



annual report 2015–16



EXPERIENCES CANADA
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"REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE
MILESTONES AS YOU PREPARE
FOR THE ROAD AHEAD."
— NELSON MANDELA

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT AND CEO

We began our year with a special announcement with Mayor Jim Watson and Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly that our flagship reciprocal exchanges would focus on Ottawa as a primary destination for 2017. Between January and December 2017 our goal is to get 150 youth groups travelling to the Ottawa area, which also means that 150 Ottawa area groups will also have the opportunity to explore another part of the country as part of their Canada 150 activities. Within the exchanges program more broadly, overall we were able to increase the total number of youth travelling by 6% with an even greater increase in participation and exchanges with Indigenous youth and communities.

In March, we launched Canada 150&Me, a Canada 150 Signature Initiative that will offer youth ages 14–19 the opportunity to participate in a national conversation about the greatest challenges and opportunities facing Canada for their generation. Hundreds of students will earn the opportunity to travel and explore Canada in ways they never imagined – participating in unforgettable week-long adventures that will fuel their passion and deepen their commitment to supporting their communities. Canadians of all ages will have an opportunity to hear what our youth have to say as they follow the project online through social media and livestreaming of the planned forum events.

We were honoured to be invited to showcase the Canada 150&Me project as part of the youth reception with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on September 25th in Vancouver. Over 100

It has been quite an exciting year for Experiences Canada as we ramp up our programming to ensure that young Canadians are front and centre at Canada's 150th birthday celebrations – not just in the national capital – but across the country!

youth gathered from across the country participated in a panel discussion hosted by Canadian Heritage Minister Melanie Joly about the greatest challenges facing Canada for their generation. This included 25 representatives from the Surrey Schools district who will be hosting our youth travelling to the lower mainland next year.

And so, as we begin a new year we mark a milestone of our own. For over 80 years (under one name or another) we have been creating moments and memories for young Canadians. Every step of the way, Experiences Canada is always generously supported by teachers, parents, and volunteers who give their time and expertise to ensure each one of these moments is authentic and enduring. Whether it is advising on our programming, organizing exchanges, or acting as chaperones for our participants; we cannot thank you enough for bringing our programs to life!

DEBORAH MORRISON

♥ OUR NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):
MYRIAM GIROUX, JAMIE MCCULLOUGH, DEBORAH MORRISON, REBECCA HORETH,
TOM KINGDOM, ELLEN GLOUCHKOW, GINNY BYRNE, SANDRINE THABET,
BOBBY BOURDEAU (ABSENT), MINH HOA KOLIE (ABSENT)





BOARD MEMBER PHOTO (FROM LAST ROW LEFT TO RIGHT) ►
GREG OWEN, DEB SOLBERG, CHRISTIE BROWN, BARRY MCGOWAN, DENISE NAWATA,
DON NEELAND, KYLE HILL, ARLENE VAN RUITEN, JUDITH SULLIVANT-CORNEY (ABSENT),
ROBERT JOHNSTON (ABSENT), VALERIE GALLEY (ABSENT)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Experiences Canada has had many names over its eighty years, but the mission for the organization has remained constant – to encourage young Canadians to connect more deeply with their country. The organization had its beginnings in 1936 when an Ontario History teacher created a summer exchange program for his students to live with Quebec families to further their understanding of French Canada.

Since then, Experiences Canada has been best known for its commitment to supporting second language learning through its experiential learning programs. However as Canada has grown, so too have our programs. From the early 1980's the organization has broadened its focus to support cross cultural exchanges with Indigenous and Northern communities, urban and rural communities, as well as thematic exchanges that enable students to explore the diversity of Canadian culture, geography, and history. In recent years, we have increased our focus on using these travel opportunities to increase youth engagement in community issues such as social and economic equality, immigration and diversity, and environmental and heritage stewardship.

We are particularly excited about the Canada 150&Me project which is a special signature initiative for Canada 150. This

project not only offers an opportunity for an enriched individual travel experience for high school and CEGEP students, but also positions Experiences Canada well for future partnerships and opportunities that will engage youth directly in finding solutions for some of the most challenging issues of our time.

