

U.S. MISSION TO CANADA ALUMNI NEWSLETTER - October 2014



Greetings from Ambassador Heyman



Dear Canada-U.S. Exchange Alumni,

Since my arrival at the Embassy in Ottawa in March of this year, and during my tour of Canada in the spring, I had the great pleasure of meeting alumni from all across the country and hearing about your exchange experiences. My first meeting with alumni was right here in Ottawa for a breakfast briefing in early April, and I look forward to additional opportunities like this.

The expertise, enthusiasm and involvement of alumni in Canada clearly demonstrate their extraordinary value to both our nations. It was

wonderful to discover how much alumni are contributing to fostering durable connections, promoting our shared values and celebrating the strong ties between the United States and Canada. As a member of the Fulbright Canada board of directors, I recognize the importance and impact exchange programs have on our professional and personal lives. Vicki and I are strong advocates for education opportunities and will continue to support initiatives that promote education and professional exchanges. I also look forward to working with Canadians on more programs such as culinary diplomacy.

I recently came back from a trip to Whitehorse and am blown away by the beauty of this country, from sea to sea to sea. If you want to share your favorite places to see and visit with Vicki and me, you can find me on Twitter @BruceAHeyman. I'd love to hear from you!

I would like to congratulate you on the role you play in developing the enduring friendship between the United States and Canada. I hope to meet all of you during my time as Ambassador, and I wish you great success in all your endeavors.

Ambassador Bruce Heyman

Special Youth Ambassador Edition!

In this issue:

Read about our 2013 and 2014 Youth Ambassadors' three week exchanges in the U.S.

More reads:

World Economic Forum Blog: [Why U.S. competitiveness is on the rise](#)

Les Affaires: [Comment rester concentré au bureau?](#)

L'Actualité –avec Dominique Anglade, PDG Montreal International et ancienne du programme IVLP : [Les succès méconnus de Montréal International](#)

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Special Edition: Youth Ambassadors Program Alumni!

The Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada is a three week exchange to the U.S. that brings together Canadian high school students and adult mentors. During this exchange, the students and mentors travel to different cities and participate in activities and workshops on the themes of civic education, community service, youth leadership development and entrepreneurship. The Center for the Study of Canada at SUNY Plattsburgh is the organizer of the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada, thanks to the support of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State, the United States Embassy and Fulbright Canada.

For this special edition of the alumni newsletter, we've asked 2013 and 2014 Youth Ambassadors to share their experiences and pictures. Hope you enjoy reading about their stories as much as they enjoyed their program!

2014 Youth Ambassadors Program Alumni

Emma Tetrault, Vernon BC

Today my group called "Global Village" had our first introduction meeting and it was amazing. What we decided to do was to accomplish something at every meeting. Since it was 9/11 today, we wanted to stress how much we care about the U.S., and how that day did affect Canada, and always will affect us. We wanted to acknowledge all of those who were affected, and show them that we care! Here is a photo of us in front of our masterpiece in Vernon, BC.

We love you, New York, and we will always remember.



Kevin Gélinas, Sudbury ON



In Washington DC: Alison Lee, Yasmine Alkadri, Brianna Dabrowski and Kevin Gélinas

My name is Kevin Gélinas and I am a 16 year old student from Sudbury, Ontario who has participated in the 2014 Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada. This exchange to the United States was absolutely amazing and the program helped me obtain numerous leadership, entrepreneurship and civic engagement qualities that I will utilize for the rest of my life.

Firstly, staying in the U.S. with a host family for most of the trip was remarkable. This experience offered the opportunity to truly observe and appreciate the similarities and differences in Canadian and American day-to-day life. Furthermore, visiting the monuments and memorials in Washington D.C., as well as the 9/11 memorial and museum in New York City has allowed me a new and more positive perspective on the patriotism proudly

shown in the United States. Touring these sites has also shown the impeccable ability that Americans have to come together quickly and efficiently as a united nation in times of crisis.

Further, with the knowledge gained from the various workshops, the friendships crafted with my Youth Ambassador colleagues and the ideas brainstormed during our follow-on in-country project meetings, I have developed a service project plan that is intended to be implemented within my school. The blueprint I have created is designed to establish a student involvement and volunteer committee at my school to improve the student-community relationship in addition to better the extracurricular student life. I hope my project will help students achieve the 40 hours minimum of volunteering that is required to receive a diploma more easily and quickly.

