



About the Red Cross

The International Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement

An understanding of the origins of the Red Cross Movement and its guiding principles is critical to understanding the operating philosophies behind Red Cross programs and services.

The Red Cross originated on an Italian battlefield in 1859. A travelling Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, came across the carnage remaining from the battle and garnered the support of local villagers to care for all the wounded. Dunant outlined the poor conditions and treatment of the war-wounded in his book *A Memory of Solferino* and advocated for neutral volunteer medical personnel to supplement army medical services. A conference in 1863 promoted the protection of those who care for the wounded as well as the wounded themselves. Neutrality was to become the cornerstone of the Movement: the care and respect of victims regardless of nationality or the "side" they fought on. The Movement became the Red Cross, and was symbolized by a red cross on a white background (the reverse of the Swiss flag). The Red Crescent operates in certain Muslim countries with a red crescent on a white background symbolizing the same protection and neutrality.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian volunteer organization in the world. The Movement has more than 178 member countries, of which Canada is one. The goal of the Movement is to alleviate pain and suffering. Seven Fundamental Principles provide direction for the Movement and all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies must adhere to them. These Principles are also applicable to you as a Red Cross Training Partner.

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Fundamental Principles

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation, and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary Service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

In keeping with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, the Society is committed to Social Justice in the elimination of Society structures and actions that oppress, exclude, limit, or discriminate on the basis of race gender, ethnicity, financial ability, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age.

The Canadian Red Cross

The Red Cross symbol was first used in Canada in 1885 at the Battle of Batoche (in the territory which later became Saskatchewan). Surgeon Major George Sterling Ryerson of the Canadian Army Medical Services improvised a Red Cross flag to distinguish the horse-drawn wagon being used as an ambulance to carry the wounded. Regional Red Cross activities began to flourish, mainly in response to the Boer War conflict in southern Africa. The Canadian Red Cross Society was founded in 1896, and in 1909, through an Act of Parliament, the Canadian Red Cross was established.

Mission of the Canadian Red Cross

To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity in Canada and around the world.

Services of the Canadian Red Cross

- International services undertake activities related to the assistance and intervention provided by the Canadian Red Cross on an international level. Its activities include the Tracing and Reunion program, the Overseas Personnel program, International fundraising, and the Humanitarian Issues program.
- Disaster services provide services to disaster clients with registration and inquiry, shelter, food, clothing, first aid and personal services to disaster clients and first aid services (first aid services delivered by volunteers during events of cultural, social, sporting or other nature).

- Swimming & Water Safety and On Board programs provide the public with the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent water-related injuries and fatalities.
- First Aid services provides training and information to the Canadian public in order to prevent injuries and save lives.
- Medical Equipment Loan services provides care and support to seniors and those requiring medical equipment.
- RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention provides educational programs to youth and community members through trained delivery partners.

In order to better serve Canadians, the Red Cross is divided into five (5) organizational and administrative units.

- National Office
- Western Canada serving the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba as well as the Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories.
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Atlantic Canada serving the provinces of Newfoundland & Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

For more information on program and services of the Red Cross visit <http://www.redcross.ca/>.