Recent developments in our programming have also resulted in new partnerships with Great-West Life; and McConnell Foundation in the current year, and many others for 2017. We are grateful for their investment in our vision and plans for the future and look forward to working with them.

In the pages of this report you will have the opportunity to hear first-hand from some of our recent exchange groups about the impact of their experiences. What these reports can never fully show is the extraordinary contributions of the teams of individuals that make these programs happen. Experiences Canada benefits immeasurably from its Program Advisory Council and Youth Advisory Committee who we meet with throughout the year either by teleconference or in person. I would also like to extend my personal appreciation for the ongoing energy and commitment of the board members and staff without whom Experiences Canada could only meet a fraction of its annual targets.


KYLE HILL

RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES

The flagship program of Experiences Canada is our longstanding reciprocal exchange program. Here, Canadian youth between the ages of 12-17 are offered the opportunity to spend a week in each other's community to foster a deeper connection to and appreciation for Canada's diversity of language, history, culture and geography.

At a time when Canadian youth completing high school are more than likely to have travelled to another country having never visited the province next door to them, Experiences Canada is steadfast in their belief that young Canadians need to have a better understanding of their own country first, in order to better prepare them for life as global citizens.

Groups travelling on exchange do so with any number of objectives in mind. They may be looking to develop leadership, language, sports or artistic performance skills; to experience different cultures and traditions, or to gain more understanding of Canada's natural environment and biodiversity.

Regardless of other themes developed for each exchange, promoting Canadian history and heritage is a primary objective for all exchanges. Group organizers work diligently to include key activities that will provide youth with the opportunity to develop a stronger appreciation of Canada's diversity of experiences. Alan Macdonald took full advantage of his community's proximity to national historic sites by incorporating a trip to Ottawa to visit the Parliament Buildings, the War Museum, Byward market, and the National Art Gallery into his itinerary. However the visiting students from Laity View school in Maple Ridge, BC found the history of Kingston the most engaging thanks to an overnight stay at Fort Henry and an "Amazing Race" organized to explore Canada's first government Capital.

In the program year 2015-16 we increased the number of groups travelling to 180 and the total number of youth

participating in exchanges to 4,362. The 6% increase in travellers within existing resources was achieved by being vigilant in finding efficiencies in the twinning of groups as well as ticket prices and administration expenses.

At the same time, we have continued to expand the number of Exchanges involving Indigenous youth and Indigenous communities. Over the past year 349 Indigenous youth participated in the program, a 31% increase over the prior year. Interest and demand from non-Indigenous groups to travel to Indigenous and Northern communities is growing, and Experiences Canada is committed to being an important contributor in helping to address recommendations 63 and 66 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action Report regarding youth education and intercultural dialogue. Louis Audet has led several groups of students from École secondaire Guillaume-Couture in Lévis, QC to Nunavik, the most northerly region of the province. Each experience has taken him to a different community in the region, but he says the impact on the participants has always been quite similar; having personal contact with each other definitely contributes to breaking down stereotypes each culture holds about the other, but most importantly the students keep a positive opinion about each other for a long time, often continuing their relationship online through facebook and other social media.

Exchanges are mutually beneficial; providing all youth with a greater sense of belonging, pride, and civic stewardship. By participating in one of our exchanges, youth gain valuable knowledge of Canadian history, heritage and culture. Reciprocal exchanges connect young Canadians to one another; ultimately building better citizens, intercultural understanding, and mutual respect.



