



experiences  
CANADA 

# annual report 2016-17

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We wish to extend our deepest appreciation to the following organizations and individuals who have contributed so generously to our success over the past year:

John Kenny  
Kyle Hill  
Herbert & Bernice Kleysen  
Denise Nawata

Greg Owen  
Dave McInnes  
Deborah Morrison  
Arlene Van Riuten



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Thank you for your support!

**IT HAS BEEN QUITE THE CELEBRATION** this past year at Experiences Canada! Our organization marked its 80th year providing travel and learning opportunities for young Canadians, and of course, we led a major youth initiative to commemorate Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation.

In late September Canada 150&Me was given a regal launch, when we were invited to host a mini Youth Forum in Vancouver as part of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's visit to British Columbia. From that point forward the momentum continued.

Between October 2016 and July 2017 we had the opportunity to talk with and learn from thousands of Canadian youth who responded to our simple question "what is the greatest challenge or opportunity facing Canada for your generation?" We hosted National Youth Forums in five communities across Canada. We introduced our young participants to dozens of national and local non-profit organizations across the country that are already engaged in the issues that matter most to them. We also gave them an opportunity to get to know each other, to meet like-minded youth from across the country they might otherwise never have the opportunity to meet, and to build a network we hope will support them for years to come. Although we set out to ignite new energy and passion amongst our participants, I have to admit, these young kids have given us so much more inspiration and have fueled our thinking about how we can better serve them with our future programming.

In our regular exchange programming, there was a 4% increase in the number of applications for groups interested in exchanging, and there was a commensurate

4% increase in the number of applications from first time schools and youth groups. Thanks to the generous support of Great-West Life, RBC, and McConnell Foundation we were able to ensure that more youth were able to travel, particularly youth involved in thematic exchanges where additional costs to participate could have been prohibitive, such as those focused on community engagement in areas of Human Rights and Immigration and Diversity, as well as exchanges between and among Indigenous Communities.

This past year has enabled Experiences Canada to reach out to new schools and youth organizations, establish new partnerships for programming as well as funding, as well as reach out to a much broader base of young Canadians. As we begin a new strategic planning cycle, we hope to build on these developments, taking the ideas and advice of the young people we've met to heart and work towards a long term vision that ensures that Experiences Canada continues to provide valuable learning opportunities that support the growth and development needs of young Canadians.

As always, we rely heavily on the involvement of our growing network of volunteer group organizers, educators, parents, host families, and alumni youth participants to bring our programmes to life. We cannot thank you enough for sharing your time, talents and passion all of which continue to be the cornerstone of our success.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH MORRISON



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

EXPERIENCES CANADA STAFF (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): GINNY BYRNE; SANDRINE THABET; JAMIE MCCULLOUGH; TOM KINGDON; DEBORAH MORRISON; ERIN WAKE; MINH HOA KOLIE; ELLEN GLOUCHKOW; AND KARINE LEVESQUE.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**O**NE OF THE MOST INSPIRATIONAL moments I have had as Chair of the Board of Directors of Experiences Canada came last June 26th when 150 youth from across Canada took to the stage of the National Gallery of Canada's Auditorium. In front of the Governor General of Canada, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a gathering of Order of Canada recipients and prominent leaders from the national capital region, they confidently presented eight remarkable pieces to highlight their concerns about the environment; embracing alternative fuel technology, human rights and equality particularly with respect to our Indigenous peoples; immigration and resettlement, mental health and social inclusion.

Anyone with teenagers in their midst already knows just how much information they process due to social media, and

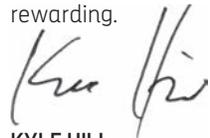
how much more connected they are to the issues and events taking shape around the world. They take the challenge of "being the leaders of today" very seriously, and we take the challenge of helping them to prepare for that role seriously as well.

We live in an interesting time. By the time they graduate from high school, it is more likely a young Canadian will have travelled to another country without ever having visited another province. They tend to think globally, forming social media networks that connect them with activists and organizations that transcend all geographical boundaries and yet, the opportunities to make those same connections to issues, organizations, and other youth across Canada are becoming fewer.

We believe effective leadership and good citizenship begins at home. To that end, Experiences Canada aims to help

young Canadians explore the diversity and complexity of issues in our own communities first, enabling our youth to gain authentic learning experiences that will help them to be more informed and better prepared for the increasingly global future that awaits them.

