Intergenerational Activity Program

Generational Activity Working Group

GOAL: Through outreach and service, members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada foster a culture where all life is valued with dignity and respect.

STRATEGY: Focus on inter-generational skills mentorship.

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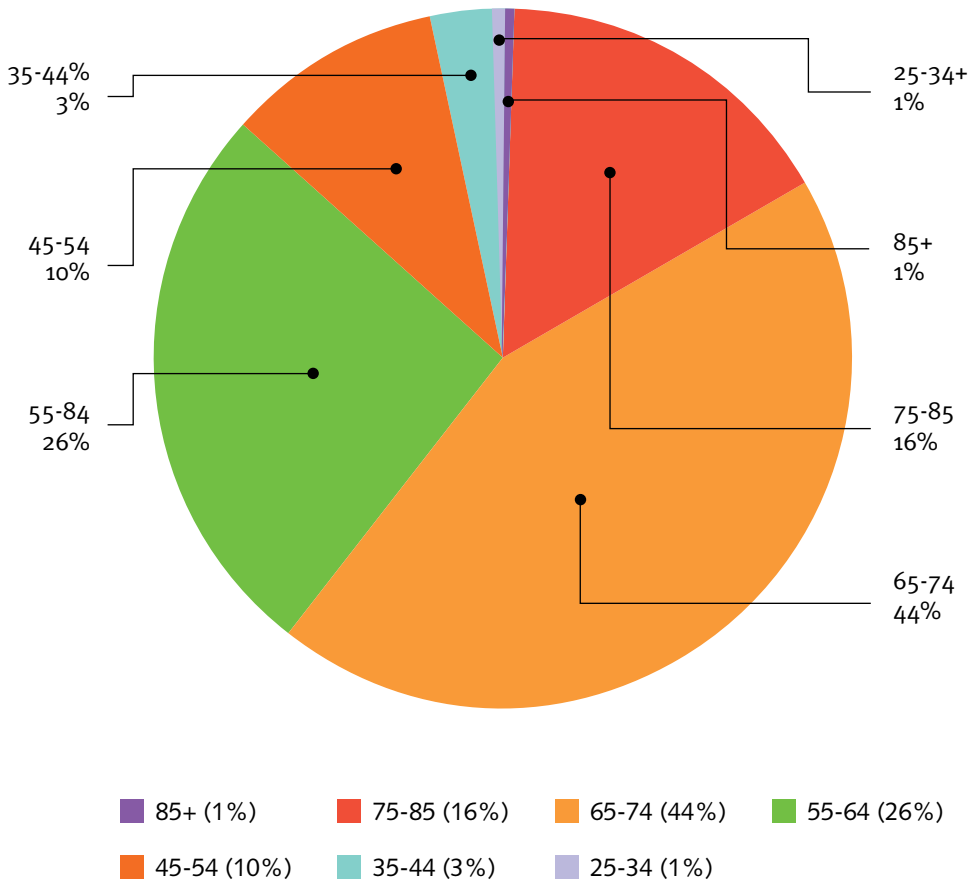
Intergenerational Interaction Benefits Everyone

Intergenerational interaction benefits both younger and older adults. Indeed “connections between generations are essential for the mental health and stability of a nation” (Margaret Mead).

It has been said that the older generation brings resources and experience, the middle generation brings “muscle” and the youngest generation brings excitement. For the League to continue to flourish, it must encourage multi-generational and intergenerational activity and diversity in its activities at all levels to ensure it is the best and strongest League that includes all members who choose to have an active role.

The importance of inclusive planning that welcomes all members regardless of their generation is proving to be of growing importance. As of January 1, 2022, the League has more than 63,000 members, including 1,125 parish councils. One of its biggest challenges is to encourage younger generations to join.

Age of Members (2019 Organization Annual Report)



The first step in overcoming these challenges is identifying the source of the problem. Age segregation has become the norm in Canada, wherein older people are often alone at home or in retirement communities. At the same time, young and middle-aged adults tend to cluster at offices and worksites. As such, there is little interaction between generations. Moreover, there are generational differences, especially regarding technology and time. Retired individuals may question what they can do with the organization, whereas the younger generation—often working and raising families—may question if joining the League is something they can balance with their limited time.