FOSTERING LINGUISTIC DUALITY

According to group organizer Stéphanie Magnan from École la Vérendrye in Lethbridge, AB, they were seeking a reciprocal exchange with a Quebec school "because we wanted our students who live and go to school as a language minority group in Alberta to have an experience living in an environment where French is the majority." Académie Antoine-Manseau Joliette, QC was pleased to be twinned with them but record snow falls during their half of the exchange meant a lot of planned activities including a trip to Quebec City had to be cancelled. Nonetheless the youth did have the opportunity to travel to Ottawa and meet the Governor General of Canada. They also shared many experiences visiting important historic sites in Alberta including Frank Slide, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, the Royal Tyrrell Museum. According to Ms. Magnan, one outcome that is often overlooked is the deeper connection youth gain to their own communities. "They become more conscious of their own community and the rich treasures it has to offer... for some it was the first time they visited these museums and attractions."

"ALL STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE THIS EXPERIENCE AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR SCHOOLING. THEY GAIN IN SO MANY WAYS, MEETING OTHER STUDENTS, EXPLORING A DIFFERENT PART OF THEIR COUNTRY, AND LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER, THEIR STRENGTHS AND THEIR CHALLENGES."

— STÉPHANIE MAGNAN

PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

In December, 2015 Glebe Collegiate students welcomed a group from Haida Gwaii to Ottawa. The week began with an Indigenous Walking tour of the city and visits to the Wabano Cultural Centre and then continued with visits to Parliament Hill, the Museum of Nature, the National Art Gallery, and the Canadian Museum of History. There was also plenty of opportunity for the youth to experience some of the perks of southern living including Trampoline Parks, Bowling, and shopping at the Rideau Centre. When the Glebe students returned to Massey, BC in May, 2016 they spent much of their time living together in long house styled cabins

at Hiellen campgrounds, hiking, beachcombing, eating traditional foods and enjoying dance and story-telling performances. They also learned about Totem Pole carving and Haida Art and visited the Haida Heritage Centre at Kay Llnagaay. What an impression this exchange must have made on both groups – such a contrast in what they saw and learned about Haida Art in each community, and how they spent their leisure time! Daniel Shulbeck from George Dawson Secondary School wrote to us after the exchange simply saying “I can tell you that your monies helped to make an experience that most of these kids will never forget.”



ENRICHING KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST: award winning program

While teaching at École Lakeview School in Saskatoon last year Kirsten Riebot organized an exchange that not only focused on helping youth participants develop their second language skills but also introduced their Quebec visitors from École des Sentiers to Saskatchewan's rich and diverse history. They visited many of the province's notable historic sites such as the Moose Jaw Tunnels, and the RCMP Museum, but they also went on a riverboat tour, visited a rural Fransaskois town, and the trip highlight, spent a day at Wanuskewin First Nation participating in a survival program learning about traditional medicines, edible plants, pow wow dancing, and how to make a bow & arrows.

The week-long experience provided all students – both local and from away – with a deeper appreciation for the many cultures and heritages that have shaped Saskatchewan over the centuries and a life-long connection to each other.

For their efforts, Kirsten Riebot and École Lakeview were awarded the Experiences Canada Award which is presented annually as part of the Governor General's History Awards for the youth exchange project that demonstrates exemplary efforts in creating programming that encourages active interest and engagement in exploring Canada's history and heritage. Kirsten is to be honoured at Rideau Hall on November 28th, 2016 and a special presentation of the Award plaque and a \$2500 certificate for a future exchange will be presented at École Lakeview in December.

NURTURING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Typically when we have bilingual exchanges, the Quebec host school likes to bring the youth from other parts of Canada to the Quebec Winter Carnival. Indeed travel to Quebec during "Carnaval" are the two most frequently travelled weeks in our calendar year. But the students from Saint-Tite-des-Caps QC had the tables turned on them as they travelled to Manitoba last February. The original intent was to let them experience Manitoba's Winter Carnival – Festival du Voyageur as part of their unique journey focused on the theme of human rights in Canada, but due to conflicting schedules, the Quebec group needed to travel to Manitoba a week earlier.

Fortunately, that was not a problem as the organizers at the high school in Neepawa had plenty of other things to show their Quebec friends, including a visit to a Hutterite colony, Filipino dancing, Ukrainian perogy-making, a Wheat Kings hockey game, and the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum. Following their rural Manitoba experiences, they had an unforgettable bus trip to Winnipeg where they saw first-hand how quickly weather conditions can change and how violent a winter storm in the prairies really could be.