This program is incredible and I hope it can continue for years to come. Already, I have benefited enormously from the experiences, activities and workshops during the exchange and hope that others can do so as well.



Robert Plessis-Belair, Kevin Gélinas and Annie Rochon (Host Family)

Yasmine Alkadri, Ottawa ON***When Borders Collide***

I remember waking up to the New York sun shining on my face, already knowing it would be a beautiful day. It was our first day in New York City, and we were already missing our host families and all the wonderful people we met in Plattsburgh. After our first day in New York City, the

other YAP participants and I were more than ready to head back to Plattsburgh. It only took a short ten days to create an unbreakable bond with our host families. I could have never imagined I would be so comfortable around the people who so willingly accepted me into their home, but it was truly one of the most amazing experiences of my life. It was a home away from home.

On top of my wonderful hosts, I had the privilege of meeting some of the most inspiring and motivated people from across Canada. The three weeks that we were lucky to spend together provided enough time for us to forge friendships that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. Here we are, almost a month after the end of the trip, and we tell each other about our days every evening over Facebook chat and Skype.

The 21 days of the trip flew by so quickly that it almost feels like it never happened. From seminars to a concert on the bluffs to trekking back home, the entire experience was so surreal, and I could not believe that it had happened until I got back to my

home in Ottawa on the evening of August 10th. That night, I teared up, missing my friends that lived both just across the city, and thousands of kilometres away.

All in all, the entire program has been life changing and eye opening. I have been able to build my network and make connections with a plethora of people, and I have discovered the potential that I hold. The variety of speakers and workshops that were hosted for us built upon our knowledge and provided us all with that extra push that we needed to accomplish our diverse goals that could have otherwise been challenging enough to scare us off. Now, here we find ourselves, in the midst of the real world, trying to pull together a project that will not only have a lasting impact, but also give us the satisfaction to know that we were able to be the difference.

Randilynne Urslak, Oxford Mills ON

In Washington DC: Randilynne Urslak, Sean Sander and Emma Tetrault

Hello everyone! My name is Randilynne Urslak, I am 17 years old and I am from Oxford Mills, Ontario. I am not sure how to begin talking about my amazing journey this summer within the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada. My experience was nothing but positive, as I learned an incredible amount of knowledge and skills that will be valuable to me as I proceed with my community service project and in the future. When I began this program, I had no idea how I was going to be able to carry out my service project. Over the course of the three weeks, with help from the many supportive and motivating leaders, I was able to narrow my idea down and come up with a project that I am very excited and passionate about. Listening to the many inspiring and innovative speakers also encouraged me to work hard on this project and hopefully make a difference in my community for years to come. My plan is to offer free swimming lessons to those children who cannot afford to learn this basic survival skill and as well offer tutoring in various school subjects for young kids who could use some extra support to succeed.

Saying all this, my favorite part of the trip was definitely the people I met and the many places I was fortunate enough to visit. I was lucky enough to make lifelong friendships and memories I will cherish in my heart forever. There was never a dull moment, that's for sure! I would most certainly recommend this trip, as it is a once in a lifetime experience that anyone would be fortunate to experience. I am forever grateful to Dr. Kirkey and all the other staff members for making this trip possible and for blessing me with the opportunity to represent Canada in the program as a Youth Ambassador.

Rashmi Jasinghe, Ottawa ON

When I was first presented with the email from my teacher recommending me to go on this trip, I jumped at the chance. How could I say no? A three-week long trip to a new country with seventeen other kids and three adult educators was an offer I could not refuse! I made several new friends and created countless memories that will last forever. Leaving home for 3 weeks was difficult for me as I have never been away from home this long and at times it was hard for me as I felt homesick at certain times. During the trip, we went to so many new places such as New York City, Washington D.C and a small town named Plattsburgh which was my favorite place of all. During the course of the trip, I have learned so many valuable skills that I can use later on my life. Our directors, Dr. Chris Kirkey and Amy Southern, along with the rest of the staff, did a wonderful job executing the exchange as everything went according to plan and nothing really went wrong. Overall I have to give this program a rating of 5 out of 5 stars as it was very well put together to improve leadership skills. I really hope this program continues for a long time as this is a great opportunity for kids across Canada and I encourage more kids to apply for a spot.

