



WELCOME TO OUR FIRST EDITION OF CWY ALUMNI NEWS

As Canada World Youth Alumni, you are part of a group of individuals whose energy, enthusiasm and teamwork have been making a difference in Canada and around the world since 1971. With the insights and experiences of over 37,000 CWY Alumni, we thought it would be valuable to have a place to reconnect, share stories, and learn more about the lives of your fellow Alumni after CWY – that’s why we’re launching CWY Alumni News.

You are part of a truly global team of individuals who continue to support CWY by actively participating in the development of a just, harmonious and sustainable world. In fact, Mike Power, Director of the Youth Leaders in Action program, describes CWY Alumni as “super volunteers” who have a tremendous impact on their communities that can be seen around the world.

Beyond volunteering countless hours, you have gone on to make a difference in fields too numerous to mention. Many of you are working in the creative arts, with INGOs and non-profits, in education and in government. But these are just a few of the paths our Alumni are traveling. We see you leveraging your interest in cultural exchange and global issues to inform and enrich a wide range of careers.

On these pages, we will promote and celebrate your activities and accomplishments. We will inform you about reunions, projects, life-cycle events and your personal stories. We will also bring you into the picture as we work to transform CWY into an organization ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead, ensuring we continue to meet the needs of today’s youth with specialized programs like the Aboriginal Youth Program you will read about in this first issue.

We will publish CWY Alumni News on a quarterly basis - keep an eye out for the next edition in the spring! Please send us any news that you would like to see featured in upcoming newsletters, as well as any feedback to mdagonas@cwjcm.org. We’d love to hear from you. Don’t forget to update your contact information so that we can continue to connect with you about new initiatives and upcoming events in your area. You can do so by emailing alumni@cwjcm.org or calling 1-800-605-3526 ext: 600. Your continued support means the world to us!

Signed,



Mathieu Dagonas, Head of Philanthropy

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER AND THE FUTURE

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL PROGRAMMING

If there is an organization today that knows the value of embracing change, it's Canada World Youth. Change is a positive force – it's how we grow and how we move forward. It is the essence of the experience we offer to those who participate in and benefit from our programs. Change is how CWY will remain pertinent in an ever-evolving world.

This year, CWY has embarked on a journey of self-transformation that includes the revitalization of our Aboriginal programming.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

CWY has re-emerged as a prominent player in the Aboriginal Youth Leadership sector following new partnerships with several First Nations and Metis organizations and communities. In late 2013, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island (MCPEI), whereby CWY would co-host a national Aboriginal youth symposium in Charlottetown. Dubbed "Aboriginal Youth and Confederation: Learning From the Past & Building For the Future", the symposium, held June 26-28, was a great success. Fifty Aboriginal youth from across Canada came together to identify and prioritize their needs, issues, and ideas in the context of confederation, and its impact on Aboriginal people in the past, present, and future.

CWY has since partnered with the Labrador Aboriginal Youth Abroad Committee to develop a project offering Aboriginal youth from the Labrador communities of Nain, Hopedale, and Sheshatshiu an experiential learning project in Tanzania, Africa. CWY also recently sent a delegation of indigenous youth from

Canada, Greenland and USA (Alaska) to participate in the "World Conference on Indigenous Peoples" (WCIP). This delegation was the result of CWY's commitment to collaborate with indigenous peoples and communities on youth issues, priorities and needs. CWY met with representatives of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) during the 2014 ICC General Assembly to discuss sending a delegation of indigenous youth to the WCIP in September.

Through the NIYC, seven Inuit youth delegates were identified from Canada, Greenland and Alaska. In addition, five Aboriginal youth delegates from CWY's Aboriginal Youth Committee were part of the delegation.

A NEW PROGRAM

These exciting new partnerships and projects have served as valuable pilot models for the renewal of the CWY Aboriginal Program, which is ready to be deployed over the coming months. This new initiative will build on the core components of the CWY Youth Leaders in Action Program model, such as hands-on, self-directed learning in a semi-structured environment. As an asset-based initiative, it will centre on Aboriginal knowledge and culture, recognizing partnerships with Aboriginal communities as essential to the design and delivery of the program.

The new Aboriginal Program is an essential element in CWY's transformation – a first step towards a future in which CWY sees Aboriginal youth playing an increasingly important role. "It's a change we are seeing already," says Arnold Blackstar, CWY's Director of Aboriginal Programs, pointing out that Aboriginal youth participation in CWY programs has leapt nearly 20% over the past five years.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

There's no doubt about it. The Canada World Youth experience has an incredible impact on the lives of our participants. The knowledge and insight our Alumni take home after a project provides them with the tools to create the changes they want to see in the world.

