

bers who have signed up for this IC listserv program. Who knew there were so many jobs in interpretation? A total of 551 were posted 2009. Could the interpretation employment market be looking up?

Most postings come from IC volunteers **Baleigh McWade** and **Mike Otto**, who took on this task back in September 2008. Baleigh typically monitors the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) job postings, while Mike watches the Service Canada Job Bank, the Association for Environmental Educational, the University of Alberta's career and placement services, and the University of Victoria's Society of Geography Students as an alumnus. Baleigh and Mike spend a couple of hours per week searching the wide range of postings for interpretation jobs. Thank you, Baleigh and Mike!

Current IC members can receive the postings by email or look them over at the Yahoo website we use at present. Anyone can post interpretation-related jobs. For more info click on the IC Listserves menu at [www.interpcan.ca](http://www.interpcan.ca).

### Marketing and Advocacy

20–25 municipal planners were introduced to interpretation's role in cultural development at the Creative City Network Conference in September 2009 in Fredericton. David Plouffe and Peter Pacey of the IC board highlighted the diversity of interpretation programs and methods in Canada with wonderful photos from Interpretation Canada members (great response coast to coast—thanks!) As this conference was held on Peter's home turf, he was able to blow participants away with a cultural interpretation-tourism field session

he led with a colleague.

Around half the participants in IC's revitalization workshops saw marketing and advocacy as the best way to enhance interpretation and its practice. The Creative City Network conference brings together municipal cultural planners from across Canada. Many participants are also directors or managers of parks and recreation or cultural departments, and usually have cultural institutions and/or urban parks in their portfolios. Many are not aware of the field of interpretation, even though they may manage sites or "interpretation signage" programs. The opportunity to present interpretation to such a group is rare. Happily, David Plouffe is also a Creative City board member and a City of Calgary planner.

## 46 Benefits of Interpretation



By Sue Ellen Fast, Executive Director and InterpScan Editor

Want to justify your budget? Looking for the words to describe the good you do as an interpreter?

Wish you could clearly link your work to your organization's larger goals?

Look no further. In the best IC tradition, interpreters from across Canada have pitched in to confirm, and add to, a long list of interpretation benefits.

To help you find the words you need, all 46 benefits are included here.

As a professional organization, IC's board wanted to know how interpretation is used in Canada. What roles and benefits of interpretation in Canadian society do practitioners see?

I used a perspective-based model I had built up over the years to organize a series of questions we asked in IC's recent online survey. Every one of the 46 benefit options we provided was recognized, from "produce citizens who value natural and/or cultural heritage generally" and "provide enjoyment", each endorsed by 153 respondents, to "reduce enforcement required (e.g., party-calming presence)" at 31. Then, respondents contributed an additional 39 benefit statements under the "other" option. Clearly, interpreters recognize many benefits of the work they do!

We put the questions this way: *The benefits of interpretation can be understood from several perspectives. Please indicate all areas in which the interpretation you provide plays a role:*

- with regard to your site or area
- to the tourism industry
- to the local community

- democracy and citizenship
- your agency
- beyond your site or area
- to the visitor

We listed a set of options under each heading, and asked participants to select all that applied. As it turns out, we needn't have bothered with the headings. Grouped this way, each category scored about the same. But when we looked at the benefit scores individually—what a range! See Figure 1 on the following page.

I have yet to look carefully at the additional "other" responses—hopefully I can do so soon when resources are in place. I can see duplication, but I suspect there are some new benefits in there as well. Certainly there is evidence of significant reflection and engagement with the benefits concept.

