

January 18, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to offer my testimony to the nomination of Bridges of Love & their Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) initiative in the Resilient Communities category.

When I first learned about CERT I was immediately drawn to it, because of my interest in Emergency Preparedness & building not only the resilience of my community, but on doing what I can to help rebuild after an emergency event occurs.

Many dismiss emergency preparation with a "the government will take care of it" mentality; but in reality home/auto insurance, roadside kits, savings accounts, etc. are all forms of preparation. As well, all levels of government now encourage & actively promote a 72-Hour Kit as a MINIMUM; with some making extensive preparation & continuity plans. Finding a balance in this spectrum is ultimately a personal choice.

I believe CERT offers a very non-threatening way for people to choose who & at what level they want to engage. I like that they encourage personal preparedness because if you are unable to care for yourself/family; you will be less effective assisting others. Being already involved in preparedness, taking the course was a natural fit. From there I became more inspired that there were others that felt the same I did. That, "It's not just about saving my skin, but helping others not only 'weather the storm,' but rebuild after it."

Since my training, I've had the pleasure of participating in others courses as a returning graduate to assist in training; encouraging others; answer questions, etc.; as well as expanding my knowledge/effectiveness through additional keynote addresses. This has further encouraged me in knowing I am on the right path. I've also volunteered at a number of events; most recently at 2 Emergency Preparedness fairs in a local mall answering questions about preparedness/resilience in general & CERT specifically. Many are unaware this type of thing exists & often very interested to know more; particularly when I share my experiences. The mall also recognizes the value of what CERT does & has invited us back for any future related events.

One particular assignment I do remember was when CERT assisted Chestermere, AB with their flood remediation payments signup. One applicant was clearly distraught with what they were told, but our team was able to directly use the skills learned in the Disaster Psychology module to stabilize & calm the person and provide them with additional resources. To me; if going through the CERT training, etc. & was only able to help in that one case it is well worth it. But CERT is more than that. It inspires, equips & encourages to not only look at yourself in a different way, but to also re/connect you to the communities you're a part of. As part of my interaction with CERT I recently signed up to act as Fire Warden for my work & am partially involved in a new resilience project in my local community. THAT is Bridges of Love & CERT in action!

Regards,



Cameron Nikitiuk