We care about our community.

At WestJet, we’re always looking for ways to enrich the lives of everyone in our world. We’re passionate about giving back in the communities where we live and work.

As a proud partner of Experiences Canada, we’re committed to helping youth explore our country, connect with others across Canada and start shaping the future of tomorrow.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage.

We would also like to thank our national sponsors and program partners:
Experiences Canada student exchanges and forums develop community leaders and informed citizens of tomorrow.

Experiences Canada is a national registered charity that helps young Canadians to explore their country in ways they may never have imagined through reciprocal exchanges, forums, conferences and other opportunities to travel and connect with one another.

Every year, participating schools and youth organizations send 10-30 youth (ages 12-17) on exchange somewhere in Canada. On average, 4,500 youth and their chaperones per year are chosen, representing just under 200 groups. That’s hundreds of thousands of young Canadians who have benefited from a student exchange experience since we began over 80 years ago.

WE BELIEVE..

..In the capabilities and potential of youth.
..Learning is an adventure.
..Young Canadians need to know their own country’s diverse histories, cultures and challenges first to better understand the world.
..The most memorable experiences are shared experiences.
..Exposure to new places and ideas will enable youth to see their world differently.
..Every youth deserves the opportunity to participate.
..Every youth deserves to be respected and included.
..The safety and security of youth is paramount.
..Everyone learns differently.

Experiences Canada

ABOUT EXPERIENCES CANADA
As another program year comes to an end, and we have this opportunity to travel our country through the photos and stories of our youth participants, I am reminded of the first time I went on a trip without my family. I was 16 and joined the militia as a summer job and headed to Camp Aldershot in Annapolis Valley NS a couple of hours from my home. I lived in a compound with 30 people I had never met before, females and males, immersed in an extremely intensive week-long training program assembling rifles, building lean-to’s, camouflaging-trucks, radio equipment and of course ourselves, crawling fully geared on our bellies and elbows... Besides getting my tooth shot off by a spent casing during target practice, I have many other memories I’ve never forgotten.

This experience opened my mind to many things, including people from different cultures, experiences and backgrounds from myself. It gave me life-long friends, it gave me confidence in my abilities and those of others, it developed my interest in our military, and it helped me stretch in ways that I may never have done otherwise. Later in my career, as Deputy Minister responsible for intergovernmental, Indigenous and military relations, I drew upon that experiential learning as it had provided me with a deeper respect and understanding for the complexities they faced.

Today, technology makes it a lot easier to build communities and cultivate connections online, but nothing can replace face-to-face contact, or as kids are fond of saying, “IRL.”

My story isn’t very different than those of the thousands of youth who have participated in our reciprocal exchanges this past year. While our exchanges and forums don’t include loaded guns and ammunition, we nonetheless recognize our responsibility to ensure that these first time adventures are always positive ones. In addition to the safety and security measures we have in place, we also provide planning resources on our website for both parents hosting youth and teachers and group organizers leading the excursion.

This past year, we also implemented a new evaluation procedure in partnership with the Student’s Commission of Canada. Not only will we be able to measure the many ways in which these experiences immediately impact our participants, but we will be encouraging parents to give permission for the youth to opt into a multi-year survey that will benchmark that impact over time, and relative to other similar youth programs. This, in addition to the continuous feedback we get from group organizers, parents and youth via email helps us to continue serving the needs of today’s youth to the best of our ability.

We deeply appreciate the support of our funding partners, including Canadian Heritage, the RBC Foundation, Canada Life, and Westjet; as well as the hundreds of volunteer group organizers who devote so much of their personal time and effort to facilitating these adventures for the youth in the their schools and communities. Together we help thousands of young Canadians explore a part of their country they otherwise might never see, and in so doing, we hope, help them feel more connected to it as they take their first steps in exploring a wider world with more confidence and curiosity.

Judith Sullivan-Corney
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

When I was in grade 5, I came home from school with a permission slip that I was certain my mother would never sign, but to my delight she agreed. With a stroke of a pen, she launched me on an amazing journey to Okazaki, Japan. I still remember every detail of that trip – the moments that I felt thrilled and worldly, and the moments that I felt homesick, exhausted, or confused. Most of all I remember the people I met, the kids my age as well as their warm and welcoming families. Back then we didn’t have the advantages of today’s communications, but we kept in touch for many years, right through high school until one too many moves resulted in our falling out of touch.

I know now that you don’t have to travel across the world to have that experience. There is so much diversity right here in our own country, and I am proud to support youth having these first-time-alone travel experiences right here at home, be it through group exchange or individual travel opportunities.

We were pleased to bring back our Youth Leadership Forums this year, involving a group of 75 youth participants and youth leaders in a week-long program to learn more about diversity and inclusion – a key priority identified by the youth involved in our Canada 150&Me program. This event was the first in a planned series of annual Leadership Forums that will tackle a different theme each year. In June 2020, we head to Winnipeg with a dynamic program focused on building knowledge and leadership in the area of advancing Reconciliation, and plans are already underway for a 2021 Youth Leadership Forum on the Environment.

