Commitment and Impact

40 Years of Building Youth Leadership
Ernie Scoles

Canada World Youth gratefully acknowledges Ernie Scoles, the artist who provided the illustration for the cover page of this publication.

“When I am painting I have a great feeling of peace and harmony with nature and I feel a powerful connection between our creator and all living things. In my work I try to capture the spiritual interaction of all life with the earth, sun, wind, and sky. I always hope that at least one person will like the image I paint.”

Artist Biography

Ernie Scoles, a member of the Barren Lands Indian Band, was born at Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1962, and raised in northern Manitoba. There he developed a deep feeling for nature and wildlife, taking advantage of every opportunity to explore the woods, lakes and streams. Influenced by the late Isaac Bignell, his mentor and friend, Ernie’s work in woodland imagery reflects his Cree heritage and is found in collections throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia.

In 1992, Ernie was awarded the Governor General’s Canada 125 Medal, and as well in 2002 he received the Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Medal for his contributions to his community. He makes his home in Saskatoon with his wife Doreen, and their four children, Davian, Amanda, Cassandra and Kalen.
Mission
Canada World Youth’s mission is to increase the ability of people, and especially youth, to participate actively in the development of just, harmonious, and sustainable societies.

Vision
Canada World Youth envisions a world of active, engaged global citizens who share responsibility for the well-being of all people and the planet.

Values
Integrity in all our relationships, partnerships and business dealings, through honest, transparent and equitable interactions.

Empowerment in providing all our constituents with the space and the ability to be innovative and facilitate the implementation of new initiatives that will promote our mission and vision.

Respect in ensuring equity for all peoples of diverse backgrounds, realities and cultures, in learning to understand and respect one another, in understanding that all humanity is interdependent on the natural environment.

Accountability in ensuring responsible actions and behaviours, while being true to our values in all our relationships, policies and decisions.

www.canadaworldyouth.org
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Founded in 1971, Canada World Youth (CWY) is a recognized leader in developing national and international educational programs for young people aged 15 to 29. A non-profit organization, CWY is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people who have a desire to become informed and active global citizens. CWY programs are designed to help youth experience the world for themselves, learn about other cultures and languages, and develop leadership and communication skills.

Since its inception, the organization has had a wide national and international presence, which has allowed 34,000 youth to participate in its programs in more than 67 countries. In addition, 11,000 host families across Canada have worked in partnership with us to provide our youth participants with a safe, healthy and dynamic learning environment.

CWY’s overarching goal is to increase the capacity of young women and men and their communities to collectively participate in and benefit from the development of just, harmonious and sustainable societies, locally, nationally and internationally. In collaboration with its partners, CWY’s programs contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the fields of environment, health and gender equality, while providing youth volunteers with educational experiences that foster commitment and action. Volunteers engage in activities ranging from HIV/AIDS prevention to reforestation, ecotourism, urban gardening, nutrition and hygiene, income generating activities and supporting women’s cooperatives.

Our many action-oriented volunteer programs, which include Youth Leaders in Action, Global Learner, InterAction, Québec sans frontières and our Aboriginal Youth Leaders Program, allow youth volunteers to work with local partners on development projects focused on the environment, health and equity. CWY also provides financial contributions to partner organizations, and local youth-led projects, to support them in their institutional capacity building initiatives and in fulfilling their missions.

This publication gives testimony to the efforts of some of the 34,000 young volunteers from Canada and abroad who have taken part in our programs since 1971. These dedicated individuals had a positive impact in 67 countries around the world and continue to be active global citizens who make important contributions to their communities.

CWY is 40 years old and here are stories of 40 of its Canadian alumni, as well as testimonials from our overseas alumni, partners, host families and staff and Board members who, like many others, have been instrumental in our success over the last 40 years. We believe that these stories will inspire younger generations to join the programs and benefit from the education and leadership development that CWY and its partners have to offer.

Enjoy!
Message from the Governor General of Canada

Wherever we see young people, we also see hope and the desire to change things for the better. For the past four decades, Canada World Youth has worked to channel the energy and optimism of young people towards creating a fairer, more just world.

This publication is proof that our confidence is well-placed. These are stories of leadership, partnership and impact, and they remind us that the health of our communities grows to the extent that youth are engaged and involved in our affairs. As these inspiring stories demonstrate, young people in Canada and the world over have the ability and the determination to transform lives, if only they are given the opportunity. They are models of creativity and global citizenship, and they represent our best hope for a just, harmonious and sustainable world.

I thank and congratulate the supporters, partners and alumni of Canada World Youth on this milestone occasion. Let us be inspired by the vision and leadership of young people.

David Johnston
October 2011
On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to congratulate Canada World Youth on its 40th anniversary. Since 1971, the Canadian International Development Agency has worked with Canada World Youth to inspire and enrich the lives of 34,000 remarkable young Canadians and youth from more than 30 countries.

Canadians have a strong tradition of volunteering to improve the lives of those living in poverty around the world. Canada World Youth programs have not only helped the world’s poorest, they have enriched the lives of Canadian youth and host families who have participated. The friendships forged during exchanges often lead to enduring bonds between individuals and entire communities.

Canada’s young people are an inspiration. The more than 40 individuals profiled this year are a testament to how one person can make a difference in the world.

My best to all who have contributed to Canada World Youth’s success for over 40 years.

Minister of International Cooperation,

Beverley J. Oda
Message from the Chairman of the Board of Directors

This publication is a wonderful demonstration of the concrete impact that Canada World Youth’s educational programs have had on the lives of people across Canada and around the world. It will allow you, as readers, to witness the rich history of the organization, its impact on individuals of all backgrounds, and its potential in shaping the future of even more youth and communities around the world.

These testimonials represent only a small percentage of Canadian and overseas participants, host families, partner organizations, staff and Board members who have benefited from, and contributed to, the programs offered by the organization over the last 40 years. You are likely to come across many other individuals who would share their stories about the life-changing impact that CWY has had on their lives.

Over the years, CWY has developed a set of unique qualities and strengths as an organization. These very characteristics will allow the organization to continue to grow and remain relevant for decades to come. Firstly, CWY offers unique reciprocal programs where Canadian youth and youth from overseas spend an equal amount of time volunteering in the two partner countries, allowing them to live a truly bilateral exchange experience. Secondly, CWY programs are accessible and inclusive.

Our staff and partners have always worked to reduce obstacles to participation for youth, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations and to increase the involvement of under-represented groups. Thirdly, the organization’s partnership model allows it to support and learn from colleagues in Canada and abroad, ensuring that the programs respond to real needs identified at the community level.

CWY is continuously developing new initiatives to meet the needs of its youth volunteers and partner organizations. With such a wealth of experience as an institution, CWY will have a lot to offer for years to come. I therefore encourage you to become active members of the CWY community. As we celebrate the first 40 years of history, together we know that, for CWY, this is only the beginning.

Sincerely,

Charles McMillan
Chairman of the Board, Canada World Youth

Charles McMillan
Charles J. McMillan, Professor of Strategic Management, Schulich School of Business, is the author of nine books and monographs related to international business and global management, including the Japanese Industrial System, The Strategic Challenge: From Surfdom to Surfing in the Global Village and Focusing on the Future. The New Atlantic Revolution. He has written and lectured extensively on globalization, international strategic planning, corporate governance, international financial reform, technology policy, and industrial restructuring. In 2007, he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship at Brandeis University, International Business School. Active in public affairs and public policy, Dr. McMillan has served as Senior Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada, and on boards of several public and private corporations. He has extensive knowledge of board responsibilities in areas like fund raising, corporate governance and financial controls.
Canada World Youth celebrates 40 years of Building Youth Leadership

Our organizational history shows that we are confident and energized now, more than ever, to reach out and build a global movement of youth leaders engaged in their communities, creating solid foundations for our collective future.

As we celebrate Canada World Youth’s 40th anniversary of building youth leadership, I would like to begin by paying homage to our first President and founder, the late Honourable Jacques Hébert, a great Canadian and inspiring international leader. His vision and commitment to youth demonstrated through his work over the years (1971-2007), merits praise and a gracious thank you.

Since I assumed the Presidency of Canada World Youth (CWY) in June 2009, I have been truly excited to witness the incredible enthusiasm, tireless dedication, and extraordinary display of commitment demonstrated by our youth volunteers. Their positive energy strengthens my resolve to ensure that all Canadians, and citizens around the world, understand the impact that CWY’s unique education and youth leadership programs have in our communities, and in the lives of our youth volunteers. Through my many visits across Canada and overseas, I have had the privilege to witness, first-hand, the positive impact our youth volunteers have in their host communities. I am truly inspired and thrilled to see all our youth in action.

While our youth volunteers enrich their minds with new learning, they complement their training through direct participation in community-based projects such as planting trees, building health clinics, teaching English and French, training local youth in the use of informational technology, undertaking public engagement campaigns in their municipalities, sharing with their host families an appreciation for people from other cultures, acquiring skills for negotiation and effective communication, learning and teaching the importance of peaceful conflict resolution. All of these opportunities for skills building are how CWY is contributing to an international community of youth leaders.

To you, our 34,000 Alumni, 11,000 host families, 600 Canadian host communities, 67 partner countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Americas, our staff and members of the Board of Directors, thank you for the role that you have played and will be playing in training coming generations of CWY volunteers.

To each of our sponsors, donors and well-wishers, we know it is through your support and contributions that we will be better able to invest, both intellectually and financially, in training the true architects of change and development in our society: Youth.

Yours truly,

Iris Almeida-Côté, B.A., M.A., LL.M.
President and Chief Executive Officer, Canada World Youth
The Honorable Jacques Hébert, founder and the first president of CWY, was a writer, editor, and politician who traveled to more than 130 countries around the world, inspired by a deep commitment to young people and his goal to bring people, across cultures, closer together.

Born in Montreal on June 21, 1923, Mr. Hébert studied at Collège Sainte-Marie in Montreal, St. Dunstan’s College in Charlottetown, P.E.I, and the École des Hautes Études Commerciales in Montreal, where he earned a licentiate degree in commerce in 1945.

A contributor to Le Devoir (1951‑1953), he also founded two publishing houses, Éditions de l’Homme (1958) and Éditions du Jour (1961), and wrote many books, including The World is Round (1976) and Hello World! (1996) where he describes his motivation behind the creation of Canada World Youth.

From 1962 to 1970, Mr. Hébert worked as host and writer for Radio-Canada, and from 1965 to 1974, he was President of the Association of Canadian Publishers. In 1963, along with Pierre Elliott Trudeau, he co-founded the Civil Liberties Union and he served as President of that organization from 1970 to 1972.

In 1983, Mr. Hébert was appointed to the Senate of Canada, where he held several positions, including Chairman of the Special Senate Committee on Youth (1984-1986). He retired from political life in 1998.

A man of ideas and action, Mr. Hébert worked hard to promote the development of young people. In 1971, inspired by his many travels around the world, his love and respect for other cultures, and his desire to help build a more peaceful world, he founded Canada World Youth, a uniquely innovative organization offering international youth leadership programs for youth aged 17 to 29.

“If we could run these programs in great numbers, we would become a totally different society; much more human, much more fraternal, without any prejudice, we would be more open to the rest of the world, we would play a greater role in the north south dialogue that is so essential if this world is to have a future at all. You might just say that is dreaming for the time being, but we have to dream”.

Jacques Hébert

“When they return home, the young Canadians no longer want to live as they’d been living before, before knowing!”

Jacques Hébert

From The World is Round

In Memoriam

Our Founder

Jacques Hébert (1923–2007)
34,000 young leaders, from across Canada and abroad, have taken part in our programs since 1971. Each year, these youth volunteer 1,000,000 hours to community projects in Canada and abroad. Here is a selection of inspiring stories of alumni, one per program year.

“CWY is a remarkable organization that provides invaluable experiences for young Canadians, as well as young adults from around the world. There is no other organization that provides similar programs. I will be forever grateful for my experience, and proud to be an alumnus of such a successful and progressive organization.”

Rhian Williams
2007, Benin
I was born in Ireland, emigrated to Toronto in 1957 and grew up with seven sisters and two brothers in working-class immigrant neighbourhoods with Europeans from Ireland, Scotland, England, Poland, Italy, Germany and the Ukraine.

**CWY was one of the peak experiences of my life. It introduced me to the world.** While we initially faced culture shock—we had to adapt to heat, language, a new and exotic environment, different food, rural life, giant insects—it really wasn’t that difficult to adjust. I was fairly fluent in Malay and wound up giving interviews on radio and to newspapers. My Roman Catholic background made Islam easy to understand, though the Islam of Malaysia at that time was not as strict as it is now. I believe the multi-racial nature of Canada also helped me adjust to Malaysia’s ethno-cultural diversity—Malay, Chinese, Indian and the native peoples of Borneo (Iban, Kayan and Sea Dayak).

In Borneo, I once travelled upriver in a dugout longboat to stay with native peoples in Sarawak. Entire villages lived together in longhouses built on stilts. I was sitting on the floor playing with children when I noticed something black slip under my sarong. Before I could move, a woman came charging across the hall towards me, pulled me to my feet and shook my skirt. Out fell a huge black spider the size of my hand! She stomped on it with her bare feet, gave me a big smile and then returned to what she was doing.

*As the novelist, O.R. Melling, Valerie writes for adults and young adults, using Celtic mythology and fairy folklore. She also wrote My Blue Country, inspired by her journeys in Malaysia with CWY, and many future youth volunteers have credited Valerie as the reason they too travelled with CWY. Valerie’s books have been translated into German, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Slovenian and Czech. After her experiences with CWY, she joined the Canadian Naval Reserve Officers University Training Programme (ROUTP), receiving the Queen’s Commission at the rank of Sub-Lieutenant. With a BA in Philosophy and Celtic Studies from Trinity College at the University of Toronto and an MA in Mediaeval History, Valerie has written film scripts, papers and become a literary critic under her real name, G.V. Whelan. Currently living in her hometown in County Wicklow, Ireland, she has a daughter, Findabhair, who is now 21. Valerie has travelled extensively in Europe, North America and India, and considers herself to be on a spiritual quest, practising Tibetan Buddhism.*
My first experience with CWY was as a participant on the Fiji exchange, followed by several years as a group leader in Senegal, Mali and Indonesia. I then became involved in the participant selection process in Ontario, and have conducted a series of country orientation sessions for successive CWY exchanges. I have also worked at both regional and head offices in Quebec, during which time I served as the employee representative on CWY’s administrative council and president of the employee union.

My volunteer work with CWY has taken me to numerous community organizations, from schools to seniors’ homes, from clinics to churches, from community centres to women’s groups, from building renovation to road construction. I have also worked on a wide variety of agricultural projects, from poultry to dairy, subsistence farming to irrigation, tree planting to tending vegetable gardens. We worked hard, sometimes under difficult conditions, in countries with different perceptions about the roles and rights of women. **There were so many moments that tested and taught us.** As a child of the seventies, my feminist outlook was not always aligned with the more traditional, faith-based viewpoints of some of the men in our group. By exploring our differences, I emerged enriched by the sum of my experiences, knowing more about the lives of other women across the world.

It’s strange to look back on my experiences. There are many memories, but one in particular involves Christmas in Mali and a visit from Jacques Hébert. In the small, isolated Muslim host village, many of us were experiencing our first Christmas away from family. With the few resources available, we tried to create a festive atmosphere, exchanging homemade gifts and decorating our dried-out tree with straw garlands and freshly picked cotton balls. Unfortunately, the Malian participants saw our attachment to the Christian calendar as inappropriate. Thankfully, the presence of Jacques Hébert helped relax the tensions and our seasonal celebration became a very beautiful memory.

Since her early days with CWY, Joanne has become mother to twin daughters and a son. Her partner, André, is also a CWY alumnus. After several years bringing up her family, Joanne has returned to work, managing a women’s literacy program at the Y in Montreal. Most of her course participants are from developing countries. Joanne believes that the person she has become is inextricably linked to her CWY experiences.
In Ottawa, our main work project was painting the Ottawa Youth Hostel. I also worked at Carrefour, a boys and girls club, and helped organize a flea market to raise funds for the kids. My second Canadian project was in Saint-François-de-Madewaska, where we helped cut wood, repair fences and harvest Christmas trees on local farms.

In Costa Rica, we carried out a land survey of downtown Tilarán, and worked at a nutrition centre, feeding kids and tending the garden. At a second project, in Santiago de Puriscal, we assisted in schools and worked with local sports groups.

In the early days of the program, we had more than one counterpart. Auxiliadora Salgado came with me to my family at Christmas, and I got to know all of her family on numerous visits to her community in Costa Rica. I visited my second counterpart, William Barrantes, in Costa Rica a few years after the program, and I am also still in touch with a host family from Puriscal, my Group Leader and Country Coordinator, as well as some of the other Canadians from our team. Facebook has been a great resource!

It makes me smile to remember the surprise birthday party we organized for Leo Holthysen. On the way home it began to snow, and when our mini-van dropped me off at my host family’s farm, it got stuck in a snow drift. In the course of trying to free it, we ran out of gas! It meant that five more people had to bunk down for the night but, like so many CWY host families, mine was extremely gracious about it and welcomed one and all.

CWY changed the way I look at the world and the people in it. “Brothers and sisters we learned to be, all together in one family” (an excerpt taken from a song Kenneth wrote during CWY). I enjoy meeting people from elsewhere and learning about their ways of life. I have become much more open and sympathetic to what makes us different, and marvel at our similarities.

