



EXPERIENCES CANADA
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annual report 2014-15





WHAT'S IN A NAME

EXPERIENCES CANADA
IS EXCITED FOR YOU
TO SEE WHAT WE HAVE
IN STORE!

Experiences Canada – Effective November 27th 2015 this becomes our new name and identity.

For over 80 years, we have built our reputation as a trusted, cost-efficient, and inclusive charitable organization. Over that time we have been called many things: *Visites Interprovinciales*, the *Bilingual Exchange Secretariat*, *Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges (SEVEC)*, and now *Experiences Canada*. Each change of name has created a broader focus, and so it is true again with this one.

Inspired by the tracks of that noble Canadian animal – the Caribou – our new logo connects our people to the places we help them explore. What's more, our participants have many of the same characteristics: highly adaptable to winter or summer, travelling great distances throughout Canada, and always moving in large packs!

Still firmly rooted in our core mandate of offering youth exchanges – we seek to present even more unique experiences to Canadian citizens interested in furthering their knowledge about our history, culture and the issues we face as a nation.

In addition to expanding our roster of youth education experiences, this new identity and direction will create new opportunities, in real time and online, for teachers, parents, and community activists to play a bigger role in inspiring Canada's newest generation of leaders.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As we turn a new chapter with a new name and logo, the dedication and commitment to serving our mission to connect Canadian youth remains the same. This year, our core Youth Exchanges Program saw 4,124 youth experience another part of our country, with most being hosted in local family settings, where they can truly experience the diversity of our country.

As we approach 2017, SEVEC, now Experiences Canada, is developing two exciting initiatives that present real opportunities to create truly memorable events for Canadian youth on a national level. **Canada 150+Me** will involve thousands of young Canadians in a conversation about Canada's future and **Destination Ottawa 2017** will bring an unprecedented number of youth to the nation's capital to be part of our sesquicentennial celebrations. As we move forward, we want to live up to the promise of our bold new name, offering incredible experiences for young Canadians. As a first step in this direction we are pleased to partner with The

Canadian Museum for Human Rights and The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 to create two new themed exchange programs.

The entire team at Experiences Canada works together to continually adapt its programming to meet the changing priorities and demands of our youth in relation to Canadian history, geography, languages, cultures, and diversity through reciprocal exchanges. Both the Teacher Advisory Council and the Youth Advisory Committee are an invaluable resource to ensure that we keep pace with the needs and interests of today's young Canadian citizens.

This is my last report as board chair, and I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement with this organization over the past five years. I wish to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors, along with the staff for making my experience such a memorable one!



DON NEELAND



EXPERIENCES CANADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014-15
FRONT: KYLE HILL, JUDITH SULLIVAN-CORNEY, DON NEELAND, ARLENE VAN RIJTEN
BACK: DEB SOLBERG, MAXIME AUDET, DENISE NAWATA, BARRY MCGOWAN, CHRISTIE BROWN
ABSENT: GREG OWEN, ROB JOHNSTON

OUR NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):
 JAMIE MCCULLOUGH (DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS)
 HEATHER DALY (DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION),
 DEBORAH MORRISON (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)
 TOM KINGDON (MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR),
 ANNE SMITH (PROGRAM COORDINATOR)
 SANDRINE THABET (SENIOR PROGRAM COORDINATOR)
 ASHLEY MONTGOMERY (COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR)
 GINNY BYRNE (FINANCE ASSISTANT)



THIS YEAR,
 266 INDIGENOUS
 YOUTH
 PARTICIPATED IN
 AN EXPERIENCES
 CANADA EXCHANGE
 (REPRESENTING 6%
 OF ALL YOUTH).



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are always pleased to receive letters and feedback from youth that have participated in an exchange experience. Many times they tell us that their trip was “life-changing” or “the trip-of-a-lifetime” which seem like such grand claims for someone between the ages of 12 and 17. But as I’ve visited many youth on exchange over the past year, I have come to see what a difference this program can make. On every journey kids experience new things: whether it is a type of food, a conversation in another

“A MIND THAT IS STRETCHED BY A NEW EXPERIENCE CAN NEVER GO BACK TO ITS OLD DIMENSIONS.”
— OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES JR.

language, a sport, or something even simpler like touching a tree or making a new friend laugh. For two weeks, we take them away from their routines, and open up a world of possibilities. For many, it truly does change how they view their country, their own community and invariably, how they view themselves. For me, the most amazing thing is that as their worlds grow larger, the connections they make to the people and places they visit brings them closer together as Canadians.