We have also made a commitment to developing educational and planning resources to support our group organizers. The first such resource, a classroom poster detailing Canada’s Treaty and Land Claims territories, was released last November. We will be supplementing our resources related to Indigenous history and Reconciliation with a series of pre-trip planning activities and classroom resources to aid those planning cultural exchanges, and launching a special group organizers’ training weekend in Winnipeg next June.

While there is a steady growing interest in exploring the diversity of Canada’s Indigenous cultures and communities, still fully half of the exchanges we support are between French and English communities seeking opportunities to further their second language education. This was the founding purpose of our organization over 84 year ago, and remains a very important part of what we do. To commemorate Canada’s official languages, we have published a new classroom resource map illustrating the history and cultural contributions of Canada’s minority language communities. The new wall-sized map will be distributed to all group organizers involved in a linguistic exchange in the coming year, with additional copies available for purchase through our website.

Our goal every year is to offer more opportunities for more youth to travel to parts of the country they otherwise might never see. In so doing, we hope after their experience they see their own country differently – in some ways, we hope their perspective of Canada is broader, but at the same time, we also hope they see it as a little smaller than they imagined.

Deborah Morrison
Experiences Canada is widely recognized as Canada’s leading service provider for youth exchanges. Launched in 1936 and previously known as SEVEC, Experiences Canada arranges travel, accommodation and programming for an estimated 4,000 young Canadians who participate in reciprocal exchanges and youth events annually to better explore their country’s rich history, culture, and geography.

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On behalf of the Audit and Finance Committee of Experiences Canada I am pleased to report the financial results for the 2018-19 fiscal year. This report is derived from Experiences Canada’s audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2019, which are available on our website or upon request.

Experiences Canada completed its final year of a three-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 Exchanges Canada for their steadfast support and commitment to our program and are pleased that a new three-year agreement for the 2019-2022 period has been renewed.

In 2018-19 revenue was up by 12% at $5.80 million compared to the previous year’s revenue of $5.18 million. Net expenditures also increased by 12% from last year, from $5.22 million to $5.84 million. Special measures funding of $95,650 was provided as additional financial assistance to ensure equal access to the exchange program.

Experiences Canada’s Youth Leadership Forum on Diversity and Inclusion contributed to the increase in revenues and expenses. Experiences Canada invested $56,725 from its own reserves towards the project. Overall, Experiences Canada ended the year with a net deficit of $38,777.

We would like to thank our individual contributors and funding partners RBC, Canada Life, Uniglobe, Westjet and Air Canada, for their generous support of this year’s programs.

Denise Nawata
INVESTMENT IN YOUTH EXCHANGES:

$5,843,661 in 2018/19

- **76%** Youth Travel
  - $4,472,330

- **2%** Marketing/PR
  - $124,800

- **13%** Program Delivery Nat’l Coordination
  - $750,031

- **7%** Corporate/Other
  - $400,850

- **2%** Special Measures
  - $95,650
I'm Spencer Bubis, and I have been serving on Experiences Canada’s Youth Advisory Committee for a unique and memorable three years! I have also had the honour this past year of serving as the committee’s President.

I first participated in Experiences Canada’s programming through the Canada 150&Me National Youth Forum. Since that first experience I had in Canada’s capital, Experiences Canada has been very near and dear to my heart. The experiences provided have been able to expose me and so many others to meaningful places, people and ideas that have all played a part in who I am today, which I’m so grateful for.

In the past few years, the “YAC”’s primary goal has been to promote and enhance the life-changing experiences of national travel and cultural experiences for youth that we, as past participants, have personally benefited from. To this end, our members have worked to meet locally with exchange groups being hosted in their home communities, aimed to enhance social media presence and create promotional material, come together every year at the Annual General Meeting, and continued to give input and advice for future exchanges and forums from an essential youth perspective.

It has been amazing to lead a nationally-based team of such capable, determined and compassionate youth. While communicating between our home communities spanning from coast to coast poses its challenges, we are always learning to be flexible while developing creative ways for us to collaborate on new projects.

The formative experiences that Experiences Canada offers are so important for the positive development of values in our country’s next generation of contributors and leaders. Now that I have had the pleasure of speaking with so many devoted exchange group organizers and participants, I can see that truly the most important impact of this programming is the new perspectives students gain from simply meeting people of another part of our vastly diverse nation. The work of Experiences Canada has continually taught me how incredibly lucky we all are to be Canadians.

My hope is that future YACers and exchange and forum participants reflect on how they will choose to leave their mark on Canada going forward in their lives. Experiences Canada’s programming brings out a special gift in every young person, but also highlights the responsibility to then share that gift with their communities and the world. Reflecting on the thoughtful prompt the 150&Me initiative put forth to thousands of youth nearly three years ago (“What is Canada’s greatest challenge or opportunity facing your generation?”), I’ve realized on the most fundamental level that so many of Canada’s greatest challenges can be addressed, and opportunities built upon, with the mutual understanding and openness that Experiences Canada continues to promote so well.
YOUTH AMBASSADORS

Youth Ambassadors are responsible for documenting their exchange through photos, videos and participant reflections. One participant per group is chosen to take on this leadership role. These ambassadors help us share everyone’s experiences during their exchange and provide valuable feedback to develop and improve our youth exchange programs.

