



annual report 2017–18

EXPERIENCES CANADA IS SUPPORTED BY:



Canadia Heritage Patrimoine

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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:

Diana Clark Robert Johnson John Kenny Dean Leask Dave McInnes Deborah Morrison Greg Owen Starbank Judith Sullivan-Corney Arlene Van Ruiten

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AIR CANADA 🏵





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Judith Sullivan-Corney

HERE IS NO GREATER REWARD AS A BOARD member for Experiences Canada than to have the opportunity to speak with youth participants and group organizers about their adventures. Hearing about how their travels change their perspectives, about themselves, their communities and the places

they visit is truly inspirational.

We also learn from their experiences when we visit with groups while they are traveling, and when we invite both youth and organizer representatives to participate in our annual general meeting and program advisory meetings. This year was particularly important as Experiences Canada undertook a major review of its strategic plan and operations.

The details of youth travel have changed considerably in recent years, from managing increased safety and security concerns of parents, to ensuring that kids' inevitable use of social media adds to their visit rather than isolates them from it, and identifying ways to extend the impact of their experience once they have returned home. Experiences Canada has made a number of investments in its program infrastructure to help make it

easier for parents, organizers, and youth to have a richer experience. We have also taken their feedback and started to develop new and enhanced programming that best suits the needs and interests of Canadian teens today. Our new strategic direction offers many opportunities for new partnerships and new approaches, and we are excited about finding new ways of opening young people's minds through the programs and initiatives we undertake.



THE TRIP WE TOOK WAS INVALUABLE. WHAT I LEARNED JUST COULDN'T BE TAUGHT IN A CLASSROOM. IN SCHOOL, YOU'RE TAUGHT THROUGH A TEXTBOOK AND THIS CAN MAKE THINGS FEEL VERY DISTANT. YOU DON'T FEEL A CONNECTION. BUT WHEN YOU TRAVEL AND ACTUALLY SEE THE HISTORY AND THE WAY CANADA WORKS, IT IS SO MUCH EASIER AND MORE ENJOYABLE TO LEARN."

— Kaden Rath

One thing that is evergreen is the powerful impact our travel programs have in building personal confidence and skills, and fostering stronger connections for young Canadians to their country and their own community. In a world where they can see and talk to each other anytime in a virtual way, there is still no substitute for the way that personto-person contact transmits true knowledge and understanding for just how diverse our country is and how much we can learn and grow together.

JUDITH SULLIVAN-CORNEY

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT **AND CEO**

Deborah Morrison



EXPERIENCES CANADA STAFF (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): MINH HOA KOLIE: TOM KINGDON: ASHLEY REAUME: LIZZIE DEVINE; GINNY BYRNE; KARINE LÉVESQUE; ELLEN GLOUCHKOW; SANDRINE THABET // DEBORAH MORRISON: IAMIE MCCULLOUGH.

N THE YEAR FOLLOWING CANADA'S 150TH—

that brought with it a 50 per cent increase in Experiences Canada regular program load—it was to be expected that the organization would take some time to reflect on what it learned and review its options for future directions. Although it might have appeared to be a fairly quiet year. Experiences Canada has been very busy overseeing significant investments in its operations, including a new office location, a new website, and a new online registration and database system.

We undertook a series of stakeholder surveys with parents, organizers and youth participants that has informed most of the new features and additional resources available on the website. These will support families to be more involved in preparing for and participating in the exchanges.

We have also made a commitment to develop educational and planning resources that support our thematic exchanges. Last November, we released the first such resource. a classroom poster detailing Canada's Treaty and Land Claims territories. And later this vear, we plan to distribute a second map that

illustrates Canada's francophone communities a new Youth Ambassador program. Each group and cultural contributions.

Finally, we are also developing a series of pre-trip planning activities and classroom resources for cultural exchanges.



LISTENING TO AND APPRECIATING THE DIVERSE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WILL HELP US TURN THE VISION OF A MORE PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS PLANET INTO A REALITY."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

But the biggest shift has been in deepening vouth engagement within our own organization. Our new vision boldly states that we are driven to "open young people's minds." Certainly. every travel opportunity in and of itself forces our young travellers to see things differently but our intention is to ensure that their trip is only the beginning of a greater adventure.

First, to make sure youth are more fully engaged in their travel experience, we created will designate a youth participant to work with Experiences Canada to document their exchange on social media and contribute to our website and annual e-yearbook.

