

OCENET works with the OCDSB to recruit and support international students attending OCDSB schools.

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The Branches of OCENET

Young People's Language School students "experience" Canada



YPLS students enjoyed a day of iconic Canadian experiences by canoeing, kayaking and swimming at Lac McGlashan north of Ottawa. Here YPLS teacher Petryna Venuta (second from left) enjoys kayaking with several YPLS students.

Just before the end of the school semester in June, the students of OCENET's Young People's Language School (YPLS) spent a day north of Ottawa at the Lac McGlashan Outdoor Education Center in Quebec. These international students attend YPLS to enhance their English language skills in preparation for attending OCDSB high schools. The excursion day was the first time many of the international students experienced the Canadian outdoors away from the city. What may be a fairly common experience and taken for granted by Canadians was a truly unique and memorable experience for the YPLS students.

Hosted by outdoor education expert Alan Earwaker, the students were instructed about safety routines and various paddling strokes for canoes and kayaks, and then it was time for the students to venture out on beautiful

Lac McGlashan. After lunch in a rustic log cabin, the students learned about the local wildlife and had a chance to view bear and moose skulls up close as well as snake spines and turtle shells.

Following a campfire style singalong the students were back on the water and later had an opportunity to cool off with their first ever swim in a fresh water lake. As Alan Earwaker has observed through his approach of "learning by doing" in nature: "Students gain confidence, trust, and build stronger relationships with each other while developing life skills. These benefits can be long lasting....Students gain confidence, trust and build stronger relationships with each other while developing life skills. These experiences assist the learner both inside and outside of the classroom."

For one of the YPLS teachers, Petryna Venuta, "It was wonderful to witness the students out on the water, experiencing the Canadian landscape

after learning about it in the classroom. This experience has been outstanding."

The students definitely appreciated experiencing the Canadian outdoors. For Hien, a student from Vietnam: "That was the first time I go canoeing. I think that was one the most fun times that I have had studying at YPLS." Tina from China reflectively summed up the day: "It was my first time swimming in a lake, canoe, and touch the old trees. I'll keep it carefully in my memory."



Led by outdoor education specialist Alan Earwaker, YPLS students sang around the campfire

Summer English Explorer offers unique educational program



At the end of their program, a class gathers outside the Albert Street Education Centre to proudly show off their Summer Explorer "Memories" books

"What's rewarding about our program is not only seeing the students make the global connections with Canadians, but also with each other."

- Constantine Ioannou, Program Director, Ottawa International Projects and Exchanges



Summer English Explorer students pose in front of the Peace Tower following the daily Changing of the Guard Ceremony on Parliament Hill

OCENET's Summer English Program is renowned for offering students an exciting and engaging approach to developing English language proficiency. Each summer over 100 students from many different countries travel to Ottawa to study English and enjoy the numerous social and cultural activities that the Ottawa region has to offer. Students range in age from 12-18 and are assigned classes based on age and level of English.

What is very special about the Summer English Explorer program is its focus on the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language study. According to the program's director, Constantine Ioannou, using the CEFR is "really important from a pedagogical side because our program provides a basis for organizing classes by level, which is something that is recognized globally." The program is very task-oriented, and emphasizes practical use of speaking and listening skills to encourage students to become proficient and confident with the English language. For example, activities require students to interview Canadians about issues, and participate in team scavenger hunts which

require students to ask directions as well as seek answers about Ottawa's historical and cultural landmarks.

The program has run for 14 consecutive years and is continually evolving and updated. While the CEFR provides a foundation, the team of summer teachers, led by Lead Teacher Sue Boudreau, has developed an interactive and relevant curriculum, with units of study on topics of interest to young adults. This summer a new unit on "Anti-bullying" was introduced and well received by the students. Students attend English classes in the morning and activity coordinators lead the students in a wide variety of afternoon activities such as canoeing, museum visits and urban art workshops.

Most students live with Canadian homestay families which reinforces the use of English while building global friendships. Over the years students have come from many different countries, including Argentina, Belgium, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South

Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and Venezuela. Many students attend as part of a group and increasingly students are coming individually. Many return to the program over the course of several summers. For example, a few years ago a Colombian student attending the program became good friends with an Italian student and by staying in touch via social media, coordinated their return visit to include sharing the same homestay.

According to Ottawa International Projects and Exchanges Director, Constantine Ioannou: "When you start to see kids attend the program or return with such enthusiasm, you realize that they appreciated and valued both the cultural and linguistic learning experience here."



