



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD INVESTING IN YOUNG CANADIANS



Internship creates opportunities for the future

At Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B., Matthew Connor and Stephen Arsenault have the opportunity to study Canadian history in books.

When they were chosen for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Gold Internship Programme last summer, they had the opportunity to study it inside the halls of Parliament.

"Every day," says Arsenault, "the march down Wellington Street toward the Confederation Building evoked sublime awe and one truly gained an awareness of Ottawa as Canada's political and national epicenter."

"I am thankful to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award for providing me with such a unique opportunity for growth and learning, one that will certainly never be forgotten."

Open to those young people who have earned their Gold in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award program, which has operated around the world for nearly 50 years, the internship initiative is a recent one that has inspired such responses all around. Working at Veteran Affairs Canada thanks to The Award's network of relationships, the two students from Sackville were the only interns on Parliament Hill not present by virtue of party affiliation.

"I think I got the call offering me the internship position on a Monday and I started work-

ing in Ottawa on the Monday," recounts Connor, originally from Nova Scotia. "I was working in the Minister's Hill office, doing things like writing mailings to constituents. Considering that task came up on about my third week on the job, I was quite nervous. They mail these out to about 40,000 people."

No one else, however, was nervous, particularly not the National Award Association's staff, who knew that Gold Award holders had already proven themselves through a challenging process that requires achievement in community service, skills, physical recreation and adventurous journey.

"We have Gold Achievers who are used to achieving goals, really focused, high-energy people, outstanding people," notes Sharon Anderson, executive assistant in the national office. "When I meet them I'm very impressed with their ability to articulate themselves — and I've spent 30 years interviewing candidates as a human resources person."

The sentiments have also been echoed on Parliament Hill.

"The Duke of Edinburgh's Award interns were far superior to other interns on the Hill," wrote the Minister's Chief of Staff in a commendation of Connor and Arsenault. "Their writing and communications skills were outstanding and they are truly decent human

beings. I would be very positive about candidates with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award credentials on their resumes."

Created in 2004 in part as a way to extend The Duke of Edinburgh's Award benefits to the young people who have spent years going through the process of attaining their Gold, the Internship Programmes goals are to:

- Provide a meaningful work experience for Gold Award holders
- Provide an incentive for young people to complete their Gold Awards
- Encourage Gold Award holders to retain contact with The Award network
- Increase awareness of The Award within the host organization

Perhaps no one has been more pleased with the early results of the Gold Internship Programme than John Sleeman, head of Sleeman Breweries Ltd. in Guelph, Ont. and a Founding Partner in The Award's Charter for Business, which brings private-sector support to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award objectives.

"The goal of The Award is to help young Canadians continue on with their development and become good solid citizens for the society," reflects Sleeman.

Sleeman put his own firm forward for the first internship in the summer of 2004, with the brewery's human resources department

as the setting for the debut program experience.

"The person worked out so well, we offered a [permanent] job," recounts Sleeman. "This year, Erin Tobin came to us from Newfoundland and she did such a good job that she's gone out to B.C. to help us there."

From the Sleeman's office in Vernon in the central part of the province, Tobin has something of the breathless tone of the two young men from Mount Allison University.

"Once I saw the position description for this internship, I knew this was something I really wanted to do," says Tobin, who began her Award program at the age of 14 and completed it last year, just as she finished a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Mount Royal University.

Now working as one of two human resources staff in the Okanagan operation, Tobin hopes to stay on.

A staunch proponent and supporter of the Award program for nearly a decade, Sleeman himself needed no persuasion as to the quality of young people the program helps develop. At the National Award Association office, the confidence is the same.

"These are our best ambassadors," enthuses Anderson. "I'm convinced that our participants in the program are going to represent us well wherever they go."

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Canadian Award Participants during their 2005 visit to Costa Rica.

'I went with intentions to change someone's life. . . I did change someone's life though, it was my own'

By the time one of the fathers in the Costa Rican community of Quebrada Grande had said a few simple words at the parting dinner last summer, a roomful of Canadian youngsters was in tears.

It had been a two-week residential visit to the Central American country on the part of 16 young Duke of Edinburgh's Award participants from the Toronto area.

The youngsters, including a diverse mixture of Aboriginal, inner-city, Somali and other youth, had spent their time helping to paint schoolhouses, clear trails, do chores on a fish farm and even make tamales.

And now one of the host parents in the impoverished village had something to say: "I'd like to thank Canada for bringing up such wonderful youth."

Abner Lico, Award Field Officer who accompanied the group, allows that he was deeply moved.

"These kids did amazing down there," says Lico, a long-time veteran of working with youth on behalf of the Award program, which encourages personal development and good citizenship in some 30,000 participants across Canada each year. "They went down there and never complained and worked extremely hard."

Created in 1956 by Prince Philip and now active in over 115 countries around the world, the Award program for youth

between 14 and 25 has bronze, silver and gold levels and consists of four sections: community service, skills, physical recreation and adventurous journey.

The Costa Rica trip was an expedition — indeed, one of a lifetime.