Recognizing what powerful bonds new, shared experiences can form, our goal for the past year has been to create new programming that offers even more opportunities to bring youth together. In some cases, we’ve reached out to new partners like the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in order to enrich the exchange experience by exploring important themes such as human rights and diversity of our past and present. In other cases, we are developing new initiatives of our own, such as Canada 150+Me that will encour-

age individual young people to take a leadership role in marking Canada’s sesquicentennial year. We are also working with groups like Winnipeg Harvest, Habitat for Humanity, the YMCA and Parks Canada to integrate meaningful community service activities as part of their exchange experience.

But none of our programming would be possible without the thousands of teachers, group leaders, parents, and community organizations who volunteer their time and talents each year to support our youth by facilitating these “life-changing” experiences. We sincerely appreciate their continued commitment and dedication.

The year ahead is going to be an exciting and challenging one. We not only have a new name to live up to, but brand new experiences to create as well. We hope we can continue to count on your support!

Sincerely,

DEBORAH MORRISON



“The intent was for students to develop cultural awareness and cultural appreciation of the Swan Valley’s uniqueness and character. We also wanted to break down social barriers and show our guests that life in small town Manitoba is really cool.”

— Jacquie Mydynski-Arp
 History Award recipient

Presented at Rideau Hall, October 16, 2015



“I am deeply grateful to be surrounded and mentored by super colleagues and brilliant youth, who regularly challenge my thinking, who open my mind and my perspective, who make me want to work harder and be a better person and artist. [I have] lots of appreciation for the opportunities the SEVEC program provides to youth, and LOTS of appreciation for the Coastal Sound Music board of directors, artistic team and choir managers for the passion and commitment they have for building community and transforming lives through choral music.”

— Diana Clark

Ambassador Award recipient

Presented at the Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam BC, June 7, 2015



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

DENISE NAWATA

On behalf of the Audit and Finance Committee I am pleased to report on the financial results for the 2014-15 fiscal year. This report is derived from the audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2015, available on our website or upon request.

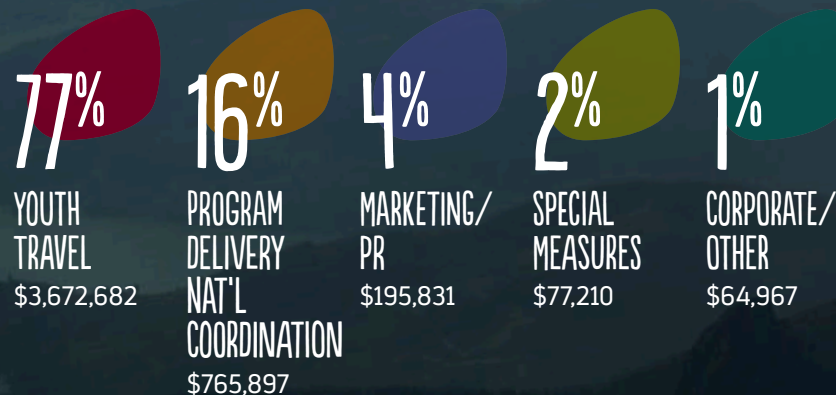
We completed the first year of a two year funding agreement with the federal government's Exchanges Canada Program. We wish to thank the Minister and staff at the Department of Canadian Heritage for the assistance they provided to make our program possible this year.

In 2014-15 we had a net deficit of \$6,668. Revenues were slightly down by 3% at \$4.76 million versus \$4.90 last year. A contributing factor is timing of youth travel as fewer groups travelled this summer, deferring their trips to the fall/winter period. Net expenditures remained steady from last year, down slightly from \$4.83 to \$4.77 million. \$77,210 in special measures was issued to provide financial assistance to exchange participants. We made additional investments in a revitalization of our brand which slightly increased research, design and marketing costs.

DENISE NAWATA



INVESTMENT IN YOUTH EXCHANGES: \$4,776,587 IN 2014/15



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 O. Kenny
Robert Johnston
Deborah Morrison
Christine de Prat
Deb Solberg



Thank you for your support!