After CWY, Kenneth studied anthropology and international development at university before working with co-operatives and then a development education centre in Medicine Hat. He has also worked as a Group Leader with CWY in Ecuador, and taught English across Canada and overseas in both Nicaragua and China. His love for, and interest in, languages was one of the direct impacts of his CWY experience. It has enabled him to maintain fluency in his second and third languages over the years. Kenneth is currently employed at the Canada Revenue Agency in Calgary.
This was my first opportunity to live outside Hampton, Nova Scotia, a small village of less than 100 people. I’d never been exposed to big-city life in Canada, let alone travelled to a developing country, and I had no idea what to expect. Culture shock would be a good way to describe what went on in my head, as I experienced successive placement opportunities in Edmonton, Alberta, Middleton, Nova Scotia, and then both rural and urban Colombia. I thought I’d grown up in a poor family, but I had never witnessed the kind of poverty I saw in South America.

Memories are flooding back. There’s the time I was bumping along in the back of a jeep in the mountains of Colombia and my companions captured a spider the size of my hand, or the day I watched street children playing with a scorpion. Another time, I tried to help a tired old man carry a log uphill. I quickly ran out of steam due to the heat and altitude, so he politely thanked me for my efforts, popped a few coca leaves in his mouth and carried on.

Perhaps my most abiding memory is of a family living in a cave-like home on the side of the mountain. We’d visited them to help chip away at the rock to try and expand their limited living space. We’d taken them some canned milk and, poor as they were, they returned the favour in kind with fruit they’d picked in the jungle.

CWY not only offered me a road to explore outside of rural Nova Scotia, but also introduced me to new friends to take on the journey. Being part of a group gave me the courage and security to go beyond my boundaries.

As a result of his CWY experience, Bob worked as a group leader for Katimavik in Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland. He then went back to school to work with people who have disabilities. Over the past 25 years, Bob has taught Karate through the YMCA to more than 1,000 students. An active member of his new Glasgow community, he has held senior executive positions with Rotary, Kinsmen, a Credit Union and Landview Housing Co-op. Bob currently works as Executive Director for Summer Street, creating opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.
For the first part of our program, we stayed on The Sturgeon Lake Reserve outside Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. One of our projects was to prepare a survey to assess needs and concerns regarding health services on the Reserve. We spoke with as many families as possible before compiling a written report that we gave to the Chief and Band Council. Very few Canadians ever have the opportunity to visit, let alone live with, a First Nations community. The experience gave me insight into Aboriginal life that has forever stayed with me.

Before joining CWY, I had never travelled outside Canada, so meeting people and living with them in rural Philippines was mind changing for me. This experience gave all of us the opportunity to know these people as individuals and family members. We were able to understand how their lives ran day to day, and see how content many of them were with the little they had. Working at a Feeding Centre in Pangasinan province, I understood the extent of the health and nutrition issues in that area and witnessed the double-edged role of the multinationals in providing products for the women and children. It was an experience that would change my outlook on how aid is used in underdeveloped areas.

Living with families in Calasiao and Ambutel taught me about new foods, living in a nipa hut, doing without the privileges we were used to. But, more than anything, I learned that people are similar everywhere. The majority only want to be able to work and earn enough of a wage to provide comfort for their families.

CWY was the best thing that ever happened to me. It gave me firsthand experience, insight and understanding, so I have encouraged my children to take part in the program. My daughter Katie went to Mozambique last year, and Meagan to Peru. I only wish every young Canadian could share in the CWY experience! It is an opportunity that changes you, and the communities you live in, forever!

After the insight that CWY gave her into health issues, Mary became a registered nurse. While single, she lived and worked all across Canada, from Prince Rupert to Newfoundland. She used her CWY youth experience to give her the confidence to backpack extensively around the world. While working in Labrador, she met her husband. Married for 23 years, they have three children—Katie 22, Meagan 21 and Marc 19. They now live in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, and Mary works in the emergency department for Labrador Grenfell Health.
My CWY Program involved agriculture and community development volunteer work in Nova Scotia and Sulawesi. I grew up in a Ukrainian-Canadian family on a farm in Vegreville, Alberta—a town with a population of 6,000 and only one Asian family. It was a major step to travel to Eastern Canada and an even bigger leap to explore Indonesia. Many of us were away from home for the first time—learning to live and work in harmony—and in Sulawesi we had our first experience of Muslim culture. In our host community of Baranti, many of the older Indonesians assumed we were Dutch, and had no idea where Canada was. We often found ourselves explaining what it means to be Canadian.

In May of 2011, I headed back to Baranti during a trip to Indonesia for a CWY reunion. We drove from Makassar to Tana Toraja, a UNESCO World Heritage site, stopping briefly along the way in Baranti to take some photos and to see what had changed. While chatting with a young mother and her friend, we were surrounded by children, neighbours and a government official. But the most memorable moment was still to come, when the head of the village said he remembered our group. I was in disbelief until he described a member of our CWY team. He then pointed out the neighbouring gravel road—called Jalan Canada in our honour—and memories of working on its construction came flooding back. I was totally overwhelmed, and so happy to have made the long journey from Canada.

To live with people who had so few material goods but such a rich lifestyle and community really left an impact on me. In many ways the CWY Program has provided me with the inspiration to become the global citizen I am today. I feel comfortable living and travelling in other countries, and will continue to search for real cultural experiences far beyond the parameters of the typical tourist.

CWY gave Marg the impetus to explore the world and get to know other cultures by straying far from the beaten path. Marg’s journeys have included an exchange in Australia, a co-op program in Japan, hiking the Inca trail, exploring Mynamar, Bhutan, China, Malaysia, Brunei and Mexico, as well as Iceland, the Ukraine and several other European countries. She has taught ESL to international students both in Japan and Canada. Marg currently administers programs with the Centre for Intercultural Communication at the University of British Columbia and teaches Intercultural Communication to Asian students.
I was fresh out of high school when I joined the Quebec-Haiti exchange in 1978. In Canada, I volunteered in a grocery cooperative in Sherbrooke and in Haiti, I taught English at a local school in Pilate. I also planted coffee, dug trenches, filled out agricultural loan applications, roasted coffee beans and made peanut butter.

The biggest revelation of my trip to Haiti was seeing how hard people work. A Haitian farmer hacking away at rocky soil works way harder than I ever have, and this forced me to think about what was keeping him poor. I’ll also never forget the day the army was helicoptered into our village to “correct” an election result. It opened my eyes to how many people have to fight for the basic rights and freedoms we take for granted in Canada.

I was very lucky that my work took me back to Pilate. We hear many stories of tragedy in Haiti, and some things were worse after 25 years. There was much more erosion on the hillsides. The school I taught in was in ruins. HIV/AIDS had killed many people. But many positive things had happened too. The military barracks—site of the fraudulent election count while we were there—is now a civilian police station. The market has a roof. The coffee cooperative is still going strong. The streets are cobbled. People have cell phones and motorbikes. The Canadian nuns who run the hospital are working as hard as ever with a dedication I can only aspire to.

At the time of this visit, our two sons had already graduated from high school, and my wife and I thought we’d done our job as parents. I don’t know if it was God, the power of the universe, karma or serendipity that introduced me to an orphan there, ten years younger than our own sons. After a lot of paperwork and tense waiting, we finally adopted him in 2008.

I know many, many people are going to say this, but CWY changed my life. It made me a better citizen of Canada. It opened my eyes to the global village. It encouraged me to do more for others.

After teaching secondary school for six years, Darren joined the Foreign Service. For the past 20 years, he’s worked mostly for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). His previous job was as Canada’s High Commissioner to Ghana, and he’s currently CIDA’s Vice-President for Partnerships with Canadians.
I grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan, encouraged to be as open and non-judgmental as possible. My CWY experience in Bangladesh and Cape Breton led me to a deeper acceptance of other belief systems, religions and cultures.

Since becoming a teacher, I have drawn extensively on my CWY exchange. Through the Health, Education and Livelihood Project (HELP) my students have helped pilot innovative global education programs. In 2007 we planted trees and tested their growth rates using waste as tree mulch. We have also helped create environmentally friendly brick, roof tiles, fibre board, milled paper and tree nursery seedling bags from waste plastic. To date, close to 2,000 students have participated in the program.

CWY deepened my understanding of the interdependence of all elements and life forms. This is why I believe so strongly that we must work together as one people, no matter what our individual beliefs and backgrounds, to ensure a just and sustainable world for all. I am happy to say that the community school our CWY group helped build in the village of Dhaka is still in use today.

Laurel completed degrees in French, Sociology, English and French Immersion Methodology and Education at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S). As a student, she took on leadership roles for the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), marketing handicrafts from 23 countries, and partnering with a Malaysian student to bring twenty ethnic groups to the stage at the U of S Folk Festival. In 1986, Laurel participated in the WUSC Ile Maurice international seminar. She also led major fundraising initiatives so that a refugee student from Uganda could continue his medical studies in Canada. All this typified the commitment and professionalism she would continue to bring to volunteer service.

Laurel began teaching in 1987, and is deeply involved in global education. On behalf of HELP, she spearheaded an evolutionary design of international development and ecology camps. She was a session presenter at both the 2005 Making Peace with the Earth Conference in Regina and the 2006 National Middle Schools Annual Conference in Houston. In 2011, Laurel and her students will create a series of short videos for the national Kaleidoscope Real World Video Challenge. She has begun her Master’s in Education and is writing a thesis on The Power of Global Education in the Classroom.

Inspired and shaped by her time with CWY, Laurel’s unusual achievements, her commitment and her unique sensibilities have changed the lives of many students. She works tirelessly behind the scenes in program design, fund-raising and programming to create world class education, in which students are given the tools to change the world.
The transformational potential of the CWY program owes much to the age of participants. The exchange creates an opportunity for young people to step out of the unquestioned familiar into a supportive environment which can help give context to issues of injustice, poverty and conflict. Through personal experience and engagement, CWY introduced us to the global dimensions of these problems—issues that I consider to be the most pressing confronting us today. As a result, our attitudes and values veered magnetically towards those that recognize and oppose injustice, that celebrate and explore cultural difference and that I would describe as “radical hospitality,” inclusiveness and tolerance.

Personally, the experience defined the direction I have followed for the rest of my life. After the program, I travelled in South Asia for a year and then completed undergraduate degrees in Asian Studies and Political Science in Ottawa. Further academic study culminated in a PhD at Cornell in Government and Peace Studies. As a direct result of my CWY experience, I knew that whatever the theories or data I studied, I was working in the realm of the lives, livelihoods and deaths of children, women and men.

Following my doctoral research, I returned to Sri Lanka for a variety of governance and development projects with a broad spectrum of actors—from local representatives to bilateral and multilateral organizations. I worked throughout the island on a wide range of projects and programs, including human rights monitoring missions, advising the British Government on its Peace and Development Program and conducting research on the politics of ethnicity and violence.

For the last two years, Kenneth has served as research director for the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. Prior to that he was a tenured Associate Professor in the MA Program in Conflict Studies at St. Paul University in Ottawa, having been recruited back from Geneva to help found the program. The curriculum he developed and the courses he taught benefited in very direct ways from his formative experiences with CWY. Kenneth has served on the ethics review boards for faculty and graduate research in both Ulster and Ottawa. For two years, he was a special advisor on humanitarian issues while Canada served on the UN Security Council. Kenneth credits the ability to bungee jump between the harsh realities on the ground in the Global South and the sometimes surreal realities in New York, Geneva and Ottawa in no small part to the grounding he received during his CWY experience.
I grew up in Anglo-Saxon Toronto with my Canadian mother, Cuban, Spanish-speaking father and a healthy dose of early urban cross-cultural exposure. During my CWY experience in the early eighties, I was shocked by the level of poverty in Indonesia. I returned home knowing that I wanted to have a hand in alleviating this, and to become engaged in international development somewhere, somehow.

Our CWY home in Indonesia was a fishing village. I have never eaten fish and squid as delicious as the fresh wok-fried or charcoal-baked ones we had there. We lived in wooden huts on stilts by the shores of the South China Sea, like a photo out of National Geographic. This was in sharp contrast to the human drama that was continuing to unfold around us, as people fled Vietnam after the war of the late seventies. Many were literally washing up on the shores of Sumatra, where our CWY group was located. I’ll never forget seeing the NGO staff at work during the crisis. I could sense both the dedication and the excitement of being on the front lines in the face of these kinds of international issues. It is very gratifying to now be doing similar work myself.

I remember returning to Canada and being absolutely paralysed for minutes in front of an endless display of different kinds of toothpaste. The ridiculous illusion of choice between identical products with different packaging still catches my attention.

My time with CWY was an exciting, formative and positive catalyst for my personal growth as a 19-year-old, and for my professional career development over the last 30 years. My CWY exchange gave me the life-long goals and values that are associated with voluntary service, cross-cultural learning and community development.

As an Ontario high school teacher and university program coordinator from 1989-2006, Gonzalo led students in volunteer service and cross-cultural learning programs in soup kitchens, community gardens, art studios, hospitals, prisons, low-income neighbourhoods, senior centres, L’Arche communities and Habitat for Humanity. In the nineties, he organized volunteer service learning trips to Central and South America. As a result of his passion for educational travel, he co-founded Compañeros Inc., a social enterprise that organizes and facilitates service learning experiences and international community development projects. Gonzalo now lives and works in Managua, Nicaragua, as the full-time director of Compañeros Inc., which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2011.
As a Canadian of Jamaican heritage, I was the only black member of my exchange. Sometimes I found it hard to adapt, and was not always able to share my feelings with staff and my fellow participants. When I was in Rogersville, New Brunswick, I didn't see anyone from a visible minority for the two months I was there. I only realized the impact of this later, when I saw a black man on the street in Moncton. I was so excited that I ran over to say hello.

My CWY exchange was an opportunity to experience other cultures, attitudes and values, but my heartache, culture shock and homesickness were uniquely different while in New Brunswick. Oddly, I was more at home in Bolivia, where I was embraced and favoured because of my colour. My counterpart explained to me that there were few blacks in the country, and the respect and attention I was receiving was because of people's empathy about slavery.

As a woman from a racialized minority, I have since shared my feelings with the young people I encourage to participate in the CWY program. By preparing them for this culture shock I am able to help them make informed decisions about how they make use of their experience.

CWY allowed me to build my confidence. Engaging with youth of other minority groups across the world strengthened me. I have a strong respect for exchanges and their influence on the young mind. When I began this journey, I was fresh out of high school with no goals or ideas about my future career paths. CWY introduced me to my own potential, opened my eyes to possibilities and helped me make the right choices.

CWY provided Tracy with the incentive to embark on post-secondary education and sparked her interest in community development, which she has pursued in all aspects of her education, employment and volunteer life. She started a non-profit organization called It’s In Me Education and Training Programs, creating opportunities for at-risk children and youth, and developing community partnerships for success. Currently, Tracy works for Toronto Community Housing in the downtown core as a Youth Engagement Coordinator. She encourages young people to become involved in the CWY Program knowing the effect it will have on their future lives.
In Manitoba, I worked at the Farmers Coop, serving at the gas bar and dealing with merchandise and customer service. In Indonesia, our group undertook a variety of community infrastructure programs, such as painting a mosque and repairing roads. Although I’d expected the volunteer work to be the emphasis of our CWY program, it was the cultural exchange that created so much value. I grew up with work as a primary focus, with culture a distant second—maybe it didn’t even make the list. As a result of my CWY experience, I now reflect on, and appreciate, the richness of other cultures, and know that when you put different people together, you can have a great IMPACT… and great times!

Our CWY group leaders did a great job helping me realize when I was dealing with culture shock, and how to get over it. Their compassion and patience was impressive, and their advice has since helped me as I navigate the world of international development.

CWY set me on my career track, a life devoted to international development. The experience of CWY in Indonesia nearly 30 years ago helped me decide what to do with my life—no regrets!

The experience with CWY has also helped me appreciate the needs and aspirations of young people who approach CARE Canada today looking for volunteer, work, or other types of engagement with our organization. I know where they are coming from, and thus look hard to try to find a way to get them involved. After all, it was CWY who took me on almost 30 years ago, and if I can help start the next generation on their way, I will have given something back like that which was given to me.

Kevin is a constant traveller, who has made a career in international development, having lived and worked in over 50 different countries over the years. After graduating from the University of Toronto he lived and worked with World University Service of Canada and CARE Canada in Mali, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Between postings, he makes his home in Ottawa. Kevin completed an Executive MBA (Queens University) in 2005, is currently President and CEO of CARE Canada and on the Boards of CARE International, Imagine Canada and the Humanitarian Coalition.
I belonged to a feminist group in Cégep, so I found my values greatly tested when I arrived in Somalia, a predominantly Muslim country. I can still remember my reactions to the idea of female excision and infibulation. When I arrived, I had zero tolerance. As time passed, I opened my heart to this largely nomadic people, where poverty and lack of education were widespread, civil war had been raging for years and survival was the main preoccupation. Progressively, I learned to recognize their needs, beliefs and fears. Gradually I gained a greater respect for these people, and realized that, in the face of certain death, excision is the lesser evil.

My counterpart, Omar, was a 25-year-old father of four. Our mutual respect and curiosity overcame language difficulties, and we were able to communicate well. Once we got to Somalia, Omar unexpectedly assumed the position of group leader. Without my counterpart, it was almost impossible to cross the village alone without people shouting or throwing things at me. Women were not permitted to walk alone. When the villagers put pressure on my host family, my volunteer work placement switched to the local primary school.