Shayla Commandeur, Jasper ON

My experience in the Youth Ambassadors Program was enlightening. I learned so much about the United States, and that inspires me to keep on learning about not only the United States but also other countries. Also, I met some amazing people on my trip. We have remained friends even after the trip came to a close and I am so thankful for that. This program helped me overcome some social anxiety that I used to deal with, for instance, reading in front of people. Now, I can do that with ease. And most importantly, the Youth Ambassadors Program pushed me to help out in my school and community and there is nothing better than spreading positivity and love to the ones who need it most. Overall, my experience in the program was eye opening and amazing and I wouldn't change it for the world.

2013 Youth Ambassadors Program

Supriya Arora, Dartmouth NS

Youth Heroes – A Youth Ambassadors Project



Youth Heroes is a youth volunteer organization that I developed with the goal of promoting community service among young youth and adolescents in my community after attending the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada in 2013. Getting the opportunity to even be a part of the program was a huge honor for me and being able to share my experiences with the 2014 Youth Ambassadors this year was a valuable learning experience. I was able to share my ideas and goals with many people that supported me, helped me, and ultimately contributed to all of my success as well as learn new skills through multiple motivational and guest speakers that completely redefined the meaning of community service and success. I was exposed to many new experiences throughout the trip from visiting new places, to living with a host family, to being exposed to the culture of the US and I enjoyed every part of it. The bonds I made during the Youth Ambassadors experience are eternal, especially those made with my colleagues. The 17 of us bonded so quickly and instantly became friends. They are always very supportive and full of helpful advice and I am very thankful that they were able to be a part of my YAP experience. I am extremely happy that I was able to meet each and every one of them. Because of them and all those others involved with the Youth Ambassadors Program, Youth Heroes was and still is a huge success. I was able to get the kids volunteering at a local seniors home as well as raise over \$850 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign which works to help grandmothers in Africa raising orphan children who lost their parents due to AIDS!

The Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada has played a crucial role in the implementation and overall success of my project. This program has not only provided me with the opportunity to grow as learner while also helping me acquire valuable leadership skills but also gave me the chance to meet with 16 other wonderful teens who share the same vision I do, to make a change in their communities. The entire Youth Ambassadors experience has been truly unforgettable and everything that I have learned for this experience was vital in the development of my program. YAP helped shape me into a more well-rounded person and showed me that the biggest difference a person can make, even as young as I am, is simply to do what you can to help out, even if it's just in the smallest of ways. The entire YAP experience from start to finish was absolutely amazing and without it I wouldn't have been able to accomplish all that I have. I would like to thank everybody that made the trip possible but most importantly I would like to thank everyone at Fulbright Canada, the US Embassy of Ottawa, SUNY Plattsburgh, Dr. Kirkey, and all the other participants and mentors that played a huge role in my learning experience. None of this would have been possible without them and I will always remember everything that they have done for me.

Youth Heroes, making a difference one community at a time!

Stefan Nestic, Ottawa ON

Something that I will never forget is being part of the inaugural Youth Ambassadors with Canada Program, a short and rich program that truly is a rare opportunity. In just three weeks, we were invited to listen to a diverse group of inspirational speakers, learn about American cultural values, and plan a personal community service project. Whether it was sitting on the grass at Columbia University and taking part in a discussion, participating in a mock debate, or going to a concert in Plattsburgh, there was not a single moment that did not feel fresh and exciting. Apart from all of the activities, I met almost twenty other passionate teenagers, and I had an opportunity to travel during my summer vacation. When I arrived home, I spent three months, implanting an initiative in my school to connect the youth in the community with the elderly through visits to a local retirement home. I had not volunteered with the elderly in almost five years, but after the first visit, I realized, and so had the other volunteers, that it is something from which everyone benefits. The interesting thing is that I would have never organized all of this without the acquired confidence and the motivation I received. In the end, I still maintained my contact with the program coordinators, and got an opportunity to come back the next year as an alumnus where I shared my experience with the new participants.



