

Interactive & Experiential Activities

Participants emphasized the value of activities that encourage interaction rather than passive participation. Ideas included:

- Interactive workshops and hands-on sessions
- Walk-and-talk networking events
- Scavenger-style exchange activities
- Art-focused gatherings
- Member retreats
- Pop-up events with short planning timelines
- Activities that encourage members to learn from one another and build connections through shared experiences rather than formal meetings alone.

Speaker Programs

Clubs are encouraged to seek speakers from a wide variety of sources, including individuals featured in local newspaper articles or community publications. This can provide access to interesting local stories and expertise while keeping programming fresh and relevant.

Member-Led Programming

A recurring recommendation was to encourage members to actively post, promote, and organize events themselves. This supports greater engagement, broadens programming options, and reduces reliance on a small group of volunteers.

Food-Centred Social Programming

Food was repeatedly identified as one of the strongest attendance drivers and an effective way to create social connections among members. Successful ideas included:

- Strawberry socials
- Welcome coffees
- Cocktail hours
- Finger Food Fridays
- Dessert socials
- Appetizer gatherings
- Cookie exchanges
- Pop-up food-themed events
- Shared meal experiences that provide time for conversation and relationship-building.

Why Food-Based Events Work

Participants noted that food-centered events will often:

- Encourage attendance
 - Create a relaxed atmosphere
 - Help new members integrate more quickly
 - Foster informal networking and friendships
 - Appeal to a broad range of members.
-

Community Building & Member Connection

A strong emphasis was placed on creating opportunities for members to connect socially.

Successful clubs intentionally build programming that includes:

- Dedicated time for socializing
- Networking opportunities
- Connecting members who share interests
- Building local community connections
- Creating club-centered experiences that strengthen members' sense of belonging.

This reinforces one of the strongest themes emerging from the Summit overall: members join because of activities, but they remain because of the relationships they build within the club.

Funding & Event Sponsorship

An additional idea discussed was the use of partially sponsored events.

Examples included:

- Members paying for their own meal while the club covers gratuities or bartending costs.
- Sponsored social events where businesses or partners contribute resources.
- Leveraging additional funding sources to enhance programming quality and member experiences.

Participants observed that modest financial support can significantly improve event quality while still keeping events affordable for members.

Updated Overall Conclusions

The breakout session reinforced several key findings from the broader Summit:

1. Food-based social events are among the most effective tools for attracting participation and helping members connect.
2. Interactive, experiential activities generate stronger engagement than passive programming alone.
3. Clubs benefit when members are encouraged to initiate and promote activities themselves.
4. Networking, social connection, and relationship-building should be intentional outcomes of every program.
5. Strategic sponsorships and modest financial investments can improve programming and member satisfaction.

The overarching message from the breakout session feedback forms is: **successful newcomer clubs balance strong communications, welcoming practices, volunteer support, and diverse programming with a deliberate focus on helping members build meaningful social connections.**

NNAC Conference Report

The NNAC Conference provided an excellent opportunity to connect with representatives from newcomer clubs across the country and learn about their governance structures, membership practices, activities, and volunteer engagement strategies.

While each club operates somewhat differently, several common themes emerged that may be useful as KNAC continues to grow and evolve.

Executive Board Structure and Governance

One of the topics discussed at the conference was Executive Board structure and governance.

Many clubs reported using staggered terms, with the President and Vice President serving three-year terms and other Directors serving two-year terms. The intent is to provide continuity and preserve organizational knowledge while still allowing for regular renewal of the Board.

There was also discussion regarding voting rights on Executive Boards. Most participants felt that the President should have a vote, noting that the President is often one of the most experienced members of the Executive and should be able to participate fully in decision-making.

Another model discussed was having the Past President act as a tie-breaker when votes are evenly split. Others argued that the Past President's experience is valuable and that they should be granted a regular vote rather than being limited to a tie-breaking role.