At the age of 20, I realized that CWY had completely changed my world vision. Today, at 47, I know that this program did a lot more than that. It changed my life’s direction.

France has worked in education and social services, with the handicapped, victims of domestic violence, young people with learning difficulties and troubled youth. For 10 years she promoted the French language in Alberta, helping establish a preschool and primary school, a resource centre, cultural activities and the French-Canadian Association. In everything she has done, CWY has opened doors for her and informed her work. Her CWY heritage has taught her tolerance in the face of difference, as well as respect for human nature. Through her work she has shared these qualities with others. Currently, she is an education specialist for the Montreal School Board, and is completing a baccalaureate in social work at the University of Quebec in Montreal. She is mother to three girls between the ages of 11 and 20.
In Canada, I volunteered on a farm in rural Nova Scotia. In Bolivia, I planted potatoes in the Andes Mountains at about 12,000 feet. Both were tremendous experiences that radically changed my perspective and understanding of Canada and the world generally. Because our group leader was unable to complete our trip in Bolivia due to an injury, I stepped into his role on a temporary basis. This also provided a great leadership opportunity for me.

I grew up in Toronto, so moving to rural Nova Scotia and to a town with a population of less than 1,000 people was a huge change and challenge. I was prepared for the massive cultural differences between Canada and Bolivia, but I was not nearly as prepared for the equally large differences in Canada. I quickly realized what a vast and interesting country Canada is. I loved my Nova Scotia experience so much that I went back to Dalhousie Law School, where I spent three years in Halifax. It is there that I met my wife, another reason I am very grateful to CWY.

I was very close with my counterpart, and with my host family in Nova Scotia. Coincidentally, their son was in my law school class several years later. It’s a small world.

The exchange I did in 1985 with CWY was an eye-opening experience, and was the catalyst for me to pursue an international career. It has given me a global perspective, and a much greater appreciation for Canada. I really struggled with taking a year off between high school and university but, looking back, I know it was the best thing I could have ever done. I am still very grateful 26 years later.

David has been practising corporate law for the last 20 years. Most of his time has been spent in Singapore as the managing partner of Millbank, a large New York law firm. David is cited as being one of the world’s leading Private Equity Lawyers in the International Financial Law Review Expert Guide, and is also cited in the 2005 Leading Lawyers Survey as one of Asia’s leading business lawyers in Project Finance. Singapore has been his family’s home for over 14 years. He credits CWY with his global outlook and desire for regular interaction with, and exposure to, different cultures and countries.
Arnold Blackstar and his two sisters have all taken part in CWY exchange programs, spanning two years, two countries and two provinces. While Arnold and Karen took part in the CWY Colombia and Manitoba exchanges, their sister Norine participated in the Costa Rica and Ontario exchange. All of Cree descent from the Moosomin First Nation, Saskatchewan, their first language is Cree Y dialect. They all view their CWY experiences as the catalyst for the paths they have taken in life and work.

Arnold: During my CWY experience I learned about the similarities and struggles that unite Indigenous peoples of Colombia and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In both countries, we have common experiences of colonialism, racism, marginalization and, in some cases, genocide. Across the world, Indigenous peoples struggle for distinctive rights, autonomy, cultural survival and economic prosperity.

CWY challenged my perceptions of the world, and placed responsibility on me to make it a better place for myself, my community and my peoples. As an adult, CWY has shaped my education, career and volunteer choices.

Karen: Four years after taking part in CWY, I went back to Colombia and Ecuador. I so love the richness of the culture and language in South America. I have many wonderful memories of the time I spent with other CWY participants, and we would often laugh over cultural confusions—like one of the Colombians in our group mistaking gravy for soup when eating Canadian food for the first time!

Norine: My sister and I applied at the same time and were both accepted. My experiences in Costa Rica and Ontario were unforgettable, and the program taught me much about the value of cultural awareness, community development and interpersonal skills. Through CWY, I discovered the importance of communicating and working together as a group.

Since returning from the CWY program, Arnold received Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Law degrees from the University of Saskatchewan. He has worked in Aboriginal policing, community and restorative justice, peacekeeping, intellectual property, mediation and alternative dispute resolution. He has also taught high school. On June 25, 2011, members of the 1986 Colombia-Manitoba exchange convened a Skype video conference to mark the 25th anniversary of their CWY program. Arnold’s life has brought him back once again to CWY, and he now works as Director of Program Support at the Montreal head office.

In 1992, Karen graduated with a Bachelor of Indian Social Work from Saskatchewan Indian Federated College–University of Regina. For the past 18 years, she has worked primarily with families and children in the field of Child Welfare. She feels passionate about her work, and likes to advocate on behalf of children’s rights to achieve equal standards of care, protection and services as defined under the United Nations Rights of the Child.

In 1991, Norine graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College–University of Regina, a Bachelor of Education and a Master’s degree in Education from the University of Saskatchewan. For the past 21 years Norine has taught various grades in the Saskatoon Public School Division. She is dedicated to First Nations education teaching methodologies and preserving Indigenous learning styles. Norine lives in Saskatoon with her husband, Ken, and two sons, Bradley and Troy.
Born in the US and raised in Ontario, I grew up in a protected, white, middle-class environment. It was certainly eye-opening to get to know people from across Canada and Brazil. I had a hunger to see the world, experience what was different and how others lived—to understand the causes of poverty and environmental degradation. It wasn’t until I returned home that I really understood the full effect of my travels. As I was presenting slides to my family’s congregation, I found myself more shocked by the images of poverty in northeastern Brazil than I had been when I lived there.

During the Quebec portion of my exchange, our work placement was at a small recycling factory in Thetford Mines. After working on the collection truck and sorting paper, glass and plastic, my counterpart and I designed promotional and educational materials. In the small village of Pacoti, we worked in a 40-bed hospital, giving medication and helping take care of patients. The placements gave us the opportunity to understand our environment and integrate into the communities we lived in. I still have the feeling that I have an insider’s knowledge of those places.

While the start of my relationship with my counterpart can only be described as tumultuous, we learned to understand and respect each other’s differences. By the end we were getting along well. When we arrived in Brazil, visited her village and were in her familiar surroundings, she seemed to relax, and I saw a very different side of her. I also have vivid memories of my group and group leaders—so many colourful personalities.

While I was living in Brazil, my entire host family slept in one room, with the grandmother in a hammock and others on the floor. They did this so that my counterpart and I could share a bedroom with two beds. I felt honoured and humbled. Hopefully, my experiences with CWY have made me a wiser, more tolerant and compassionate person.

Since taking part in her CWY Program in 1987, Beth travelled to Benin with other CWY ex-participants, and volunteered in support of rural cooperatives. Driven by her CWY experiences, she has written a guide to socially responsible food choices in Montreal, worked on an organic farm and co-founded an environmental organization called Equiterre. Beth has also completed a Master’s in Rural Economics, researched food security and dietary diversity in Lebanon and coordinated a campaign for sustainable seafood in Canadian supermarkets. She now works for a family foundation.
I’ve experienced CWY several ways throughout my life. Before the program, when I dreamed about it. During the program, when I lived it with every fibre of my being. Directly after the program, when I took Hindi courses at McGill University, working at the reception of CWY’s head office before resuming my Cégep studies. Thirteen years later, spending two marvellous years working for the NetCorps coalition, creating information and computer technology internships in developing countries. Finally, lending my voice, name and image to promote the CWY program because I believe so strongly in its benefits.

When I travelled to India with CWY, people had nothing and everything. The country was economically underdeveloped, but family and social groups were solid as a rock. I remember the religious broadcast on Sundays. Everyone in the village without a TV came to my host family’s house. It was unbelievable—50 people coming together to watch a TV program! Until I went to India, I’d never seen a wedding that went on for three days, where the whole village seemed to have been invited. Through this rich, intense and sometimes equally frustrating experience, I realized the extent to which I come from a culture of individualists. This was so different from what I was used to.

I remember too the concentrated smells—the perfume of flowers and spices. And the intensity of fresh flavours, like a pea fresh from the pod. In India, cooking is quite simply seasonal. It was also in India that I discovered recycling. Nothing is wasted. Shower water was used to wash the floor, vegetable scraps for the neighbour’s cow, writing paper to wrap lunch, evening leftovers for breakfast—and human warmth to keep out the cold of winter’s night (in a cement house in northern India without insulation or heating, girls slept together like sardines).

For me, CWY put life in perspective. Ever since, I’ve looked at things differently.

Shortly after CWY, Stéphanie had twins, Daphné and Cybèle, who are now 21. While they were young, she completed a Master of Arts, following which she created a series of installations (JE SUIS MORTE) in Toronto and Montreal. In 1996, she produced her first short film, distributed in Famous Players cinemas throughout Canada. In 1998, Stéphanie met François Pouliot and embarked with him on what was to become a wonderful life project: “La Face Cachée de la Pomme”, a quebecois cidery which has received more than 80 international prizes, and the products are now appreciated in more than twenty countries. Since then, she has participated in the development of product commercialisation and brand of the cidery. In 2008, she began her collaboration with VISITE LIBRE (Télé-Québec and ARTV), creating designer furniture and accessories on a budget.
Coming from a mixed Judeo-Christian background, it wasn’t so much that CWY challenged my cultural values—rather it broadened my horizons. Being immersed in a developing, moderate Islamic country was an eye-opening and extremely positive experience, especially as it was my first time abroad, apart from a few childhood trips to the States. My time in Indonesia also brought me to question my understanding of what international development really means. I don’t think any other experience in my life has impacted me so profoundly.

I had a strong relationship with my counterpart, and we became a support system for each other throughout the program. Although we have lost touch, I have been in contact with other participants via Facebook, and we still relive some of the memories of our time together over two decades ago. I also still communicate with my host mother and her family.

I’ll never forget my experience at a Javanese transmigration camp, where I tried to use an outdoor toilet during a high profile dinner. I squatted on a log that turned out to be rotten, and fell into a stream of open sewage. After a thorough shower I eventually sat down to dinner, and much laughter.

From CWY, I gained cross-cultural and communication skills that were deeply influential and highly valuable in later travel experiences. These skills also served me when teaching English as a Foreign Language in Japan and English as a Second Language in London, England, working mainly with refugees and asylum seekers from the global South. However, the greatest impact of my CWY experience was the realization (thanks to my outstanding group leader) that sustainable development is inherently political, and tied to vested economic interests. This awareness has had a profound influence on my career path, and is now central to the focus of my PhD studies, which bring together theories and insights from political ecology and ecological economics to analyze and critique the dominant interpretation of sustainable development.

As a result of the deep impact of her CWY experiences, Hali has helped develop an online course called Ecological Economics from the Bottom Up, part of a project run by the Civil Society Engagement with ECological Economics (CEECEC), funded by the European Commission and enabling civil society organisations to engage in and lead collaborative research with ecological economists. She is now also a PhD student in Political Ecology at King’s College in London, England.
Andrew: I have such fond memories of a Christmas Day picnic with my host family. We sat under a bridge by a river and played soccer on the burning sand. I'll never forget the first time some real gauchos rode into my life, and how much I was in awe of the sight. My counterpart, Erwin, comes to mind whenever I hear anything by Tracy Chapman—he was always asking me to explain the lyrics of her songs. And then there were the pre-lent carnival dances! We'd milk the cows in the early evening, eat a little supper, head into town at midnight and dance until dawn to the sounds of cumbia and tango.

My CWY exchange burst my suburban bubble, opening my eyes to the realities of other communities in Canada and abroad. I am very proud to have participated.

Natacha: Leaving Canada for several months with CWY changed my life forever. My time away shattered my vision of reality, giving me a new appreciation for everything I’d taken for granted before. And it deepened the pride I have for my Acadian heritage. Also, of the many things I learnt on that small farm in South America, I’m particularly proud of my ability to milk a cow!

I developed a wonderful friendship with Carolina, my Uruguayan counterpart—a very wise and special person. She visited Canada after the exchange, and we wrote to each other for several years before losing contact. I was so excited when she found me again recently on Facebook. Social media has been great for reconnecting with past CWY participants.

Following his farming adventures in Aigua, Andrew joined his brother Jim, Ed Robertson and Steven Page in the early days of The Barenaked Ladies. The Brothers Creeggan have since toured together, and Andrew has also released three solo albums (Andiwork). He has a degree in composition from McGill University. Natacha trained in musical therapy in Vancouver and Montreal, and studied paediatric medicine at the University of Sherbrooke. Returning to her Acadian roots, she is now a paediatrician at the Moncton hospital where she was born. Andrew and Natacha were married in 1999 and have two sons, Oscar and Leo. They dream of going back to Uruguay with their boys, who they hope one day will also experience the magic of the CWY Program.
The concept of time, the rhythm of life and the approach to work in Ghana were very different from the North American ways that I was used to. I became frustrated about the pace of our progress until I sat down to talk with our project leader, Bernard Pelletier, who encouraged me to stop and think. Had I come to Ghana to do everything my way? Was I so stubborn that I couldn’t explore other ideas, other concepts of time? Thank you, Bernard—you helped me grow enormously, and part of me remains Ghanaian to this day. When I find it hard to finish what I’m working on, instead of stressing out, I simply slow down.

I got on really well with my counterpart, Steven Kwasi Bonny. He was a potter, and I loved to watch him make his ceramics. While I cranked the potter’s wheel, Steven would teach me English. It still makes me smile to think of a French-Canadian learning English in a Ghanaian pottery.

I remember going to the beach one day with the whole CWY group, and finally getting the chance to body surf. After several mouthfuls of salt water I felt ready to confront a wave. I launched myself a little too early and ended up grazing the sea floor. When I surfaced, I realized I had scraped my forehead and, by the look on his face, worried Steven. Thanks to the salt water this little adventure didn’t leave me with any scars, and taught me the importance of risk assessment!

CWY taught me to relax in the face of challenges and find flexible solutions. Working in group situations, I learned to assess and express my frustrations calmly and rationally. Running my own business, I draw on my CWY experience in my interactions with employees, who are all entitled to their opinions and to my respect.

A search and rescue specialist since he first started living in Western Canada in 1993, Stéphan worked for a ski patrol in British Columbia from 1998 to 2004. Since 2005, Stéphan has lived in the Yukon capital of Whitehorse, where he owns a construction and renovation company and teaches avalanche safety courses. For many of his search and rescue years he shared his job with a German shepherd cross called Zack, who once saved a nine-year-old boy, lost in dense forest at Great White Ski Resort. Zack’s career came to an end in 2007, and Stéphan’s alpine partner is buried on Log Cabin Mountain, on the border between British Columbia and the Yukon.
My host community in Quebec was beautiful Maria in the Gaspésie, and in Tunisia I lived in Tozeur, a town built around an oasis on the edge of the Sahara desert. The handbook we received at orientation asked us to consider our “cultural goggles”. I really had no idea what this meant. But, as I progressed through the exchange, I had many experiences that laid bare my frequent assumptions. I recall being frustrated by the apparently haphazard organization of streets in Tozeur. I thought the approach was inferior and unthoughtful compared to the grid system I was used to. I would later learn that this set up was deliberate, to prevent the advance of blowing sand.

I think I learned the most during the program via my relationships with my team and my counterpart. We were very close and lucky to have extremely skilled and sensible group leaders who created a positive environment for the group. My counterpart was an older and wiser person who, unlike me, had faced a good deal of adversity in his life. His generosity was exceptional.

I have many magical, vivid memories of Tunisia. Cross-country skiing in the desert, feeling the surprising coolness and silky texture of the sand. Sitting in a cafe in the oasis at night watching steam rise from the natural spring waters as moonlight framed the edges of the palm trees. Returning back to Tozeur after a long hike in the desert just as the call to prayer sounded on the first day of Ramadan. That night, I walked through the empty streets and returned home to a wonderful feast.

Almost twenty years out, I think my CWY experience remains the most formative year of my life. It helped me understand who I am and my place in the world, recharged my excitement about school and learning and gave me a sense of confidence and maturity I didn’t have before.

Jason works as a psychiatrist in Halifax in the teaching hospitals affiliated with Dalhousie University. His CWY experience gave him the confidence to seek out training in bilingual Montreal, so he can now offer patients service in either official language. It has also helped him be interculturally effective, working in many cross-cultural situations, especially with patients from diverse communities. He hopes to have an opportunity to work internationally and give his three children the chance to live in a new cultural environment.
I come from a small, largely Catholic, mining town in British Columbia, and CWY gave me my first opportunity to experience a very different reality. Living in a Muslim culture and experiencing Ramadan with an Egyptian family meant that I witnessed, and came to respect, a lot of different perspectives on religion, gender, work and education. My counterpart, Sahar, became like a sister to me and, though she now lives a very conservative Muslim life with her Saudi husband, we are still in touch. Following my own experience, my sister was so curious about CWY that she encouraged her then best friend, Thomas Laenen, to get involved with the British Columbia-Uruguay exchange. He came back a new man, and my sister fell in love. Their wedding was well attended by his team mates from both countries, and one of the Uruguayans is truly like family to us all now.

CWY has impacted me, my family, my career choice and the world around me. I improved my French and learned the basics of Arabic. I developed intercultural competencies that have been useful in all my subsequent employment settings. I acquired communication and team building skills, along with the knowledge that the best leaders are those who empower through respect and self-discipline. CWY gave me the courage to know I could change the world, and that I have the internal fortitude to be an agent of positive change.

CWY also taught me that we are multi-faceted creatures. So, inspired by my sons to become a hockey coach and yoga teacher, I have opened our family business teaching yoga to young elite hockey players. I have also recently expressed my interest in becoming a host family for a CWY exchange. This continued involvement speaks to the impact of the program.