NEW

name
partnerships
experiences



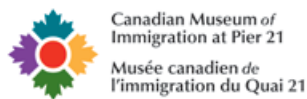


canada 150+me: what is canada's greatest challenge or opportunity of your generation?

This is an important question we will be asking thousands of youth participants between the ages of 14–18 as part of our upcoming Canada 150+Me project. The youth-led project will leverage our existing youth exchange networks to create a unique multi-destination youth exchange and series of forums for young Canadians that will travel coast-to-coast over a two-month period. Canada 150+Me has been submitted as a signature initiative under the Canada 150 fund managed by the Department of Canadian Heritage. If approved, over 12 weeks, 11 Regional forums propose

to bring together thousands of like-minded youth to talk about the issues they care about most in different communities all across Canada. Over a full week they will honour the past through historical and cultural visits; engage with the present through community service activities; as well as imagine their future. From these regional events, a further 151 outstanding youth will be selected to travel to Ottawa for one week to present their collective findings to a National Forum of government and business leaders AND to participate as community volunteers in Ottawa 2017 celebrations. We have a proven track record of youth projects of this scale and scope and are looking forward to launching this project and helping to support today's youth to become the strong leaders and global citizens we need. Visit our website for updates on the roll out of this exciting new project.

exploring what it means to become canadian



Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21
Musée canadien de l'immigration du Quai 21

To enhance young people's understanding of the experiences of immigrants and their arrival in Canada, we are proud to facilitate a new thematic youth exchange that focuses on immigration and diversity. Youth participants will examine ideas of citizenship and diversity issues such as customs and beliefs, morals and ethics, refugee and immigration laws, resettlement and more. Together, youth groups will have the opportunity to discover the Museum's most famous exhibition dedicated to the years when Pier 21

was open as an immigration facility between 1928 and 1971. In this exchange, youth will work together on an action-plan to implement during the second half of their exchange. Based on where they will be traveling, students will brainstorm ways to carry on and explore this dialogue such as organizing and celebrating diversity through a school or community arts and culture event, taking cooking classes and learning about different cuisines, volunteering at an immigrant resettlement centre or teaching English or French to young newcomers.

setting a new course for human rights



CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
MUSÉE CANADIEN POUR LES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

In partnership with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights,

participating groups will exchange ideas of human rights issues that concern them and their community. Before meeting face-to-face, virtual discussions will take place covering themes such as bullying, racism, gender identity, surveillance and freedom of speech, allowing youth to share their thoughts on these subjects. The first leg of the journey will begin in Winnipeg at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. While in Winnipeg, participants will also visit the Festival du Voyageur in Saint-Boniface, Winnipeg's French quarter and host to the largest winter festival in Western Canada. Both groups will participate in a Winnipeg General Strike tour and a traditional sweat lodge ceremony developing their knowledge and understanding of human rights. Together, youth participants will work on

ACCORDING TO OUR YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE TOP 3 MOST INTERESTING THEMATIC EXCHANGES ARE 'IMMIGRATION & CITIZENSHIP,' 'SPORTS,' AND 'HUMAN RIGHTS.'

ACCORDING TO OUR YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THEIR PREFERRED/MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM IS INSTAGRAM.

an action-plan to implement during the second half of their exchange. Based on where they will be traveling, students will brainstorm ways to carry on and explore this dialogue. Examples include: organizing a school or community event such as an anti-bullying rally or volunteering at a local food bank or charity. In the months that pass between travel-periods, the groups will continue to share ideas online, planning their activities and discussing what they've learned while blogging or vlogging their most memorable moments.

youth exchanges

In the program year 2014-15, we funded travel for 169 groups representing 4,124 youth from across Canada. Over half of the groups participated in a bilingual exchange, while the remaining groups participated in thematic exchanges including:

- Leadership
- Cultural enrichment & traditions
- Sports
- Music
- Indigenous communities
- & more!