While there was no single approach adopted by all clubs, the discussion highlighted the importance of considering governance structures that balance continuity, experience, and effective decision-making.

Membership Recruitment and Engagement

Several successful clubs shared their approaches to attracting and welcoming new members.

Most clubs maintain a Facebook presence, and many also have a simple website that provides basic information about the organization and includes a contact form for prospective members.

One particularly successful club hosts a monthly **Coffee Conversation Group** that is open to both members and individuals interested in learning more about the club. This informal gathering provides an opportunity for prospective members to meet current members, ask questions, and experience the welcoming atmosphere of the organization before deciding whether to join.

Another club hosts a monthly **New Member Meet and Greet** designed specifically to welcome and orient new members.

These ideas generated considerable interest. It may be worth exploring whether KNAC could combine elements of both approaches through a regular Coffee Conversation Group that welcomes current members, new members, and prospective members alike.

A common theme among the most successful clubs was the importance of having a full Executive Board supported by a strong network of convenors and volunteers. Many clubs reported sharing responsibilities

through co-chair or shared Executive positions, helping to distribute the workload and ensure continuity when volunteers step down.

Activity Ideas from Other Clubs

The conference also provided an opportunity to learn about activities being offered by other newcomer clubs across the country.

Some of the more interesting ideas included:

- Clothing Swaps and Scarf Swaps, often held in church halls or community spaces. These events provide a fun and inexpensive opportunity for members to socialize while exchanging gently used items.
- Towns in Our Backyard, where members explore nearby communities through organized day trips. These outings encourage local tourism and provide opportunities to discover attractions, restaurants, museums, and points of interest within easy driving distance.
- Wine Tasting Groups, an activity that has been particularly successful for the Niagara-on-the-Lake club. Given our proximity to Prince Edward County and its growing wine region, a similar activity could be worth exploring for KNAC members.

While not every activity will appeal to every club, these ideas serve as useful examples of the diverse programming being offered by newcomer organizations and may provide inspiration for future KNAC activities.

Membership Tracking and Member Engagement

One of the most impressive ideas shared at the conference came from the Hamilton club.

Their membership and renewal form includes a list of all club activities and interest groups. Members are asked to indicate which groups they currently participate in and whether they are active on Facebook. This information is then entered into a spreadsheet that provides valuable insight into member engagement.

The President demonstrated how the system allows them to quickly identify new members who have not yet joined any activities. In these cases, their Membership Care team reaches out to learn more about the member's interests and suggest groups that may be a good fit. With the member's permission, the appropriate convener can then contact the individual directly to extend a personal invitation.

The system also provides useful information about activity participation across the club. It allows the Executive to identify which activities are thriving, which may need additional support, and where there may be opportunities to develop new programming.

I found this to be an excellent example of how membership information can be used not only for administrative purposes, but also to improve member engagement, retention, and overall satisfaction. It is an idea that may be worth exploring further as KNAC continues to grow.

Supporting Convenors

Several clubs emphasized the importance of maintaining regular contact with their convenors and recognizing the valuable contribution they make to the organization.

One approach that stood out was having the Vice President serve as a liaison to convenors, reaching out several times each year to check in, gather feedback, and identify any support that may be needed. These conversations provide an opportunity to learn what is working well, address challenges, and ensure convenors feel connected to the Executive.

Another club hosts an annual Convenor Appreciation Event to recognize the time, effort, and enthusiasm contributed by their volunteers. In addition to expressing gratitude, these events provide an opportunity for convenors to meet one another, exchange ideas, and build connections across the organization.

Both of these initiatives struck me as excellent ways to strengthen communication between the Executive and convenors while recognizing the important role convenors play in the success of the club. They may be ideas worth considering as KNAC continues to grow and expand its volunteer base.

Moving Forward

The conference included many additional ideas, examples, and best practices that could be beneficial to KNAC. However, rather than attempting to review and implement everything at once, I believe it would be more productive for the Executive to focus on a few initiatives that align with our current needs and priorities.