Paula has a Bachelor’s degree in International Studies, a Master’s Degree in South Asia Area Studies and a Master’s in Social Anthropology. She has worked for the Swedish Royal Technical University, the Stockholm School of Economics and began her public service career at the Canadian Embassy in Sweden. Paula has worked as Assistant Director, Montreal Airports, for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and was appointed to the Management team of Canada’s National Risk Assessment Centre (NRAC). She also served as CIC’s National Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) Coordinator, helped deliver the Canada-China Cooperation on the Management of Environmental Sustainability and managed Environment Canada’s Training and Learning Division of the Enforcement Branch.

Paula currently promotes trade to Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, where she is the Senior Desk Officer for West Africa, providing oversight for 14 countries.
Initially I wanted to do the CWY India exchange because I felt very strongly about discrimination against women. But, interacting with our Indian counterparts, I came to understand that we all face discrimination in different ways. I also learned to appreciate concepts like arranged marriage that I would never have accepted prior to this experience.

We lived in a village in India where the women were completely veiled. When we were building classrooms, a woman in full purdah joined our work crew, and she blew us all away. Even in full purdah, she worked faster and harder than all of us, and could carry 14 bricks at a time on her head. I have a beautiful photograph of her at work, which I used in all my school presentations.

By challenging my preconceptions—about the treatment of women, poverty, culture and ways of life—my CWY experience means I no longer see issues in simplistic black and white. I know now that any situation always contains nuances of grey. I have also come to understand that, once you have lived somewhere else and come to care about the people there, you are always conscious that seemingly distant world events are actually happening to real people in communities just like the one you visited.

A CWY experience makes clear the difference between head and heart learning. While it is fine to turn to a book to learn about and grasp things conceptually, it is only by being there, living it, having the reality fill your eyes and ears and nose that you will truly understand. Speaking with people and experiencing those different dimensions firsthand teaches you in a way that you will never forget.

I am in touch with three Canadian CWY participants, who I call my blood brothers and sisters. We have forged such a strong bond by sharing a tremendously challenging and amazing experience.

After CWY, Kelly took undergraduate courses in Geography and Environmental Studies, bringing her Indian experiences into many of her courses and assignments. She returned to India for two months on a scholarship with the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute to study international development. Later, she spent a year in Kenya working with the Aga Khan Foundation on a rural development program, before completing a Master’s in Public Administration. For the past three years Kelly has worked with a consulting firm evaluating international development programs, travelling to Africa and the Middle East on many occasions.
Born near Hong Kong in the former Portuguese territory of Macau, I came to Canada when I was three, and settled in Regina. While with CWY, I volunteered at the St Clair Watershed Conservation Authority in Ontario and on a community library build in the village of Kennalu, near Mysore. India was an excellent country to witness irony and honesty firsthand. Its remarkable diversity of religions, languages, cultures, castes and classes, along with its long history, revealed so many views of every controversial issue we discussed.

**CWY made me more confident of my values and attitudes. The diverse challenges and experiences allowed me to recognize my limits and gave me permission to explore, develop and continue to grow**—whether connecting with an older generation or developing language and living skills. With its inherently objective approach, CWY also highlighted the importance of reserving judgement—not just for the sake of tolerance—but also to allow time to understand an array of perspectives. **Because of CWY, I have been able to view relationships, work and life’s challenges from a multitude of angles.** My time in India gave me the knowledge that even seemingly unwavering attitudes in an individual, family, culture or country can change.

Since taking part in the CWY Program, Vivien completed her undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies. She then returned to India for six months to complete her internship in Bangalore. During this time, she was able to visit her host family often, attend her host brother’s wedding and travel to Mumbai and Delhi to meet up with some of the Indian participants from her CWY days. Vivien and her counterpart, Meena, have also been able to attend each other’s weddings since then, which she describes as priceless. Following her time in Bangalore, Vivien spent a year in Yellowknife working in the environmental field. She completed a Master’s in Environmental Design that twice took her to Southeast Asia to do research, spending a total of eight months immersed in Thai culture and language. On her return, she moved to Ottawa to work for the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development in the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. **Vivien currently works in International Affairs at Environment Canada.** Vivien and her husband live in Ottawa with the little boy they adopted from the Ukraine at the end of 2010. **She credits her ability to take on new, difficult and global challenges to the skills she acquired in CWY.**
My volunteer involvement in CWY spans more than a decade, and includes entrepreneurial work in Smiths Falls, school work in Kaliningrad and home work in Winnipeg, where my husband and I hosted two young women from the Manitoba-India program.

I grew up in a Franco-Manitoban family, and our francophone community was very much like a small town within a big city. Almost all of my classmates went to the same Catholic church as my family. One of the main impacts of the CWY program was to open my eyes to the world, and to help me appreciate everything I have as a Canadian. When I returned from Russia, I was blown away by how much food was available in our grocery stores.

During the first part of our program, I have vivid memories of taking long evening walks with my counterpart, Irina, in our rural community. Since my Russian was not very good, and she had been speaking English all day, Irina would teach me Russian pop songs while we were walking. When we arrived in Russia, the community hosted an event to welcome us. The entire CWY team was invited on stage in front of an audience of 150. With no translation, the Master of Ceremonies quickly announced in Russian that we would play a game. She continued to explain the rules and start the game without the Canadians really understanding what was happening. Somehow, I managed to tie for first place with one of the Russians. At this point, the MC told us that the crowd would decide who should be the winner, and it was our job to convince them. As she handed me the microphone, I froze. My Russian was nowhere near good enough to put together impromptu sentences! Thinking on my feet, I remembered one of the songs my counterpart had taught me, sang it to the crowd and, to my astonishment, I won. My prize? A stuffed mouse that very much resembled a rat!

CWY gave me an opportunity to travel in a very intimate way—staying with local families and working in the community. This gave me a desire to travel in other meaningful ways.

Since CWY, I have been fortunate to work and stay with locals in India, South Africa and Sénégal. I am now a Grade 4 French Immersion Teacher in Winnipeg, a wife and the mother of a wonderful one-year-old, Claire. I enjoy volunteering with immigrants and refugees—applying the skills and values that I learned from my CWY experience.
I was very lucky that the Canadian portion of my CWY experience took place on a dairy farm in Quebec, quite different from the Canada I knew in British Columbia. In Burkina Faso, I lived with an extended Muslim family and worked at a secondary school.

Soumaila, my counterpart, had never felt or seen snow, and probably never been anywhere colder than 15°C. As the leaves began to fall in Quebec and the temperature continued to drop, Soumaila became quite anxious, because we spent a considerable amount of time walking and working outside on the farm. He acquired a second insulated winter jacket, many tuques and a few pairs of gloves. When the first snow of the year arrived, we dressed up and went outside with our host family’s kids to make snowmen. Eventually, I convinced him to remove his glove and touch the snow with his bare hands. He shrieked and pulled back in shock and amazement, shaking his head and muttering “No, no, no.” We laughed about it later, but he never did it again. I appreciated his dramatic reaction to snow when I saw how comfortable he was in Burkina as the thermometer topped 45°C—a temperature that made me decidedly uncomfortable.

CWY taught me how very fortunate we are to live in Canada—how much more young Canadians have simply as a result of being born in Canada—and how we waste our considerable resources, which we seem to take for granted. My experience helped me recognize the opportunities and rights we enjoy. Privileges that are often not shared by people from developing nations. But more than this, I also learned about life’s quality—witnessing firsthand the importance that Burkinabés place on family, and how this produces a strong sense of belonging and attachment. When I returned home from Burkina, I was unprepared for the magnitude of the reverse culture shock. Compared to other nations, whose key concerns are food, shelter, health and personal safety, we Canadians appeared to be overly preoccupied by inconsequential issues.

Since volunteering with CWY, Matthew has also visited Australia, New Zealand, Barbados, Costa Rica, Peru and Bolivia, working as a biologist. He has a BSc in Marine Biology, and recently finished his Masters in Resource Management with a focus on Fisheries Science. He now works for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, specializing in Canadian species at risk of extinction. Matthew strongly believes that the CWY experience increases awareness of how lucky we are in Canada, creating more responsible global citizens who truly care about sustainable development.
Born in former Yugoslavia, I came to Canada at the age of 10. This first experience of cultural change opened my world to so many teachings, experiences and practices—and led me directly to CWY. Ironically, it was the Quebec component of my CWY program that was more challenging for me. It exposed me to a very different reality and expanded my view of Canada dramatically, evoking a sense of appreciation and intrigue.

In West Africa I found a lot more commonalities with my Yugoslavian culture. I was able to challenge my own identity by seeing myself in so many other people. As a foreigner, the greatest reward is to feel totally integrated into your host community. To take part in daily life, to dress alike, to work in the same way. In the Côte d’Ivoire, I never felt like a tourist. As a result of my CWY experience, I was able to deepen my knowledge and understanding of the country in a very meaningful way.

It is these early experiences with CWY that led me to work in the social services sector, and to focus on building both individual and community wellness. It is through my interest in the world and its diverse cultures that volunteering has become a very natural part of my life.

During my CWY program, I took part in a group community-building exercise. Having to work together to create a sustainable community taught me so much about our social tapestry—how I fit into it and how I want to contribute to it. CWY has given me a sense of being a part of something bigger than myself and made me aware of my responsibility to contribute to the wellness of the whole. It has shown me that when we work together we really can create miracles.

Since taking part in CWY, Snjezana has worked as a Shiatsu Therapist, as well as a facilitator and front-line youth worker in various communities in Toronto. One summer, she travelled to Bosnia Herzegovina to work with young war victims, offering therapeutic Shiatsu treatments in the camps. In 2007, she re-joined CWY as Volunteer and Alumni Assistant and Consultant, working in Ontario, Nunavut and Manitoba. As well as helping youth survivors of the war in former Yugoslavia, Snjezana has created and run her own mental health, self-empowerment and community re-integration program for former child soldiers in Colombia and at-risk youth in Toronto neighbourhoods. Without her CWY experience, she believes none of this would have happened.
Growing up, many of my friends were into crime and drugs, but I played baseball and skied competitively. Sport helped me escape a lot of peer pressure. My first international work experience came with the opportunity to coach skiing in Japan. I knew then that I wanted to see more of the world. The day I graduated university, I left for a year in New Zealand.

It was during my six-month internship with CWY in the Philippines that I started to think about how I could bring together my passions for sport and international community development. I couldn’t speak the language, but there was a basketball court in the centre of the village. I discovered that sport was a way of communicating with children and youth. Since then, I’ve been fortunate enough to build a career in international development through sport, having lived and worked in nine countries and travelled to more than 50 on behalf of organizations including the UN High Commission for Refugees and Commonwealth Games Canada (CGC).

As a CWY participant, I celebrated New Years in my tiny, mountainous host village of Sumadel, and remember thinking of the amazing celebrations that were taking place all over the world. At midnight, as I sat on a riverside rock in this remote village in the Mountain Province, I saw a single, unexpected red firework. The image has stayed with me ever since.

CWY taught me to be patient, flexible and adaptable. I also discovered the importance of listening, and the value of observing all that is taking place around me. My internship provided me with a unique opportunity to explore the field of global development—something I didn’t know existed prior to my work partnership program.

Carla studied Kinesiology at the University of Alberta and completed a Master’s in Sport and International Development through Memorial University of Newfoundland and the University of Peace in Costa Rica. She then spent three years working with the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, in Geneva, as their Sport for Refugee Coordinator. She is presently the Director of International Programs with CGC. Carla knows that when you bring out a Frisbee or a soccer ball, kids are immediately interested, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity or religion. Suddenly, you have an unbiased audience, ready to listen, ready to learn. Representing CGC, Carla works with partners to identify local needs and then supports the delivery of programs that make sense in their particular cultural context. Carla tells us that this is something she learned from her experience with CWY.
My involvement with CWY began at 16 with a high school Global Learner Program. This Global Learner Program married formal curriculum with experiential learning. We spent two and a half weeks in Costa Rica, living with host families and working in the Manual Antonio National Park. Our experience helped us gain a concrete understanding of environmental diversity and the effects of eco-tourism in the Monteverde Cloud rainforest.

The impact was deep, and I resolved to shape my own reality through what I understood the mission of CWY to be. I wanted to achieve personal transformation, to embrace and safeguard cultural roots and to learn through direct experience.

After completing my third year of undergraduate studies, I was accepted into a CWY Africa-Canada Eco-Leadership Program (ACELP) in Namibia and British Columbia. In British Columbia I worked in an outdoor French leadership program, and in Namibia I worked in the HIV/AIDS department of Otjiwarongo. In the process, I allowed a lot of new and important information into my worldview, and reclassified or deconstructed other modes of understanding. **The process is ongoing... and I am still unpacking this powerful experience.**

The relationship with my counterpart was one of the greatest blessings of the project. She was the youngest on the team, and I was one of the oldest, but I found in her a great sense of maturity. Afterwards, we kept in touch, exchanging packages of photos and life snippets, and we phoned each other on special days. With advancing technology, we now communicate via Skype and email. I also stay in touch with other participants and host family members on Facebook.

In the book, *Kadijah Goes to School*, Assim Hussain says: “A degree is just one form of education. Likewise, having *street knowledge* or *social knowledge* is just another form of education… Education is a struggle, sometimes it doesn’t come quickly or easily, education is constant, it’s all the time, every day.” My CWY experience has taught me the truth of these words.

Eleni returned to the University of Ottawa to complete her Honours Program in Social Science, applying the rich learning of her CWY field experience to her academic pursuits. She completed an internship program through the University of Panama in a remote Indigenous community called Embera Drua, in the Chagres National Park, where she worked to understand the positive and negative impacts of development and aid. Eleni now works in Montreal for CWY as a Program Administrative Assistant, playing a crucial role in coordinating the logistics for various CWY teams every year.
My passion for the outdoors came alive when I took part in a six-month CWY environmental leadership program in Costa Rica and Canada. My three months in Costa Rica were fantastic—a wonderful opportunity to learn another language and discover a different approach and culture. The second half of my program took place in my hometown in Nova Scotia. My counterpart and I used our experience in Costa Rica to deliver environmental education workshops to local summer camps, libraries, community groups and summer festivals. We were so excited about our message that we also designed a puppet show to highlight environmental issues. We were eager, self-directed and motivated young people, excited about making a difference.

One of the biggest lessons I learned from my experience with CWY is the necessity for young people to take responsibility for their own direction and learning. We have all this energy when we’re young, which can often be blocked because of systems that don’t maximize our potential. Frustration can lead to inaction, but I learned that there is always a way to reach our full potential by being self-directed.

My participation in CWY made me eager for new approaches and experiences and I continued to travel. I’m absolutely certain that it opened my eyes to new opportunities and helped me develop my own sense of identity. That extended period of time in a culture remote from my own gave me a more enriched outlook. Getting to know my host families, both here and in Costa Rica, gave me alternative perspectives so that I have a better understanding and greater respect for difference.

I want to emphasize how incredibly important CWY is in creating a sense of connection between people and making youth realize their own potential.

Since taking part in her CWY program, Johanna has travelled the world and gained a wealth of experience teaching in Korea, working for wilderness education programs, job creation programs for aboriginal youth at risk, organic farms… With literature as her first passion, she completed her BA in English Literature at the University of Toronto and her MA in English and Creative Writing at Concordia University in Montreal. She is currently completing her PhD in English Literature at the Université de Montréal. In 2010, Johanna won the prestigious Giller Prize for her book, The Sentimentalists. At 30, she is the youngest winner and the first debut novelist since 1999 to capture Canada’s most prestigious literary award. Johanna splits her time between Tuscon, Arizona, and Montreal.
Before my experience with CWY, I wasn’t particularly interested in learning about other cultures, apart from a rather far-fetched idea about travelling to Africa one day—the continent seemed so inaccessible and far from my own reality. An opportunity to participate in the CWY Program would completely change my perception of the African continent and the world in general. I discovered that the distance between people is much more psychological than real. By sharing daily life with Malians, I demystified my prejudices and learned to see my place in this world quite differently. I became confident of my ability to take action, and realized that a seemingly vast world is well within our grasp—as long as we are willing to accept what it can bring us.

My counterpart, Ibrahim, was like a brother to me—someone I could share everything with, good and bad. During the seven months we spent together, we were able to build ties that go way beyond superficial cultural prejudices. Not long after the program, Ibrahim returned to Canada to deepen his agricultural knowledge and to attend university. When he arrived, he stayed with me for six months, and we continued our CWY experience with my family. Since graduating, he has returned to Mali and is working for CIDA. I still consider him to be part of my family, and we will for sure continue to keep up with each other in the years to come.

On returning from Mali, Jean-Sébastien studied management and organizational development, and founded his own association, Iciéla, promoting cultural exchanges for young people. For seven years, Iciéla has mobilized hundreds of young people, organizing collective intercultural activities and school pairings with an emphasis on leadership and action. In collaboration with Je ka barra, an association founded by his Malian host family, Jean-Sébastien has developed a series of interactive multi-media modules, which are now used in 30 countries. Jean-Sébastien was elected president of the Forum Jeunesse de l’île de Montréal, and has also recently taken over a family business, Montréal-Contacts, a Foreign Rights Agency representing editors internationally, and facilitating the exchange of literature between diverse cultures. Whether he is creating intercultural youth workshops or sharing literature worldwide, he hopes to continue to represent the vision and values that CWY first nurtured in him. It was Jean-Sébastien’s experiences with CWY in Mali that inspired him to begin his global journey.
I grew up on Vancouver Island, with a heritage that is a flavorful mix of British, Irish, Scottish, Swiss German and Shawnee. Inspired by those around me to pursue a life of meaning, I was taught to value people and to sacrifice my own comforts for the needs of others. I was encouraged to embrace the good and the bad in life, and to freely share my experiences with others, friend or foe.