To overcome these differences, the League needs to focus on what each generation values in an organization. Communication methods must be considered, and to reach the intended audience, councils at all levels must include their audience's preferred form of communication. For example, seniors often prefer in-person or telephone conversations and receiving hard copies of bulletins. In contrast, young adults may prefer communicating via text messaging and obtaining information from websites and social media. Councils must also recognize their biases and generational stereotypes and seek to bridge the gap. According to Liane Davey, author and team effectiveness advisor, "The key to preventing generational tension is remembering that everyone wants to feel valued." The League is positioned to offer outreach to members in many ways. In its inclusive environment, councils can include multiple types of communication to reach members.

A Generations United survey of more than 2,000 American adults found that approximately 90% felt both seniors and youth could benefit from multi-generational relationships within their communities. Nearly one-half of the seniors reported feeling occasional loneliness and 19% reported frequent loneliness. Seventy-seven per cent hoped for opportunities in their own communities for different age groups to meet and interact. The League has an opportunity to provide like-minded women of various generations a chance to meet and interact regularly.

Research shows there are major health benefits to intergenerational interaction for both the old and young alike. Benefits include a positive impact on mental, emotional and psychological well-being. Intergenerational activities can help build teamwork skills, provide an understanding of different ages and backgrounds, increase empathy, break down stereotypes, create a greater understanding and tolerance and create a better sense of community. Specifically, the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA) notes, "Intergenerational projects have considerable benefits that include: strengthening communities to become more age-friendly by breaking down barriers between ages and stereotypes by one age group toward another; promoting understanding, respect, and sharing ideas, knowledge and experience; teaching the young about aging while teaching the aged about youth… [and] building self-esteem and satisfaction for both age groups through the learning of new skills."

Conversely, the BCCPA cautions that those without strong social networks may become isolated, which can lead to reduced physical and mental health, including depression. Intergenerational social connections produce solid social networks and happier people. When older people participate in their communities, everyone benefits.

John Roberto, editor of Lifelong Faith, wrote that bringing generations together within the church provides a further layer of benefit through a variety of blessings, including reclaiming God's intent for faith to be shared in community and across generations, affirming each person's value regardless of age and fostering a foundation of support of each other's faith formation, concerns, interests and activities. Certainly, in small church groups, "one generation can speak truth and hope into another generation" (Peri Gilbert).

Benefits of intergenerational activities and relationships specifically to seniors include reducing isolation, depression and loneliness. Intergenerational activities have proven to energize older adults and give them a sense of purpose, especially when sharing their experiences and skills. Seniors may benefit from increased physical activity and even brain function when sharing or learning a new skill. According to All Seniors Care Living Centres, older adults who work with young children burned 20% more calories and had fewer mobility issues. They relied less on canes and were less prone to falls than those who did not regularly spend time with younger people. Linking Generations, an organization that promotes relationships between seniors and youth, notes that intergenerational activities provide seniors with an opportunity to transfer knowledge, traditions and wisdom, acknowledge self-worth and feel they are contributing members of society.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has given the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of older generations working with younger generations while adapting to various technologies and using these skills to maintain social connections and participate in League meetings, retreats and even mass.

The benefits of intergenerational activity specifically to younger members include helping them understand ageing and face their own more positively, teaching younger participants to value older adults and providing opportunities for finding positive role models. When youth find ways to engage and develop relationships with the elderly, these experiences can build self-esteem, develop leadership skills and encourage a lifelong commitment to volunteering.

It is clear organizations, including the League, benefit from intergenerational activity. Being aware of the advantages of intergenerational activity illustrates many reasons for women to become active and contributing members. This awareness may also offer support for women to bring their parents and children to League events and fundraisers.

Resources to Encourage Intergenerational Activity

1. Intergenerational Activity Suggestions
2. Sample Intergenerational Activity How To's
3. Appendices
   a. **Appendix A:** Customizable, Printable Badges
   b. **Appendix B:** Info Brochure
   c. **Appendix C:** Sample Postcard Invitations
   d. **Appendix D:** Sample Poster
   e. **Appendix E:** Sample Program
   f. **Appendix F**: Sample Social Media Post

Councils at all levels must encourage multi-generational and intergenerational activity and diversity in their activities to ensure that the League is the best and strongest organization and includes all members who choose to have an active role.