Experiences Canada would like to thank this year’s youth ambassadors:

Précieux King
Sarah Ainalik
Ayssa Iep-Smith
Jay Porter
Samuel Boutin
Pascale Lagace
Hana Vinette
Vinícius Vieira Lima
Ève Demers
Marilou Daraiche
Sophia Villagomez
Ayaan Jeraj
Anais Demers
Laurie Fortier
Ariannne Rousseau
Taylor Clark
Elyann Haley
Katie Prince
Lourdes Adante
Sandy Minton-Dyke
Annick Williams
Hannah Cramer-Law
Renaude Vigneau
Marie Nourissat
Gabriel Morantz
Lydia Cameau
Blanche Pineault
Calli Smirl
Ashley Ciardullo
Sharijjah Cunanan
Rose Lemelin
Nathan Cyr-Jones
Emma Gosselin

Hannah Forsyth
Sarah-Ève Prévost
Erica Edwards
Anaëlle Davidson
Felicia Valiente
Olivier Quimper
Alyson Desharnais
Thomas Boucher
Rémi Brousseau
Jade St-Onge
Florence Poisson
Alex Lavallée
Mahée Roy
Loic Turcotte
Kelly-Kim Jutras-Paquin
Charles-Olivier Giguère
Sarah Bissonnette
Anthony Camiré
Jade Ahkimnachie-Chîsaakay
Heidi Richard
Diego Munoz
Jillian Ogilson-Cole
Charlotte Roberge
Trinity Praill
Antoine Houde
Ophélie Larouche
Seth Bowby
Coralie Sansregret
Daphne Monro
Reaund Roy
Rodrigo Medina-Jarcic

Jennaya Patterson
Éloane Thivierge
Andre Joanas
Kayla Willisone-Colle
Chloe Henderson
Andriesje Sarsfield
Clara Aubin
Madeleine Jorgensen
Theresa Thurston
Emma McMullin
Louna Emilie Janin
Lauren Allistoon
Cassandra Bennett
Grace Robinson
Evening Drury
Ellazora Hardy
Kaia Rebaine
Ava Hardy
Maddline
Lischchynski
Uitangie Usuituayuk
Calahndra Brake
Lucas Dimonte
Nicholas Dunn
Abby Clark
Elianne Dugal
Desiraes Anderson
Amber Vincent
Skylar Page
Harper Pingle
Ben Riehl
Emily Hubert
Katelyn Stojadinov

YOUTH AMBASSADORS
Experiences Canada’s reciprocal exchange program relies on the hundreds of group organizers who help organize the exchanges and ensure the safety and security of our youth while they are traveling and visiting.

Whether they are classroom teachers, sports coaches, or community organization leaders, they put in countless volunteer hours to bring these experiences to life. If you’re reading this and you haven’t yet taken the time to thank your group organizer and chaperones for making your trip possible, it’s not too late to tell them! Go ahead: seek them out and let them know!

We would like to express our thanks to the following 2018-19 group organizers:

Nathan Moore
Dustin Garrett
Martin Richard
Cynthia Ramamonjisoa
Natalie Claivaz
Stéphanie Poulin
Heather McPhail
Marco Asselin
Christina Lorentz
Leslie Rowe
Mistral Dowson
Pansy Wright-Simms
Nyasha Kamera
Sean Johnston
Susan Heddle
Steve Kataquapit
Janay Eccles
Ronald Aubrey
Hawton
Kari Goethe
Regina Vosahlo
Erla Boehm
Elora Lake
Eve-Line Boisjoly
Geneviève Pelletier
Jan Collard
Rosalie Toussaint
Christianne Wiigs
Colleen Prail
Susan Baker
Eric St-Pierre
Teresa Trimble
Helen Smith-Macphail
Pascal Florant
Isabelle Lafrance
Charlene Dobie
Joëlle Legresley
Sharon Lajoie
Stéphane Savard
Didier Lebreux
Helen Clugston
Julie Pilote
Jennifer Martinez
Martin Pichette
Bernadette Miranda
Sietske Fichter
Alex Mercredi
William Morris
Dominique Ouzilleau
Caroline Hardy
Anneke Jansen Van Doorn
Silken Bruder
Alex Hutcheon
Georges-Michel Tamdjou
Laura Bereza
Marie-Eve Beauchemin
Johanne Abbis
Alain Riou
Cheryl Fiske
Pascal Gauthier
Janette Perron
Jérôme Doré
Bertrand Giroux
Tommy Savard
Greg Campbell
Stephanie Isaac
Paul Rioux
Serge Bilodeau
Caleb Allred
Reave Macleod
Suzie Pelletier
Louise Plante
Laurie Magnan
Marie-Claude Pouliot
Natalie Lemieux
David Martel
Catherine Harvey
Jeffrey Irwin
Jennifer Piercey
Dean Fagnan
Jamee Lea Watson
Wendy Beaton
Siubhan Drinan
Patty Chevalier
Samm
Marie-Josée Savard
Eve Laurin
Matthew Koeslag
Valérie Doré
Karine Léveillé
Geneviève Tétreault
Stephanie Mackay
Keven Mathieu
Patrice Tremblay
Cathy Ann Mulligan
Dave Loubier
Nafissata Toure
Emma Hart
Sherwyn Solomon
Alain Bilodeau
Susan Kabotoff
Sylvie Philippon
Daram Van Oers
 Roxane Esch
Serena Menzies
Amita Khandpur
Joti Singh
Jonathan
Desrosiers
Jack Frimeth
Joanne Hobday
Joanne Lussier
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Samara Worth
Martin Arsenault
Rene Maheux
Cheryl Gagné
Carl Hardy
Marie-Eve Bissonnette
Carl Hardy
Michelle Chabot
Susan Leslie
Tania Desroches
Lisa Marie Thériault
Sophie Rodrigue
Diane Beulens
Marie-Claude Bédard
Holly Poell
Lee Barter
Simone Randall
Nick Anning
Joyce Leggott
Danielle Leblanc
Janice Sardari
Annie Coulombe
Caitlin Stewart
Julie Morrice
Caroline Carrier
Marc Ferron
Alain Forand
Corey Van Zandbergen
Gwynn Norman
David Fehr
Drew Hayman
Nathalie Beerman
Rohan Hollingsworth
David Monette
Valerie Rose
Dessaint
Megan Leuskink
Hilary Towne
Mcgillivray
Monique Marinier
Isabelle Paquet
Paul Rioux
David Reimer
Ronald Aubrey
Hawton
Joanne Decruyenaere
Kevin Nearing
Charlee Mappin
Suzanne Turbis
Robert Loiselle
Valérie Gingras
Gina Gauvin
T Han
THANKS!
Building bright futures through lifelong learning

Together, we can do more for Canadians, for each other and for the communities we love.
ABOUT RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES

Experiences Canada has offered reciprocal youth exchanges in Canada since 1936!

Every year, participating schools and youth organizations send 10-30 youth (ages 12-17) on exchange somewhere in Canada. On average, 5,000 youth and their chaperones per year are chosen, representing just under 200 groups. That’s hundreds of thousands of young Canadians who have benefited from a student exchange experience since we began over 80 years ago. But we know we could travel a lot more. In any given year, we receive 30-40% more applications than we can provide funding for!

We offer opportunities for young Canadians to explore their country in ways they may never have imagined. For many, these experiences may be the first time youth have traveled without their family, and more often the first time they have visited another province or territory within Canada.

BENEFITS OF STUDENT EXCHANGE:

• Strengthens second language skills & academics.
• Improves cultural awareness and understanding of Canada.
• Increases empathy, inclusion and reduces social barriers.
• Develops leadership skills and critical thinking.
• Forges new friendships and connections.
• Builds self-confidence, independence, and maturity.
• Creates FUN memories that last a lifetime!

Experiences Canada offers many types of exchanges including Cultural, Sports, Indigenous, Immigration & Diversity, Human Rights, and Linguistic. More are in development all the time.
2018-2019 EXCHANGES

164 EXCHANGE GROUPS
3527 YOUTH
13 PROVINCES & TERRITORIES
1000s OF LIVES CHANGED
My time on this exchange, both while we were in Ontario and while we were in British Columbia, exceeded all expectations. When we traveled to the Gitxsan territory, we were fully embraced into their way of life and were given in-depth insight into their culture that I never could have predicted.

Our group consisted of high school students from Peterborough, Ontario. Most of us are currently taking an aboriginal governance course, which is why we were invited to participate in this particular exchange. There were twenty students and three adult chaperones. During the Gitxsan students’ stay in Peterborough, we set out to build familiarity and companionship. It was also very interesting to visit different areas of our own community, many of which our own student group experienced for the first time.

When we arrived in British Columbia, we experienced a blur of activity in a new place very different from our home. Some of the obvious differences had to do with the physical characteristics of the two communities; the Gitxsan territories were much more rural, towns were more dispersed and we were surrounded by expansive mountainous terrain. However, the differences between their community and my own go deeper. The Gitxsan territories we visited had a certain vibrancy that stands as a testament to their cultural resilience.

We went into the exchange believing that the other students would be very different from us. We had many preconceived notions of how they would act and what they would be like. When they first arrived, we learned very quickly that we were quite similar in the way that we dressed and acted, and in our concerns and interests. However, I was more surprised during the second half of the exchange when we visited a sweat lodge. We were very apprehensive about the whole experience because we didn’t know what to expect. Then we found out that it was not only going to be our first time experiencing the sweat lodge, but it would also be the first time for many of the Gitxsan students. For me, the experience was even more meaningful knowing that we were able to share this first time experience with our new friends as they reconnected with their own culture.