In addition to their exchange theme, all groups included Canadian culture, history and heritage in their hosting plans. Groups visited museums, farms, participated in interactive guided tours and activities such as attending Aboriginal Pow-Wows, visiting UNESCO World heritage sites and practicing their second language. As youth are billeted in their twin community, they are immersed in a different culture and often exposed to different cuisines, languages and traditions; allowing them to better appreciate the similarities as well as embrace the differences between each other's communities. The youth group's communities are typically quite hands-on in all aspects of the exchange; often assisting the lead group organizer with their itinerary; allowing youth participants to feel a great sense of pride when hosting in their community and showing-off their hometown to their twin.

Promoting Canadian history and heritage is one of the main objectives of our exchanges. Group organizers work diligently to include key activities that will provide youth with the opportunity to develop an appreciation of



Canada's history and heritage. One exchange in particular that strongly promoted our national history and heritage was between a group of Girl Guides from Saskatchewan along with their twins from Newfoundland. While visiting Newfoundland, the groups hiked trails near Fishing Point Park and Lighthouse, visited Raleigh Provincial Park as well as Burnt Cape Ecological reserve. Throughout their week they developed an appreciation for the geography of the land by visiting local heritage sites.

This year 2,544 youth participated in a bilingual exchange, representing 62% of all exchanges. Many groups travelling to Québec wish to immerse themselves in the French Canadian culture by engaging with their twin, host family and host community as much as possible. École Jésus-Marie de Beauceville from Québec prepared an exemplary itinerary of activities for Neepawa Area Collegiate from Manitoba that promoted both linguistic and cultural components. While in Québec, the groups visited the famous Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré shrine, walked alongside the Chute-Montmorency falls, visited old Québec as well as the Musée de la Civilisation. The itinerary included activities that were

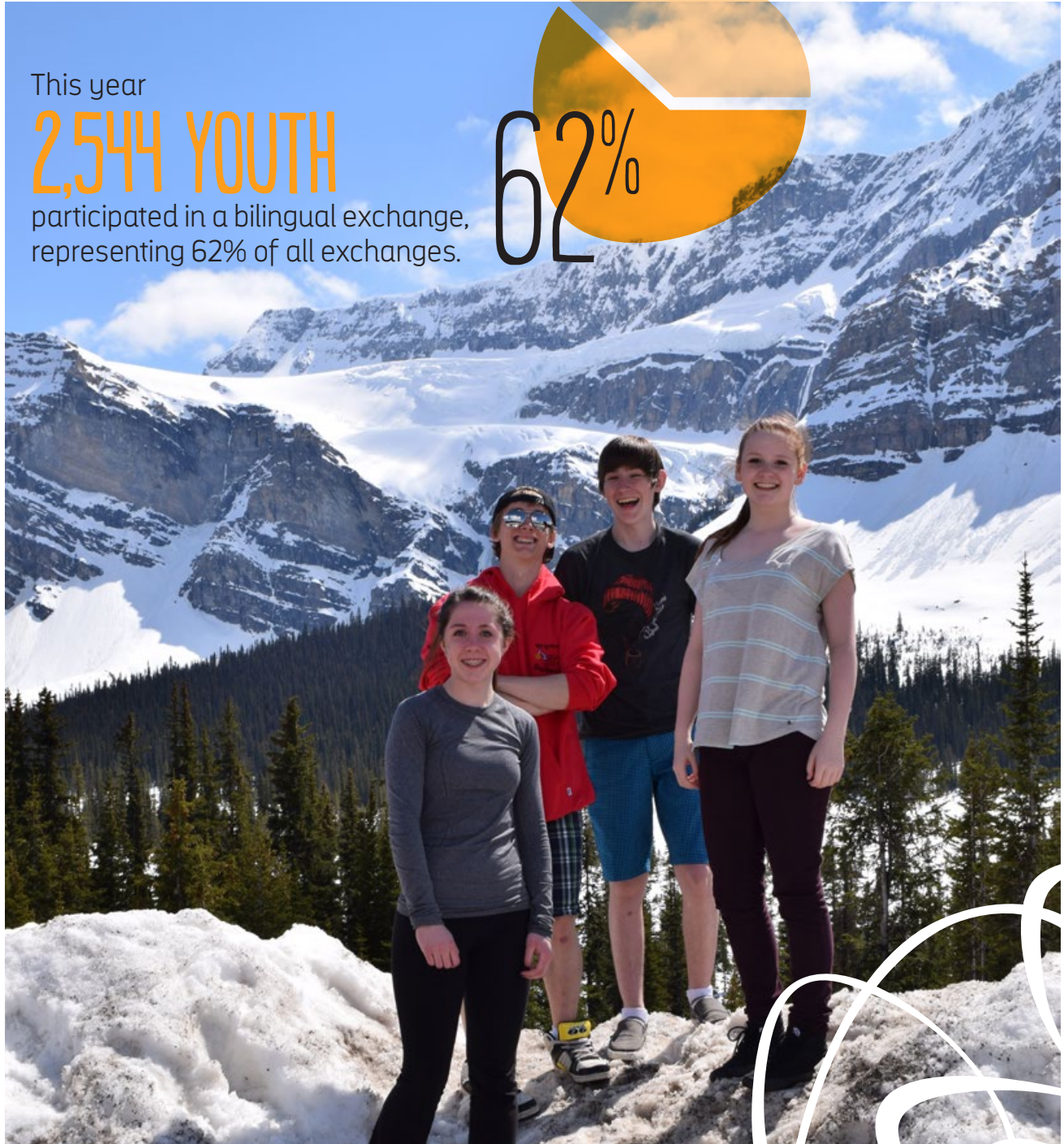
THIS YEAR, 6% OF OUR PARTICIPANTS WERE INDIGENOUS YOUTH.