Secondly, we have created a more robust alumni program. The program offers select vouth funding to attend other national youth conferences and events we support; an information feed for scholarships, online surveys and consultations: as well as the opportunity to play a direct role with Experiences Canada as a member of the youth advisory committee.

As always, our aim is to engage, inspire and empower youth to be more confident in themselves, and in the power and potential of their contributions to their community and their country.

Sincerely.

DEBORAH MORRISON









YOUTH EXCHANGES REPORT

Jamie McCullough, Director of Programs

XPERIENCES CANADA'S RECIPROCAL

exchange program funds group travel so youth can discover a different part of Canada through experiential learning opportunities. Each year, Experiences Canada funds travel for approximately 5 000 youth and chaperones. Canadian youth between the ages of 12–17 travel to a part of Canada for one week, and in turn host their "twin" for another week later in the year. Each exchange experience is unique and offers youth an opportunity to travel to a different part of Canada, build confidence, skills and new relationships, and develop an appreciation of the diversity in geography, history, language and culture in our country.

Each exchange group is lead by an organizer. The organizer outlines the age and demographics for the youth involved, their learning objectives, and the desired time for travel. The learning objectives of each group are often diverse and may include a focus on learning about history, cultural exchange or regional diversity, strengthening second language skills, developing social responsibility through community engagement, or fostering connections and building skills through sport and arts.

During the 2017-18 program year, Experiences Canada funded travel for 4 038 youth. Of those 4 038 youth, 2 233 participated in a linguistic exchange. Participating in a linguistic exchange enhances their second language skills, while introducing them to a different

culture. When Collège de Champigny in Québec hosted youth from Jasper, AB, they indulged in traditional foods at a Cabane à sucre and visited the community of Wendake to learn about the Huron-Wendat First Nation. The groups also spent one day in Québec City, where they explored the Musée de civilisation; the Plains of Abraham and the Maison de la Découverte, and participated in a walking tour. While in Jasper, the youth explored the Maligne Canyon, visited Jasper Yellowhead Museum, enjoyed a ski day at Marmot Basin, and spent a full day at Palisades Center, a Jasper National Park Education Center.

Intercultural exchanges offer Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth the opportunity to develop relationships with each other in a safe and welcoming environment. Annie McLeod is an Experiences Canada alumni who participated in a youth exchange in 2010. She attended Wellington District High School in Fergus, ON and travelled to Piikani Nation in Brocket. AB.

This personal experience started to shape my future. Because of this trip, I knew I wanted to spend a life working for Indigenous people in some sort of beneficial way. When people ask me 'how did you get to where you are today?' I always answer that it started with this exchange trip. Beyond the love and open arms I felt from my host family and the entire community, the trip put me on the

path to learning more about concepts such as racism, privilege, and power. I started to really take interest in my own family history and issues that face Indigenous people in Canada. I started to enjoy trips to Moose Factory and attend cultural events. I started to focus my high school studies around Indigenous issues and slowly understand things like colonization. I then decided to attend Trent University to study politics and Indigenous studies where my eyes were opened even further. Again, I was able to study alongside people who were like me and people who had interest in the same things as me. I then moved to Thunder Bay for a course in Aboriginal Community Advocacy. And today (at age 24), my work focuses on First Nations' vouth well-being and outreach in some of the Treaty 9 communities.

In the pages that follow, we provide more stories from exchanges this past year. Participating in an exchange opens up young peoples' minds and encourages them to see the world more broadly. Experiential learning opportunities engage the youth in community, allowing them to better understand and appreciate differences, which results in more mutually respectful relationships and a stronger sense of self.



DISCOVERING CANADA'S REGIONAL DIVERSITY IN THE SNOW

ANY CANADIANS DREAD WINTER, BUT the youth involved with Cross Country Nova Scotia and Foothills Nordic Ski Club hotly anticipate it because it means the start of skiing season! Last year, they had even more to look forward to because it was also their first time on an Experiences Canada exchange. This exchange wasn't only about skiing. "The goal of the trip was to expose each other to subtle regional cultures," said Daniel Murray, the group organizer for Cross Country Nova Scotia.

Daniel and his team flew from Halifax, NS to Calgary, AB on November 28, 2017. They kicked off the week with a scavenger hunt in downtown Calgary. The participants had to locate iconic sites and landmarks—a great way to view the city for youth and break the ice to get to know one another. The following day, they drove up to Banff where they walked through the historical Banff town and learned the origins of the springs. They also spent half a day skiing on an old car route called Great Divide Trail—a route that leads skiers into British Columbia. Lastly, after visiting the famous Chateau Lake Louise, they raced

with athletes from all over the province in the popular Alberta Cup Race.