How do councils reach all generations?

A list of intergenerational activity suggestions has been created that might be useful in helping plan activities that bring many generations together. Details have been added to four of these events to help with the planning. Often when events are advertised, councils limit themselves to using an email list and the church bulletin or making announcements at the end of mass. A brochure has been designed (Appendix B) that can double as a newsletter. Information can be transposed directly into an email for members who prefer digital copies and printed for those who would like a physical copy from the council. What about invitations? Why not use the postcard template (Appendix C)? These postcards can be included with parish bulletins, put in an envelope and hung from the League bulletin board or mailed to members who might be ill or housebound. The posters (Appendix D) and social media posts (Appendix F) can be used to increase the League's reach within the community. They can also be used by other organizations that might want to support events. The organization benefiting from a fundraiser could also easily forward a social media post or hang a poster at its office.

Intergenerational Activity Suggestions

1. "Digital era" intergenerational teaching
   - Youth: Provide computer and smart phone lessons for seniors—how to use email, social media, FaceTime and texting.
   - Seniors: Mentor youth on learning new skills such as cooking, crafting or sharing recipes.
   - Seniors: Offer childcare services in return.
2. Organize seniors' activities
   - Play games such as bingo, trivia, card games and dominos.
   - Help seniors or parishioners with gardening, spring cleaning and cooking, or accompany them on a walk or visit to a museum.
   - Host a tea for anyone who lives alone.
3. Service/support and pastoral care
   - Form a victim support or bereavement committee and send friendly greetings and messages of hope.
   - Host a pro-life "Baby Shower for Jesus." Check with a local pregnancy care centre and moms-in-need groups to see what they need. Register for the items this group needs. Play baby shower games. Write encouraging cards/letters to pregnant moms and share favourite baby food recipes.
4. Social programs with fundraising (See Appendix E for a sample program layout)
   - Organize a theatre group and participate in a Christmas pageant, Christmas around the world events, passion play, Christmas caroling or short play.
   - Host a fundraising event with guest artists to entertain both young and old with songs and dances from different countries around the world.
   - Host a festival fundraiser and display the finished crafts or favourite cookbooks with a few cooking, baked or canned products. Be aware of food safety standards when preparing and selling homemade food.
5. Support Catholic schools and the parish priest (church)
   - Partner with Catholic schools, home schooling parents and catechism programs to offer support for children's education.
   - Catholic book club: Choose a new book to discuss each month (virtually or in person).
   - Support and work with the church/parish priest at a summer bible day camp or sacramental events.
   - Have an essay contest open to confirmation candidates. For example, "What does being Catholic mean to you?"
   - "Our Incredible Lenten Gift:" Form an intergenerational group for Lent (or Advent), including bible study and storytelling/questions to generate faith-nurturing conversations with all ages. Challenge participants to practice random acts of kindness.
   - Host virtual rosaries, retreats and meetings, which allow more participation for those who are homebound or have childcare challenges.

6. Great events for fundraising (See Appendix C for postcard invitations)

   - Organize a German Christmas Market: Host an outdoor market (as an alternative to a bazaar) where crafts, canned items, baking and other goods can be sold. Christmas music, hot chocolate and other treats can be available.
   - Host or co-host a larger event, an event in conjunction with Knight of Columbus and youth groups, or the Catholic Girls' League in the parish, with all different age groups.
   - Host a "Thanksgiving pumpkin pie in the park" or Easter spring social event with food and games.

7. Other fun activities for all ages

   - Create a "mom's circle" subcommittee under the service standing committee that enables moms to participate in assorted fundraisers and events in the parish that are designed to be child friendly.
   - Organize a Yoga or Zumba® training session for all ages.
   - Candid clicks: Have a photography session with young and old using funny filters. You can also distribute photographs to participants that show different emotions reflecting how members feel or remind them of a time they felt sad, afraid, confused or peaceful. For example, share an image of hope or a reminder of a favourite bible passage. Allow the photographs to trigger a conversation about members' thoughts or experiences.
   - Create "painting stones" with symbols painted on them to mark moods, beginning, endings, thankfulness, prayer, loss, birthdays, anniversaries, names of siblings, etc. Use the stones as a story starter, where both young and old relate to the stone's meaning.