cultural, historical and linguistic and provided the young Manitobans with an enhanced vision of Québec and the francophone culture.

This year 266 indigenous youth participated in an Experiences Canada exchange. Inuksuk High School from Iqaluit shared their traditional Inuit language, social practices and traditions with their twins from Morell Regional High School from Prince Edward Island. During their week in Iqaluit the youth participated in drum dancing, drum building, throat singing and toured the legislative buildings of the area. They also had the opportunity to go dog sledding, ice fishing, and igloo building!

Exchanges are mutually beneficial; providing all youth with a sense of belonging, pride and legacy. 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.



This year
2,544 YOUTH
participated in a bilingual exchange,
representing 62% of all exchanges.

62%



WINTER SPORTS BUILD COMMUNITY SPIRIT

THIS YEAR,
130 COMMUNITIES
HAVE BEEN INVOLVED
IN EXPERIENCES
CANADA EXCHANGES.

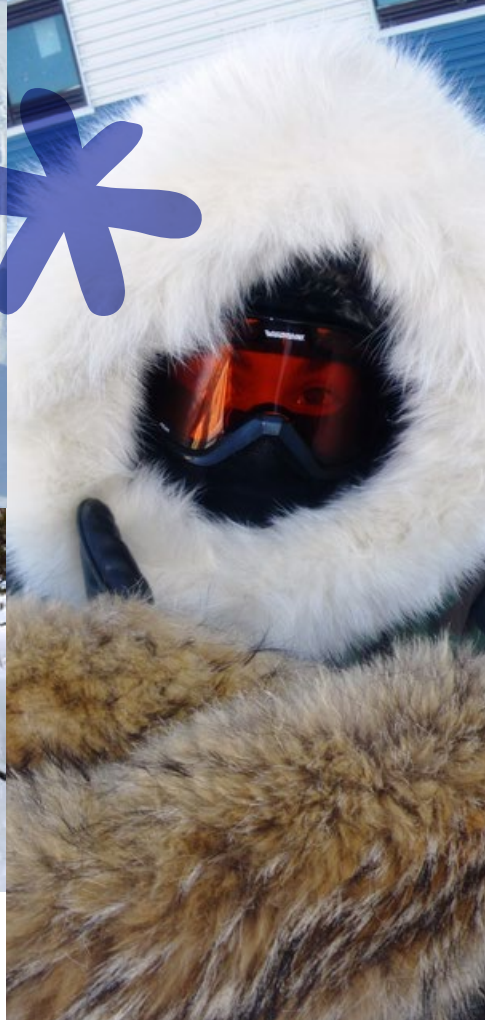
When students from Mother Teresa High School learned that a new rink had recently been constructed in their twinned community of Igloolik, Nunavut they decided to bring skates and hockey equipment with them to help stock the new facility.