Lindsee Clark, Baie Verte NL

When I set out from my first senior badminton regionals with a collection of medals around my neck, I didn't think the day could possibly get any better! Then I got the call from my mother that I had been one of sixteen teenagers from across Canada chosen for the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada. I was in total shock. I was only fifteen at the time and didn't expect to even get considered for such an esteemed program with the Embassy! Time passed quickly and eventually I boarded the plane by myself and landed in Ottawa. I clicked with the other ambassadors almost immediately, and by the time we arrived in Plattsburgh, we were absolutely inseparable, we had already begun forging friendships that are still strong today. The classes with SUNY Plattsburgh where we learned about leadership, civic engagement, improving our communities and so much more positively flew by under the hot summer sun. My favorite part about Plattsburgh was the host family that graciously took me under their roof for the couple of weeks I was in that beautiful city. They were amazing people, and in fact, we keep in touch to this day. Eventually, we made our way over to New York City, NY, and when the bus fires made their way through the busy streets for the first time, I felt so blessed that I began crying tears of joy. This trip changed my life! We got to stay in an Ivy League school and tour the grounds while in New York City, and we got to eat in the most fantastic restaurants you can think of. Then finally, we moved along to Washington D.C., which was an incredibly informative experience. I got to learn more about the U.S. form of government, how Congress works and the like. Our stay in D.C. also gave me and my fellow ambassadors time to relax and to really bond some more. We made pillow forts, shoved ten of us onto one bed to watch a movie- our bodies a warm pile of love and acceptance for one another- and played jokes on one another. By the time we arrived back in Ottawa, I could never picture myself the same person without them, and in result, cried a river of tears on our departure. I still keep in touch with a nice few of my fellow ambassadors, and I get to see a couple of them whenever I'm in Halifax. Coming from a small rural town in Newfoundland and Labrador, taking part in this program really helped me see the diversity of our great nation and the U.S.A., and it gave me a new perspective on the importance of civic engagement and leadership. Although picking an idea for my project was terrifying, my fellow youth ambassadors and mentors really helped me feel secure and ready to do my library program. I wouldn't trade this experience for all the tea in China, and as we say in Newfoundland, "Long may yer big jib draw".



Brandon Finyanos, Halifax NS



The greatest thing the Youth Ambassador Program offers is diversity. Diversity of not only experiences over the duration of the trip, but diversity of those taking part in the program; from Baie Verte in Newfoundland & Labrador across thousands of kilometers of our great nation to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. Each of the participants brought their own personalities and world views which allows each and every one of us to take away a better understanding of acceptance and diversity. Without my fellow youth ambassadors I would not have succeeded in developing a greater appreciation for not only the diversity of the people we met, but the diversity of my fellow citizens.

Mélanie-Rose Frappier, Sudbury ON

Being a part of the Youth Ambassador program 2013 changed my life completely. After the 3 weeks in the United States I was able to create my non-profit organization called *It's Cool to be Healthy - C'est Cool d'être en Santé* and truly make a difference in people's lives. My non-profit is based on raising awareness about a healthy lifestyle through games, physical activity and nutrition. During this past year I have been able to present to several schools, daycares and associations around Canada reaching thousands of people not to mention the population touched by the media. I was the recipient of the National Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award 2013 in Ottawa, The Gathering our Voices Award 2014 in Vancouver as well as the Top 20 under 20 Award of Canada 2014 in Toronto. However, the most exciting presentation was at the US Embassy this past July when I was able to talk to the new youth ambassadors and share my journey. I told them not to wait for the perfect moment but to take the moment and make it perfect. I believe that every youth has the potential to achieve greatness and have an impact on people's lives. And finally, I am invited as a guest speaker at this year's We Day Toronto event at the Air Canada Center where I will be able to influence other youth to make a positive difference in this world. I recommend every youth in Canada to follow their dreams because we have the power to redefine what is impossible.

Maleeka Thaker, Carleton Place ON

The Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada of 2013 was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From the inspirational speakers to the extraordinary young adults I was able to join on the journey; I know this program will stay with me for a lifetime.

The Youth Ambassadors Program has encouraged within me a sense of capability to create positive change. It has taught me that with hard work, good planning, and the right network, I can overcome any obstacle and initiate something great! I certainly feel as though I am more prepared to embrace my future.

As a youth participant, I also received the opportunity to discover more about the bonds existing between Canada and the United States of America, and to live with a family in Plattsburgh, New York. It was a learning experience unlike what I had expected.

Yet, above and beyond all the amazing exposure offered by the Youth Ambassadors Program, I know that my trip was only as memorable as it was due to the remarkable students and adult educators I was able to experience it with. Between our work periods, we shared many laughs and bonded quite closely. I'm so happy to hear about the success fellow participants have had! I miss them all and I can guarantee that they will never be forgotten because of the fond memories they have given me.

I sincerely thank the Youth Ambassadors Program with Canada for strengthening my leadership skills and allowing me to kindle new friendships.

**Alumni Publications**

Ted Marmor was a visiting professor at McGill University in 2005. Here are his latest publications:

Marmor, Mashaw and Pakutka, ***Social Insurance: America's Neglected Heritage and Contested Future***, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2013.