The trip was well worth it, though, as they came away after two days of workshops at the Canadian Human Rights Museum with a wealth of



information and a new appreciation for our rights and freedoms. Nora Heschuk, organizer for Neepawa High School wrote that "Although the activities planned in both communities were well-received, the workshops and presentations at the Canadian Museum to Human Rights in Winnipeg were definitely a highlight. This was a first-time visit for all of the student participants, and the facilitators at the museum made it well worth the two days spent there." She added that she "very much appreciated the support from Great-West Life to help to offset the costs of our stay in Winnipeg."

In April, it was École du Sommet's turn to host, offering their guests plenty of opportunities to experience Quebec history and culture through a visit to a traditional sugar shack, playing traditional games and enjoying a meal with the Wendake First Nation, and tours of the historic sites of Quebec City. As part of their human rights exchange goals, all of the exchange participants were involved with a school fundraiser to support extra-curricular activities and programs.

"FOR MANY STUDENTS, THEY WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO AFFORD THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL TO ANOTHER PART OF CANADA LIKE

THIS, AND YOU MAY NEVER KNOW THE IMPACT THAT THIS MOMENT IN TIME HAS HAD ON THEM. I AM EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE HAD A STUDENT, 15 YEARS AFTER HER EXCHANGE TO QUEBEC, TAKE THE TIME TO SEND ME AN EMAIL ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT THE EXCHANGE HAD ON HER LIFE. THESE EXCHANGES/CONNECTIONS REALLY CAN BE LIFE-CHANGING."

— NORA HESCHUK, NEEPAWA HIGH SCHOOL, MB



EXPERIENCES CANADA 150&ME: a sesquicentennial opportunity!

Experiences Canada was honoured to be selected as a signature initiative for Canada 150. The Canada 150&Me project provides a unique opportunity for youth between the ages of 14 -19 to explore Canada in ways they never imagined!

Experiences Canada wanted to put youth at the centre of next year's monumental celebration. While a 150th birthday is naturally an opportunity to look back and see how far Canada has come – it is also a great milestone for marking where Canada is today and imagining what Canada can be for the next 150 years. That is where Canada 150&Me begins.

Youth across the country are invited to respond to the simple question: What is the greatest chal-

lenge or opportunity facing Canada for your generation? Emphasizing the importance of creativity, youth are encouraged to reply using whatever medium they choose – they can write an essay, produce a video, compose a song or perform a dance, or create a work of art. Based on the responses we receive, 150 youth will be selected amongst the entries received by February 1st 2017 and organized into four groups. Each group of 37 or 38 youth will then travel to either Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, or Vancouver throughout April and May where they will be twinned and live with 37 or 38 local youth also participating in the program. Together they will spend a week exploring their region's history and heritage, being mentored by inspirational leaders already active in their



"THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONFEDERATION ENCOURAGES ALL CANADIANS TO DREAM ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HAS IN STORE FOR US. WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OUR YOUTH DEVELOP TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL SO THEY CAN IN TURN INVEST IN THEIR COMMUNITY. LET'S WORK TOGETHER FOR THE CANADA OF TOMORROW!"

— MELANIE JOLY, MINISTER OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

field of interest, as well as gaining hands-on experience working with non-profit organizations already actively working in these areas.

Each regional event will culminate with these youth leading a day-long youth forum where 500 youth from the local and regional area will join them onsite, and potentially thousands more will participate through live-streaming to hear each other's ideas, become inspired through presentations by prominent Canadians, and work together on recommendations to take forward to a national forum in Ottawa the week before Canada Day.

At each regional event, a whole new group of 37 or 38 youth will be selected to travel to Ottawa to represent their regional forum. While in Ottawa, the 150 youth will not just come to watch the fireworks – they

will have a hands-on role in making Canada 150 happen. For example, they will spend a day as "honorary docents" at the National Art Gallery talking to visitors about the Canadian Art that resonates most with them.