I CAME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH I RELATED TO INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS AND RESPECTED THE LONGEVITY OF TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS CULTURE.

This exchange was an opportunity to build relationships and get to know each other. It was an opportunity to explore common interests, learn about each other’s cultures, and help each other open up and learn about ourselves. We were nervous during the lead-up to the trip, but everyone involved worked hard to help us feel that we were a part of something great. Going on this exchange greatly impacted how I see myself and my world-view. I came to realize how much I related to Indigenous teachings and respected the longevity of traditional Indigenous culture. Both as a host and as a visitor, I had an exceptional experience that I would recommend to anyone.

I encourage anyone interested in going on an exchange similar to this one to do it. Keep your mind open to new ideas and experiences, because there is so much to encounter in the two short weeks. Get out of your comfort zone. The best memories I have from the exchange come from times where I pushed myself further than what I was initially comfortable with, resulting in the most rewarding experiences.

By Cali Brake
This trip was a wonderful experience that allowed me to connect with people from another province and discover new places.

- Anaïs Demers
In school, you are limited to texts and images to do your learning, but being able to see all the sights up close makes it seem that much more incredible. - Elyann Haley Daraiche
What surprised me the most is how the people that live there help each other... I also noticed just how open minded and accepting people are regardless of their differences. Their open mindedness made me think about how here, people judge more easily and how we should follow their example.

- Marilou Daraiche
During this exchange I learned a lot about what it was like to live there and how different it was from living here. It taught me a lot about our land and diversity.

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Proud to support the activity and initiatives of Experiences Canada
I desperately wanted to do this exchange since I was going to discover a new part of Canada. I also think that this type of exchange is a good opportunity to practice your English and make meaningful connections with new people! Ever since the announcement, I couldn’t wait to live such a beautiful experience, but once the trip started, I realized just how lucky I was. If I had the opportunity to redo it tomorrow morning, I would 100% no hesitations!

In total, we were twenty grade eight and nine students from École Jesus-Marie de Beauceville. We’re all from Beauce, a small corner in the administrative region of Chaudière-Appalaches in the big province of Quebec. We’re about an hour from Québec. For a few of us, including me, it was the first time we would be flying. At the beginning, it was stressful, but then I got used to it and it went well.

In my opinion, Alberta is similar to Quebec because the people there are very respectful and thankful and they really appreciate what they have. In terms of the landscape, there were a lot more farms in Alberta than in Quebec, and it was impressive to see how many there were. The fauna and flora of the Rockies also blew me away, and I quickly fell in love with the magnificent landscape of the mountains that had snowy summits and light blue lakes! It was impressive to see how Alberta has a flat landscape all the way to the Rockies, whereas in Beauce, we have more of a hilly landscape. I think that Alberta is a beautiful corner of the world, very calm, maybe even calmer than Quebec.

The thing that was the most surprising to me during the exchange is without a doubt the West Edmonton Mall. I told myself that it was big, and I imagined that it was maybe similar to the ones we have in Quebec, maybe a little bit bigger. When we arrived, I realized that it was ENORMOUS and that I never imagined it to be that big! After all, it’s the third biggest shopping centre in the WORLD!

After the exchange, I would say that I’m more open to other cultures and that I’m not as much of a picky eater, I try and taste more new things. I would really like to do a second exchange because I loved that our twins got to stay with us and we got to stay with them! I would love to redo the exchange because it allows you to discover a new corner of your country and create new friendships! At the beginning of my stay at my twin’s house, I found adapting to a new bed, a new house... just being out of my comfort zone difficult! However, my twin’s family was so welcoming that I didn’t feel nervous at all, I felt like I was at home. I really liked my twin! He took very good care of me, assured me that I was fine and that I hadn’t forgotten anything for the day’s activity. Basically, it was like he was my big brother. I strongly recommend doing an exchange like the one I lived, and I guarantee that you won’t regret it.

Finally, I have so many memories from the exchange, notably new friendships, some super beautiful photos and some really funny moments that I’ll never forget! It made me step out of my comfort zone and open myself up to other cultures. I’m really going to miss Alberta! It’s really something you should do in your lifetime!

By Samuel Boutin
I wanted to be a part of the exchange because I feel like it’s the only way to really learn about another culture. No matter how many one-sided or biased text books or articles we read beforehand, nothing was the same when it came to meeting these students in person. It certainly met every expectation we had and was really educational about things like cultures that can’t be fully learned anywhere else.

- Cassi Bennett
I'm really surprised by the connections I created with the people over there and by how much I miss them.

– Ève Bolduc
People who only have experienced life in Eastern Canada don’t realize how magnificent the mountains are in the West.