The Ottawa students saw this as a great opportunity to give back to their host community while connecting with their exchange partners through the love of Canada's national winter sport. "It was decided that we would collect used skates in good

condition because, as an environmentally aware school, it made sense and as a sharing catholic community, it is what we do," explained group organizer Kevin Nearing.

Last winter, the students worked hard to collect donated ice skates to reach their goal of 50 pairs by reaching out to local sporting goods stores such as Play It Again Sports, who generously donated 25 pairs of used skates. Their local Canadian Tire store also donated hockey bags and shoulder pads for the students to bring to Igloolik. To top it all

off, Canadian North Airlines, our travel partner for the exchange generously offered to transport the skates and equipment to Nunavut free of charge to support the student's efforts. The students from Igloolik also enjoyed their time in the nation's capital while on the second leg of their exchange. Blandina Iqqaqsaq from Ataguttaaluk High School in Nunavut enjoyed her visit to the Ottawa mayor's office and Parliament Hill. "I learned what they do and how things work down there. My perspective on my life and the world has changed forever for the better."



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Teacher Advisory Council (TAC) provides group organizers with an opportunity to provide valuable feedback from their first-hand exchange experiences. Their combined expertise helps to enhance the overall experience for our participants. Initiated in 2012, the Teacher Advisory Council continues to run effectively.

The Council is made up of ten members, including: Barry McGowan (QC), Charlene Dobie (BC), Roy Mills (AB), Korrie Hopper (MB), Chuck Daly (ON), Jennifer Martinez (ON), Pat Watson (ON), Carl Hardy (QC), Maxime Audet (NS), and Anne Slauenwhite (NS).

Topics discussed at meetings over the past year included:

- Group organizer and parent selection and orientation
- Webinars, online training and pod casts
- Online parent registration
- Fundraising
- Police and vulnerable sector checks
- On site visits
- Lesson plans and correlating curriculum to exchange hosting plans

We value the support of each member of the Teacher Advisory Council. We look forward to their input as we implement new exciting initiatives in the year ahead; incorporating how-to videos, webinars and mentorships to support more organizers in their efforts to create successful exchanges.

Barry McGowan

BARRY MCGOWAN



VOICES UNITED:

choirs perform at national arts centre for Canada Day



The Ottawa Children's Choir and the Inuksuk Drum Dancers from Iqaluit made the most of their exchange this past year. They celebrated musical artistry, cultural diversity, youth leadership and community-building all at once! The Ottawa Children's Choir traveled to Iqaluit in May and collaborated with the Inuksuk Drum Dancers presenting music education workshops for students in all schools in Iqaluit as well as the neighbouring community of Apex. The Inuksuk Drum Dancers then traveled to Ottawa where they performed a new composition written by both choirs and inspired by their exchange.

They performed it during the national Unisoning choral festival in Ottawa on Canada Day.

Both youth groups had the opportunity to spend time immersed in each other's communities, learning about the daily lives of people in Iqaluit and Ottawa. This thematic exchange allowed these exceptional youth to connect with one another through their mutual love of music. Exchange highlights for the students included singing Frobisher Bay on the banks of the Bay itself; performing for the Governor General of Canada; and watching the Canada Day fireworks on Parliament Hill.

HERITAGE SITES: music to choir groups' ears



The Coastal Sound Music Academy from BC and the Annapolis Valley Honour from Nova Scotia participated in a thoughtfully historic and musical exchange last spring.

When the Annapolis Valley Honour Choir arrived in BC they performed with one another and local school choirs in Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and Nanaimo; as well as at the top of the Squamish Sea to Sky Gondola! They also had the opportunity to visit places of cultural, artistic, historical and geographical significance such as the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden, the Vancouver Maritime Museum and Granville Island. In mid-May, Coastal Sound Children's Choir then traveled to the Annapolis Valley to learn first-hand, about the

history of the area. Throughout the exchange, the choirs focused on the theme "where we live" in Canada through the lens of choral music. The young singers learned not only about each other, but also their communities and their roots. The homestay experience was also positive for the choir groups as they realized how much they had in common despite being from another part of Canada.

This exchange really celebrated Canadian history and heritage through song:

- By singing *The Blue Nose* song while standing beside the same ship in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia
- And singing Acadian music at the French Cross on the UNESCO world heritage site Grand Pré.