"The air was a bit thinner and drier, and the hills were much longer than in Nova Scotia. It was great to have to ski the same trails that hosted the 1988 Olympics and several World Cups," said Daniel Murray.

As a parent, April DeJong found this exchange to be a great experience. "I just loved the athlete we hosted and the parent volunteer. Both were really wowed by our mountains. Our parent volunteer had tears in her eyes as we were driving, and I realized then how much we all take [our surroundings] for granted. We met absolutely wonderful people on this exchange and we need to keep up the friendships. What an opportunity to share stories and experiences!"

On February 27, 2018, it was Cross Country Nova Scotia's turn to show Foothills Nordic Ski Club the wonderful city of Halifax and its surroundings. They kicked off the week at the Maritime Museum, where they had booked a guided visit to learn more about the Halifax Explosion and how Halifax is connected to the

Titanic. The following day, they were on the road to Cape Breton. The group took advantage of the ride to make stops at the tidal bore, the Museum of Industry and the Mik'maq Cultural Center. Of course, the rest of their week was spent cross-country skiing.



I HOPE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE GET A CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING AS WILD AND WONDERFUL AS THIS!"

- April Dejong, Willem's parent

Jackie Irwin, the group organizer from Calgary, liked the experience of skiing on different mountains. "It was really exciting to ski on different terrain in a new part of Canada. The kids ski a lot in Alberta and are very familiar with the trails, etc. It is always nice to explore new areas to ski."

Willem De Jong, a participant from Calgary, loved skiing in Cape Breton as well, and noticed that the snow in Nova Scotia is wetter than in Alberta.



N OCTOBER 6, 2017, THE RANKIN INLET
Minor Hockey team boarded their plane in
Nunavut for the six-hour flight to Toronto,
ON. But the journey to get to this point
was much longer.

A few months earlier, Lee Barter, the group organizer for the Mimico Canadiens Hockey Association was leading a used-equipment drive. "In 2017, our Mimico hockey community led a used-equipment drive for a fly-in Northern community. After delivering the equipment in the North, my co-coach and I realized that the youth who had collected and sorted the equipment in Toronto, did so without any real awareness about where the equipment was going or how their actions helped real people on other end. We began to search for ways to bridge the divide. I recalled my experience 25 years prior and found Experiences Canada online." A short while later, Lee reached out to Katie Bell, the group organizer for Rankin Inlet Minor Hockey, to start planning their exchange.

Although hockey was what brought the groups together, Katie and Lee wanted to

incorporate other cultural learning into the trip as well. While in Toronto, one of their first activities was grocery shopping. The goal of this outing was for the Northern youth to understand the variety of food available, as well as the differences in food prices. It's expensive to have food delivered to Nunavut, therefore the prices are much lower in Southern Canada. They spent Thanksgiving together, which was a great way for all the families to get to know each other, for the Northern youth to live Thanksgiving in another city, and for all to celebrate their new friendships.

Another bit of a cultural shock happened after a hockey game, when all of the exchange participants were walking back to the GO train. Katie Bell recounted that one of our players stopped and started to cry. Toronto unfortunately has thousands of people who live on the streets. For the Toronto youth, this wasn't news, however, for the Rankin Inlet youth, this was quite shocking.

As Katie Bell explained, "In Rankin, we do not have 'homeless' people. Usually when

someone ends up without a home, a family member takes them in, or some sort of shelter is provided for that community member. He was visibly upset because he couldn't understand why a man in a wheelchair was sitting on the corner of the street with a sign asking for help and money as he had no home." Preston (the young player from Rankin Inlet) tried to give the man all the money he had in his pockets.

Katie said it was an emotional moment for everyone. Growing up in Collingwood, ON, many of them had been to the city many times and passed by lots of homeless people. For Preston, this was a new experience and all he could think about was how he could help this man. "This was impactful," explained Katie, "because even though they were essentially strangers and had never met before, Preston considered him family. And you always help family in the North, it's part of your culture."

A few months later, it was Mimico's turn to travel. Their twins welcomed them to Rankin Inlet on April 27, 2018. In between hockey practices and hockey games, the

youth from Southern Canada learned about Rankin Inlet's Indigenous culture and spent a lot of time out on the land ice fishing, building igloos, and competing in dog sled and skidoo races. They even took some time to personally deliver 300 toys they had collected to children in the community.