- Benjamin Silcoff
Viola Desmond
Photo courtesy of Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

sitting down
to take a stand

We tell her story #AtCMHR
Before going on exchange, I hadn’t really heard of Experiences Canada. But, if I had heard of them I would have been even more excited for this exchange. Above all else, I wanted to be a part of this exchange because the students who had gone the year before all loved their experiences in BC and encouraged us to participate. I already had great expectations for this exchange, because all I heard were good things, and reality surpassed my expectations because all the activities were educational as well as fun.

My group was fairly big because even though we divided up in smaller groups we were usually 6 or 8 depending on the activity. Where I come from, we pretty much all know each other because Bathurst is a small place, and you don’t have to worry about getting lost. Even though I was with the group, and even though I had already traveled and taken a plane with my parents, without them it was different because in the first few days I was worried about getting lost or that my family would forget me.

When I was in my twin’s home, I was more than reassured because his family was so wonderful and kind. I became the closest with his mother because she reminded me of my own mom.

Because I’m from there, I find Bathurst boring, but we had actually planned some fun activities, like going to Fredericton and learning about science at Science-Est and some history at the courthouse. We also went to the Acadian village. This week for me was wonderful (except for when I had a fever).

In Ottawa, we went to the Museum of History, and my favourite part was the “Across the World exhibit” for young kids.

I would really love to do another exchange next year. This exchange was very educational and I learned the most about money at the Bank of Canada museum, which changed my perspective on overspending, so I am certain that will be helpful when I have to manage my own money.

I recommend to all students to participate at least once, because the experience was more than amazing, educational and fun. I will cherish these wonderful memories.

By Pascale Lagace
"The impact this exchange had on me was that it showed me that I don’t have to be scared of travel. That Canada is a big beautiful place, and I want to see more of it."
I feel blessed to be part of it, and will try my best to learn more about the culture in Attawapiskat, closely linked to my culture as a Métis.

- Alexandre LaFleur
My twin family made sure to make me feel like I was part of their family. I barely even missed home while I was with them.
Every second year, Canadian Parents for French organizes an exchange with another community through Experiences Canada. I love learning new things about our country, improving my French and meeting new people. That is why I wanted to go on this exchange. The exchange that I participated in exceeded my expectations. It was so much fun and the people were great.

The group of kids that were on the exchange this year were from grade 7 and 8 and they were all very nice. The 19 of us live in the towns of Canmore and Banff. The town of Canmore has a population of about 13,000 people and Banff has about 8,000. They are both extremely beautiful communities. The community that we visited, Saint Augustin de Desmaures, was bigger and closer to a major city. These communities are similar as they both are wonderful places with great people. Something I didn’t expect was to see how spectacular the Hotel Frontenac was. It was bigger and more magnificent than I had expected.

My exchange partner, Claudia, and the other kids we met were amazing and I really want to see them again. I hope to go visit them next spring break. My twin was a little quiet, but so nice and super cool. It was great having her at our house. My twin’s family was one of the kindest families ever. Her mom cried when I left, and I almost cried too. I would 100% recommend this experience to someone else. My mom is already planning to do the exchange with the same organizers from Saint Augustin de Desmaures when my sister is in grade 8, because we had such a great time with them.

I don’t think that the exchange could have been any better than it was. Everybody loved everybody, and we had a blast. My exchange partner was such a kind and wonderful person to be around. Everyone even said we kind of look alike. It was one of the most fun things that I’ve ever been part of and would recommend it to anyone.

By Jay Porter
When we were in Quebec we went to a maple farm and we got to eat and do some French dancing and play with spoons and the setting made everything so fun.

- Hannah Cramer-Law
EXCHANGE PHOTOS - QUEBEC
We had three activities at the dogsledding place [in Baie-Comeau]... ice fishing, making maple syrup and lastly dogsledding. 4 huskies were pulling me for about 45 minutes. I was smiling and laughing for the full 45 minutes. It was incredible how strong the dogs were.

- Desirae Anderson
Ever since I was young, I’ve always wanted to go on a student exchange trip. I read about programs hosted by Experiences Canada, and I thought that living somewhere else for a while would be the coolest thing in the world! I wanted to have my own Indiana Jones adventure, so when my teacher approached me to go on an exchange trip to Bathurst, New Brunswick, I immediately said yes! I was looking forward to immersing myself in a different culture, improving my French skills, and meeting new people. After being a part of an exchange, I realized how lucky I was to have that opportunity!

I live in the suburban area of Ottawa, Ontario. It is a fairly large and loud community. When we arrived in Bathurst, we were surprised to find out how quiet it was there. There was barely any traffic and outside noise, which was great for the tired Frank Ryan students who wanted to sleep after the long flight. Bathurst is a very small city and where my host family’s house was located, everything we needed was in close proximity. The chances of getting lost were very small, which was a major plus for me, a person with no sense of direction. Both our communities are very cold.

I think that this exchange was a wonderful experience for my peers and I to develop our independence and to be more confident. I might have even found a place where I would like to retire to! I love how calm Bathurst is, and I would love to live there later on in life!

My experience hosting was wonderful! We had the chance to be the first hosts of the exchange, which meant we were the ones making the first connections. My teacher paired me with a wonderful “twin” and we had a ton of fun together. We got along straight away and were laughing and giggling every day. She also helped me come out of my shell.

