



# Northern Youth Abroad

NUNAVUT ♦ NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



Education Through Work and Travel

# Northern Youth Abroad

NUNAVUT ♦ NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

February 6, 2012

Dear Mary Ann,

It is a pleasure to submit our Programming Report to the Gwich'in Tribal Council in support of our 2011 programs. Through our partnership we were able to support Josephine Martin as she completed our Canadian Program.

All participants spent more than 200 hours developing their occupational interests, gaining transferable skills for the workplace, and identifying future career goals during their ten month involvement with NYA. Additionally, each participant had the opportunity to engage in various activities focused on sharing their culture, while learning about life in their host community. Participation in our programming allows youth to earn up to eight high school credits. As many participants are in the final stages of completing high school, these credits are one of many tangible benefits of program completion.

Please find attached a detailed program report. Audited financial statements will be prepared in April and will be forwarded to you as soon as they are adopted.

We look forward to collaborating in support of the shared missions of our organizations and in the coming years continue to offer life directing and changing opportunities to Gwich'in youth. NYA is committed to developing young leaders in the NWT who have a solid understanding of the North's important place in Canada and the world. These youth return home with new skills and the confidence to positively contribute to their communities.

We are so thankful for the support we have received from the Gwich'in Tribal Council and look forward to working with you again in 2012. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me toll free at 1-866-212-2307 or by email at [rebecca@nya.ca](mailto:rebecca@nya.ca).

Sincerely,



Rebecca Bisson  
Program Director

## **INTRODUCTION**

Northern Youth Abroad sincerely appreciates the financial support it has received from the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Our partnership has been based on a solid foundation of helping build the capacity of youth from the north and has advanced the shared objectives of both of our organizations. We have just concluded our 14th year of programming and your support has allowed us to deliver a meaningful leadership and education program to youth from your region.

Please accept the following as our final report for our 2011 programming. Audited financial statements will be forwarded to you once they have been completed in the spring.

## **ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD**

### ***2011 Canadian Program***

The 2011 NYA Canadian Program included one Gwich'in Beneficiary (Josephine Martin) along with another 14 youth from the NWT and 18 youth from Nunavut. Participants were selected in the fall of 2010 from a pool of more than 140 applicants. Each selected participant and alternate began working on a series of assignments over the winter. These first assignments included permission forms and pre-travel clearance as well as a number of assignments that focused on key development areas - including career exploration, leadership, and volunteerism.

On July 1st, all participants arrived in Ottawa to begin their summer adventures. Upon their arrival everyone travelled to our Orientation camp at the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre and had the opportunity to meet each other. Orientation lasts five days. Participants were spread out between three home groups and each engage in facilitated training sessions designed to prepare them for their summer placements in the south. The sessions cover everything from learning how to cope with homesickness, to adjusting to a different culture, and workplace expectations. All participants take part in first aid, workplace safety, and water safety training.

Participants come together as a group at Orientation and begin to build relationships with others from across the NWT and Nunavut. Peer mentoring is encouraged and participants are encouraged to share their experiences and provide each other with support

After Orientation, participants travelled, in pairs, to their host families. This year's host communities were spread across seven provinces; Nova Scotia, P.E.I., New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. Each participant volunteered approximately 150 hours at a local work placement at a position where they could develop their own career goals.

After the summer placements concluded, all of the participants returned to camp and participated in four days of Re-orientation debriefing sessions before returning home. There are sessions on college options, other leadership and travels programs, and how to keep this positive momentum going forward in their life once returning home. Re-orientation is a time to celebrate the accomplishment of finishing the program and plan for the future. These four days are a highlight of the year and at no other time is their personal growth and excitement for the future more evident.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

Each participant received:

- Up to eight high school credits
- Basic First Aid certification
- Leadership skills
- Work place safety training from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)
- Public speaking training and presentation practice
- 150 hours of on the job training
- Sessions on healthy lifestyles
- Information on post-secondary and career options