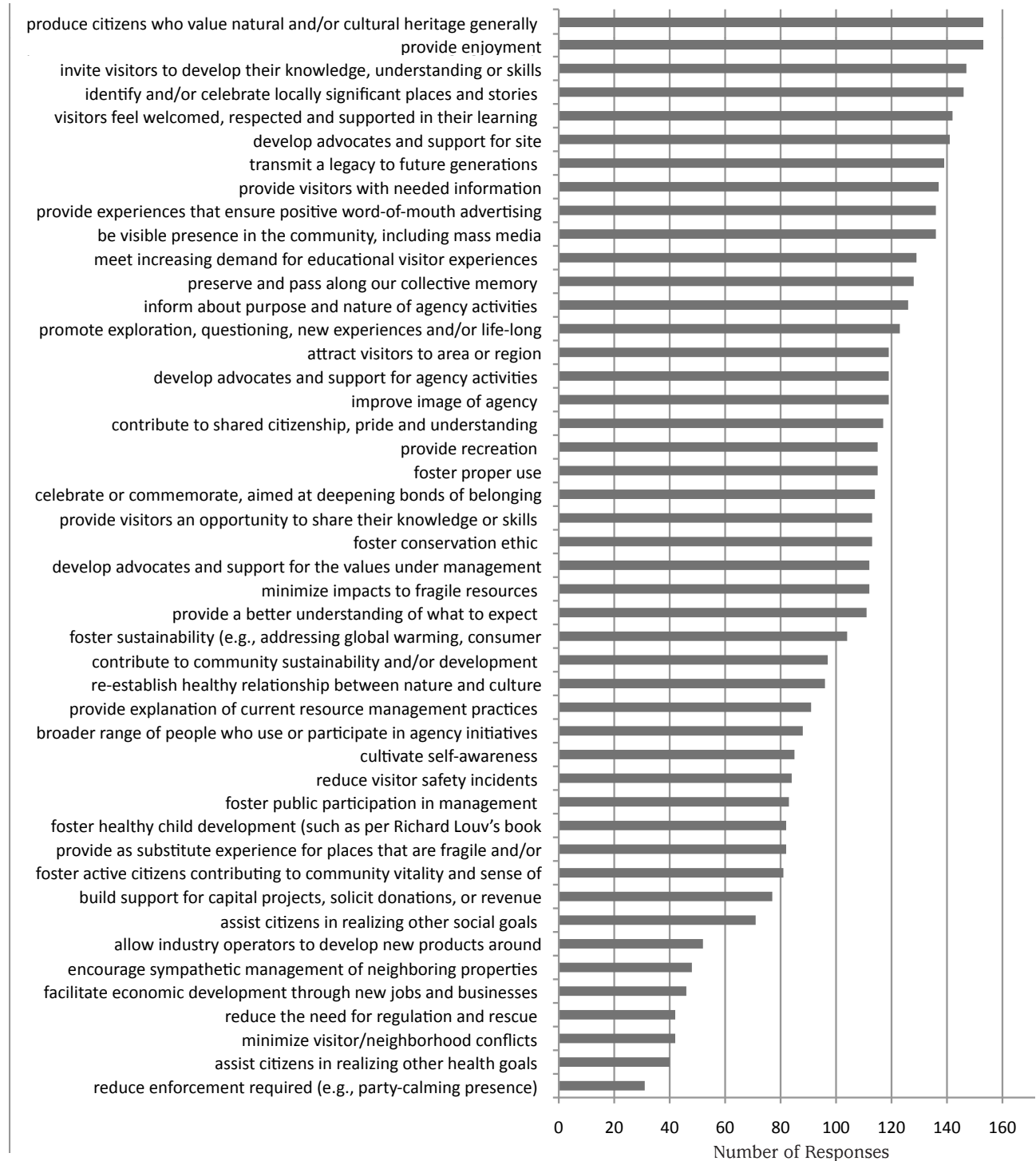
What do the results tell us? Personally, I found them very interesting. For example, I expected the benefit "foster conservation" to rate much higher. Are not most museums, parks, art galleries and

historic sites fundamentally concerned with conservation? Why is interpretation not seen by more of us as contributing to this? And I expected “cultivate self-awareness” to rank lower. Perhaps these results are reflecting larger trends in our

society. Lots to reflect on here. Practically, the IC board will consult them as needed through the coming years, as we decide how to develop our programs where to put resources. For example, how many interpreters apart from Parks Canada

employees can be expected to pursue certification under the CTHRC’s tourism-based program described earlier? It appears that respondents could see some links between interpretation and the tourism industry. Many saw their work as attracting visitors to area or region (78%).

**Figure 1: Benefits of Interpretation, by Number of Responses**



But fewer recognized the interpretation they provided as contributing to other tourism industry objectives, such as helping industry operators to develop new products around interpretation (34%), or facilitating economic development through new jobs and businesses (30%). (If I were to remove the responses of Parks Canada employees, I suspect these percentages would be even lower.) In another survey question, only 7% of all respondents identified themselves as working in the tourism industry, although it was a “choose all that apply” type of question. Interpreters clearly identify much more with non-tourism aspects of their work.

But that’s just one example of how the benefits data can be used. The prime conclusion to draw from these results is that there are many, many recognized benefits of interpretation!

Do planners, managers and other non-interpreters recognize these benefits? Perhaps not yet—but using this language of benefits may help interpreters to better market and advocate for their programs. If you are tired of seeing your program or position on the cut-list year after year, these words may help. Being able to articulate the benefits of your work may also help you build recognition for yourself and your team as professionals.

When your team needs a boost, I invite you to sit down with them for an uplifting ramble through the benefit wordings!

Link them to your goals and objectives, break out the green and red dots, or divide them into categories that make sense for your workplace. Doesn’t it feel good to know that your work is so important? If you sort through the open-ended

responses, please let me know which you see as new to the list of 46 and should be added.

More importantly, which benefits will you use to justify next year’s budget increase or expanded role?

Enjoy!

*The 46 Benefits also available at [www.interpcan.ca](http://www.interpcan.ca)—ed.*

Sue Ellen Fast honed her interpretation skills at a nature centre and various parks systems. In the 1990s she wrote and hosted the award-winning Nature Walk television series filmed across Canada, the United States and Central America. She consults and trains through eoleaders.ca and is the executive director of Interpretation Canada and editor of *InterpScan*. Contact Sue Ellen at [editor@interpcan.ca](mailto:editor@interpcan.ca).



Interpretation Canada’s table at the conference.



Jarrid Jenkins and Lisa Ferris, conference organizers extraordinaire!

## In Our Next Issue...

Look for an in-depth report on IC’s participation in the EECOM 2010 conference.



More members of the ICBC conference team.