Experiences Canada is guided by a dedicated volunteer board of directors and strong staff whose efforts ensure that each year more than 4500 youth get to explore another part of this country in ways they never imagined. I would like to extend a heartfelt word of thanks to each and every one of them for making my experience with this organization so rewarding.

  
KYLE HILL

# RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES



**E**XPERIENCES CANADA'S RECIPROCAL exchange program provides funding for groups of youth to explore Canada from coast to coast. Each year, Canadian youth between the ages of 12-17 years travel in groups spending one week in a different community and in turn hosting their "twins" for another week in their own community. The exchange experience offers youth an opportunity to discover a different part of Canada, to create new friendships and develop an appreciation for Canada's diversity of geography, history, language, and culture.

Each exchange group sets a variety of objectives for their journey, and Experiences Canada pairs them with another group looking for a similar focus and experience. Some objectives are to strengthen their second language, develop leadership skills, enhance their knowledge of Canadian history and heritage, engage in civic issues, or learn about Canada's Indigenous communities.

For example, in the summer of 2016 the Coastal Sound Children's Choir from Coquitlam, BC travelled to the Jeunes Chanteurs d'Acadie to Shediac River, NB. In addition to sharing their passion for music by collaborating in multiple choral workshops; the youth were able to learn about Acadian culture by visiting the Lefebvre Historical site as well as the Mi'kmaq culture by visiting Bouctouche. They also visited Eco-Centre to learn about the ecology of New Brunswick.

During the program year of 2016-17, Experiences Canada's reciprocal ex-

change program funded travel for 4503 youth, an increase of 4% over last year. Of the 4503 youth, 2785 participated in a bilingual exchange, representing 62%. Many of the second language exchanges travel to Quebec City in February enabling them to participate in Quebec's Carnival.

Inter-cultural and intra-cultural exchanges play a significant role in developing mutually respectful relationships by inviting youth to engage in another community. Youth have the opportunity to learn about different cultures, languages and traditions. In particular, exchanges with Indigenous communities, and between and among Indigenous communities have grown in recent years. Experiences Canada sees this as a positive way to help foster greater youth dialogue and awareness of Indigenous issues, a key recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

While at the Deninu School in Fort Resolution, NWT the Ottawa Presbyterian group participated in traditional Dene games, learned how to prepare dried moose meat, made traditional crafts and snowshoed on Great Slave Lake.

Participating in a youth exchange offers youth an opportunity to develop their awareness of Canada through experiential learning opportunities. The exchanges are mutually beneficial and promote respectful relationships by engaging youth to interact with each other and their communities. Youth develop a strong sense of identity, awareness and appreciation for the diversity within Canada.



## STRENGTHENING LINGUISTIC DUALITY

### GOING ON AN EXCHANGE IS A GREAT

way to practice a second language. Both group organizers, Bonnie White and Carl Hardy, wanted their group to know what it is like living in a community where their second language, French or English, is dominant.

In February 2017, Bonnie brought her group to Québec City just in time for its famous Carnival. The week was filled with activities that showcased Quebec history and culture; one of the highlights was a re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham. Amy Goetken, a participant from Prince George, said that being surrounded by Francophones taught her a lot about the French language. But that wasn't the only new experience - Amy comes from a small town and so visiting a big city was an eye opener for her. Her

mother, Corina Goetken also went on the trip and observed that Amy seemed to be very at home and was speaking French fluently with her twin.

In May 2017, it was Carl Hardy's turn to bring his group to Prince George. Bonnie planned a totally different week from the one they enjoyed in Quebec City. The week highlighted BC's beautiful natural history. One of Carl's participants, Alexandra Dufour-Bégin, said she learned a lot about Prince George and Anglophone culture. Her favourite activity was going to Ness Lake, where they participated in group challenges and navigated courses.

Not only did this exchange help both groups build their second language skills but they also developed new social skills, and were able to see Canada in ways they had never imagined it before.



## FOSTERING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

**IN MARCH 2017, DANDELION DANCE OF** Ottawa, ON welcomed Dancestreams Youth Dance Company from Port Alberni, BC. Although both groups are part of a dance studio, each one is run very differently. Dancestreams has choreographers that come in to teach like most studios, however, Dandelion Dance has a different approach. They encourage their students to choreograph their own dance pieces based on issues they are passionate about. Another interesting fact about Dandelion is that their group is very diverse. One participant, Ashley, has Down syndrome and the BC girls had a great experiences dancing with her and learning from her.