I will bring additional conference highlights forward at future Executive meetings as appropriate. In the meantime, I would like the Executive to discuss some of the ideas presented in this report and identify those that may be worth exploring in the coming months.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to learn from successful newcomer clubs across the country, and I believe several of the ideas shared could help strengthen member engagement, support our convenors, and contribute to the continued growth of KNAC.

NNAC Conference Report

The NNAC Conference provided an excellent opportunity to connect with representatives from newcomer clubs across the country and learn about their governance structures, membership practices, activities, and volunteer engagement strategies.

While each club operates somewhat differently, several common themes emerged that may be useful as KNAC continues to grow and evolve.

Executive Board Structure and Governance

One of the topics discussed at the conference was Executive Board structure and governance.

Many clubs reported using staggered terms, with the President and Vice President serving three-year terms and other Directors serving two-year terms. The intent is to provide continuity and preserve organizational knowledge while still allowing for regular renewal of the Board.

There was also discussion regarding voting rights on Executive Boards. Most participants felt that the President should have a vote, noting that the President is often one of the most experienced members of the Executive and should be able to participate fully in decision-making.

Another model discussed was having the Past President act as a tie-breaker when votes are evenly split. Others argued that the Past President's experience is valuable and that they should be granted a regular vote rather than being limited to a tie-breaking role.

While there was no single approach adopted by all clubs, the discussion highlighted the importance of considering governance structures that balance continuity, experience, and effective decision-making.

Membership Recruitment and Engagement

Several successful clubs shared their approaches to attracting and welcoming new members.

Most clubs maintain a Facebook presence, and many also have a simple website that provides basic information about the organization and includes a contact form for prospective members.

One particularly successful club hosts a monthly **Coffee Conversation Group** that is open to both members and individuals interested in learning more about the club. This informal gathering provides an opportunity for prospective members to meet current members, ask questions, and experience the welcoming atmosphere of the organization before deciding whether to join.

Another club hosts a monthly **New Member Meet and Greet** designed specifically to welcome and orient new members.

These ideas generated considerable interest. It may be worth exploring whether KNAC could combine elements of both approaches through a regular Coffee Conversation Group that welcomes current members, new members, and prospective members alike.

A common theme among the most successful clubs was the importance of having a full Executive Board supported by a strong network of convenors and volunteers. Many clubs reported sharing responsibilities

through co-chair or shared Executive positions, helping to distribute the workload and ensure continuity when volunteers step down.

Activity Ideas from Other Clubs

The conference also provided an opportunity to learn about activities being offered by other newcomer clubs across the country.

Some of the more interesting ideas included:

- Clothing Swaps and Scarf Swaps, often held in church halls or community spaces. These events provide a fun and inexpensive opportunity for members to socialize while exchanging gently used items.
- Towns in Our Backyard, where members explore nearby communities through organized day trips. These outings encourage local tourism and provide opportunities to discover attractions, restaurants, museums, and points of interest within easy driving distance.
- Wine Tasting Groups, an activity that has been particularly successful for the Niagara-on-the-Lake club. Given our proximity to Prince Edward County and its growing wine region, a similar activity could be worth exploring for KNAC members.

While not every activity will appeal to every club, these ideas serve as useful examples of the diverse programming being offered by newcomer organizations and may provide inspiration for future KNAC activities.

Membership Tracking and Member Engagement

One of the most impressive ideas shared at the conference came from the Hamilton club.

Their membership and renewal form includes a list of all club activities and interest groups. Members are asked to indicate which groups they currently participate in and whether they are active on Facebook. This information is then entered into a spreadsheet that provides valuable insight into member engagement.

The President demonstrated how the system allows them to quickly identify new members who have not yet joined any activities. In these cases, their Membership Care team reaches out to learn more about the member's interests and suggest groups that may be a good fit. With the member's permission, the appropriate convener can then contact the individual directly to extend a personal invitation.