My best memory of the week I was hosting was when my “twin” and two of our friends were playing Super Mario Bros. together in my basement. We were laughing, yelling and screaming at each other all night, and I felt like it was a great icebreaker and a wonderful bonding experience.

My second favourite part of the exchange was when my classmates and I were on the plane on the way there. One of my best friends was flying for her first time, and I was happy that I could experience that with her. I loved seeing how excited she was seeing how high in the air we were. The whole flight, we were singing, dancing and listening to our favourite songs.

I was placed with the nicest host family in the whole world! They treated me like their own and helped me immerse myself in their culture and language during my stay. I had a host mom, a host dad, a brother and sister. I don’t have any siblings, and I was happy to be the “big sister” of my exchange twin and her brother. I felt super loved and I was sad to leave.

A student exchange seemed a bit scary at first. I was scared to leave Ottawa without my family, but I feel like it was a great experience for everyone! I got to learn more about myself, make new friends and experience new things! If anyone is uncertain about doing an exchange, you should try it! Who knows what you might discover?

By Hana Vinette
It was really the best of what Canada is about, and I am so grateful for the opportunity Experiences Canada provided us.

- Leslie Howse
I think that this exchange was a wonderful experience for my peers and I to develop our independence and to be more confident.

- Hana Vinette
THE NORTH

I was lucky enough to be involved in an exchange with a group of students from Fort Providence, which is an indigenous community in the Northwest Territories. We came together three different times, twice in Ottawa, and once in Fort Providence. We went up for a week in March and as excited as I was, I could’ve never imagined how incredible that week would be.

“THIS EXCHANGE HAS BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE, AND I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT I’VE MADE, AND THE LESSONS I’VE LEARNED.”

My favourite memory of our trip came at the very beginning when just after arriving, we left to go winter camping for three days. The area that we stayed at had heated cabins that had more than enough room for us, as well as plenty of space to run around and throw a Frisbee, which we did a lot. There was also a spot for a campfire, where we spent all of our nights playing games, chatting and singing songs underneath the northern lights. Our group was also super fortunate to be involved in a youth conference, with groups from all around the Northwest Territories, who came to the school in Fort Providence where we were staying. For three days, we got to listen to guest speakers and discuss some of the issues that indigenous people face, and what people around our country can do to support reconciliation and decolonization.

This exchange has been one of the greatest experiences of my life, and I will always cherish the relationships that I’ve made, and the lessons I’ve learned. Anyone who has the chance to do one of these exchanges shouldn’t hesitate to sign up because you will not regret it. Even the people who were hesitant about joining were the ones who ended up enjoying it the most, and the saddest when our two groups had to part ways.

By Nicky Dunn
I have learned about how to hunt wild animals and create your own coats, jackets, hats, gloves, just anything. I got to learn about their culture.

- Olivia Stogen
My favorite experience from the trip was going out onto the ice flats and seeing the floe edge because of just how far out the sea went... Before you get to the edge all you see is snow and ice and then out of nowhere it's just a vast expanse as far as the eye can see.

- Wesley Carifelle
EXCHANGE PHOTOS - THE NORTH
Overall it was a wonderful, very positive experience. Our son really enjoyed seeing Quebec, and came home so proud of himself and full of confidence about his French language skills. He was very surprised by how different our two provinces are, and it was an excellent way for him to get a glimpse of how others live. He has made some lifelong friends.

We loved being a part of this exchange. Not only for the kids but also for the parents to learn about and experience diversity! Great to be out of our comfort zone and show off what we love about our town.

I believe this is very valuable for parents and children to learn more about the different people in our country and to support one another.

As this was an exchange with the French part of Canada, it is a great tool to showcase Canada’s second language and culture.

My daughter is noticeably more mature, confident and will never forget the opportunity your organization has generously offered her. We took in two twins due to uneven numbers and we are so grateful to have hosted them. My perception of our wonderful Northern inhabitants has been changed and we are very thankful to you and the wonderful chaperones who volunteered their time.

My child had an excellent time and an experience that he has grown from and will remember for the rest of his life- we are so fortunate to have this valuable opportunity.

Parents rated the following elements of the exchange experience as either meeting or exceeding their expectations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety &amp; Security Measures</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-trip Info</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time hosting Twinned Youth</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents thought their children:

- 91% of parents would recommend this program to a friend
- 89% of parents would participate in another exchange.