During their stay, they visited some of our national museums, ate Ethiopian food, attended a dance workshop at Dandelion studio and watched some contemporary dance street pieces at the National Arts Centre. The students learned different ways of creating dance and discovered that even though they come from different parts of Canada they are not so different after all.

Kayla Champis, a participant from Dancestreams, loved her experience in Ottawa. She said that the lifestyles were very different, especially because she's from a small town. Her mother, Lana Champis, noticed that Kayla became more comfortable being independent. "The girls learned to see people in a different perspective. They felt it was amazing and interesting to see all the

girls from different personal and cultural backgrounds come together to share their experiences through free movement."

"Yes, I would recommend this experience," said Bonnie Hall, a parent from Dandelion. "It is such a wonderful way for young people to connect with each other, learn and grow" "The girls who stayed with me had different cultural backgrounds than my daughter, but in many ways they were also very similar." Bonnie's daughter, Maya Velic, who participated in the exchange, said she learned a lot by seeing her own city through someone else's eyes.

When visiting BC, the youth got to attend a workshop with the guest choreographer Constance Cooke where they learned about the methods of creation and interpretation. The workshop was followed with a Scottish Dance class and an in studio showing of both choreographies.

They continued their exchange by visiting BC's beautiful natural settings, including Cathedral Grove, an ancient rain forest. Lastly, they got to learn about the indigenous culture by visiting the Ahtsik Gallery, the Huu-ay-aht totem and the totems at Port Alberni Harbour Quay. Maya Velic found that the nature in BC is absolutely breathtaking. "I now have a deeper understanding and appreciation for our environment and how we live." She also found it easy to fit in with the other girls and thought it was a great experience to learn new styles of dance.

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## EXPLORING CANADIAN DIVERSITY

**IN APRIL 2017, ÉCOLE ISUMMASAQVIK** from Quaqtaq, QC hosted École St-Jean Baptiste from Val David, QC. It all started when Nancy Breton from École St-Jean Baptiste asked her students what they knew about the north communities of Québec. The answers she got were very stereotypical – igloos, polar bears, etc. She wanted to find a way to show her students the true North and decided to organize an exchange for her students to experience intercultural dialogue through Arts.

Quaqtaq is an Indigenous community and so Daniel Charest from École Isummasaqvik, made sure to plan a full week that highlighted their culture and traditions. Throat singing, dog sledding, and cooking an Indigenous meal were some of the activities on the list. The students also met with an Indigenous artist who guided them as they took on their own projects drawing, carving and designing t-shirts. Two students from Val David, Asia Tanrière and Henri Lemay, agreed that one of their highlights of the week was getting to

ride on a skidoo, something they don't get to do every day in Val David. Henri shared that it was easy to communicate with the other students even though there was a language barrier. Most students have kept in touch and Asia hopes that one day she can go back and visit.

Christelle Castro, Asia's mom, noticed that she had grown and matured because of the trip. "She doesn't stop talking about her new love for Indigenous culture and Quaqtaq's scenery!"

Henri's mom, Emmanuelle Verdier-Huot, said the exchange helped him build self-confidence and independence. He also found a stronger appreciation for different cultures.

Both parents strongly recommend exchanges as it broadened their children's perspectives about life and about themselves.

In Val David, the students learned a variety of new art techniques; they were initiated to screen printing and engraving; and participated in a workshop with the

artist Kinya Ishikawa who showed the students how to create clay figurines. They also got to explore areas around Val David like Montreal and Mont Tremblant and were treated to a special visit with Cirque du Soleil to learn about circus arts.

Daniel Charest said the highlight for his Northern students was to go to the school's gymnasium, and to eat at the cafeteria since they usually eat at home.

"They learned that Art cannot be just pen and paper, that it's all around us," said Martha Nakoolak, Paul and Ajaguta's mother. She added that they have both become more independent since they returned home from Val David.

Nancy Breton concluded that the exchange as a total success. "They developed relationships very quickly and always respected each other" she said. They now have a much more accurate picture of life in Northern communities, and at the end of their exchange, she noted "they realized that they are not so different after all."

## ENRICHING KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST: AN AWARD-WINNING EXPERIENCE

**DENISE LIPSCOMBE, A FRENCH IMMERSION** teacher from East Three Secondary School in Inuvik, Northwest Territories was been awarded the 2017 Experiences Canada Award, presented annually as part of the Governor General's History Awards administered by Canada's History Society.