Marmor and Klein, Polifits, ***Health and Health Care: Selected Essays***, Yale University Press, 2012.

Share your publications with us!

International Exchange Alumni

Taste of State, join the International Exchange Alumni recipe exchange!

Calling all exchange participants and #ExchangeAlumni! You went on an exchange – now exchange again! Taste of State is our FIRST global recipe exchange! Submit your favorite recipes from around the world with photos to the International Exchange Alumni Tumblr <http://goo.gl/oB5h8o>. Top submissions will be featured in the FIRST ever Taste of State online cookbook! If you aren't an exchange alumna/us you can still participate! Share your favorite recipes by using the #TasteOfState hashtag and dig in!



Alumni Community

Halifax

International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) alumni Jason Mullen and Gary Logan pose with Sherry Bell at the US Consulate General Halifax. In 2010 Bell served as the English Language Language Officer (ELO) on a IVLP program "Securing North America" with Logan, Mullen, and another Nova Scotian, David MacKenzie. All three Canadians raved about their home province and David offered that if Sherry ever came to visit, he could use his cottage. Since their IVLP trip the four have kept in regular contact and remain great friends.



Jason Mullen (IVLP 2010), Sherry Bell (ELO), and Gary Logan (Political-Economic Specialist, U.S. Consulate Halifax)

Montreal

29 septembre 2014 - Joël Plouffe, un participant au programme IVLP en 2012, chercheur au CIRRIQ et doctorant à l'École National d'Administration Publique a reçu la bourse d'excellence doctorale 2013-2014. Cette bourse est octroyée à un étudiant de 3e cycle pour l'excellence de son dossier et cheminement académiques. <http://www.cirriq.org/medias/nouvelles/article/index.php?id=44>.

Toronto

Alumnus Gary Pieters join the Start Cycling Campaign in Toronto! <http://startcycling.ca/gary>

Gary rides up to Jane & Weston from CityPlace. He tries to avoid busy streets & construction.

Zabrina never thought she'd bike in Toronto. Now cycling sets her free.

Shraddha & Lincoln ride from Queen & Woodbine to work on College St. It's a scenic commute, a solid workout, & actually faster than taking the car!

Cycling isn't just for the hardcore.

Want to try biking to work or school? Read real stories & learn how to get started.

startcycling.ca
#startcycling

A project by Toronto Public Health

Calgary

Preventing Criminal Radicalization Through Youth Empowerment Summit September 11 – 14

Mahdi Qasqas of the OWN Cultural Brokerage Program was a principal organizer of the Calgary Muslim Summit held in Calgary on September 11 – 14, 2014. The objective for the summit was to improve the way that the Muslim community participates with law enforcement, government, academia, media, and other stakeholders in preventing crime and promoting youth empowerment. The organizers hoped to advance the dialogue on understanding the risk factors to criminal radicalization and enhancing the capacity for youth empowerment. Consul General Peter Kujawinski participated as a keynote speaker during the opening day of the summit along with various Canadian government, law enforcement, and community leaders who contributed to a thoughtful discussion on the prevention of criminal radicalization through youth empowerment. Coverage of the event was widespread locally, nationally, and internationally (CNN). Mahdi is an IVLP alumnus who participated in the Promoting Moderate Voices program in 2011. Calgary Public Affairs plans to work with Mahdi's organization on an upcoming youth conference in 2015.



Photo Credit : Own It 2014 Workshop
<http://ownit2014.com/photos/>



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Make your U.S. Exchange work for you! As an alumnus of a State Department sponsored exchange program you have free access to online reference databases including EBSCOhost, Gale Cengage Learning, and ProQuest. Over 20,000 online newspapers and magazines are at your fingertips! There's also the \$33 billion worth of grant opportunities. All you need to do is register at [State Alumni!](http://StateAlumni!) Alumni.state.gov

Stay in Touch with Alumni around the World



International Exchange Alumni joined Tumblr! You can visit the brand new #ExchangeAlumni Tumblr blog here <http://goo.gl/8JlOKI>

If you're an exchange participant, or alumna/us of an exchange program, this blog is just for YOU! From job listings, to exchange program information and alumni stories, to virtual dance parties—this blog was designed just for you to share information and meet other exchange participants and alumni.

Do you have a Tumblr page too? Let us know, we'd love to follow you. This is your space, so have fun with it!

Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalExchangeAlumni>

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