near future. Or facing a fight with as disease themselves or the specter of isolation and depression.

As soon as they arrive at our meeting, it’s a case of “I’m Pete, and just learned of you guys”. The response? I shedder makes room at the table. Introduces himself and the rest around the table and a new friendship is born. And this miracle happens every month. These new guys go home and within hours are communicating with shed members with a new zest for life. They have new group of friends who expect nothing more than their friendship.

Recently we conducted a survey to find out if shed members were nursing undisclosed needs. There was a deluge of positive feedback. As one shedder wrote, “This shed is going to outlive all of us”.

Our shed chose to be of the independent variety which suits the culture within our community. From the start it was agreed not to appoint an executive but a group eventually called coordinators. They act as a filter to consider proposals and where appropriate and worthy are forwarded for review and for decision by the whole membership.

Workshop Space



Workshop space. A place to cut wood and make things. NMS enjoys no-cost custodianship of a woodwork shop in Appleton Village thanks to the generosity of a local couple.

Community Projects



Community Projects. So far NMS has built:

- an accessible planter adjacent to the community wood burning oven adjacent to Almonte Library.
- A quantity of solitary bee houses for the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust
- Is in process now 40 bat-houses for the Canada Wildlife Federation and 50 Bluebird House kits for the local young field naturalists' group.
- Soon the deck will be cleared for craftspeople within the shed to flex their capabilities and help stock the Mill of Kintail gift shop.



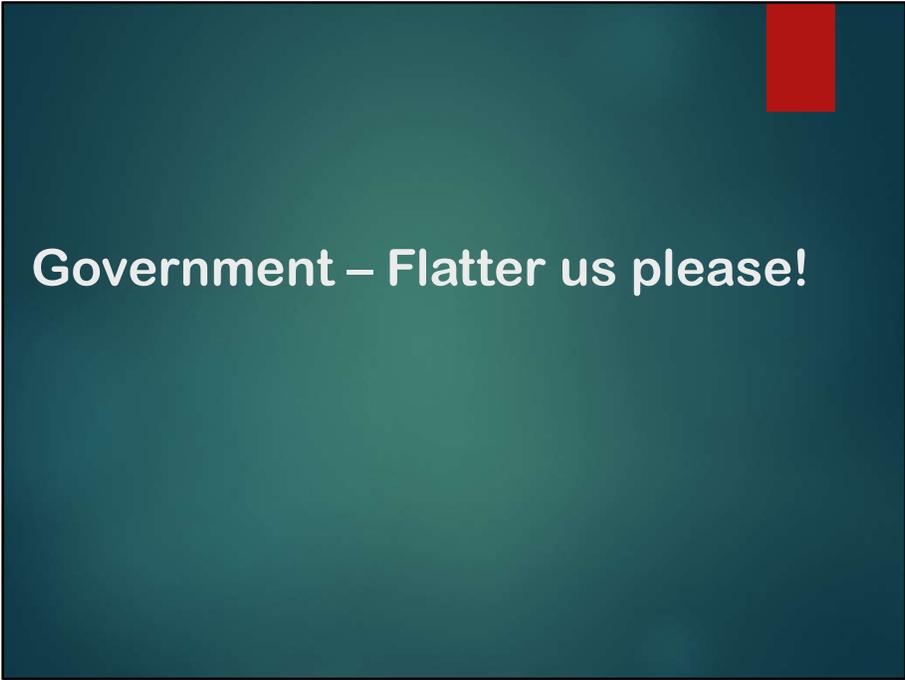
The shed continues to be totally self-supporting based on the \$1 per year membership fee and donations received from members and project recipients. We are finding the funding sufficient to cover utility costs at the shed and acquire liability insurance to supplement that provided by the Mill of Kintail while on its premises.

The shed is reviewing its options to seek grant money from New Horizons for needed equipment although the size of the task to apply and the reporting commitment once monies are received might dampen enthusiasm.

Meanwhile the shed's strength is in the comradery within the friendly atmosphere reflected in all shed business.

We consider ourselves a model for any group that has the desire to organize

an independent, stand-alone type community men's shed.



Government – Flatter us please!

Help needed. If imitation is the best form of flattery, we need the Canadian, provincial and regional governments to flatter the Canadian Men's Sheds Association (CMA). As in the U.K and the Republic of Ireland, CMA deserves to be recognized as a viable solution for men at risk, and to receive the financial support, shown to be such a wise investment in those countries.

The Canada Men's Shed movement needs your help to:

- increase the awareness of the program,
- Encourage men to organize new sheds in their community,
- Endorse the MS movement in its pursuit of government financial support.
- Endorse the Men's Shed's as a proactive approach and effective solution to the growing crisis being faced by Canadian men.



Is this all there is? No, much more mate!