Sample Intergenerational Activity How To's

Take an idea from the above list and make it work for the parish council. Involve as many people as possible, making sure to include members and ideas from across all generations. Some of the work that needs to be done for all events would include:

- Identify one or more coordinators to run and organize events.
- Decide on and book the venue (whether it be the church hall, churchyard or park).
- Choose a venue accessible to all with adequate parking and space.
- Organize volunteers to help prepare ahead of time and on the day of the event.
- Invite the spiritual advisor to start the event with a prayer.
- Advertise the event.
- Have a copy of League event insurance (if needed to book venue/host event).

The BCCPA website (bccare.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCCPA-Intergenerational-Toolkit.pdf) has some great tips, tricks and prompts for planning intergenerational activities.

Below are four examples of events with more specific planning ideas:

1. Outdoor German Market: The event can be organized as a traditional indoor League Christmas bazaar; however, an outdoor event may be a safer option and a unique event for all ages to participate in and attend.

Before:

- Choose the venue and date: Early November might be appropriate to host an outdoor event weather-wise. Consider a venue with some shelter and heating areas in colder areas, or make it indoors. This could be a two-hour event, excluding clean-up time. Again, volunteer shifts can be divided.
- Sell a variety of goods like food, drink and crafts.
- Arrange for Christmas music, carolers or optional Christmas characters.

Event day:

- Decorate the venue with Christmas decorations, including a Christmas tree (if possible).
- Award door prizes, hold raffles, etc. Note that a license may be required.

2. Pie in the Park: This activity is intended to be an outdoor event with dessert, socializing and games for members of all ages. If shelter and heating areas are available, they can be hosted at any time of year.

Before:

- Bake pies/tarts and bring cutlery. Individual portions plated ahead of time make for easier distribution.
- Optional: Include games everyone can play from their respective spots, like trivia based on the time of the year (Thanksgiving, Easter, etc.).
- Suggested: Play "Have You Ever" and include ideas, places travelled or "what are you wearing." Make sure to include funny options. Dollar store items or small gift cards can be given as prizes.

Event day:

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle and have all participants bring a lawn chair. Extra chairs should be made available for older people. Set up desserts and beverages on a picnic table so members can pick up their treats.

3. Baking Day: A baking day in the church kitchen is a fun and educational way to get members of all ages together. Children and teens can join their mothers or grandmothers for this event that makes people feel happier and more relaxed. A salsa or jam canning day or cooking ethnic favourites are options that can be organized similarly. The items made can also be used for future fundraising events.

Before:

- Identify the item(s) to be baked and purchase ingredients. Consider the ages of the participants. Ideas could include making bread, cakes, pies, eclairs and cupcakes for young participants.
- If making canned items or baking that needs to be frozen, secure appropriate storage.
- Health and safety rules should be reviewed via email a day before with all participants.
- Confirm the number of participants. Where possible, measure out the required ingredients and arrange the needed tools.

Event Day:

- Length of the day is based on the project.
- Consider having participants partner up, perhaps a younger and an older pairing.

4. Crafting Group: The purpose of this group is to encourage intergenerational activity through crafting and help the older generation transmit cultural traditions and values to younger ones. Craft items can be sold to raise funds for the parish council.

Before:

- Choose the venue and regular gathering date and time. For example, space could be somewhere in the church. Gatherings can be held monthly or bi-monthly and should not exceed more than two hours.
- Organizers should select projects for each meeting and a potential member to lead craft classes and ensure craft materials are brought to meetings and stored in large totes.

Event Day:

- Start with simple projects like making Christmas tree ornaments and decorating event bags. Then, gradually move into more complicated projects such as knitting and sewing classes or teaching one another new craft skills. Depending on the project, members can work in pairs, assembly-line style, etc.
- Inexperienced crafters should be encouraged to join the group and explore their talents.