- Made New Friends 68%
- Learned New Things About Canada 64%
- Have a greater appreciation for Canada’s Diversity 66%
Experiences Canada is a registered charitable organization that facilitates educational opportunities within Canada, building bridges between young Canadians and helping them learn about their country’s history, geography, official languages and cultural diversity. Thanks to the generous support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, our flagship Exchange program provides opportunities to Canadian youth, as well as the families and organizers that support them, to foster deeper connections to their country and to each other through week-long reciprocal visits to each other’s communities.
EXPERIENCES CANADA values the feedback of its participants. Here is what they told us about their experience through an online survey:

YOUTH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS:
- 14% Member of a visible minority group
- 7% Indigenous (First Nation, Métis, or Inuit)
- 31% live in rural or remote communities
- 67% Female
- 32% Male
- 0.9% Other
- Median Age: 15

87% Rated their exchange as good or excellent

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS WERE INVOLVED IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THEIR EXCHANGES IN DIFFERENT WAYS:
- 63% Fundraising
- 20% Helped plan the itinerary/host family activities
- 23% Recruited friends to participate

THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THE EXCHANGE MET OR EXCEEDED YOUTH PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS OVERALL:
- 77% Variety of Activities
- 74% Homestay Visitor Experience
- 78% Homestay Host Experience
- 64% Time with Twin

Would go on another exchange: 91%
Would recommend this program to a friend: 79%

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- 64% Time with Twin

Would go on another exchange: 91%
Would recommend this program to a friend: 79%
LASTING IMPACT:
Youth respondents overall felt very strongly about the following impacts of their exchange:

- Felt an increased attachment to their community/region: 64%
- Felt an increased sense of attachment to their province/territory: 71%
- Have a greater appreciation of how diverse Canada is: 84%
- Have a better understanding of what Canadians have in common: 78%
- Learned new things about their community: 64%
- Improved their language skills: 61%
- Increased their community involvement: 63%

WHAT OUR GROUP ORGANISERS ARE SAYING:
- 95% of group organizers who responded felt the exchange experience overall met or exceeded their expectations.
- 96% believed their students had learned more about Canada.
  “Students and families have raved about what a wonderful experience it was for them. They learned a lot and developed strong connections between the two schools!”
  “The hosting part was particularly important for our community. We had many people come together to support the exchange and were able to bring important parts of Kyuquot culture to our students and theirs.”
  “Our students had experiences in their own community that they didn’t even know existed, families came together to work as a community to plan events, youth made lasting friendships and learned so much about another part of Canada.”

WHAT OUR PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING:
“If you go on an exchange you will become closer with people from your community, other communities and it will open your mind to an even better Canada.”
“My exchange was amazing and stepping out of comfort zone, turned out to be a fully positive experience.”
“I was only in trois rivières for a week but I loved being surrounded by a different language. I wish I could have stayed longer because I know it would’ve helped my French so much. This trip has led me to do a larger exchange in February, for three months.”
“I just need to say this was an amazing trip that opened my eyes on Canada’s other culture and programs like these need to be kept!!! I hope every generation gets some sort of experience like this.”
“My favourite part of the exchange was discovering the Inuit culture and experiencing their love for their land and their kindness to us.”
Experiences Canada is committed to inspiring youth to build on their travel experience and connect with other youth that share their passion and interest in exploring our country. We operate alumni pages on Instagram (@EC_alumni_anciens participants) and Facebook (Experiences Canada Alumni / Anciens Participants) where youth can share photos and reflections from their experience, and keep in touch with each other. We also use those pages to post information about other youth opportunities available, some offered by Experiences Canada, and some offered by other youth organizations. We encourage you to sign up and check the space regularly so you can continue to explore what this country has to offer in ways you may never have imagined!

Youth looking to stay involved in Experiences Canada may wish to consider applying to become part of our National Youth Advisory Committee. Each year Experiences Canada invites 12-18 youth from across Canada to serve on its advisory committee. They meet in Ottawa for a weekend in November to talk about their ideas for youth travel and exchanges with the Board of Directors and set their plan for supporting the organization through volunteer projects throughout the year. The advisory committee is a great way to develop your leadership and advocacy skills and gain valuable training and experience making presentations, advocating for projects, and learning about how youth programs are developed.

In June 2020, Experiences Canada is presenting the second Youth Leadership Forum on the topic of Reconciliation. Sixty Four (64) youth, half of whom will be Indigenous will be selected to participate in a week-long program that explores First Nation, Inuit and Métis history, culture, and rights, and involves them in learning and discussion about the many challenging paths toward reconciliation. Youth can apply via our website answering the question “what does reconciliation look like to you” using whatever medium they choose: art, music, performance, written or spoken word.

Experiences Canada is also interested in understanding the longer impact of youth travel and exchange experiences. We are always looking for alumni interested in keeping in touch with us through occasional surveys and updates to hear your thoughts on issues, ideas, as well as program impact. We are happy to hear from you at any time so feel free to connect via our social media pages, or drop us an email at info@experiencescanada.ca
32 Indigenous youth and 32 non-indigenous youth between the ages of 14-18 will be selected from across Canada, to travel to Winnipeg for a week-long program to develop their knowledge and foster greater dialogue and understanding among non-Indigenous and Indigenous young people about indigenous history, culture, and the path forward to Reconciliation.

WWW.FORUMS.EXPERIENCESCANADA.CA
Celebrating our commitment to young Canadians

The Government of Canada, proud partner of Experiences Canada for youth exchanges