Do you ever wonder where your fellow Alumni are now? In this chapter of CWY Alumni News, we reconnect with past volunteers who have gone on to do incredible things within their communities and around the world.



GUNNY TENESE
YUGOSLAVIA 1972-1973

Gunny just turned 60 and celebrated with her best friend, another CWY Alumni by taking a 24-day cruise through the Mediterranean and returning to their CWY country, the former Yugoslavia. She's moved across Canada from Kitchener to Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Montreal, back to Winnipeg and finally returned to Vancouver. Her career path led her into journalism and then real estate, which she currently still does for a living. "I thrive in change, marry often, travel even more, love to change my surroundings".

How did you make the decision to go with CWY?

I saw an article describing the program in our local paper in Kitchener, Ontario and thought it sounded like an opportunity of a lifetime... a chance to leave a small city, meet new people and travel overseas. I applied even though the article was published after the submission deadline thinking "what the heck...maybe I still have a chance." I wanted to go to Africa, but was chosen to go to Yugoslavia. No regrets, but still want to get to Africa.

What did you learn while on your CWY exchange?

I had led a fairly conservative sheltered life so probably the biggest revelation was that "there's a big world out there". Even though I was well aware that there are French Canadians living in Canada one of my biggest culture shocks was meeting them and realizing some don't speak any English. I had no idea and was also sorely reminded of how lacking my own French speaking ability was in spite of studying it for most of my schooling. CWY changed my personality considerably. My own mother didn't recognize me at the airport when I returned from our CWY travels. To this day she claims that CWY ruined me, but I say the program made me the person I am today and I'm very grateful!!

What surprised you most during the program?

Group dynamics and how easily people can get riled over what I perceived to be petty things. But more than that I was amazed at how easily we all fell in love with each other... 40 Canadians and 40 Yugoslavians living in such close harmony on a daily basis made for the warmest social feelings I've ever experienced. To this day I still love all these people!

What skills did you develop during your program?

I became much more gregarious, opinionated, talkative, outgoing, helpful, hard working, part of a team. My love for languages was accelerated as was my love for travel.

I THRIVE IN CHANGE, MARRY OFTEN, TRAVEL EVEN MORE, LOVE TO CHANGE MY SURROUNDINGS.

Have you kept in touch with your fellow participants?

We had a 10 year reunion in 1982, a 40 year reunion in 2012 and I met my best friend, Georgia Tiedemann in the program. I even married and divorced one of my fellow participants. I keep in touch with some on a regular basis and unfortunately some have completely vanished in spite of our research. Recently my best friend and I returned to the former Yugoslavia and met with two of our Yugo participants there.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

Birthing my children sounds trite as lots of other women through the ages have done it, but my three are still my proudest accomplishments. Next to that... being independent, self-supporting, volunteering, being a good friend. My career is quite secondary to all these things.

What are your plans for the future?

Gosh, who knows? Retiring at some point, more travel, maybe becoming a grandmother might be in the cards in the future. For now I live mostly day to day.

Photo by: Jonathan Cruz



DAVID ZEMANS
ATLANTIC CANADA - BOLIVIA 1985

From volunteering on a farm in rural Nova Scotia, to planting potatoes in the Andes Mountains at 12,000 feet above sea level, David's exchange program was a tremendous experience that radically changed his perspective and understanding of Canada and the world around him. Today,

David lives with his wife and two children in Singapore, where he practices corporate law for a large New York firm with a significant practice in Asia and its emerging markets.

I GAINED CONFIDENCE AND THE POWER TO BELIEVE. I LEARNED THAT YOU CREATE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES.

What did you learn while on your CWY exchange?

I attribute CWY with my global outlook, my desire for regular interaction and exposure to different cultures and countries — and for pursuing an international career. Thank you CWY!

What surprised you most during your program?

My participation changed my sense of the world and reinforced that part of me that was curious about the world and interested in travel.

What skills did you learn during your program?

I gained confidence and the power to believe. I learned that you create your own opportunities. I feel very fortunate that I was able to create my own unique career path and to shape my own life.

Have you kept in touch with your fellow participants?

I have kept in touch with some of my fellow participants but not all of them. I look forward to future Alumni activities and to the CWY Alumni network being up and running.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I am running my firm's Asian practice, mostly working on mergers and acquisitions in emerging markets. It is exciting to be a Canadian in a senior position in a US-based law firm. Canadians are highly regarded around the world and occupy many key roles.

Are you involved in other organizations or volunteering?

I am very heavily involved in a Children's School in Singapore, which is an international school with a diverse and eclectic student body. I also work with an organization called "Room to Read", which builds libraries and schools in Asian countries, empowering the next generation to read and promoting literacy among young girls.