Friendly Reminder

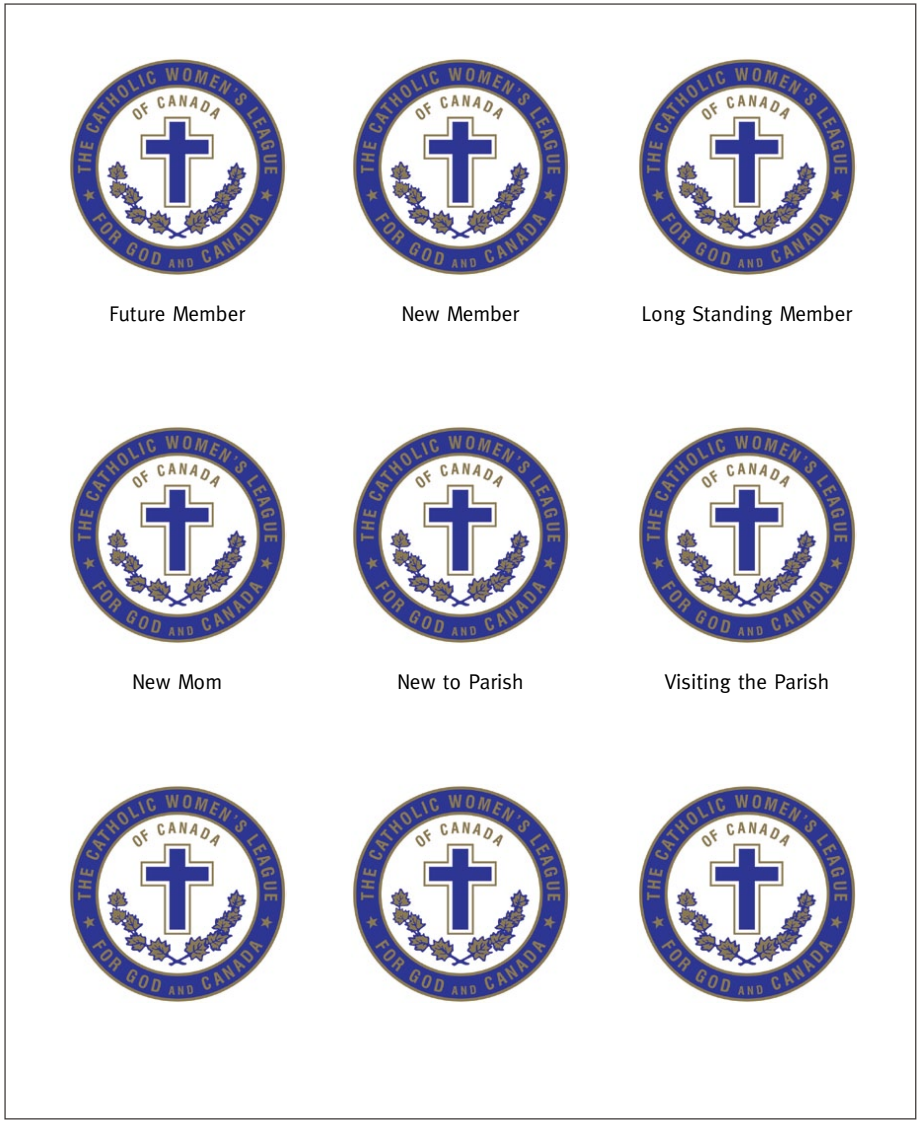
Taking pictures of an event is fun! Sharing them shows everyone how much fun the council's events are! However, some people may not want to be included in pictures that might be shared publicly. Please consult your diocesan, provincial and national councils to ensure that all the correct release forms are signed if you want to use event pictures in future advertising.

Appendix A: Customizable, Printable Badges

Customize these badges to suit the council or the event. For example, are there participants interested in becoming members during the next membership drive? Give them a badge that says, "Future Member"! Is a member's daughter or a member of the Catholic Girls' League helping? They could use the "Future Member" badge as well! Are sons or husbands coming to be "support" or "muscle" at an event? Why not give them a "Helper" badge? Did a member recently have a baby and it is her first meeting back? Give her a badge that says, "New Mom." The League already includes the community, so why not give the community a shout-out for its work? Consider removing the text and distribute to members travelling together or heading to an event in another community.

These badges are designed for printing on Avery 22830 labels (2.5" round labels and nine per page). They could also work to print on cardstock and secure with a safety pin. Want a more environmentally friendly option? See if someone in the council (or community) can turn them into a button pin to be reused over and over.