The system also provides useful information about activity participation across the club. It allows the Executive to identify which activities are thriving, which may need additional support, and where there may be opportunities to develop new programming.

I found this to be an excellent example of how membership information can be used not only for administrative purposes, but also to improve member engagement, retention, and overall satisfaction. It is an idea that may be worth exploring further as KNAC continues to grow.

Supporting Convenors

Several clubs emphasized the importance of maintaining regular contact with their convenors and recognizing the valuable contribution they make to the organization.

One approach that stood out was having the Vice President serve as a liaison to convenors, reaching out several times each year to check in, gather feedback, and identify any support that may be needed. These conversations provide an opportunity to learn what is working well, address challenges, and ensure convenors feel connected to the Executive.

Another club hosts an annual Convenor Appreciation Event to recognize the time, effort, and enthusiasm contributed by their volunteers. In addition to expressing gratitude, these events provide an opportunity for convenors to meet one another, exchange ideas, and build connections across the organization.

Both of these initiatives struck me as excellent ways to strengthen communication between the Executive and convenors while recognizing the important role convenors play in the success of the club. They may be ideas worth considering as KNAC continues to grow and expand its volunteer base.

Moving Forward

The conference included many additional ideas, examples, and best practices that could be beneficial to KNAC. However, rather than attempting to review and implement everything at once, I believe it would be more productive for the Executive to focus on a few initiatives that align with our current needs and priorities.

I will bring additional conference highlights forward at future Executive meetings as appropriate. In the meantime, I would like the Executive to discuss some of the ideas presented in this report and identify those that may be worth exploring in the coming months.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to learn from successful newcomer clubs across the country, and I believe several of the ideas shared could help strengthen member engagement, support our convenors, and contribute to the continued growth of KNAC.

National Newcomers Summit - Honsberger Estate Winery

Sunday, May 31, 2026

NOTES

1. In attendance were 51 people who were representatives from 12 clubs.
2. National Newcomers Association of Canada is a Not-for-Profit organization, not a charity. The first Newcomers Club started in Calgary in 1961. These proliferated and were so successful that in the 1970's the Toronto NC Club started a National Club to support the regional clubs.
3. There are currently 58 clubs across 5 provinces (there used to be clubs in all provinces). 20 in Ontario with close to 6,000 members and 30 in BC.
4. Services provided by the NNAC:
 - a. Zoom workshops and information sessions - next is June 28 at 2 PM eastern time. Can have up to 100 people on the call.
 - b. Access to group insurance - Co-operators
 - c. Advice and Support
 - d. Handbook is available on line
 - e. The goal is to keep clubs strong and sustainable
 - f. We can send our newsletter to NNAC. They share ideas in their "Club News"
5. To get on the National Board, you need to be nominated by a local club and attend the AGM. You don't have to be on a local board, just be a member.
6. A number of clubs have an App called "Stacked Team App". The App gives members access to a tool that, among other things, tells them about activities and events and replaces their newsletter. Members can also pay for things through the App.
 - a. Individuals can choose what they get notifications for
 - b. There are Youtube videos that help with setting up your own Stacked Team App. The Stacked website has links to Youtube tutorials.
 - c. During the startup phase, clubs had "App Ambassadors" whose job it was to help people with the App.
 - d. There was general strong acceptance of the App, but those few who had trouble were given support.
 - e. There are with-ads and without-ads versions of this App. Boards were covering the cost of having no ads for their members
 - f. Boards paid up to \$2,000 for support in getting the App up and running. Others handled it themselves.
 - g. The Oakville club - Loreena vanBokhorst could be a resource for this.