Canada 150&Me is a major undertaking and involves multiple partnerships at the national and regional level. We are grateful for the support of Canadian Heritage who is contributing 40% of the cost for this project, and for the enthusiastic support from provincial governments, private sector funders, cultural institutions and non-profit agencies all of whom are central to our ability to deliver the exceptional experience we plan for our youth participants. A partial list of partners and contributors to the project can be found on the financial pages that follow.

Canada 150&Me is made possible because of the many program partners who are generously giving of their venues, programming, and expertise in youth engagement.



Canada



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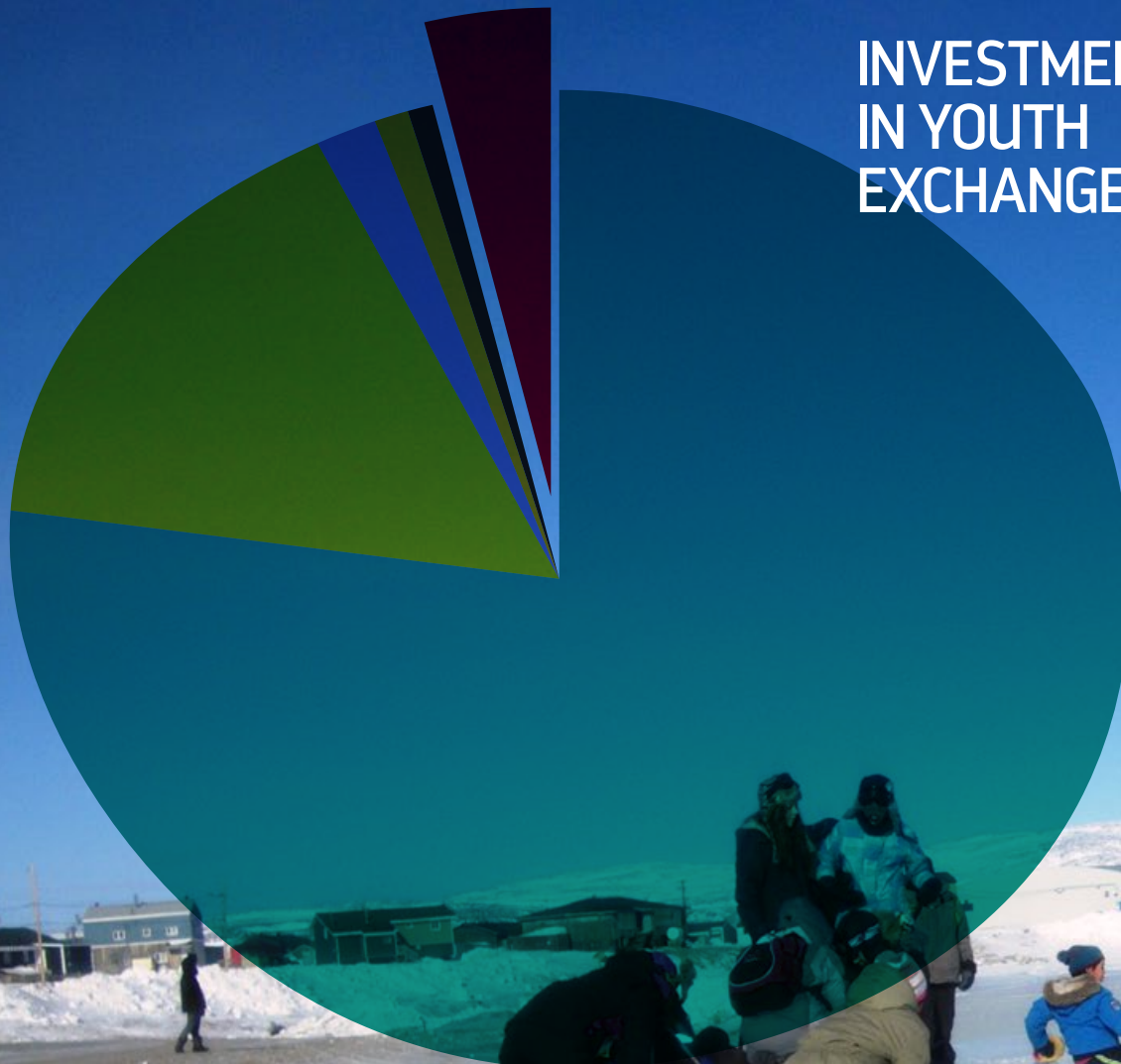
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INVESTMENT IN YOUTH EXCHANGES: \$5,341,612 IN 2015/16