JOHN R. SYLLIBOY
ONTARIO - COSTA RICA 1990

John has lived and worked for over 15 years in Costa Rica, Washington, DC, Colombia, and Canada in education, youth leadership, and community development. He has extensive experience in administration and marketing for second language development services in Latin

America. From 2002-07, he was the International Director of Service for Organization Business Multinational in Central and South America.

John returned to Mi'kmaki (Mi'kmaw territory) Nova Scotia to work with Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Secretariat (APCFNC). He was Coordinator from 2007-2013 of Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative and development of post secondary education strategies for inclusion of Aboriginal worldviews. He was also Assistant Research Coordinator for economic development research with projects working with Atlantic Elders. John gained extensive insight into First Nations education, youth initiatives and leadership development. He continues to work with Elders on projects for research and traditional knowledge.

In 2013-2014, John worked as Program Director at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) for "Engaging Aboriginal Communities Through Education" which partnered with 8 NS Mi'kmaw Nations on a consultation project for post-secondary educational needs.

John's current employment is with IWK's Centre for Pediatric Pain Research with the Aboriginal Children's Hurt & Healing Initiative (ACHH) on its research: "Seeing Aboriginal Children's Pain and Hurt - Weaving Stories, Art and Statistics to Create Ways to Reduce the Hurt and Improve Children's Wellbeing" as Community Program Coordinator with Research Services.

What did you learn while on your CWY exchange?

In the 90s, Aboriginal recognition was not as prevalent as today. CWY really encouraged it. They made me realize that where you come from is who you are.

What surprised you the most during your program?

The various culture representations from across Canada. I was 21 years old at the time, I thought I was open-minded but I realized I wasn't. I thought I was the only gay person in the program. My expectations towards Costa Rica were wrong also. I thought from their religious background they would be very conservative, very "Latin American". But when I got there, I realized they were very open - liberal, very involved, and that surprised me a lot.

Which skills did you develop during your program?

I developed many skills like education and teaching skills, public speaking, critical thinking, etc. CWY helped me think on the spot. I became a better listener, which is especially important when there is a language barrier because you need to look more at body language and read the context of where that person is from.

Have you kept in touch with some of your fellow participants?

Absolutely! I went back in 1991, for two more years as a volunteer in a specials needs school and to further my Spanish learning in the same town I was hosted by CWY. After learning Spanish, I did my undergrad in International Relations in Costa Rica. I maintained my friends since CWY days. Over the years, the group has maintained contact. There is a Facebook group with nearly 75% of the participants who share photos and updates on their lives.

What are your plans/projects for the future?

I aim to finish my Master's thesis in Educational Foundations at Mount Saint Vincent University, hopefully by early 2015. I will continue to be involved in Aboriginal education, health and community development. I hope that our alliance will reach out to other countries - Latin American Aboriginal tribes for knowledge sharing and strengthen our alliance's involvement in Canada as well. And I will continue to support CWY!!!



JENNIFER JONES
QUEBEC - BENIN 1999-2000

Home from Benin with "a firm commitment to community development and inclusive development," Jennifer completed her degree in International Development and Women's Studies. She has built on her CWY strengths ever since, teaching refugees community development and working with Room To Grow in Thailand and also volunteering with several projects in Laos, where she has initiated a project with Insulin for Life, providing lifesaving diabetes supplies and education to people in developing countries, and developing educational materials for the Elephant Conservation Centre.

How did you make the decision to go with CWY?

A friend told me about CWY as I was just finishing high school. I had been accepted into University but I didn't really know what I wanted to do. CWY offered me the chance to visit a new part of the world, so it was an easy decision to make.

What did you learn while on your CWY exchange?

After the program, I started studying International Development. I think my experience with CWY raised more questions about inequality in this world than anyone has answers for, but it's the asking of the questions, and the search for answers that were the most valuable things I took away.

What surprised you most during the program?

I worked at an under-resourced health clinic in rural West Africa for four months. The things that surprised me the most aren't things people like reading about, trust me.

What skills did you develop during your program?

CWY instilled in me a quest to understand things from a non-white, non-Western perspective. At the time, I found that frustrating. Sometimes it even felt a bit like being in a cult. And to be honest, I don't think I was very successful at it. But it stuck with me. The work I do now is based in community development approaches which work alongside local people to achieve local priorities. I work quite differently than many of my colleagues in aid organizations. What we are doing is often quite similar, but how we do it can be worlds apart. I trace back my philosophy of aid to those very confusing days with CWY.

Have you kept in touch with your fellow participants?