7. Most clubs reported having a Facebook page dedicated to the club.
 - a. Can have 2 pages; 1 public to promote the club and 1 with private membership for members.
 - b. As an example, Nlagara-on-the-Lake has a FB page to raise community awareness only.
8. Some clubs distinguish between Programs and Interest Groups. Programs include things that are organized for members like excursions and making holiday wreaths. Interest groups are things like book clubs.
9. Most clubs have a way to take in money on their App and they charge members for attending events.
10. There was discussion at tables about “what works”
 - a. The App
 - b. Asking people to send pictures of their hobbies and hidden talents along with a short write up about how they got started - art, sewing, cycling, etc
 - i. A convener put the pictures and origin stories into a PP presentation and this was featured at a number of meetings where members could ask questions of the people being featured
 - ii. This facilitated new groups and getting to know each other
 - c. In-home pot lucks
 - d. Getting newbies together
 - e. Mix and mingle events
 - f. Spring Social
 - g. Cards - euchre, canasta, bridge, poker
 - h. Monthly lunches
 - i. Sing-Along (using member’s talents)
 - j. Presentations by members of a hobby or hidden talent
 - k. Walk & Talk - rather than general conversation, the “talk” focuses on learning to navigate to places and general learning about neighbourhoods
 - l. Hop-on-Hop-off bus excursions
 - m. Pop Up groups that are posted on Facebook and in the App. These are groups with a short lead time and are just held once. An example from Toronto was a scarf exchange. Participants used YouTube videos to show people how to wear the scarves they had brought to exchange. Other examples were clothing exchanges, trips to markets, cookie exchange, cocktail making
11. There was a discussion about how people find clubs locally.
 - a. On municipal website
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Community awareness events that are organized by the club

12. Board recruitment and succession was discussed
 - a. Some clubs give board members free membership
 - b. One person had been her club president for 20 years.

13. Ideas to consider:
 - a. Look at more things that cost money like museum excursions and shopping trips
 - b. Inviting/paying for comedians and musicians at monthly meetings
 - c. AGM as a short meeting followed by entertainment (Note, the exercise that identifies hobbies can help to identify possible entertainment).
 - d. At least one club has changed their name to “Women’s Club” to avoid confusion with support for new immigrants who are also called “newcomers”.
 - e. All clubs have trouble with no-shows. Some reported that charging even a toonie has helped with no-shows.
 - f. IDEAS that popped to mind during the day
 - i. BBQ at Crescent Park or other outdoor space with facilities
 - ii. Bus into Vancouver to learn how and then visit VIFF, a museum or art gallery

14. Some supports that club boards found useful were discussed:
 - a. Zoom AI Assistant. It takes notes and transcribes for about \$270 annually.
 - b. For in-person meetings: Google Gemini to record what is said. AI is then asked to summarize. It was noted that the free version of Gemini is in the public domain. You can pay for the App to keep it private. What you do with Chat GBT also defaults to the public domain - that is how it learns. There are settings to use to keep it private.

TAKE AWAYS FROM NNAC SUMMIT – MAY 31, 2026

1. Stack Team App (Guelph and Oakville)

- a. FREE!
- b. Website [Team App](#)
- c. Manage members list – can welcome new members instantly
- d. Communications – events, photos, news items
- e. No lengthy newsletter
- f. Everything is in Real time
- g. Secure information
- h. Registration forms, scheduling, ticketing
- i. no need to collect cash or cheques for fees
- j. voting – allows members to vote anonymously
- k. can be phased in over a few years so that members get used to app – Guelph set a 3-year timeline and it has worked well
- l. **Easy payment methods:** Stack (also offers an online store and POS (Point of Sale) payments. Stripe payments (online payment method) which costs around \$300 a year.

2. FB – make it private, can post events, photos, and can be used as an alternate communication tool for members to connect.

3. Website - Some Clubs have websites with individual membership numbers to login and can pay dues through website, again not need to collect cash or cheques (NOTL).