My Tanzanian husband affectionately describes my cultural approach as, “Take me as I am, or don’t. But this is it, this is me!” Both he and my CWY experience in Tanzania have taught me that everyone views life through a different lens and, now that I live in Tanzania, I continue to learn about these cultural nuances. Unlike me, people here are often reluctant to share personal details, providing information only when required by circumstance. This is because they believe in earning respect through gestures and attitudes. Perceptions are very important. With this knowledge, I make a point of shaking hands with someone, rather than waving from across the street, and I accept offers of a cup of tea or a meal at someone’s house, whatever else I may need to attend to.

To this day, I remain very close friends with my Owen Sound host sister, Kate. We were roommates in Toronto in 2005, and I was one of her bridesmaids. I married my Tanzanian Indian fiancé in February 2011, and now live in my CWY host community. I guess you could say that participating in the CWY program introduced me to some very amazing and special people. My host sister has become one of my most cherished friends, and a man I met during my work in Tanzania after CWY became my partner in life!

Following her CWY experience, Sarah and her cousin built a library in Tanzania with funds they raised themselves. She returned to Canada to complete degrees in Environmental Studies and Swahili at York University and Intercultural Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (TWU). In 2008, she brought a group of TWU students to Tanzania to build a library. She then worked as an intern in the Global Projects department of TWU. In 2009, Sarah returned to Tanzania and continued working in Community Library development. She is currently working with over 20 community libraries across Tanzania to form a Community Library Association. Sarah is also a volunteer consultant for an American-Tanzanian non-profit organization seeking to build five community libraries across Tanzania.
I think some of the greatest things I did with CWY were organizing community events like a coffee house night to fundraise for our volunteer activities. In Ostroh, Ukraine, I worked at a music school, and performed with the city’s chorus. In Alberta, I lived with the Simmelink family, working on the farm. I’m a bit of a city boy, so mucking around with cows was a GREAT experience!

I’m part Ukrainian, but growing up, my closest ties to the Ukraine had been eating cabbage rolls. Living there allowed me to make deeper connections with my cultural heritage.

In Alberta, I learned about culture shock, and just how big and diverse Canada is. Being a gay man in a conservative rural setting was quite challenging, but I managed to negotiate my identities and my surroundings. When we were at Rocky Mountain House, our CWY group performed a Malanka (Ukrainian Folk Holiday) play for a fundraiser. Guys and girls often dress as different genders, and I was told that I HAD to play the female fortune teller. I ran around the auditorium telling fortunes from my frying pan. It was hilarious for me and, I’m pretty sure, terrifying for the audience.

My counterpart, Sasha, and I are still in touch via the Internet. He was living in Toronto for a while, so I actually got to see him a few years after our program! I have also had the great honour of being the best man for my friend Vania, who married Lindsay from our CWY team.

My experience with CWY strengthened my self-confidence and ignited a passion within me to become an advocate and builder of communities and culture. I started the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) project ARTWHERK! so that I could share with my communities what I had learnt through CWY.

Christopher graduated from Ryerson University with a BA in Politics and Governance, a Millennium Scholarship and the Dennis Mock Award for academic community participation. He is currently completing his Master of Social Work at the University of Toronto. On his return from the CWY exchanges, he became heavily involved with Toronto’s LGBTQ community and produced ARTWHERK! for six years. The event sought to create a space for young or emerging LGBTQ artists to share their work and points of view. Christopher is currently Director at Camp Ten Oaks, a one-week sleep-away camp for kids from LGBTQ families/communities and those who identify as LGBTQ.
Mother and son, Michelle and Morgan have both experienced the excitement, challenges and community impact of CWY—33 years apart.

Michelle: Our team came together under the clock at Union Station in Toronto on October 2, 1972. This marked the beginning of an 11-month adventure that would engage us in our world, our country and with each other in ways that we could never have imagined.

I learnt better ways of communicating, problem solving and appreciating that challenge and conflict can bring positive results. CWY has created lifelong friendships.

Our kids grew up with the value of volunteering and travel. My daughter met her husband on a Nicaraguan youth tour in high school. For the last two years, Erin and Mario have been living in Nicaragua working for Casa Canadiense, coordinating Canadian educational youth and service groups.

For me, CWY was a portal to a better understanding and awareness of what it means to be an informed Canadian, a global citizen, an agent for social justice.

Morgan: I have been involved with CWY in three different ways. As a participant in the Ukraine-Alberta program, on a two-week Global Learner program in Ecuador, and as a host brother, community liaison and work placement volunteer for the Nicaragua-Alberta exchange.

My Ukrainian counterpart, Dima, and I have stayed in touch, meeting up six times since the program, in the Ukraine, Montreal, New York and Kansas.

CWY really challenged me to look at Canadians and Albertans from an outsider’s perspective. I became more conscious of what Canada is, and how we are perceived. I take more ownership and pride in where I am from. It has made me think about what it means to be a global citizen and has given me an insatiable hunger for travel.

Returning from CWY, Michelle got involved with the Edmonton Cross Cultural Learner Centre, social justice groups, inner city organizations, and kept in touch with CWY. She became a social worker and registered nurse, and for the last 30 years has combined part-time nursing with volunteer work and travel. Most recently Michelle has developed a health and wellness project for elders in a community in Nicaragua. The Bamfords have also become a CWY host family.

Since completing his CWY programs, Morgan spent four months as an English-language teaching assistant at the National University of Ostroh Academy in the Ukraine. He completed a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies at the University of Alberta, and will now spend a year in Montreal learning French in an immersion program.
My counterpart from Jamaica taught me so much about myself and others. We came from very different backgrounds, with divergent moral and philosophical opinions, and didn’t always share the same religious or political views. Despite our differences, and a relationship that was at times fragile, we learnt how to work together effectively, keeping our relationship amicable and mutually respectful. It’s a life skill that has helped me tremendously ever since.

I remember when our Jamaican host families held a welcoming event in our honour, and the master of ceremonies asked for a Canadian volunteer to dance on stage. We already knew from Nova Scotia that, next to Jamaicans, Canadian dancers almost always look horribly uncoordinated. So it was unsurprising that we Canadians suddenly took an extreme interest in our shoes, pockets—anywhere but the stage. I made the mistake of catching the eye of one of the other Canadians, who (traitorously) volunteered me for the task.

Before I knew it, I was pushed up on stage in front of about a hundred expectant Jamaicans. I looked terrible, and the entire debacle was captured on video, which was really, really funny, but definitely not for sharing! The good thing is that the incident has completely cured me of my stage fright. Whenever I’m tasked with speaking in front of a bunch of random strangers, I remember that it is nowhere near as embarrassing as having to twist my body into a pretzel in Jamaica.

My CWY program was a journey of self-discovery and questioning that I have never experienced before or since. It was during this period that my reason and my emotions were most aligned, and I often go back to these memories when faced with issues and challenges that I find overwhelming. In many ways, the thinking I did during CWY formed the basis for my personal compass, which helps me make decisions about what to do and where to go both personally and professionally.

Since taking part in the CWY Program, Anshula has studied economics at the University of Toronto and attended the University of Pune, India. She is a founder of the Young Social Entrepreneurs of Canada, and created the Social Finance Microloaning Program, the first of its kind for youth-led social enterprise. Her recently launched Social Asset Measurements helps organizations measure and manage their social impact.
I grew up with parents and grandparents who worked with Oxfam Canada and Amnesty International. Friends and family had participated in CWY—including my mother, a project supervisor in Colombia in the mid-70s. Before I started high school, I knew that I wanted to be part of the CWY program. With strong interests in human rights, culture, diversity and language, I wanted to take a year off before university to volunteer abroad and gain more cross-cultural experience—understand more about global citizenry. To be sure of my choice, I did extensive research, and CWY still topped my list of overseas programs.

In Benin, I worked at a rehabilitation centre for young people with physical paralysis. Of all of my volunteer experiences, this one was the most incredible. I read stories to the children in the dormitories, played games with kids in the courtyard and visited with the mothers while they cooked. For the first few days, I found the rehabilitation room completely overwhelming—seeing so many children in pain. But I soon realized that the pain was minimal compared to the enormity of a child standing, walking and moving with newfound ease. This changed me, and I will forever be grateful for the time that I spent with these children.

During my time in West Africa, I also attended the National Voodoo Festival in Porto-Novo, Benin’s capital. It was an incredible opportunity to experience firsthand many aspects of this religion, which is such a strong part of Beninese culture.

My experiences with CWY have greatly impacted me—providing innumerable lessons that have become a part of who I am and what I want my life to be. In Benin, I learned that sometimes you give and sometimes you learn, and that CWY brings those two things together. But most of all, I learned the importance of human connection, understanding and involvement in one’s community. CWY has helped me apply a global perspective within my community in Canada. It has made me understand that every opportunity to get involved in my community, big or small, is important and has an impact.

Returning to her home province of British Columbia, Rhian gave many presentations about her experiences in Benin. She now studies international development, Spanish and French at Dalhousie University, and has just completed a semester abroad in Havana, Cuba. She volunteers in Halifax with Oxfam and the Child Soldier initiative, as well as in recruitment and regional alumni affairs for CWY. She looks forward to completing her degree and obtaining an overseas internship.
Olivier: Music is a passion of mine, and during my time in Honduras I taught guitar lessons to several of the neighbourhood kids. Before the CWY Program, I considered myself to be a fairly well rounded person, morally and culturally—but I soon realized that I wasn’t immune to culture shock. I am still in contact with my counterpart, Douglas, and we have been firm friends since the moment we boarded the CWY bus. This past spring, I visited him in Honduras and was able to meet his family and friends.

One of my favourite CWY moments, which included love, pain and comedy in equal measures, happened when Douglas and I (two grown men) found ourselves crying on each other’s shoulders after talking about our CWY experience coming to an end. Thank you CWY for showing me the importance of relationships and the positive impact that strong ties can have on the development of communities.

I remember my CWY experience as a book of scriptures. In this book, I find references to the importance and relevance of community, family, love, pain and laughter.

Christophe: My ethno-cultural background is a mixture of French-Canadian, British and Indian, and during my CWY experience I taught English in the Ukraine. I found that my biggest challenge was developing the kind of communication skills that would help me make the most of my time in a foreign country. The impact that the program has had on me? CWY has made me appreciate the value of sharing. And I now also understand the direct links between patience, compassion and success.

Olivier and Chris are both singers, songwriters and musicians—members of the band Soulfat Funk. Olivier has been playing the guitar and composing since the age of nine. He made his first studio recording at 14. As well as collaborating with his brother, Chris, and other bands, Olivier has performed as a solo artist at local festivals and events. And he has taught guitar in Canada and Honduras.

Chris is a multi-instrumentalist, who started playing the guitar at age 13 and the harmonica two years later. He then went on to teach music part time. Chris has fronted his own bands as well as collaborating with his brother Olivier. He has attended open jams and workshops with recent Maple Blues award winner Steve Mariner. Chris has been fortunate enough to travel and explore different musical traditions, jamming on the streets with the locals in Europe, India, the Ukraine and Morocco. He is currently in school.
I am an Inuk from the Kivalliq region, living in Rankin Inlet. I was the only Aboriginal person in my exchange group, which was both shocking and terrifying for me because it was the first time I would spend extended time without other Inuit. After living and studying in Ottawa and learning more about colonization, I had become very ethnocentric and uncomfortable with the southern Canadian culture. However, my CWY exchange taught me that people are people no matter where you come from, and I was very wrong about what I thought of southerners. I met a lot of amazing people during my program.

With health as the dominant theme, I volunteered as a kindergarten classroom assistant in the Ukraine, worked for the Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley and assisted as a youth counsellor in the Children Who Witness Abuse program in British Columbia. My counterpart, Olga Kyts, and I were very close. She is outgoing, fun, caring, passionate, hardworking and we kept each other in check and on track. She taught me so much about her family and traditions. I picked plums in her farm, ate her mother’s amazing cooking, visited her sister in Rivne city and even attended her cousin’s wedding. She is getting married in September, and I am hoping to be able to go back to visit her family and meet her husband!

There is a saying that advises looking at things through the eyes of a mouse and a buffalo—to see what is immediately in front of you, but also step back and view the situation from a larger scale. I find it is easier for me to step back and evaluate myself and my actions now that I have participated in CWY’s Youth Leaders in Action (YLA) program.

Following her experience as a volunteer in the program, Lori was hired as the Aboriginal Access and Support Intern for CWY—recruiting, preparing and supporting the Aboriginal volunteers program. She was also involved in planning and facilitating the debriefing and training of Aboriginal volunteers and the orientation and debriefing of the Mini YLA programs. Her contributions and hard work were instrumental in large part for 72 Aboriginal youth (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) completing a CWY program in 2010—a first in CWY history. In the fall of 2011, Lori will resume her 2nd year program at Nunavut Sivuniksavut (a college program for Inuit in Ottawa). She will learn about Northern development, strategies to address Inuit issues, circumpolar studies and the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, while also taking Carleton University Political Science and English courses. Lori is aunt (Atchak) to the most beautiful boy in all of Nunavut, as seen in the photo above, and the only sister to four brothers.
My heritage is a mixture of Inuit and Haitian, and while I was raised in Nunavik, I also spent a lot of my childhood in Ontario. My CWY exchange involved a work placement in Moncton, at Youth Quest Central, a centre for homeless youth, where I made many friends. Overseas, my experience was in Ghana, working in schools and clinics. Both were perfect for me, because I really love working with young people.

One morning, in Ghana, I saw my host mother had no one to help her carry water, so I grabbed a small bucket and followed her to the well. The large group of women who regularly sat chatting outside our house would applaud me each time I brought back a bucketful, and laugh when I managed to soak myself in the process. To fill the water tank in the house we had to make several trips, and I began to get impatient, taking a succession of larger buckets with me each time. The ladies laughed at my determination, and clapped each time I returned successfully.

When I emerged from the house with a gigantic metal bowl large enough to sit in, the women started yelling at me, begging me not to fill it with water. Being headstrong and confident, I ignored their advice and decided to give it a go. When I got to the well, none of the kids pumping water would fill it for me. Their only response was, “Obruni, no! Obruni too big! Obruni you can’t!” Sizing up the situation, my host mother had sent her son to help, and he begged them to fill the container. We both struggled to get it on my head but I couldn’t balance, and water was sloshing everywhere. Needless to say, I returned to the house with my tail between my legs, followed by my host brother with the brimming, oversized bowl on his head.

CWY completely changed my outlook on life, especially life in my home community in Aupaluk and my region, Nunavik. It gave me the tools to understand my own cultural context better, and it helped me make sense of the differences we face in relation to mainstream Canadian culture.

During the CWY Program, Janice ran for a position at the Regional Youth Association in Nunavik, Saputiit Youth Association. Since completing the exchange, as Vice-President of the association, her focus has been on Nunavimmiut youth politics, health and education. Janice is a shining example of the young leaders that are formed through CWY programs—youth who continue to contribute and make a positive impact on their home communities.
Here are some reflections from current youth volunteers in the midst of their programs, a testament to the 40th year of CWY’s legacy of impact and commitment to building youth leadership.

“We have participated in several events so far. Mandela Day, which is celebrated on the birthday of Nelson Mandela on July 18. Our first event consisted of cleaning up several beaches here in Cape Town. We also took part in the cleaning of Fikelela Children’s Home, an orphanage for children aged 0 to 8 who have been abused or neglected and/or suffer from HIV/AIDS. We painted walls, disinfected toys, sorted out wardrobes of clothing, cleaned the floors and furniture, and organized a variety of content. It was a blissful day and we truly got an experience of what Mandela Day is all about.”

Sana Hussain
South Africa-British Columbia

“My counterpart, Boubacar Kola Sangho, and I are already “brothers from another mother”. Friends are being made in abundance and memories are being made in droves. So far the experience has been hard in ways I did not think it would be but overwhelmingly positive and important in shaping an adult in me.”

Henry Fieglar
Mali-Quebec

“CWY provides a great experience to know more about yourself: your emotions, your reactions, your interactions in a group… you’re not in your natural environment so you can become more aware of your feelings. The program has helped me grow a lot!”

Carol-Anne Rienteau
Honduras-Ontario

“People’s everyday life, which is truly different from ours back home, is making me realize that things we take for granted are not necessarily available everywhere (running water, electricity). I have also come to understand that this way of life is certainly not inferior to ours. Right now, it is giving me more time to think and to talk with people. Finally, I really believe I’ve also learned to take the time to understand the customs of people from an unfamiliar culture rather than getting frustrated with some of their decisions. They are from here; they know much more about it than we do. Canada World Youth is teaching me how to interact with different types of people. I’m learning every day here.”

Mathieu Lachapelle
Tanzania-Ontario

“CWY has been a part of my life for a very long time. At the age of 2, my family hosted 2 boys from CWY’s India/Ontario exchange in 1991. Even now, at the age of 22, they are still both in contact with me and my family. This experience so far has most definitely been challenging but I will cherish every moment for the rest of my life.”