"Learning how the Inuvialuit thrived in a comparably inhospitable environment for thousands of years is just as important to understanding the history of Canada as the battle of the Plains of Abraham," according to Ms. Lipscombe.

Denise has organized two exchanges in recent years with schools in Quebec City with the dual goals of introducing Southern youth to the rich history, contributions and potential of the Arctic, and providing her students in the North with the opportunity to show off and appreciate their own community. During their time in Inuvik, Ms. Lipscombe and her students planned a bilingual itinerary that included a trip on the ice road to Tuktoyaktuk; walking on the Arctic Ocean and snowshoeing to the Pingo's National monument; touring Inuvik's historic community freezer, sod hut, and Igloo church; dogsledding; playing traditional games; trying a caribou soup lunch and learning to build traditional shelters and make fire with a bow.

"It is important that the youth of the North have an opportunity to show off their region and way of life to develop a new appreciation for their hometown and its cultures, explained Ms. Lipscombe. "We tend to idealize what it's like to live in a city and forget to appreciate all the advantages and opportunities Northern communities have to offer."





I HAVE CREATED A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT GROUP CALLED MARITIME FUTUREMAKERS TO EMPOWER EACH AND EVERY YOUTH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, COUNTRY, AND OUR WORLD, TO RECOGNIZE THE POWER THEY ALREADY HAVE INSIDE.

– ZOE MORGAN, NS

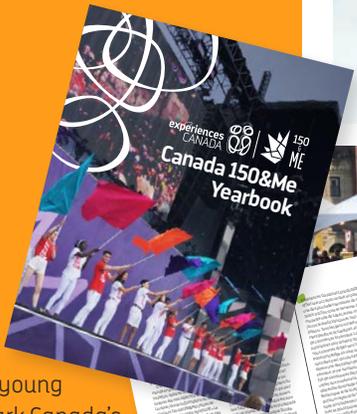
CANADA DAY WAS THE ABSOLUTE BEST! I HAD A BLAST. JUST TO MEET SUCH AMAZING PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE SAME THINGS AS ME WAS AMAZING.

I LOVED SEEING HOW PASSIONATE EVERYONE WAS AND I LOVED THE NEW EXPERIENCES I GAINED. TRULY ONE OF A KIND.

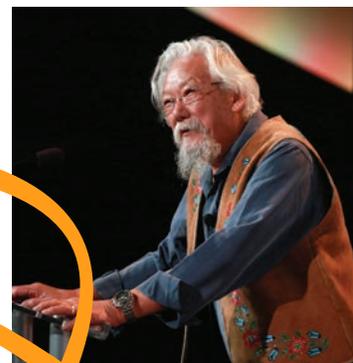
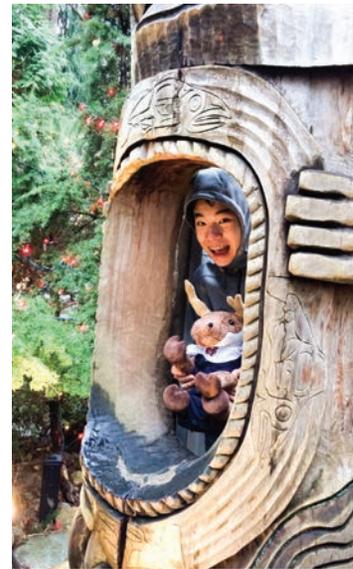
– CANADA 150&ME PROJECT SURVEY RESPONDENT

MY FAVOURITE PART OF THIS EXPERIENCE WAS LEARNING FROM OTHER PEOPLES AND HEARING THEIR STORIES. I ESPECIALLY ENJOYED SPENDING TIME WITH THE YOUTH AMBASSADORS AND STAFF AND HEARING ABOUT THEIR TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS AND HOW THEY ARE OVERCOMING THEM/OVERCAME THEM. I ALSO REALLY ENJOYED VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY AND BEING ABLE TO HELP OTHERS.

– CANADA 150&ME PROJECT SURVEY RESPONDENT



**EXPERIENCES CANADA** set out to create a unique opportunity for young people ages 14-19 to mark Canada's 150th anniversary by talking about the challenges and opportunities they saw facing Canada for their generation. The goal was to let youth lead the national conversation, share their thoughts and ideas on social media, and come together online or in person at one of five events held across the country between April and July, 2017. Over 3,300 youth participated directly in the forums and have since shared their experiences with peers and families through social media and other means for a total estimated reach of over 12,000. To capture the conversations and document the project, Experiences Canada created a Canada 150&Me Yearbook. To download the free digital version visit [experiencescanada.ca/150](http://experiencescanada.ca/150) or to order your print copy visit [blurb.com/user/canada150me](http://blurb.com/user/canada150me).