4. Event ideas – Burlington – Hobby Day

- a. Send photo of hobby (painting, knitting, etc.) to person designated to do a PowerPoint – participants come to event, show PowerPoint and members can show off what they made - like show and tell
- b. Bingo – BC – play Bingo for blooms or chocolate – ask a local business to get involved and provide space and then call numbers – ie a pub from 10 am to 12 noon, then members can stay for lunch – ask local businesses to provide prizes

5. NNAC website

- a. has wording for dealing with different situations, they won't tell us what to do but will provide guidance.
- b. 58 clubs across the country
- c. Some clubs call by-laws their constitution

- d. Will be doing some advertising to help attract new members
- e. NNAC can run ZOOM workshops
- f. Access to group insurance
- g. Requirement to be a NNAC member – don't have to be on exec, just need to be a member

6. Keeping clubs strong & sustainable

- a. Allowing those who have had a life change outside of moving within last 3 years - ie: loss of spouse and allowing men to join – Grimsby is co-ed and has 120 members, started during COVID, 90 % are retired – demographic is 65 to 95 years vs Oakville whose demographic is 35 to 65
- b. NOTL – info from Town of NOTL to new residents has a brochure that includes info about Newcomers (along with services like garbage day, etc.)
- c. Attend community information day at community centre for non-profits (NOTL)
- d. Host a community awareness event and invite other non-profits, set up a table to promote club

7. Communication and member engagement

- a. Host breakfast and coffee with training for new members (Guelph)
- b. Use public website to draw new members
- c. Use app like STACK for real time communications
- d. Newsletter – can be lengthy and not necessarily read by all, STACK app is a great way to communicate with club
- e. Use What's App too for communication between team members.

8. Programming, Events and Fresh Ideas

- a. Private movie screening with popcorn
- b. Clubs out west do not use anyone's home for activities, will use pubs and other public spaces such as community space at a business – businesses like to be seen as community minded and are happy to support
- c. Allow "pop-up" events – if a member has a good idea and wants to run with it, provide support and communicate to members what the event is, details, etc.
- d. Clothing or scarf swap and exchange – successful in Toronto
- e. pasta making
- f. language clubs
- g. cocktail making – Oakville – 4 hosts make 4 different cocktails

9. Newsletter

- a. Instead of the President writing a message every month, each executive member takes a turn to introduce themselves more thoroughly and write a message to members

10. Confidentiality

- a. Concern about sharing personal information with the entire Club. Other clubs said that you need to obtain consent to share address and phone number with the entire club. Concern about the list being left out in the open for non-members to see. Example: what if someone had a dishwasher repair person doing work in their kitchen and the membership list with address and phone details was left out on the kitchen counter?

11. NNAC Executive

- a. they may have positions that are available on an ongoing basis (National Board Member for NNAC) and this is open to regular Newcomer's members
- b. don't have to be on the executive for our individual clubs
- c. They have a link to the handbook for bylaws, etc. on their website (bottom of their newsletter).

12. VP role – no other clubs have VP's who organize events, many have only one VP – primary role is to support president and step in if Pres is away.

- a. Coordinate with the convenors – they meet 4 times a year
- b. Do not organize events
- c. Most clubs have an activity coordinator(s) for events

Breakout Session 3 – Program Events ... Fresh Ideas

Activities & Engagement

- Interactive sessions
- Speakers can be found using newspaper articles
- Walk-and-talk networking
- Pop-up events
- Scavenger-style exchange activity
- Art-focused gatherings
- Retreats

Food & Social Elements

- Food is a major draw (strawberry socials)
- Cocktail hour
- Welcome coffee
- Finger food Fridays
- Dessert/appetizer events
- Pop up cookie swaps or appies
- Sponsored gatherings (meals, bartender, tips covered)

Community Building

- Time for socializing and networking
- Connecting with like-minded people
- Local program connections
- Club-focused activities
- Encourage members to post/promote events

Funding/Operations

- Sponsored parties/events where the member pays for the meal but club pays tips and bartenders
- Additional funding strengthens overall programming