"I went to Costa Rica with intentions to change someone's life or at least make a tremendous difference in a small rural community, but I believe that I gained more than I could have ever given back," says Suzanne Narain, one of the young participants.

"I did change someone's life, though it was my own," she continues. "I learned how to appreciate the little things. I realized that the lifestyle in Canada does not allow us to stop and smell the flowers, or play soccer with the local children, or walk into our neighbor's home and borrow milk without asking. We are too busy, all the time."

"So while it lasted, I took the time to gaze at the stars and appreciate the one thing we are missing in this land of democracy: freedom. Quebrada Grande may be behind in its development and a little underprivileged; however, in my eyes, it is a land full of the richest people with the most amazing personalities and the biggest hearts."

Lico feels particular pride in how The Award group reflected the multicultural



The Canadian Award Delegation at the September 2005 International Gold Encounter in Hong Kong.

diversity of Canada. Accustomed to American and European visitors who all seemed to have the same Caucasian appearance, the Costa Ricans were surprised to be meeting Canadian youth of several different races and ethnic backgrounds.

"They told us, 'You guys are very different than any group of kids who have ever come down here,'" Lico recounts.

While The Award program thrives in every kind of regional setting around the globe, there is also a significant commonality among the many thousands of youths who pursue their Award markers of achievement. That always comes through at the triennial International Gold Encounter, which was just held this fall in Hong Kong and which consistently affords a powerful opportunity to experience shared goals and ideals.

"We had 71 Gold Award participants from 31 countries, and seven of them were from Canada," remarks Andrea Fleischhauer, a Gold Award achiever in 2000 who is now on staff at The Award.

The IGE experience was a powerful one, with day-long workshops on each of three international themes that had been chosen

for the gathering: environmental conservation, HIV/AIDS and poverty alleviation.

"It was interesting to see what people knew about these global issues," says Fleischhauer, noting that there was also a strong contingent of Gold Award achievers from Hong Kong itself.

Along with tours of museums and other local attractions, the two-week event included an excursion of three days into Mainland China.

"That was the part I liked best, even the bus ride," Fleischhauer comments.

This was the eleventh International Gold Encounter, the latest directly leading up to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which was originated by Prince Philip in 1956. The IGE gatherings conclude with a two-day international council meeting at which Prince Edward, The Earl of Wessex, is present.

The idea is to map out an agenda of international goals for The Award program around the world. At the IGE, the nations of origin represented are many but communications aren't a problem: in championing citizenship and contribution, Award participants all speak a similar language.

"I thank the Founding Partners of the Charter for Business for their vision and generous investment in Canada's Young People. The Award and the support it receives have helped bring positive changes to many young lives." HE The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, CC, CMM, CD Past National Chair, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

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WHAT IS THE AWARD?

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an exciting personal challenge for young Canadians. It is a balanced, non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encourages:

- Personal Discovery & Growth
- Self-Reliance
- Perseverance
- Responsibility, and
- Service to the Community

Since it began in 1956, The Award has developed into one of the world's most prestigious youth programmes. More than 115 countries now offer The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and almost 6 million young people have taken part.

In Canada, The Award has been operating since 1963 under the leadership of The Governor General and thousands of highly motivated volunteers. The Award is amongst the highest accolades a young Canadian can receive, and some 30,000 participate each year.

HOW DOES THE AWARD WORK?

All young people between the ages of 14 and 25 can participate, regardless of their circumstances or abilities. The criteria for achieving an Award are based upon individual effort and improvement, taking into account each participant's initial capabilities.

To achieve an Award, each participant must complete four sections:

COMMUNITY SERVICE is an experience essential to the development of a sense of personal and community responsibility. SKILLS developed by pursuing and persisting in an interest, develop creativity and personal discovery. PHYSICAL RECREATION promotes good health and develops a sense of achievement and satisfaction. ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY cultivates a spirit of adventure, teamwork, and an appreciation of the environment.

There are 3 levels of The Award: Bronze, Silver & Gold, each requiring an increasing degree of commitment. Young people participate either as individuals, or through established community organizations such as schools, police services, social service agencies, youth groups, etc.

HOW IS THE AWARD IS FUNDED?

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Canada relies on private and corporate donations, which are used to:

- Support the operation and growth of The Award Programme in Canada.
- Ensure that all young Canadians have access to the benefits of The Award Programme.
- Expand our work with disadvantaged young people, particularly: Inner-City Youth, Aboriginal Youth, Young People with Disabilities, and Young Offenders.

There are several ways to contribute to the work of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award:

- The World Fellowship is a joint International-Canadian fund-raising programme that supports the growth of The Award around the world.
- The Charter for Business is a national partnership with the Business Community, designed to fund the expansion of The Award across Canada, with a special focus on "at risk" youth.
- Provincial & Territorial Campaigns provide the daily operating funds for The Award in all 10 Provinces and 3 Territories.
- Special Events (Including The Duke of Edinburgh's Cup golf tournament) take place regularly across the country, generating funds for both the National and Local operations.