Hannah Siksik, parent of Rankin Inlet participant Charlotte Siksik, had a few thoughts on the exchange. "Our hosting experience was very positive, the family we were matched with is amazing and we have become lifelong friends with them. Their daughter is now coming to visit us in Rankin Inlet after hearing what a great time her brother had while here with us. This was such an incredible journey for my daughter. She got to see what it is like to live away from home with people she didn't know and develop an appreciation for her home community and the opportunities she gets to experience."

Charlotte Siksik confirms she and her twin still keep in touch today. She loved her host family as they made her feel welcome and reminded her of her own family.



IMPROVING PROFICIENCY IN CANADA'S TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

INGUISTIC EXCHANGES ARE VERY POPULAR.

About half of Experiences Canada's reciprocal exchanges are language-focused. Dean Fagnan, one of the group organizers for R.F. Staples Secondary School, wanted to give his students an unforgettable experience. He wanted to take them to a francophone community, where they could practice their French. "Our students get an opportunity to be immersed into a completely French language environment. The experience shows them they are capable of communicating in French and possibly opens up more career and travel opportunities for them," explains Dean.

The exchange started on February 6, 2018, when Dean and his group traveled from Westlock, AB to Beauceville, QC. Kaitlyn Edwards, a participant from Westlock, was a little uncomfortable at first with the idea of staying in a stranger's home. This experience ended up challenging her to get out of her comfort zone and fully live the experience.

During their stay, the groups took a stroll in Vieux Québec, where they were charmed by its beauty and history. They learned how to make cheese at the Fromagerie la Roche D'Or, and spent a fun afternoon snow tubing. Of course, their trip wouldn't have been complete without lunch at a local Cabane à



sucre. "The most impactful activity is the time spent with the twins and their families. They get an opportunity to communicate in French and boost their confidence in their ability to use the French language. They also gain an understanding of a different culture and get a first-hand experience in the diversity of Canada," shares Dean.

As Kaitlyn observed, even though Canada is one country, not all Canadians share the same culture. "I found there's a difference in cultures, for example religion is still really important in Québec. Also Westlock is a rural, farming community and Beauceville is more urban. You see differences even in the vehicles people drive and the way people dress. Québec has smaller cars and people dress fancier."

Two months later, it was Kaitlyn's turn to host. She and her group had planned a week

full of activities that started with a day at West Edmonton Mall. They also visited a farm, where the students from Québec learned first-hand about an industry and culture that plays such a big role for Canada. Before heading up to Jasper, the Westlock families spent the weekend with their twins and showed them their favorite parts of town. In Jasper, the group hiked the Maligne Canyon and took in the beautiful views that Jasper has to offer. Before returning to Westlock, they also took some time to explore the breathtaking Athabasca Falls.

These activities were great bonding opportunities and made a lasting difference in the lives of the participants. "It was just amazing! As a group organizer, it was exciting to provide our students with this experience. The actual exchange was an amazing chance to watch the students use their language

skills, have fun, and experience something incredible," remembers Dean.

Kaitlyn was definitely happy she had this opportunity. "I would recommend this experience to everybody! I now have new friends in Québec, and better relationships with my classmates here in Westlock. I learned different things about my country including how knowing a different language can help me get to know new people, and experience different opportunities."

Leanne Huppertz, one of the parents, agreed. "We were very excited to be involved in such a fantastic program twice. Each of our girls took part in the exchange and they benefited immensely. They had a chance to use the French language skills they had been learning since kindergarten."

AND THE 2018 EXPERIENCES CANADA AWARD GOES TO...



AT WATSON. THE GROUP ORGANIZER FOR the Kingston, Ontario based Girl Guides of Canada 1st Nova Scotia 2017 Independent Trip Unit has been awarded the 2018 Experiences Canada Award. The award is presented annually as part of the Governor General's History Awards administered by Canada's History Society.