HISTORY ON THE RAILS

Twenty-one students from Polyvalente Hyacinthe Delorme in St-Hyacinthe, Québec traveled to Kamloops BC visiting an historic locomotive from 1912 while on their exchange. Jordan Popadynetz, a grade 12 student from Norkam Secondary School, along with the Kamloops Heritage Railway Society facilitated an interactive tour of the railway station. The students learned about the history of the Canadian railway, the restoration of the 2141 steam locomotive and even got to ride on a pumper car! "It's great to be able to share with students all the way from Québec what the trains would have been like to get from A to B...from BC to Québec for instance in the hay day it would have been this train," explained Jordan. "I hope the Québec students take away from this, really about how Canada was built; the railway played such an important role of building Canada and transporting goods."

The other half of this exchange included visits to Montreal's Grévin Museum, Ottawa's Parliament hill and the Musée de la Civilisation in Gatineau Québec. "It has been the best experience that I have ever been involved in," said a student from Norkam Secondary School. "I've made so many new friends, and I think they will be lifelong friends that I will stay in touch with for the rest of my life." The reciprocal homestay aspect of this particular exchange really allowed the youth to practice and perfect their second language skills and realize how diverse Canada is, from one corner to the next.



PEI WELCOMES YOUTH OF CONFEDERATION:

six groups unite on the island

In May 2015, 120 youth representing four Canadian provinces converged at Terry Fox Centre in Cornwall PEI for a BBQ, meet and greet and some group photos! This gathering was the largest recorded congregation of exchange participants in our organization's history. While on the east coast, the students visited historic locations such as Citadel Hill and toured an authentic island fishing village in which they learned the significance of PEI's fishing industry and history.

The three PEI groups hosting these exchanges had opportunities to visit Alberta, Nunavut and Quebec earlier in the year.





SHARING THEIR LOVE OF MUSIC

As part of the first leg of their exchange 30 young musicians from Carleton Place High School and 21 from Alberta's Hillside High school performed a morning concert at Carleton Place Terrace senior's residence in Ontario. The groups' goals for the exchange included developing a greater understanding and appreciation of Canada's diverse history and culture, developing their artistic skills, and fostering a strong sense of Canadian citizenship. These goals were undoubtedly achieved by sharing their mutual love for music with the elders in their communities. Cynthia Yuschyshyn, music teacher and group organizer for Carleton Place High School participated in an

exchange of her own back in 1979, and had many great memories from her experience. "I am happy to take up the torch and give students a chance to connect, make music, and forge friendships that will hopefully last a lifetime. My students are excited about our upcoming exchange and look forward to meeting new friends." While in Alberta, the groups traveled to Sturgeon Lake in which they participated in Aboriginal cultural activities hosted by Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation School. The 3 school groups had the opportunity to exchange musical performances and traditions and even received a tribal dance demonstration...carrying their musical theme throughout both legs of their exchange.

MESSAGE FROM SAM MACPHAIL, YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESIDENT 2014-15



This is one of the few youth-oriented programs that has the power to change someone's life forever. For example, on my exchange, even after only spending two weeks with our billet "twin" and family, some of my peers on the exchange began bawling their eyes out because they wouldn't be seeing each other for possibly a very long time. There are simply no programs that create these types of friendships.

When I was introduced to the idea of joining the Youth Advisory Committee by my exchange director, I instantly hopped on the opportunity and haven't looked back since! Not only do I get to improve the experience of exchanges but I get to meet numerous new people from different backgrounds. We, as a committee, put countless hours into our work to improve exchanges with multiple conference calls followed by our Annual General Meeting workshop weekend in Ottawa each November.

Each year, so many new experiences are gained that ultimately help all of the committee with their future endeavours

in the "real" world. I can attest to having completely changed as a person since joining over two years ago. I was once shy, but have since delivered numerous speeches to crowds of over a thousand people, something that I would have never imagined without the YAC.

My role as president keeps me on my toes to say the least. I am held accountable for many tasks and to be in a way, the face of the YAC. As president, I must be confident in my other committee members as it is a team effort, and without the rest of my team, I would never be able to accomplish as much. This role has allowed me to mature as a leader and has given me opportunities I never would have been exposed to and I am forever grateful. I owe the vast majority of my success so far in my young life to this organization.

SAM MACPHAIL