Alysha Thibodeau
Tanzania-Ontario
A selection of stories from our alumni around the world; one story from each region of the world highlighting the mutual understanding, respect, and lasting friendships forged by the CWY experience.

“The intensity of our cross-cultural experience opened our horizons, diminished prejudices and enriched our life and work perspectives. In 1976, we were naive teenagers from opposite sides of the globe. Living in small communities, we were able to learn the importance of tolerance and mutual understanding. We are who we are today thanks to CWY.”

Denny Sutoyo-Gerberding
1976, Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and East Java
with the local community to organize a Radiothon fundraiser. We used the money we’d raised to buy construction materials, rented a truck and drove the supplies to Guatemala. Although not an intentional part of our exchange, our actions were prompted by everything we were learning through our CWY experience.

Following my volunteer work with CWY, I continued my community involvement in Acajutla, creating activities and organizations for the benefit of the townspeople, including workers’ cooperatives, community banks, credit unions and educational opportunities.

Following his experiences with CWY, Miguel continued his studies while he worked as an administrator for the Acajutla Port Authority in El Salvador. He later became a social worker and, as a result of his community involvement, was invited by El Salvador’s first democratic government to become Assistant Governor of his province. In 1984, he returned to Canada with his family, learned French and became director of the Fraternité Multiculturelle de Québec. Four years later, Miguel studied business management and administration at the Montreal business school, Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC), and was hired by Desjardins. Following a move to Vancouver, Miguel and his wife set up their own business, and Miguel also served as the director of Vancouver’s Hispanic Community Centre. He returned to Montreal in 2000 and founded the Scalabrini Centre for refugees and immigrants. Miguel is a member of several national and international organizations and continues to learn about social and economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean. He says that it was CWY that led him to become a social entrepreneur in Canada and El Salvador.

I was running a community youth group in my home town, when the country’s Minister of Education chose us to travel to Canada with CWY, along with three other groups. The CWY experience has had a significant impact on my life and work.

While I was in Toronto, I volunteered at the Don Valley Community Centre helping to organize activities. The director of the centre, who was blind, made an enormous impression on me. In my home country of El Salvador, we helped the mayor and young people from the town build a professional training centre for women. We also constructed cement benches for bus stops and painted a primary school in Acajutla.

In February, when the Canadian group arrived in El Salvador, we felt the earthquake in Guatemala. We were all living together in a rented house and were woken at four in the morning. A week later, we joined forces
Thirty-five years after starting our CWY experience together, around twenty of us came together for a reunion in Seminyak, Bali. We’d worked on agricultural and community development projects in the late 70s, and now in our fifties, gray-haired, some of us grand parents, we were together again to pay tribute to the impact that CWY had on all of us.

Our team coordinator, Bill Young, brought over 200 slides, documenting key moments in Canada and Indonesia. We laughed, reflected and shed some tears when we saw ourselves again as young adults.

"It was remarkable to witness the rediscovery and renewal of bonds of loyalty and affection that had their origins in our intense CWY experience. It seems that seeing ourselves, then so young and hopeful, reminded us of who we were and of all that we had achieved, both individually and as a CWY family. The overall impact of our reunion was to confirm the great privilege of our CWY experience." Bill Young

“The CWY Program built my character and gave me the confidence to work in different fields across the world. Our reunion proved to me that our friendship is one of the most wonderful things in my life.” Dessy Lumbantoruan

"Over the years, I have come to realize how significant and important my CWY experience was in shaping my life. It changed me, opened my mind, broadened my understanding of my own country and developed in me a deep appreciation of people, different cultures and alternative ways of doing things.” Lorna Knudson

James Buffin joined the reunion on a personal journey, as his brother Mark was a participant in the Kalimantan team and passed away a few years after returning to Canada.

“I turned 10 the year my brother Mark participated in the CWY trip to Indonesia. I grew up clinging to the few things Mark left behind when he died—the photographs from Indonesia being central. Attending the reunion in Bali caused me to reflect on how I arrived here, and the role of CWY in forming my thoughts, beliefs and direction. The most meaningful thing I could do with this experience was to film it. Documenting the reunion was a privilege. For me, the trip was an unanticipated gift, which allowed me to immerse myself in the community Mark was closest to in the defining moment of his life.” James Buffin

“How wonderful to meet old friends that I’d shared such amazing experiences with in the past. Even after 35 years, our friendships were as fresh as if we had been together yesterday. Our bodies may be older but our memories of CWY are still vivid.” Jim Allison

“CWY was the catalyst for my career and the way I got to know the world better. As a village girl studying at a small university in Sumatra I knew nothing about foreign countries. My experiences with CWY gave me the confidence to teach at an American school and to join a CWY trip as a group leader. Now, I am a teacher at the University of Riau.” Raida Johar

“For me, CWY was a very positive experience in my life and I treasure my memories of it. I remember being struck by how incredibly generous the Indonesian people were to us. I felt very close to several of my Indonesian and Canadian counterparts and learned a lot from them. The very fact that we gathered together for a reunion after more than three decades speaks volumes for the bonds that developed between us.” Gina Waldie

“The intensity of our one-year, cross-cultural experience opened our horizons, diminished prejudices and enriched our life and work perspectives. In 1976, we were naive teenagers from opposite sides of the globe. We were able to learn the importance of tolerance and mutual understanding. We are who we are today thanks to CWY.” Denny Sutoyo-Gerberding

People came from all over the world to attend the Indonesian reunion.
As a participant in the CWY Program, I travelled from Pakistan and volunteered for The Reporter newspaper in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia. While I was there, I wrote a number of articles on different cultural issues, and I also organized many cultural programs for the local community.

As an athlete, I was really happy to have the opportunity to run 10 km with The Antigonish Road Runners, and even more pleased when I won the race. I also competed in the Halifax Marathon, placing second, and was so honoured to receive congratulations and cards from everyone at the CWY head office.

I am Muslim, and my counterpart on the program was Jewish. We had a very good relationship with each other and he helped me a lot during the whole time I was in Canada. I also think fondly of our host mother, Caroline Malnik, who was a very loveable lady and always took such great care of us.

When I first arrived, things could be confusing, and I’ll never forget one particularly memorable visit to a restaurant in Halifax. In the absence of halal food, I ordered potato chips. When our meals arrived, I could barely see my dinner companion over the mountain of chips on my plate. It caused quite a stir among the other diners!

This was a wonderful experience—living with people from other cultural and religious backgrounds, sharing values and learning about different customs and traditions. All these years later, I am still in touch with several of the CWY participants from Pakistan.

The CWY program was a turning point in my life. This exchange gave me the courage to be an initiator. As a result, I am very proud to be the first person in Pakistan to hold a Doctorate Degree in the field of Sports Psychology.

Ejaz is currently a faculty member of the GC University in Lahore, Pakistan, and has just completed a PhD in Sports Psychology at the University of Leipzig, Germany. In November 2011 he returns to Pakistan as Chairman of the University’s Sports Sciences Department.
My counterpart and I worked at the Camrose Regional Exhibition, in the newly created information centre. We helped put together a highly accessible website and introduced elementary and high school students to the Internet as an educational tool. In Mexico, under the direction of Don Aurelio, from our rural host community, we helped build a thermal spa (temascal).

My experience in Canada challenged so many of my habits and customs. The food I am used to is spicy and flavourful. My climate is mild and consistent, with an average annual temperature of 21°C. We dress lightly and don’t have to worry about changes in temperature. A journey into town is never longer than 30 minutes.

In contrast, while I was in Alberta it was particularly cold and snowy. In November there were at least two weeks when the temperature reached -40°C. Going outside involved layers of clothing. I was living on a farm 25 minutes outside of Camrose, and our closest neighbour was two miles away. One day, I cycled next door in 10 cm of snow and a temperature of -18°C. When I reached my destination, I realized that my eyebrows were frozen. While in Canada, I was eager to cook for my host family, but had so much trouble finding the ingredients I needed. And, although everything I ate in Canada was excellent, as time wore on my body was crying out for something spicy!

In my Mexican host community of Morelos, I was able to experience something other than the confines of my home town. It was an opportunity to discover diversity, and to learn about the region’s rural communities.

All of my CWY moments are memorable, but it’s the lessons I learned as a result of the experience that have had the most impact on my life. I learned to be patient in the face of challenges or when trying to speak another language. I learned the meaning of solidarity, both with my counterpart and my group. CWY taught me to be more self-confident, and this helped me enormously during my time in Switzerland. Most importantly, though, thanks to the friends and mentors I had as guides, CWY taught me that education can be part of everyday life.

Once Daniel finished his CWY exchange, he completed his undergraduate education in Mexico and then continued his studies in Switzerland. Currently he is completing a doctorate at the University of Morelos, working with his CWY host community.
I had the opportunity to take part in CWY as a member of a Sri Lankan regional youth club. The aim of the exchange was to develop both personal and professional skills, so that we would be equipped to participate actively in the development of just, harmonious and sustainable societies. While I was in Canada, I worked alongside my wonderful counterpart, Melani Parsons. She played the role of friend, sister and Mom to me, taught me to cope with unfamiliar culture and technology and has since helped my family during the tsunami. Melani and I are still in contact with each other, and I have vivid memories of visiting Niagara Falls as well as dressing up to go trick-or-treating with her.

At home, the influences of Buddhism and Hinduism have created a culture that operates within a hierarchical system. We are conscious of social order and status, and the patriarch is considered the leader of the family. Parents take care of their children's needs even into adulthood. In turn, children take care of their parents when they are elderly. Many Sri Lankan women avoid physical contact with a man outside the family, and marriages are traditionally arranged by the couple's families.

In contrast, when I visited Canada, I discovered that most younger Canadians are not religious. There is also greater equality between men and women, both personally and professionally. In Canada, most young people make independent life decisions, and sexual matters are discussed openly.

The CWY exchange program gave me the desire to learn more about how I can help serve society. Whenever I get the chance to learn, explore and share, I try my best to make full use of the opportunity.

Inspired by her experiences in CWY, Eranthika has obtained diplomas in Community Development, Psychological Counselling and English at the University of Ruhuna. She has completed a physiotherapy training course and holds a certificate of psychosocial work from the International War-Related Trauma and Humanitarian Trust. She has studied mental health and the motor development of children with Down’s syndrome and has received training on seizure disorders and functional behaviour assessments at both Navajeevana NGO, Sri Lanka, and St. Cloud University, USA. Since 2005, Eranthika has worked in Sri Lanka as a Rehabilitation Therapy Assistant at Navajeevana, a Social Worker and Counsellor at Enfants du Monde—Droits de l’Homme (EMDH) and an Inclusion Officer at Handicap International. She is currently Assistant Unit Manager and Special Education Teacher at Navajeevana, and has been nominated by the government to train as a public health midwife.
I was the CWY Benin program supervisor in 2005, and program coordinator at Benin’s Ministry of Youth, Sports and Leisure in 2007. My different experiences with the CWY programs and my collaborations with friends from other cultures gave me a new vision of my surroundings. Everything seemed so new, so intriguing. I was fascinated by everything that I saw, touched and tasted.

I really enjoyed my stay in Canada because it was a truly rich experience which allowed me to develop great relationships with my team, my host family and members of the local community. My counterpart, Owen Campbell, was always at my side. He truly supported me throughout the program. He was also very curious and constantly questioned me about my country. Whenever we had misunderstandings, he would play music that we both enjoyed and we would quickly end up laughing about it all!

During the program, I reflected a lot on issues related to gender equity, the individualism of Canadian society, development in Africa, the challenges related to intercultural understanding, and the necessity to protect the environment. Back in my country, I continued my reflections and carried on learning about myself and others around me.

CWY offers young people important integration and intercultural experiences, and helps them develop the skills that are essential for group collaboration. **With opportunities for dynamic volunteer projects, cultural discoveries and language acquisition, participants are ideally placed to become true citizens of the world.** CWY is the only organization to offer such an experience both at home and abroad.

*Mathieu is a principal youth and recreational activities counsellor, and plays an executive role at the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Leisure in Benin. In 2008, he became president of Benin’s CWY alumni program, and is working on a national exchange project that will bring Beninese youth together to achieve millennium development goals. The group is championing a project that will enable young people respond to significant challenges and implement tangible solutions for sustainable development within their local communities. Participants will be able to take part in local campaigns to communicate initiatives concerning waste management or tree planting, for example. Mathieu and his team are currently researching local partners for the initiative.*
I took part in the Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) project, living and working in host communities on Vancouver Island and Kagwe, Kenya. In British Columbia, I volunteered at Providence Farm, a horticultural therapeutic community where we worked with mentally, physically and emotionally challenged individuals. In Kenya, my placement was in the Chief’s office, where we worked in the flower gardens and landscaped the compound.

I am a Kamba-speaking Bantu from Eastern Kenya, but my CWY host community was in Kenya’s Central Province, where the local people speak Kikuyu. I was the only Kenyan in the group who didn’t speak the local language. Some of the Canadian participants didn’t speak very good English, so the whole experience helped me gain more patience with people from all walks of life, with different ways of expressing themselves.

While completing a conservation internship in Pennsylvania, USA, I returned to Canada to do an impact assessment of our CWY projects. I stayed in my former host community of Duncan, visited some work placements and held a community potluck dinner. When I saw how many people came to the event, I realized we had impacted the community in more ways than we had thought.

I believe that, given the chance and opportunity, young people from all walks of life can change the world by means of the leadership roles entrusted to them. Thank you to CWY and KENVO for giving me the opportunity to grow.

Immediately after her CWY program, Martha facilitated an environmental education and outreach program in the Nandi District of Kenya. The intercultural and social skills she had acquired during the CWY program contributed significantly to the success of the venture, when the country was still healing from the 2008 post-election violence. During one of Martha’s CWY projects in Naivasha, she met the Director of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, which led to her US program. In the course of this conservation science internship, she published a children’s colouring book on vultures of Africa, which is now widely distributed in Africa and abroad. Martha is now a third-year student at Moi University, completing a BSc in Tourism Management. Martha recently won a photography award in a National Environmental Competition, organized by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW). Her passion for photography has led to her work being widely published. Earlier this year, she invited two CWY groups to Kenya to take part in biodiversity monitoring and environmental clean-ups in Nairobi and other parts of the country. Last year, she visited the CWY-UVIKIUTA group in Tanzania and volunteered with them for a few days.
Over the last 40 years, 11,000 host families, in Canada and abroad, have generously opened their homes and their hearts to youth taking part in our programs. Host families across Canada share their memories and lessons learned from being a part of the CWY family.

“If we are to work toward cross-cultural understanding and world peace, it is important that programs like Canada World Youth are there giving youth the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of how others live.”

The Williams Family
British Columbia, 2008-2011
In our large home in the country, we all work together. We try to be as self-sufficient as possible, so we grow food in our garden and raise our own chicken and beef. You will often see someone from CWY harvesting vegetables and, on occasion, gathering fresh meat from the chicken pen. Frequently it’s the Canadian participants, rather than their counterparts, who find these activities more unusual. Nevertheless, everyone helps out one way or another.

We may not always realize the impact we’ve had on the people who have stayed with us. Every year one of our CWY kids reminds us about what his visit to our home meant to him. Even after 20 years, Mohammad calls from Egypt on Isabella's birthday. When he first arrived to stay with us, Mohammad was reluctant to dig potatoes, considering it unsuitable work for a man. By the time he left he was a good potato digger. Now with two children of his own, Mohammad continues to thank Isabella for helping guide him towards the man he’s become.

We are proud to have been part of making the CWY program succeed in our community, and we look forward to many more adventures as a host family.
In 2009, our diversified organic farm served as home and workplace for two African and two Canadian participants who were taking part in the CWY Mali-Quebec exchange. At the Beaulieu farm, we raise livestock and grow produce, which we market from Matane to Montreal. As a member of World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)—a program that connects host organic farms around the world to volunteers who work in exchange for room and board—people come from far and wide to visit us, work on our farm and share time with our family. Because of this, and because of Lise’s own travel experiences in Louisiana and Ontario, we felt very comfortable hosting young people from the CWY Program.

What we hadn’t expected was the exceptional experience that awaited us, and how it would open our seven children to the world. From the very first day, we felt that these young CWY volunteers were members of our family. They even called us Mom and Dad, and the boys seemed like big brothers to our children. As young, inspirational adults, they turned out to be significant role models. By setting positive examples and painting pictures of the world outside our windows, they have inspired our children to participate in CWY themselves one day. In return, we hope to have provided a glimpse of life on a Canadian organic farm—and if you’d seen the expression of wonder on the boys, faces as they saw our pile driver in action, I guess you would have had to agree that we can all learn from each other.

As sad as it was when the program drew to a close, we fondly remember the last night of their stay. When it came time to say our goodbyes, all the host families and the young CWY teams came together for a farewell supper that combined delicious food with music and dancing. It was such a memorable evening that we’re all still talking about it.
When our four children were small, becoming a CWY host family was a way of bringing the world to us. We raised our girls to be open-minded and respectful, so CWY offered us the opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures in the most natural way. Sharing your home, food and family with others can be far more rewarding than just taking a vacation. Since our first experience as a host family, we have welcomed more than 35 youth from around the world for anywhere from six weeks to a year. Our family and our lives are much richer because of it.

All of our guests brought something unique and special to our household and dairy farm, but I am sure the experience the participants had was far more demanding than ours. Living with a family of four girls in itself has its challenges, but both our daughters and the participants thrived, as we learned from each other. Through Facebook, and other social media, we have been able to connect with some of our Canadian participants, and we are regularly in touch with a few of our project leaders.