“I’ve seen the difference in students who have participated in NYA, especially in the International Program. They return more articulate and more willing to try new things. NYA bolsters the student’s confidence, sense of self, and even their own cultural identity”

-NYA Mentor

**Josephine Martin-** Josephine is from Inuvik and spent her summer in Westmeath, Ontario with Jennifer and Jeremy Austin and their family. Her placement buddy was Kiyana Betsaka from Nahanni Butte. Westmeath is located on the shore of the Ottawa River in an area famous for white water rafting. Josephine's volunteer work placement was at the United Way of Renfrew County. While volunteering at the United Way she helped prepare for a campaign that they were launching in the fall.



Josephine (3rd from left) is seen here with her host family and placement buddy Kiyana.

## **2011 INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM**

This year's International Program consisted of two groups comprised of eleven participants, one group leader in training, and four group leaders from across the north. Seven of the participants were from the NWT and four were from Nunavut. Participants were selected in early 2011 and completed a series of preparatory assignments before they travelled to Ottawa for Orientation on July 1st. The two groups participated in community based volunteer projects the southern African country of Botswana.

### ***Group Leaders***

Once again we were very fortunate to have four amazing group leaders. Levi Eegeesiak and Mélanie Dostie-Allaire of Iqaluit lead one of our groups while Shane Thompson from Fort Simpson and Cara Cormier a teacher in Grise Fiord lead the other.

This year was unique and we were excited to be able to provide an alumnus with the opportunity to become a group leader in training. An open invitation was extended to our alumni to apply to for this position. After interviewing all those who were interested, Murina Sabourin from Fort Providence was selected to help lead Shane and Cara's group. Murina did a wonderful job and we are excited to provide this opportunity to more alumni in the future.

### ***Pre-Placement Preparation***

Participants prepared for their placement by completing work that further explores the skills and ideas introduced in the Canadian Program. International Program participants take a deeper examination of global citizenship, community development, and the role culture and cultural differences play in our everyday lives. International orientation runs simultaneously and at the same site as the Canadian Program orientation. This is organized intentionally because the International participants have completed the Canadian Program previously and are able to offer their insights, support, and advice about the upcoming placements to their Canadian Program counterparts.

Each group took part in team building exercises and participated in session on international travel, development education, governance and leadership, and issues such as HIV/AIDS. In addition to these sessions, participants take a First Aid refresher and learn about First Aid in the wilderness.

### ***Placements***

This years placements took place in Botswana. This was our 10th year working in this nation with our in-country partners. To date all of our placements have been very successful. Our community placements were in Ramotswa and Shakawe. While on placement, the two groups worked with the local Batswana people on a number of development related initiatives.

## Shakawe:

This summer Melanie and Levi's group returned to the village of Shakawe. This was our fifth time with a group in this community. The village has about 5,000 inhabitants and is located near the northern border with Namibia. While in Shakawe the group worked at the Botshelo Trust Day Care/Pre-School Centre. The mission of the Botshelo Trust is "To develop excellent and sustainable programs for orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers to become confident in a secure and stable environment." Some of the groups tasks included repairing a fence, gardening, helping with the cooking, and in-class supervision.



"We were able to do a lot of activities, eat well, and travel within the country. To notice the maturity that each of the youth gained during the summer was rewarding. As individuals and partners we all gained a lot this summer."

-Mélanie Dostie-Allaire, Team Shakawe Group Leader

## **Ramotswa:**

The second group was placed in Ramotswa. Ramotswa has a population of around 20,000 and is located in the south eastern part of the country near the South African border. The placement was our second in the community and took place at the South East District Youth Empowerment League youth centre. The mission of the centre is to educate youth about HIV/AIDS through sports. The groups main task was to work on a garden that was to be used for growing fruits and vegetables. The fruits and vegetables would then be distributed through the community and to the youth at the center. The group really enjoyed the placement and built many close relationships with the people they worked with.