We kept in touch for a very long time. But its now been 14 years since we were on the program together, and most of that time I've been out of Canada. I have a good idea where many of them are and what they are doing and I know that if I ever needed them, they would be there for me.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

In 2007, I co-founded a charity for refugee children without parents called Room to Grow Foundation. The work started in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border where I lived and worked for seven years. I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes just a week after I got home from my CWY debriefing and being able to handle my disease and work in conditions where there is no electricity or running water, has been a challenge I am proud to have accomplished. Every year, we are able to support local groups that house, clothe and feed over a thousand children who are looking for safety, peace, an education, and a chance to be children. Every time I see one of those children, I feel proud to be part of a community that helps them grow up stronger and smarter and ready to face the future.

What are your plans for the future?

I will continue to serve on the Board of Directors for Room to Grow Foundation and ensure that our work continues to help children in need. I'm currently based in Laos, but I'm not sure what the future will hold. I have been blessed to be healthy and to have had challenging and interesting work in my life that matters. That's all I could hope for - for myself, for the future.

Photo by: Jason Miller

EVENTS

With reunions, a leadership tour, and a national symposium, it's been a rather eventful year for Canada World Youth.

The first of this summer's reunions took place in Banff, bringing CWY Alumni together to celebrate CWY's long-standing Canada-India exchange. With Banff Mayor Karen Sorensen as the guest of honour, and many members from India in attendance, the reunion was a great success.

In late August, a reunion of participants from CWY's Indonesia-British Columbia and Indonesia-Ontario 1984-85 exchanges was held in Bali. Twenty-four CWY Alumni and family members reunited for three days under the sun, exploring new ways to support the village that hosted them decades ago.

The CWY leadership team was also busy this summer, touring Western Canada to reconnect with Alumni from Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.

MADE FRIENDS, SPOKE MY TRUTH, GREW AS A PERSON.

That's how one participant summed up the experience shared by many at the Aboriginal Youth & Confederation, a national symposium for Aboriginal young people, hosted by CWY and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island.

Held June 26-28, in Charlottetown, PEI, the event brought 50 Aboriginal youth from across Canada together to:

- Share information about the contemporary significance of Confederation
- Generate ideas for addressing specific challenges facing Aboriginal young people in Canada

- Create formal and informal networks to assist with the development of a "National Framework"

The symposium was presented under three themes: Confederation, Colonization and Reconciliation.

IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

The first day laid the groundwork for group discussion, with expert panel presentations and a "living medicine wheel" activity designed to stimulate open dialogue amongst small, rotating discussion groups of participants, speakers and community members.

Day two focused on brainstorming sessions aimed at identifying and prioritizing needs and issues.

The groups' action plans were presented on the third and final day, which concluded with next steps and evaluations, followed by a closing ceremony and group photos.

We'd like to extend a big thank you to all the speakers, Elders, performers and organizers for their hard work in making this event such a success. CWY also commends all the young people who participated – demonstrating great courage in sharing their stories, experiences, insights and opinions.

It is this kind of collaboration and open-mindedness that inspires the work that we do.

Was the Symposium a success? Our follow-up survey determined that 96% said yes!



Canada World Youth gratefully acknowledges the financial support of its donors, partner organizations, and the Government of Canada, provided through the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). CWY is a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency (charitable number 1189 73999 RR0001) and a charitable tax receipt will be issued for all gifts over \$20.

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TRAVELING THE ROAD TO TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is what it's all about at Canada World Youth. Since 1971, CWY has transformed thousands of lives by offering youth from Canada and across the globe truly life-changing experiences. However, it was in 2013-14 that CWY redoubled its efforts towards the road to organizational transformation.

A key goal of this transformation process is to make CWY more self-reliant by diversifying its sources of income. This diversification includes the creation of a Strategic Alliance with Youth Challenge International and a strong focus on

Aboriginal programming. In an effort to improve our fundraising initiatives, a new philanthropy department has also been established. This team has been hard at work cultivating a philanthropic culture to support our organization's growth strategy for years to come.

Greater self-reliance also means improving our performance on all fronts and reevaluating our core values and capabilities. At a strategic retreat last fall, CWY management, union, NFSA, and staff representatives collaborated to identify CWY's true differentiator:

"CWY provides Canadian and international youth who are looking to discover themselves and the world with authentic and eye-opening experiential learning, unparalleled by any other organization."

At a second strategic retreat in January 2014, CWY board members met to discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead,

to identify organizational priorities both short and long-term, and provide alignment within CWY.

Another objective of CWY's transformation was to examine how to better present ourselves to the world – a crucial part of marketing the CWY identity. The result of this transformation is a fresh, vibrant, and modernized look that brings our true differentiator to life – distinguishing CWY in the marketplace and painting a compelling picture of how our organization will continue to transform youth for years to come.

Signed,

Rita S. Karakas
President and CEO