# CANADA 150&ME: THE NEXT LEADERS OF CANADA

**WHEN EXPERIENCES CANADA INVITED 150** youth from across the country for a ten day trek across the National Capital Region, we were ready for the unexpected.

I say this lovingly, because after four regional forums across the country, we twenty or so youth ambassadors had each been in the throes of the busyness of days filled with enriching experiences: a quick breakfast followed by a trip to a city museum, an afternoon on a volunteer home building site, an evening supper with community members. We each took on two forums and witnessed students at their best in both the organized events of the day and the unscripted bus and meal conversations in between. Thinking critically about the world and their place in it, the Canada 150 & Me Youth constantly found places and people to connect to, to learn from, and to shape their lives.

The thing to remember about Canada 150 is that it's a celebration that calls us to reflect not only on the glory days, but on the hardships still faced by many. The programming that Experiences Canada put together reflected this incredibly well. The young Canadians who attended the forums engaged firsthand with discussions. They saw the connections of First Nations on and off-reserve crises in our country as interwoven around themes of income equality, poverty reduction, power, and environmental racism. Time and time again in both the environmental and human rights forums I participated in, they made con-

nections across topics in their discussions on possible solutions.

These youth see how Canada is a leader on the world stage, but that reputation requires leadership at home in the way we treat our own citizens who are struggling to survive. They see that a shift to green energy and fighting climate change will need a mind shift over conservation and efficiency. Largely they were keen on these issues before, but throughout the regional forums and as witnessed in the national forum presentations to the Governor General, their capacity for expressing their resilience, protest, optimism, and reluctance for the 'status quo' in this country was brought to a whole new level.

I work in climate change education, a field where hope and capacity are not always thought to go hand in hand. We are given so many difficult problems to consider on a day-to-day basis that sometimes it seems there is too much to take on. But the youth involved with Canada 150 put aside their own personal accomplishments and worked together. They developed a strong collaborative work ethic and close relationships through getting out and learning on the land, in local communities, and with local partners. Experiential education like this comes with unintended learnings, spurred on from coming to know the intricacies of people who lead noble lives that are impressionable for our students.

The engagement these students had with organizations from across the spectrum



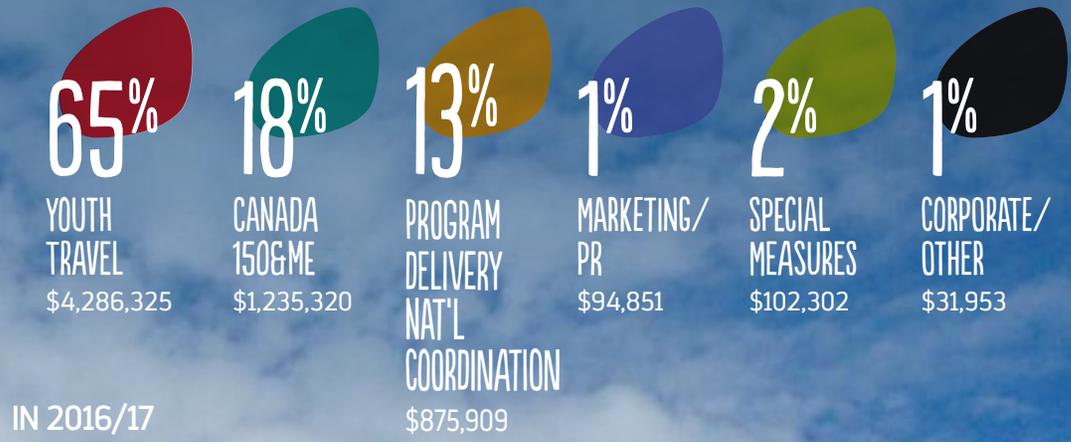
"CANADA 150 & ME YOUTH CONSTANTLY FOUND PLACES AND PEOPLE TO CONNECT TO, TO LEARN FROM, AND TO SHAPE THEIR LIVES."

within the forum cities helped them literally see what happens when you open a door and enter into a conversation. All of us witnessed their processing of these events, and how they built upon their past lived experiences to build them up for the future. As an educator, it was these moments that have stood out for me.