We have so many happy memories from our six experiences as a host family. There are enough to write a book, but we particularly remember Sarah cooking with a really small hot chilli pepper to prepare herself for her eating experiences in Thailand. Sid and Tasman taught us so much about India. Then there was Zac’s birthday, and the Uruguayan BBQ we attended. Aoy loved the electric stove and wore a winter jacket when the temperature was 28 Celsius. The time we went jet boating down the Niagara River with Alex and Jaras was such fun, as was the wine tour and the ice cream cake. And it will be a long time before we forget Patrick paper clipping his nose while clearing the barn with Saichon.

While we were a CWY host family, we learned firsthand about the differences in cultures and countries, but what we really discovered is that, for all the differences, we all are really striving for the same things—respect and acceptance. Our girls are all grown now, and we already have three grandchildren, who will grow up hearing all our CWY stories.
Eagle Family
Whitecap Dakota First Nation,
Saskatchewan, 2009-2011

I am a First Nation woman, living with my two sons and two adopted daughters on Whitecap Dakota First Nation, in Saskatchewan. At the time of the program, I was working for Indigenous Gaming Regulators Inc. I currently work as a project manager for Saskatchewan First Nations Family and Community Institute. I am a single parent and provide care for my aging father, who is in ill health.

My experience of welcoming Sarah and Scarleth into my home was very positive. We got to share our personal and cultural values and beliefs with one another, and both girls introduced us to their native languages. Open and accepting, they wanted to know more about my cultural identity and First Nation history. Sarah came with me to a community feast, and both girls got to go to our Christmas children’s concert.

We enjoyed having the girls live with us and share in our daily lives. They became part of our family, watching TV and movies, enjoying supper meals together and taking the shuttle bus from the casino into Saskatoon. I keep in touch with Sarah and Scarleth, as well as CWY participants Amiani and Jose Daniel via Facebook. We send each other messages about our families and what is happening in our lives.

As a family, we very much value the opportunity we have had to get to know and respect these beautiful, intelligent and talented young ladies and men who shared our home during their CWY experience. We got to learn about different languages, cultures, beliefs and values—and came to realize that we are not very different after all.
Spending time with people from other cultures challenges you to look at your own values. What is really important in life? It is hard to avoid making comparisons, but we have found far more similarities than differences between our cultures. We all love our families, have hopes and dreams for the future and long to live in peace and security.

We have grown to love our CWY volunteers like our own children. Their enthusiasm for life and learning brings such energy into our home. We look forward to their arrival in September and miss them dramatically when they leave just before Christmas. I am always anxious to hear news of how their lives are developing, and it’s amazing to pick up the phone and hear, “Hi Mom,” from one of my African ‘daughters.’

I’ll never forget one Saturday morning in November 2009. My kitchen was a hive of activity with a CWY group busy making hundreds of shrimp rissois—a favorite Mozambican snack food—for a fundraising dinner and talent show to benefit youth in the Cowichan Valley and in Nampula, Mozambique. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door and a neighbour announced that the Cowichan River and tributaries were overflowing and we were on evacuation alert.

It was shocking to look down the street and see the water coming towards me, picking up garbage cans, lawn furniture and wood piles. Rescue workers were paddling down the street in kayaks, and my next-door neighbour launched his dive boat to help the search and rescue team check for people who may have been trapped in their homes.

Across the street, rescue and media vehicles started to arrive and volunteers were making up sandbags. When the flood peaked and our house had narrowly escaped, it seemed natural to take some of our Mozambican food to share with the rescue workers. Later, at the fundraiser, a power failure forced us all to evacuate. When the entire CWY group came back home with us, there were still volunteers working across the street, so we all pitched in. As we all worked, our Mozambican friends led us in some traditional songs. People came from all around to help, and our CWY team was right there with them. When the work was finished for the night, my house was filled with youth singing and dancing to Mozambican pop tunes. Our story is a perfect illustration of the community impact that CWY is all about.
Staff and Members of the Board

Hundreds of dedicated and motivated office staff, field staff and Board Members have contributed to the success of Canada World Youth over the years. These are stories from a few of those behind the scenes, ranging in roles and eras of CWY’s history.

“It is not a question of the number of years that CWY fulfills but of the number of lives that CWY has impacted positively over these years. The organization continues growing, learning, breaking barriers and changing lives!”

Maria Fernanda Yanchapaxi
Alumni, 1999, Ontario and Ecuador
Project Supervisor, 2011-2012, Honduras and Ontario
I am Lil’watul of the St’at’ym’c First Nation, and grew up surrounded by elders who had lived on the land. They knew our history and lived our traditions. I spoke only Lil’wat until I was sent to residential school at St. Joseph’s mission more than 250 km from my home. In my early years, I witnessed the breakdown of my community, and I wondered why we couldn’t withstand the outside forces that were responsible for it. It wasn’t until my CWY trip to Malaysia, when I encountered the Orang Asli people, that I stopped blaming my elders for not doing more. Like the Indigenous people in Malaysia, they were making sense of living in a world imposed from the outside.

While leading my CWY group, I learned about my ability to translate and traverse the cultural divide. I was a good bridge for both the young Canadians in my care and the people we encountered in Malaysia.

CWY challenges so many divides: rural and urban, north and south, east and west, Indigenous and immigrant. And the insight we gain persuades us to confront and erase our racialized differences.

My own experience has been transformational. I have witnessed the process of colonization and cultural change firsthand. My work has been an extension of what I learned in CWY—as an Indigenous woman, a Canadian, a person of colour, I continue to be a mediator between worlds. CWY impacted and shaped my work in education, and my work with youth. Some things I learned as sudden bursts of understanding, others have taken the rest of my life to emerge.

During my time in Malaysia with CWY, I was the first woman given the honour of killing a pig in a greeting ceremony—and it was because I was Canadian and a Lil’wat woman. Because of our Indigenous roots, the people there felt a connection with me, as I did with them.

After serving as a CWY Group Leader in Malaysia, Lorna taught in a growing Lil’wat First Nations school. She began a teacher education program with Simon Fraser University, and developed the Lil’wat language curriculum. She later moved to Vancouver, working for the School Board to develop programs and services for Indigenous students and their families, and offer professional development to educators. During this time, she published children’s books and directed films to help the public learn about First Nations people and their history. Lorna subsequently became the Ministry of Education’s Director of Aboriginal Education, and currently holds the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning at the University of Victoria.
I was brought up in a suburb of Montreal where, the only immigrants were of European origin. CWY enabled me to communicate with a totally new world that, to me, had previously been unknown. I lived with a fishing family in the Kerkennah Islands. I harvested olives in El Alem and I taught French in Gamouda, on the edge of the desert.

Vincent and I both participated in Year 1 of CWY. He was selected to join an exchange to Malaysia and, at the same time, I was preparing to leave for Tunisia. What I saw in Tunisia opened my eyes. I realized that everything I had learned, everything I knew, could be questioned. Depending on the place or the context, things could be understood or interpreted differently.

Vincent had come to Montreal from Belgium at the age of six and had already experienced culture shock early in his life. He was a shy homebody by nature, and CWY taught Vincent how to open himself to the world, how to interact and get along with everyone around him. His CWY team loved and respected him as much for his warm spirit as his ability to turn his hand to almost anything that needed doing.

A great unifier, Vincent was the glue that held his group together. I first met Vincent and another Malaysian participant, Michel Clément, when they arranged a party at their Montreal apartment for everyone from all five CWY first year country programs. Vincent and I were married in 1979, and for about three years our apartment served as pied-à-terre for CWY participants living outside Montreal.

CWY taught me to learn from other countries, and I’ve spent my life doing it. A Belgian husband, an Indian best friend, a daughter from India and another from China.

Diagnosed with colon cancer in 2006, Vincent’s first instinct was to go back to Malaysia one more time. On this return journey, he revisited the places he had got to know with CWY. Witness to the spirit that had brought them all together 39 years before, many of the participants from that inaugural CWY program were with him when he died on June 11, 2010.

Inspired by their CWY experiences, Louise and Vincent both worked part-time as support and administrative staff members for CWY while studying at Cegep. Back from Malaysia, Vincent enrolled in IT courses, came top of his class and was recruited by Digital, who he stayed with throughout his career as the company became Compaq and later HP. His work involved frequent business travel, which he loved. He particularly enjoyed an extended trip of several months in China. Throughout his life, Vincent was known for the excellence of his work.

After her experiences in Tunisia, Louise taught visual arts for 10 years and pursued a career as a sculptor. Over the course of 15 years, Louise had five fertility treatments. She co-founded the Quebec Fertility Association, later known as Déméter, serving a three-year term as President. Together, Vincent and Louise spent seven years as a CWY host family for adults, and raised two beautiful daughters.
In thinking about CWY and how it has influenced our lives, the term “legacy” frequently comes to mind. Something of real value and lasting significance that has been passed along to us. **Because of CWY, our family has built a treasure of legacies, and our lives have been deeply touched, changed and enriched by this extraordinary program.** It is because of CWY that our Bordeleau-Cass family came to be. Through close to 35 years of engagement with CWY, we have gained an extraordinary international community of family, friends and colleagues around the globe. These are people whose lives, and in many cases careers, were also shaped by their unique CWY experiences. People who nurture deep relationships of respect, caring and solidarity.

Our home is often filled with CWY friends and community from around the world. This past Thanksgiving, we had 14 people at our table, representing three generations and numerous cultures. There was much food, laughter and, of course, there were endless stories. One of the CWY participants we were hosting at the time asked if all of us were connected through CWY. The answer was a resounding yes, as even my mother had once hosted a CWY field staff retreat! So we raised our glasses to toast our international family and the legacies we have built together. At the same time, we acknowledged someone who was missing, yet very much with us in spirit. Guy died in 1996 while serving as Deputy Director of CWY. During his long career **Guy had believed passionately in the potential of youth to build a better world, and the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of CWY as a unique and powerful learning experience.** He saw the CWY Program as a vital springboard to further youth engagement in international cooperation. In his memory, and in honour of his legacy, family, friends and colleagues have built the **Guy Bordeleau Memorial Endowment Fund**—which continues to grow and, with ongoing support, will soon generate bursaries to support post-program youth leadership as well as special initiatives.

Guy and Sue met while working as field staff on the India and British Columbia Program in 1980. After several years in the field—with the India, Bolivia and Ecuador programs—Guy’s 17-year career with CWY went on to include working as National Director of Cooperation Services, Director of the Latin America/Caribbean Region and finally Deputy Director of CWY. Sue undertook an additional year in Ecuador before working as Assistant Regional Coordinator (Ontario). She then took on a range of special projects as coordinator, facilitator and trainer before branching into a career in community, organizational, international development work and intercultural training. She is currently managing partner of One World Inc. consulting. During those CWY years, Guy and Sue also became proud parents of **Jaya and Zoé—a next generation of CWY youth leadership!** This past year, Jaya completed the exchange in Peru and Alberta and Zoé will participate in the 2011-2012 Ghana and New Brunswick program.
My time at CWY left a lasting impression on me and represents one of the high points of my career. At the head office and regional offices, as well as in the field (both in Canada and abroad), I worked alongside extremely talented colleagues whose commitment to youth was unwavering. Our young people were in good hands with them. It was not always easy, given the challenges CWY presents to its participants, but as a result, I understood the extent to which both youth and people in the field were able to handle unusual situations while respecting their own fundamental values and those of their peers. I frequently met participants on location while accompanied by representatives of the host country’s embassy or project managers from the Canadian International Development Agency in Ottawa. Those who had the chance to interact with participants on such occasions quickly became advocates for the program.

CWY’s Director General must ensure quality control for the program by making official visits to observe participants. These visits left me with many memories and prompted me to reflect on various issues. Here is one example:

Needless to say, selecting partner organizations is a matter of vital importance at CWY. It is essential to make sure that the respective missions are compatible. In India, the CWY program involved collaborating with the National Cadet Corps—representing a million cadets from the Indian army—as an equal partner. While implementing the program, we were repeatedly questioned by Canadians about our choice. How could CWY work in partnership with the military? It is important to recognize that the Indian participants were extremely disciplined and always eager to learn. They were also astounded by the quality of the Canadian participants—even if, much to their surprise, the latter often resembled their stereotypical idea of 1960s “hippies.” On the whole, the program was very successful.

It was therefore not so surprising when, at the end of one exchange program, I witnessed an unforgettable sight: a uniformed Indian lieutenant colonel being thanked by long-haired Canadians in jeans, who said his farewells by embracing each in turn with tears in his eyes!

In a multicultural world, the CWY program is an informal educational experience that offers participants the opportunity to develop their awareness of and receptivity toward others, which is a gesture of solidarity and mutual understanding. CWY thereby helps to foster citizens in Canada and in exchange countries who are open to other cultures and traditions and thus better prepared to face the challenges of a multicultural world shaped by the forces of globalization. In this way, CWY continues to play an essential role for youth.
I am a Montrealer who grew up in a largely white, English-speaking community, quite isolated from the larger multicultural city. CWY allowed me to see what I had always believed—that there was much more to the world than the perspectives and ideas I grew up with. My CWY experience helped me understand my own values and learn how to accept the values of others—gradually exploring the concepts of family, community, consumption, faith and gender. I remember being amazed at how very different our thoughts and feelings could be and trying to understand why. One of the first sentences we learned from our Sri Lankan coordinator was, “Wenass, namut racii” — loosely translated as, “Different but good.” It proved to be very useful as I tried to make sense of my new community and family in Sri Lanka.

Chandrika Malkanthi Jayacody and I had a great counterpart relationship. We laughed about many things, worked well together and she took excellent care of me in Sri Lanka as I stumbled my way through culture shock. She was always ready for any adventure. I still remember the first snow we had in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan. It was during our team debriefing before we left for Sri Lanka in early December. Chandrika had never seen snow before, and about three inches had fallen the night before. She took one step out the door of our cabin in the early morning and landed flat on her back. She had no idea that snow would make the ground slippery! We all had a good laugh, with no idea of the many surprises that lay ahead of us Canadians in Sri Lanka!

Following CWY, Kirstie completed a BA in International Development Studies at Dalhousie University. Inspired by her CWY experiences, she worked for many years with a street youth organization in Halifax and went on several extended trips to Latin America. Later, she completed a Bachelor of Social Work and a Master’s in Adult Education. She currently works as an adult educator at the Centre for Intercultural Learning, where she designs and delivers courses in Intercultural Effectiveness. She also conducts anti-racism workshops with students and staff for le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, the only French language school board in Nova Scotia. Kirstie lives in Halifax with her husband, François Tardif, who she met working as a project leader with CWY in Jamaica in 1994. They have three children—Océanne, 14, Chloë, 12 and Olivier, 10.
In some ways, my life has been one long cross-cultural exchange. I was born in Quito, Ecuador, daughter of a Kichwa Indigenous father and a mixed-race mother, both from Ecuador.

While learning about the Cree Nation, I acknowledged my own Indigenous identity, which I had denied before. During the program, I learned about the occupation of Aboriginal territory and displacement of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and it encouraged me to learn more about the history of colonization amongst my own people.

I saw Krista, my counterpart from 1999, just two years ago. Although we had been apart for 12 years, we kept in touch throughout. She was my best friend during the program, knew me at my best and worst and cared about me despite the many mistakes I made.

I will always remember the time our team went goose hunting in Canada and had to pluck the geese. In Ecuador, we pluck chickens using hot water, but in my host community we had to do it without any water, which made our work harder. Feathers were flying all over the place and we were covered in them. I had no idea why we had to collect all the feathers in huge bags, until someone explained a couple of days later that they were used to make warm coats for the winter.

CWY helped me learn about myself and how my decisions impact people’s lives. It has provided me with the tools and opportunities to become a better educator for social and global justice.

After CWY, Fernanda completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Development. Working with The World Bank and helping run grassroots youth volunteer projects, she learned how different models of development can create different kinds of worlds, and decided to refocus her career. Fernanda started working on initiatives supporting women, Aboriginal peoples, human rights and equity. She discovered her passion to be in the educational sector and became an educator for social justice, working for the Fundación Reto Internacional, CWY’s partner organization in Ecuador, as a Project Supervisor. She completed a Master’s in Latin American Studies and was recently awarded her Bachelor of Education. Fernanda is teaching in Toronto and is currently working as a CWY Project Supervisor for the Honduras-Hamilton Women’s Exchange. Her goal within CWY is to promote and increase the participation of Aboriginal, racialized and under-privileged youth in the programs.
I made CWY my partner in adventure when I joined an outstanding group of Canadians and Southeast Africans in British Columbia and Mozambique. In Sooke, we volunteered on a self-sustaining organic farm, and in Inhambane at a children’s orphanage. Having repaired a playground, we combined heaps of colourful paint with immense amounts of fun and created a massive mural. Above the dusty floors, on the bare walls of the orphanage, the colourful mural still hangs as a reminder of our adventure, and the great children we were blessed to volunteer with.

My counterpart, Bruno, and I crossed a river and climbed a mountain together—literally and figuratively. We sang rap songs while picking strawberries. We played soccer with the Mozambican orphans, and djembe drums on the beach. We stayed up late into the night to talk.

In Mozambique, I discovered many women bake Christmas cookies in the community clay oven. On December 23rd, I offered to take care of my host family’s cookies, not knowing how many women were waiting in the baking yard. When I got there, as many as 40 women burst into such wild laughter that my ears were still ringing on Christmas Day. Word spread quickly and I was, proudly and affectionately, known for the rest of the trip as “The Cookie Boy.”