This is Pat's second Girl Guides of Canada exchange with Experiences Canada. This year, she and her team built a very interesting itinerary that focused on a greater understanding and appreciation for Canada's history, heritage and community. She also made sure to integrate part of the Guiding

promise "to take action for a better world" into their activities

The exchange kicked off in Ottawa where a local Guiding unit acted as tour guides as the Kingston group and their Nova Scotia guests visited the Parliament buildings, the Supreme Court, the War Museum, and the Royal Canadian Mint. Afterwards, they made their way to Kingston where the real Guiding adventures began! Before exploring Kingston, they settled into the Girl Guide camp (their base for the week) and spent a day Voyageur canoeing on the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site. The following day, they worked together to make a collection of fleece capes for children that were donated to a local women's shelter They continued to explore the history of Eastern Ontario and Kingston by visiting Fort Henry, the Kingston Penitentiary, Queen's University and Sir John A. Macdonald's home. Pat did a great job incorporating all the goals of the exchange! Thanks to her leadership, the girls had a great exchange experience while making a difference in the community.

Experiences Canada was also pleased to recognize Samara Worth, from École Forest Grove School, SK; Krista Campbell, from Horton High School, NS: and Pierre-Olivier Boily, from Collège de Lévis, QC as finalists for the award.

SHELTERED SUPERHEROES

Pat Watson

URING OUR EXPERIENCES CANADA exchange, our Girl Guides of Canada group decided to make some fleece capes to donate to the local women's were wearing.

little superheroes and we wanted them to have something that would be just for them to brighten their day. Decorated fleece capes their own and they would be something cuddly, as well as a toy to play with.

mother, and was thinking of her as she

fabrics. This year we had cows, hockey players, fish, superhero logos like Batman

creating these capes, and hope they will







\$5,204,780

75% YOUTH TRAVEL \$3,910,823 19% PROGRAM

DELIVERY NATIONAL COORDINATION

MARKETING/ **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

\$67,447

SPECIAL MEASURES

\$62,150

CORPORATE/ OTHER

\$167,241



150&ME

CANADA \$38,451







REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Denise Nawata



N BEHALF OF THE AUDIT AND FINANCE
Committee of Experiences Canada, I am pleased to report the financial results for the 2017-18 fiscal year. This report is derived from Experiences Canada's audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2018, which are available on our website or upon request.

Experiences Canada completed its second year of a three-year funding agreement with the federal government's Exchanges Canada Program. We wish to thank Minister Mélanie Joly for her strong support to the program during her tenure and staff at the Department of Canadian Heritage Exchanges Canada initiative for their steadfast support and commitment to our program. We look forward to working with Minister Pablo Rodriguez in continuing to advance the program in the years ahead. We would also like to thank our sponsors for this year's programs; Westjet, Air Canada, Great

West Life, RBC, and TD Bank Group.

In 2017-18, revenue was down by 21 per cent at \$517 million compared to the previous year's revenue of \$6.57 million. The primary factor for the decrease in revenue is the completion of the signature project Canada 150&Me.

Net expenditures also decreased from last year, from \$6.63 million to \$5.22 million, a 27 per cent decrease, directly correlated to the Canada 150&Me project. Special measures of \$62,150 were provided as additional financial assistance to ensure equal access to the exchange program. Experiences Canada ended the year with a net deficit of \$35,390.

Marata

DENISE NAWATA











MESSAGE FROM CATHERINE CADIGAN, YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESIDENT 2017-18

ERVING AS PRESIDENT OF THE EXPERIENCES Canada Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Having the opportunity to work with youth from across the country who are engaged and excited about supporting each other and the future of Experiences Canada has been nothing short of life changing. Although this was my first year as part of the YAC, I was given a warm welcome by both seasoned and incoming members. This fostered strong connections that were reflected in the work we do as a team. Since this was also the first time I was a part of a national team. I learned that physical houndaries do not limit the reach of an advisory committee—Experiences Canada has reached an amazing number of students and geographic locations. I experienced this firsthand when I took part in the Canada 150&Me project that connected thousands of youth across the nation to develop future policy development recommendations to government.

Although 150&Me is now over, the friendships made, as well as the impact it's had on our lives will continue on. The concept

of fostering a strong community of alumni who can provide more opportunities and inspire new projects became our committee's main focus. We created a dedicated alumni social media account so that they would feel strongly connected to the organization and their past experiences. We also created "teacher tips" to help educators prepare themselves and their students for their exchange, and visited groups after their exchange to receive feedback, promote the YAC and encourage students to connect with other alumni in the future. Although we have significantly strengthened our alumni network and met students from various backgrounds. we still have many ideas on how to promote Experiences Canada and engage as many vouth as possible. I am more than excited to take on my second year of the YAC with the addition of incredibly passionate and creative members. Together we can achieve incredible results and explore unlimited possibilities as youth with a passion for change.