Team Ramotswa is seen here with a group of indigenous San villagers. While in Botswana the groups engage in cultural exchange while volunteering on development related projects.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS & CHALLENGES

Heading into our 15th year of operations, this last year has seen the organization experience many positive things in addition to enduring some challenges along the way.

### *Successes:*

We are so proud to report that this year our participants had the highest ever rate for program completion and participant success.

- Forty-three participants successfully completed their respective program.
- Our network of volunteers continues to grow and do amazing work. Across the country our volunteer network stretches into the hundreds. Volunteers allow this program to operate and are involved in everything from helping with the recruitment and selection of participants, to fundraising, hosting, and sitting on the Board of Directors. We are so thankful and are in awe about how many people go out of their way to support NYA through volunteerism.
- NYA has allocated additional resources to remain engaged with and support alumni. Our early feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. We now have three alumni sitting on the Board of Directors and also have alumni involved in facilitating, mentoring, helping with the recruitment and selection of participants, and helping select host families and group leaders
- In the fall of 2011 NYA launched a new \$500 bursary available to alumni who are pursuing post-secondary education and/or training.
- This year we launched a new Volunteer Recognition Award. This award is presented to highlight and acknowledge the dedication and commitment of our volunteers. Mindy Willet, who over the years has done just about everything including volunteering on the Board of Directors for many years, was presented with the inaugural edition of the award. Each year the award will be presented to a volunteer to recognize their contributions and dedication to NYA.
- Karen Aglukark was presented with the 2011 Outstanding Alumni award. We are so proud of Karen and all of her accomplishments. Karen is an alumna of both programs, has facilitated at camp for the last two years, and has found time to sit on our Board of Directors, all while being enrolled in her 4th year of studies at Carleton University.
- NYA partnered with Canada World Youth on a special initiative to offer modified programming targeted specifically towards Northerners. Thirty-four youth participated on six week volunteer placements in either Nicaragua or Peru. We anticipate continuing this partnership in the upcoming year and look forward to being able to offer this programming to more youth.
- Murina Sabourin from Fort Providence was our first ever Group Leader in Training.
- With the support of MACA our Program Director, Rebecca Bisson, was able to visit and conduct community tours across the NWT. The interest generated from the visits was strong and we have received a record number of applications to our 2012 programming.

## ***Challenges:***

Some challenges have accompanied this success along the way. The first, and biggest of these challenges has been an unprecedented financial pressure. The reason for this pressure is primarily two-fold. Firstly, traditionally many of our regional funders have supported us through the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) program. This year the program evolved into the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) program. This transition has proven to be difficult for NYA to navigate, and has resulted in significant reductions in revenue from long-term funding sources.

Secondly, the economic downturn has resulted in increased competition for fewer funds. During this year's program cycle we have had to stretch fewer resources while battling rising costs and anticipate ending the year in deficit. We are committed to working in tandem with our funding partners to ensure that we do not have to reduce participant numbers in future program years.

Other challenges have included:

- We continue to receive a strong pool of qualified and enthusiastic applicants that exceeds the number of participants we can accommodate. The majority of these applications continue to come from smaller communities.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Recruitment for our 2012 programming is just finishing up and we look forward to another exciting year. This upcoming year will be our 15th in operation. Our success in the last fifteen years has seen NYA grow from initially being run by a small group of board members who received 20 applications for 10 positions to an organization with 12 board members, two summer staff, and four full time staff members. Last year we received over 200 applications for 45 positions and anticipate continued growth in the future. Our programming truly makes a positive impact on the youth of the north.

The financial contribution from the Gwich'in Tribal Council this year and in years past has helped NYA develop young leaders who are generating positive momentum in their communities and across the north. Our participants have gained many valuable employment and life skills and have come away from the program with a solid understanding of their Territory and how it fits into the national and international realm. They have also gained the skills and confidence to make a difference in their communities. We are certain we can demonstrate good value for the investment the Gwich'in Tribal Council has made and we hope that our partnership continues in years to come.