My CWY exchange was a beautiful moment of satori when my relationships, goals and character were revitalized in accordance with a new vision of the world. It was a process of transformation—an existential change from my Western perspective, a new understanding of Native Canadian values and ceremonies and of Mozambican cultural practices. CWY handed me a pearl for which I am eternally grateful.

Jamie’s CWY group was inspired by the orphans’ lessons of courage and relentless hope. A month after returning to Canada, he began a cycling tour to raise money for the orphanage. With the encouragement and support of CWY and his group, Jamie and his best friend flew to Newfoundland and, in late April 2010, began pedalling westward. They biked in snow, sleet, rain, hail, wind, floods and freezing temperatures, but also met sun, gentle breezes and warm summer days. In 89 days they crossed all 10 provinces, cycled 8,126 km and reached their CWY host community of Sooke on Vancouver Island’s west coast. Sharing a BBQ with Jamie’s CWY host family and community at the organic farm where they had volunteered, they realized they’d come full circle. In total they raised over $17,000, which will be put towards community projects at the orphanage by the next three CWY volunteer groups!
Since 1971, Canada World Youth has collaborated with partners in over 67 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. Representatives from each region share their stories of partnership, cooperation, and mutual learning.

“I won’t forget my experience with CWY programs because it helped me to do what I really wanted to do in my life; I wanted to work in the community with young people. After being in this program, I found my way back to college and took a degree in community development. I am now happy to be doing what I dreamed I would be doing in life.”

Ben Mongi
Past Project Supervisor, current Project Manager for UVIKUUTA, Tanzania
“The development of new skills, attitudes, self-esteem and global understanding has been remarkable and we will be forever grateful for our partnership with CWY in providing our school with such an opportunity.”

Anne Vrana
St. Thomas High School

At a glance

St. Thomas High School, founded in 1961, has been a mainstay in the community over the past 50 years, offering a well-rounded education of the highest caliber with a focus on academics, athletics, humanitarian concerns and developing students who are critical thinkers. There are presently 1,360 students attending St. Thomas whose diverse needs are met in an environment of safety, personal belonging and mutual respect.

Over the years since the school’s inception, St. Thomas students have successfully accomplished many humanitarian projects through their involvement with such organizations as CWY Haiti Partage, Free the Children and the Terry Fox Foundation, just to name a few.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

In September 2007, St. Thomas launched its first Global Learner Program to Ecuador with CWY. The program reflected our school’s belief that students’ involvement in humanitarian-based projects leads to positive changes in attitudes towards diverse individuals, groups and cultures.

Since 2007, over 70 students have participated in the Global Learner Program which brought them to remote communities in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Peru.
“The partnership between Collège André-Grasset and Canada World Youth is a definite privilege for our students who wish to become involved on an international level.”

Ginette Trudeau
Assistant Director of Studies and Student Services, Collège André-Grasset

Collège André-Grasset
Montreal, Quebec
First year in partnership: 2003

At a glance
A private college-level institution, Collège André-Grasset is a venue for education and training whose mission is to prepare students for university studies via life sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, science and arts programs, as well as DEC Plus, an enriched science program. It offers its 1,100 students a strong intellectual foundation based on acquiring work methods, integrating knowledge, and developing the ability to think independently and make judgements, with the purpose of producing responsible citizens.

By way of support, Collège André-Grasset offers a dynamic, creative and innovative social environment that promotes the individual's overall development. It shows students the importance of honesty, tolerance and social responsibility. Similarly, it raises their awareness of justice, sharing and global issues by providing opportunities for volunteering and international community engagement.

In partnership with Canada World Youth
In pursuit of its educational mission, Collège André-Grasset signed a memorandum of understanding with Canada World Youth in 2003 to work together via partnerships based on integrity and respect for others.

The projects that have been implemented are aligned with the goals of the college and CWY’s Global Learner program: cultivating participants’ sense of mutual responsibility and commitment toward resolving socioeconomic problems; promoting intercultural understanding and the building of lasting relationships; and acquiring the skills needed to make effective contributions to community development.

Since 2003, students have had unforgettable experiences in Costa Rica (2003, 2006, 2009 and 2010), Ecuador (2007 and 2009) and Peru (2011). The educational and environmental goals that they achieved had a life-changing impact, helping them to develop every facet of their personalities and become better global citizens.
“Our programs are in small communities in western Honduras. I am from a larger city and was used to having access to universities, jobs, and other attractions. Through the program, I adapted to these smaller communities. Their beauty and traditions absorbed me and I learned to appreciate what our country has, our culture and customs, and became interested in learning more about my own people.”

Norman Alvarado
Overseas Alumni, Project Supervisor, and Program Officer, ASONOG

At a glance

Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales (ASONOG) is an association of Honduran non-governmental organizations whose programs focus on areas of citizen participation, institutional strengthening and community health, amongst others.

Through a model of behavioral change, ASONOG works with families to empower people on issues such as nutrition, hygiene and sanitation. By working with trained community facilitators, ASONOG supports the development of small scale food production and life skills development that enable families to use their food appropriately, while improving hygiene and sanitation.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

CWY and ASONOG work in partnership through the Youth Leaders in Action (YLA) program, as well as a new water-focused youth internship program called Sources / Fuentes.

YLA volunteers support community youth facilitators and help ASONOG’s technical staff support the work of other partner organizations. The volunteers participate in group activities related to campaigns for environmental protection. They also visit homes to collect key information, transfer information to ASONOG’s database, conduct data analysis, and assist with workshops facilitated by local facilitators.

Expected Results

• Increase knowledge and practices about food and nutritious using fresh local products
• Increase knowledge and improvement of habits which modify the hygiene and sanitation conditions
• Integrate and implement initiatives that improve living conditions regarding health, environment, and local employment
“For us, Canada World Youth is our main partner because it offers the opportunity to give many young people an experience as a volunteer in a different country, and to experience their own country differently. It is very important for us as it allows young people within and outside the organization to have a vision of what the world is, and could be.”

Jorge Galiano Bravo
Program Coordinator, BVBP

At a glance

Created in 1982, the Bolivian Volunteer Brigade of Peru (BVBP) is a youth organization that works with volunteers nationwide. They have 16 subsidiaries in Lima and in communities around Lima.

Mission: BVBP seeks social change, development and leadership training, as well as the personal and social development of young people and their integration and participation in decision-making.

Vision: BVBP aims to be a leading international organization that promotes integration and solidarity through volunteering.

BVBP, in keeping with the integrationist thinking of Simon Bolivar, works on establishing a large national youth movement, where service to the community, solidarity, intellectual and moral training, and the search for national identity are practiced freely without limits, in order to build a socially just nation.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

Since 2005, BVBP and CWY have worked in partnership through the Youth Leaders in Action and Global Learner programs. The youth volunteers benefit from the learning and experience of BVBP through direct participation in several of their innovative leadership building projects including: training on leadership and social development at the national level; work camp programs in indigenous communities; youth volunteer programs in secondary schools nationwide; and recreation programs for young people.

Expected Results

- Promote the preservation of the historic center of the city of Cajamarca
- Support the reconstruction of the archaeological zone of Chan Chan
- Teach street-workers
- Enhance food security and nutrition of families in the Commonwealth of Palca

“After participating in the program, young people feel more committed to themselves, more committed to their community, and more committed to the organization.”

Jorge Galiano Bravo
Program Coordinator, Peru
“There are a few organizations around the world working seriously with youth in the “construction” of social capital; CWY has done it, continues doing it, and it has created an example in society.... Social capital as a tool to build up peace around the world. Congratulations CWY in your 40th anniversary!!”

Kléver S. Albán Flores
Executive Chairman

Fundación Reto Internacional
Quito, Ecuador
First year in partnership: 1983

In partnership with Canada World Youth

CWY and Fundación Reto Internacional understand the importance of building peace worldwide.

Program areas

Overseas excursions (university and non governmental organizations):
A one to twelve-month experience designed for participants who want an overseas volunteer work placement which may or may not be related to their field of study. The primary focus is the work experience and integration into the community.

Short-term excursions (high schools):
A two to three-week overseas experience for a class or group of youth which is usually curriculum-based. Participants stay in small communities and participate in a community-driven project.

Organized trips:
A fifteen to twenty-one day organized excursion (work or recreational). Participants can either choose: 1) the Mountain-Coast-Jungle or 2) the Mountain-Coast-Galapagos excursion.

At a glance

Fundación Reto Internacional is a non-governmental organization that facilitates non-formal educational programs which allow participants to experience another culture. This is achieved by:

1) living with a local host family;
2) participating in observational visits to nearby communities; and
3) volunteering with different organizations.

Participants learn about Ecuadorian culture, community development, adaptability, time management and independence.
The National University of Ostroh Academy
Netishyn and Ostroh, Ukraine
First year in partnership: 1996

“In Canada World Youth I learned acceptance and how to share my personal point of view. I learned why it is necessary to volunteer and how important it is to work as a team. While learning to respect other cultures, I also learned how it is cool to be Ukrainian because when you are abroad you also learn to respect your own identity.”

Serhiy Halaetsky
Alumni and current Sector Project Officer, NUOA

At a glance
The National University of Ostroh Academy (NUOA) was originally founded in 1576 in Ostroh, Ukraine. NUOA is a higher educational institution that focuses on training highly qualified specialists in the fields of history, culture, foreign languages, economics and law. NUOA is a member of the international level of higher learning institution, specializing in Liberal Arts. Due to its unique approach to learning, NUOA has an exemplary reputation both in Ukraine and abroad.

In partnership with Canada World Youth
NUOA works in partnership with CWY through the Youth Leaders in Action program. Two of the four exchange programs through NUOA are also accredited by Cégep Marie-Victorin, meaning participants from Quebec have the opportunity to receive credit for their work and participation in the program.

CWY and NUOA work in partnership on sector projects in the following areas:

The health sector project is focused on prevention, intervention and counseling in the areas of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco use. Working with community members in the town of Netishyn the project aims to promote a safe and drug-free environment for all young people 14-21 years old through DAT (drugs, alcohol, tobacco) education programs.

The environment sector project focuses on the “Green Campus” program, a special form of ecological education in higher education reform, significant in forming “green consciousness” and promoting sustainable development on campus. It meets the latest requirements for higher education in terms of global environmental protection and sustainable development, and has gained widespread respect within the circle of international higher education.

The Ukraine women’s exchange program integrates gender into both health and environment sector projects.

Expected Results
• Health: Improvement of the quality of life for young adults, both girls and boys, ages 14-21, by reducing and/or eliminating the introduction of the abuse of illicit drugs, tobacco smoking and alcohol abuse.
• Environment: Sustainability reflected in every aspect of human cultivation allowing students, volunteers and local youth to participate in active greening activities. The knowledge acquired will help them play a leading role in their home community or in society in the future.
“Every day, Canada World Youth offers young people a different and more open approach to education than that found in schools. From 2002 alone, 796 youth have participated in the program in Mali. These include: Malians, Beninese, Burkinabé, and Senegalese. Collectively, we have considerable assets. We have harnessed enough energy, intelligence and courage to all have confidence in the future.”

Bréhima Bouaré  
Program Coordinator, DNA

At a glance

The mission of the National Agriculture Directorate, or DNA, is to establish elements of the national policy on agriculture and to coordinate and oversee their implementation.

The DNA is present throughout Mali, supporting rural communities in development activities linked to food sovereignty, the protection of natural resources, and the fight against poverty. The Ministry of Agriculture is in charge of achieving rural development objectives as set by government policy and the DNA is the delivery structure responsible for implementing the exchange program.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

“In 2008, the Canada World Youth team revamped its programs. In addition to cultural exchanges, the new structure gave Mali the opportunity to receive funding for sustainable development projects.”

Bréhima Bouaré  
Program Coordinator, DNA

CWY works in partnership with the DNA through our Youth Leaders in Action program. During the exchange, youth volunteers gain skills in agricultural practice, food security, resource management, poverty reduction, and environmental protection. An example of some of the work that young volunteers contribute to is the reforestation project along the road between Karadjè and Sirakorola.

Expected Results

- Contributing to the development of market gardens in order to generate more income for women and youth
- Reducing desertification and its impact on the environment and residents of the Sirakorola community through planting and tending trees
- Enhancing quality of life via access to water for use in developing an integrated agroforestry project
- Reducing socio-economic problems related to the lack of economic activity
“Working with the Canada World Youth programs has made me change the way I see things, to better understand the reality of the world socially, politically and economically. Through this I have learned to accept differences that exist in human nature, and to respect them.”

Ben Mongi
Past Project Supervisor, current Project Manager for UVIKIUTA

At a glance

UVIKIUTA is a youth development organization established in 1983 with the assistance of the father of the nation, the Late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, First President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Its mission is to build self-reliant communities able to address social and economic challenges by using available local resources.

The organization was set up as a response to the government policy call for unemployed youth to form economic groups. In 1986, a group of youth moved from the city to the community of Chamazi to establish a new settlement. Members of UVIKIUTA live, work, and share life with community members.

UVIKIUTA is focused on preparing its members, youth and the community to be active leaders, change agents and good global and local citizens.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

CWY-UVIKIUTA youth volunteers benefit from UVIKIUTA’s work through projects that seek to provide an experience that connects service, culture, professional and personal growth. Working with people of various cultures allows for learning and recognition of the world we all share. UVIKIUTA’s programs include:

Eco-Village: Emphasizing the improvement of local systems to create incentives and reshape the traditional patterns of consumption, development and employment into more efficient and sustainable patterns.

Development of Entrepreneurs: This program helps generate income to sustain the organization while using the projects as models for youth employment creation.

International Work Camps: Organized and implemented in collaboration with communities across the country, UVIKIUTA brings international volunteers to Tanzania to contribute to community projects and priorities highlighted by the communities themselves.

Expected Results

• Employment creation
• Education/skills improvements for self reliance
• Permanent shelters
• Environmental sustainability
The value of our program lies in our ability to provide volunteers with the real life experience of what it means to be Canadian or Indonesian through community work at home and abroad. The experience is drastically different than any tourist would ever encounter. By offering our youth an opportunity to participate in an environment of group living, team building, cultural understanding, and peaceful conflict resolution, we foster a common appreciation for each other, instilling a mutual respect for our differences, while celebrating our commonalities. By learning to appreciate another culture through direct experience, we learn to value our own culture and traditions.”  

François Tardif  
Program Manager, Canada World Youth

At a glance

Since the early days of Indonesian independence there has been an institutional concern for youth and sport development in Indonesia. Sports and physical education activities were under the Ministry of Teaching, which then became the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 1946. Currently, the institution is called “MENPORA” which has official branches in provinces, cities and regencies all over Indonesia.

In partnership with Canada World Youth

In 2010, Indonesia celebrated 35 years of partnership with CWY making it the longest partnership for the organization. The mutual goal of the exchange program is to have our youth gain useful experience (learning by doing), in order to broaden their knowledge and transfer those values to other youth throughout Indonesia and Canada. The young people selected for this exchange program come from almost every province in Indonesia and Canada, and work together through the Youth Leaders in Action program.

Expected Results

• To enhance youth participation in national development in order to face globalization challenges
• To enhance the role of youth organizations to enable empowerment of young people
• To broaden youth empowerment policies which are used as the guidelines for youth programs
• To advance youth empowerment policies by strengthening coordination and synergy among stakeholders.
Canada World Youth (CWY) has evolved into an innovative champion of youth-oriented programming. As we proudly celebrate the rich and diverse history of our organization, we look to the future, recognizing our incredible potential to reach more youth, to create dynamic leaders in a globalised world, and to contribute to the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

True to our vision, mission, and values, going forward we will invest our energy into ensuring that the voices of youth everywhere are heard, that their creativity and ingenuity are celebrated, and that their learning opportunities are maximized. We will strive to work closer with youth from Aboriginal communities, as well as engage various cultural and socio-economic groups who might not have been given the opportunity, as of yet, to benefit from CWY’s life-changing programs.

Our strategy for further growth as an organization is to build on the constituency of support that we already have in Canada and internationally. With the support of our stakeholders, CWY will strengthen the network of engaged global citizens comprising our thousands of alumni, host families, past and present Board members and staff, and partners across 67 countries.

In our 40 years of history, we have been inspired by our alumni, who continue to be actively involved in their own communities, as well as in national and international development initiatives. With their help and expertise, we will create new and relevant programs addressing current local and global needs for development.

Our strategic partnership with several public and private sector organizations across Canada and internationally offers us the intellectual, financial and human capital to advance our mission of building youth leaders. With support from our alumni, we will build upon our educational programs, reach out and offer more inclusive youth programs, open new doors in the world of youth-driven development, and provide youth with the support and information needed to access internships opportunities, awards of recognition, financial bursaries and the mentors to accompany them in their professional development.

As we move forward, my message to youth is simple: “Continue to inspire your communities and the world by your deeds. Be the beacon of light that the world needs and excel following the leadership development you have received. Always think about and include those less fortunate in your deliberations. Be of service to those who are at the margins of your community. Demonstrate your leadership talents by your involvement in building, together, more just, harmonious and sustainable societies.”

As the great Mahatma Ghandi would say: “Be the change you want to see in the world”.

Yours truly,

Iris Almeida-Côté, B.A., M.A., LL.M.
President and Chief Executive Officer, Canada World Youth
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CWY sincerely thanks the thousands of individuals, families and organizations from across Canada, as well as the Government of Canada’s Canadian International Development Agency, who contribute time, money and expertise to the success of our mission of building youth leaders.