77% YOUTH TRAVEL
\$4,140,311

15% PROGRAM DELIVERY NAT'L COORDINATION
\$787,103

2% MARKETING/PR
\$103,957

1% SPECIAL MEASURES
\$60,242

1% CORPORATE/OTHER
\$33,968

4% CANADA 150&ME
\$216,031

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:

Exchanges/General



AIR CANADA



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THE J.W. MCCONNELL
FAMILY FOUNDATION

LA FONDATION DE LA
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Canada 150



Canada

Major Gifts
John Kenny

Individual Donations

Kyle Hill

Robert Johnston

Barry McGowan

Deborah Morrison

Denise Nawata

Don Neeland

Greg Owen

Deb Solberg

Judith Sullivan-Corney

Arlene Van Riuten



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Audit and Finance Committee of Experiences Canada I am pleased to report the financial results for the 2015-16 fiscal year. This report is derived from Experiences Canada's audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2016, which are available on our website or upon request.

Experiences Canada completed the second year of a two-year funding agreement with the federal government's Exchanges Canada Program, and successfully confirmed a three-year renewal of our funding agreement commencing April 1, 2016 and a new federal partnership to produce Canada 150&Me, a

signature initiative of Canada 150. 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 were also pleased to establish new partnerships with Great-West Life, McConnell Foundation, and RBC Foundation to support growth in key priority areas such as community service programming and Indigenous exchanges.

In 2015-16 revenue was up by 14% at \$5.41 million compared to the previous year's revenue of \$4.76 million. Contributing factors to the increase in revenue is more

youth travelling, increases in our registration fees, additional funding from private sector sponsors, and our new project, Canada 150&Me. Net expenditures also increased from last year, from \$4.78 million to \$5.45 million, a 14% increase, 10% of this can be attributed to our core reciprocal exchange program, and 4% due to the Canada 150&Me project. \$60,242 was issued in special measures intended to provide additional financial assistance as needed to ensure equal access to the exchange program. Experiences Canada ended the year with a planned net deficit of \$25,469 which will be recovered from a special reserve established by the board for the Canada 150&Me project.

DENISE NAWATA



It has been my honour to lead this diverse group of youth from across Canada to assist Experiences Canada in realizing their vision. Each of the 12-member Youth Advisory Committee has shown keen interest and dedication to help shape the programs and community outreach offered by Experiences Canada over the previous year.

Pulling from our own personal experiences on youth exchanges, we have engaged with exchange groups nation-wide to gather feedback on Experiences Canada's offerings, conducted outreach to local Members of Parliament in the interest of maintaining government support, and conducted a review of exchange "twinning" practices to promote cohesion between exchange partners. Most importantly, committee members have demonstrated a key role in providing perspective and input on the upcoming Canada 150&Me project.

When I reflect on my own experience on an exchange to Quebec City, I am reminded why Experiences Canada is such a vital part of our country. It exposed me to a remarkably different culture, compared to my hometown in British Columbia, that encouraged me to continue French language studies and take pride in my Canadian heritage. On top of this, my entire exchange group created lasting friendships that continue to link us together.

I thank each of the volunteers, donors, Board Members and fellow Youth Advisory Committee members for your support in making Experiences Canada a success. We provide a valued and meaningful opportunity to support Canadian youth to learn about our country and culture.

NICOLAS OUELLETTE



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT,
YOUTH ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
2015-16**