Group dynamics have a way of changing conversations. I'm glad that Experiences Canada allowed the group dynamics from each regional forum and the national forum presentation groups to shine through in their own way. Going around from group to group while they were preparing for their forum presentations, it reminded me why

I am a teacher. Giving youth the means to build capacity and bring out their best can be a challenge, but the results are always worth it. I don't think any one of us could have imagined the diversity of role-plays, dance choreography, video editing, art, and spoken word that the Canada 150 & Me youth created together in the span of 24 hours. Like the youth, I will hold onto these memories as well. I will remember them as they continue to go out in this world and collaborate with each other to not only discover the solutions we need in our society, but to act with determination, thoughtfulness, and best practice in mind.

**BY ADAM YOUNG, YOUTH AMBASSADOR**





## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

**O**N BEHALF OF THE AUDIT AND FINANCE Committee of Experiences Canada I am pleased to report the financial results for the 2016-17 fiscal year. This report is derived from Experiences Canada's audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2017, which are available on our website or upon request.

Experiences Canada completed its first year of a three-year funding agreement with the Federal Government's Exchanges Canada Program, and successfully completed Canada 150&Me, a signature Canada 150 initiative. We wish to thank the Minister and staff at the Department of Canadian Heritage Exchanges Canada and Youth Take Charge programs for their steadfast support and commitment to our programs. We would also like to thank our sponsors for this year's programs; TD Bank Group, Great West Life, The McCain Foundation, Province of Nova Scotia, Shaw Communications Inc., RBC, The Winnipeg Foundation, Morris & Rosalind Goodman and Manitoba Education

and Training, Westjet, Air Canada, ViaRail, and Uniglobe.

In 2016-17 revenue was up by 20% at \$6.57 million compared to the previous year's revenue of \$5.48 million. Contributing factors to revenue growth included increases in the number of paid registration fees, additional funding from private sector sponsors, and our new project, Canada 150&Me. Net expenditures also increased 20% from \$5.52 million to \$6.63million, most of which was attributed to the Canada 150&Me project. Thanks to additional investments from RBC and Great West Life, we were able to increase special measures support by 70% over the prior year. \$102,302 in additional financial assistance was issued to ensure equal access to the exchange program. Experiences Canada ended the year with a net deficit of \$44,582.

**DENISE NAWATA**

# MESSAGE FROM ASTRID KRUGER, YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESIDENT 2016-17



**SPEAK ON BEHALF OF ALL THE MEMBERS** of the Youth Advisory Committee when I say it has been an absolute privilege to offer my advice, opinions and voice to such an incredible organization. Coming up on my third year on the YAC, I have been fortunate enough to work with some amazing, passionate youth from coast to coast and I can only reflect on the work that we've accomplished together with utmost admiration.

Building from our own unique experiences and diverse perspectives, we identified what our role as Youth Advisory Committee Members should entail. Together, we contacted Members of Parliament, spoke with educators and met with exchange groups to listen to their feedback. We worked in committees to improve our "twinning" questionnaire, promote social media following and provide exchange facilitators with tips and advice. Most significantly, in 2015 and 2016 we worked directly with Experiences Canada to help develop the incredible and impactful project Canada 150&Me! After spending months discussing potential forum topic ideas, designing social media advertisements and reaching out in our own communities to promote this initiative; hundreds of students from across

Canada travelled all over the country, discussed the next steps for a better Canadian future, and became part of a permanent network of engaged youth.

I am fortunate enough to have participated in Experiences Canada exchanges as well as in the Vancouver regional forum for Canada 150&Me. The friends I've made, lessons I've learned and experiences I've gained hold value beyond anything I may learn in a classroom. It is organizations like Experiences Canada that keep Canadian youth engaged, passionate and connected to the country they live in. Being at the forefront of the youth voice for such an organization is an honor I can only hope to make my mark on.

I would like to thank everyone who has made the Youth Advisory Committee a reality. Though it saddens me to know I will be leaving the "YAC" behind, it is the skills and experiences I've gained as a member of the group that make me eager for all the adventures ahead. Experiences Canada, thank you for valuing youth voice. Young people: never doubt the power you can have when you speak up and get involved.

**ASTRID KRUGER**



I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO WORK WITH SOME AMAZING, PASSIONATE YOUTH FROM COAST TO COAST AND I CAN ONLY REFLECT ON THE WORK THAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER WITH UTMOST ADMIRATION.