Please use the editable file format to print.



Appendix B: Brochure

A tri-fold brochure might be handy to have in the parish hall, tucked into the bulletin every other month as a reminder, or for members to be able to print and share. This sample has a section for the council to forward requests for volunteers and an upcoming schedule. These might also double as a newsletter or can be mailed with the minutes from the last meeting. Remember, not all members of the League can be reached by email and social media. Depending on the member's hearing ability and schedule, a telephone call might be difficult as well.

About Us

We are all sisters in Christ! Here at Any Parish Council, we offer you a chance to join in the national organization of Catholic sisters known as the Catholic Women's League. Come share your faith, fellowship, and friendship with likeminded women!

Meet the Team

Jane Smith
Parish President

Mary Jones
Membership Chairperson

Molly Abrams
Secretary

The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.

Get in Touch!

Any Parish Council CWL
123 Main Street
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anyparishcwl@gmail.com
(123) 456-7890

Any Parish Council Catholic Women's League

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Any Parish Council Catholic Women's League

Please use the editable file format to print.

Appendix C: Sample Postcard Invitation

These postcards are designed to be additions to the parish bulletin, as part of a mass mailing to members, or for members to hand deliver to friends and family. Please feel free to modify them to meet the council's appetite for technology. Use them as physical postcards or edit and send as a digital invitation.

Come Join Us!

Outdoor German Market
Saturday, November 5, 2022
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Any Parish Parking Lot

Get a jump start and stockpile for your baked goods,
preserves, crafts and Christmas goodies!
We will also have a tea party with Mrs. Claus on site!

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Appendix D: Sample Poster

This poster is a sample layout that can be developed to advertise any event. It can be included on the bulletin board in the church foyer or parish hall, or even on community event boards around town. A smaller or cropped version would also work in the advertising section of a parish bulletin.

Please use the editable file format to print.

Come Join Us!

World Day of Prayer
Friday, March 3, 2023
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Any Parish Hall

Come join our intergenerational activities to help us join hearts, minds, bodies and souls in prayer. There should be something for everyone. Volunteers are still needed!

Appendix E: Sample Program

This sample program can be used for plays, event schedules or other special events. Use it to identify the people participating in the event or offer a thank you to supporters, organizers and those who supplied items or services to make the event possible.

The program is designed for printing on one sheet of paper, double-sided. Then fold the sheet in half for a booklet appearance. Add more pages and staple the sheets together when a program has more information, such as songs or prayers that require participation.

Any Parish Council Catholic Women's League

Fashion Afternoon!

Saturday, May 7, 2023
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Any Parish Hall

Today's Schedule

- Mother and Daughter collection
- Mothers on the Go collection
- Grandmother Chic collection
- Professional Mothers collection
- Juniors Fun in the Sun collection
- Date Night Collections

Special Thanks go out to...

- Any Parish – for the use of the Hall
- Momma Mary's Boutique – for supplying the clothes for the show
- Any Parish Youth Group – for helping model the junior's collection
- Mrs. Helen Grice – for organizing the event!
- Mom and Pops Cafe – for catering the reception after the show
- The members – for organizing and modeling these clothes!

Please use the editable file format to print.

Appendix F: Sample Social Media Posts

Some quick tips for posting on social media:

1. Create something that quickly catches people's attention.
2. Consider using the event options available so that people can enter the event into their schedules with a click of a button.
3. Add a location. People often look for events in their community by searching the city, town or community name. This helps extend the League's reach beyond that of members. It can also help the council feel like an inviting and inclusive place within the community.
4. Add a call to action in the post. If the event is "Pie in the Park," then ask, "what is your favourite kind of pie?" or "whipped cream or ice cream with your pie?" This encourages people to interact, which increases the likelihood more people will see it!

Calling all Pie Lovers!

"Come out to join Any Parish CWL Council for its Pie in the Park on Saturday June 4, 2022, between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. We will meet at the picnic shelter at Queen Elizabeth Park at 702 Any Street, Anytown, Canada.

The event will start with an icebreaker to get everyone chatting! Let's get to know each other while indulging in some amazing pies from @NanasBakery!

So, are you planning to add ice cream or whipped cream to your pie?"

NOTES

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Inv. #634