Students enjoy all of the afternoon activity programs and learn new skills while practicing English



Representing four different countries — Spain, Italy, Kazakhstan, and France — summer students visit Ottawa's historic Byward Market

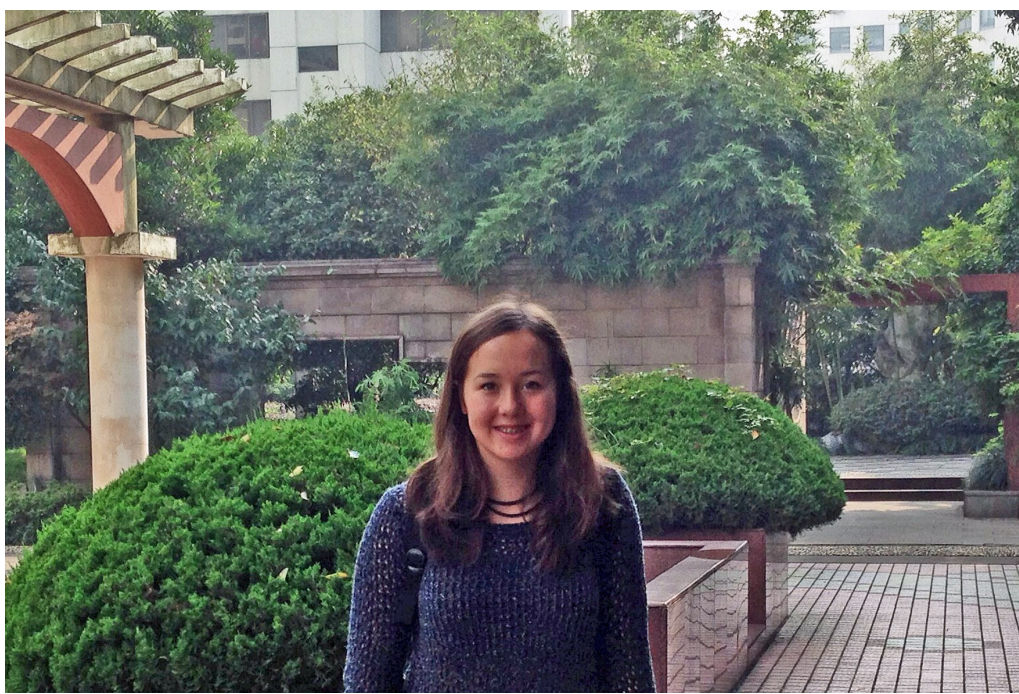


Thinking About Becoming A Homestay Host?

- Among the many benefits of being a Homestay host:
- make a significant difference to the life of a student from another country
 - learn about people from other cultures
 - make friends across the world
 - introduce your children to an intercultural experience
 - share Canadian culture and life in Ottawa
 - Host Support 24/7
 - receive an honorarium to cover expenses

Visit "Hosts" at www.canadahomestaynetwork.ca

Elena's Blog: A Canadian International Student in China



Pictured outside the residence of her homestay family in Suzhou, China, Elena is enjoying the experience of adapting to Chinese culture and attending a Chinese high school which offers Canadian curriculum courses.

At the end of August, Elena, a Grade 11 student at Ottawa's Glebe Collegiate Institute, travelled to China to study in Suzhou, a city of 4 million people near Shanghai.

Arriving in China

My arrival in China was among the most overwhelming experiences of my life! Everything was so loud, so big, so full of people and so incredibly different. After a full summer of camp in Canada, followed by a five day turn around to pack and say goodbye to everyone for five months, I had just enough time to remember how much I enjoyed their company and forget why it was I wanted to attend school in China in the first place. I figured it all out soon enough; with each new place, face, and experience in China, I got more and more excited to be here and live the next adventure of my life.

Adjusting to a new culture

Things like using chopsticks to eat French fries, tasting new fruits I have never heard of, and

eating rice with literally every meal have made mealtimes one of the most intriguing parts of my day. In general, the food has been delicious, but situations like thinking I was ordering chicken wings when instead receiving a duck's head (eyes, beak, skull and all!) have left some shocking impressions. In those instances when I need a small taste of home there is a Starbucks right around the corner from the homestay where I am living.

Adapting to a new school

There are many differences between school here and home, such as the 7:30am - 5:15pm school day, though it's the more hindering differences like the inch too long, two-ring hole punched paper that does not fit in any of my binders that have driven me the most insane. My classmates have all been very kind and welcoming, though communication is sometimes challenging for obvious reasons. The tonal nature of the Chinese language is proving difficult for someone who is to-

tally tone deaf(!), though I'm happy to report that I am making some progress.

The people are warm once you get to know them, but first impressions are sometimes less than encouraging. For example, smiling at someone in passing is often met with a blank stare rather than a "Hello" or smile in return. Regardless, I've fortunately made new friends.

Putting it all in perspective

While I miss home and all the things that come with it such as family, friends, my ice and field hockey teams, and familiar food, I have a list of the things I want to experience while I am here, including Suzhou's beautiful gardens, canals, temples and history. Five months away is not really a long time at all, and I remind myself everything will still be waiting for me when I return to Ottawa.

Elena's blog will continue in future editions of Global Connections.

"I am so happy to be here and I can't wait to see what the next five months bring."

***- Elena,
Canadian international student in China***

Do you know someone interested in being a Canadian international student?

Opportunities exist for Study Abroad Scholarships

For application forms and additional information, see your guidance counselor in Student Services or visit: www.ocenet.ca/en/page/show/study-abroad-scholarships

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OCENET connects at OCDSB “System Day”



On August 26, OCENET representatives attended “System Day” where the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Senior Staff and all School Principals convened to review plans for the upcoming school year. Pictured beside a banner promoting the successful OCDSB International Certificate Program are OCENET’s Kathy Scheepers, International Education Coordinator (left), and Geoff Best, OCENET’s Executive Director (right), along with Principal Wendy Verreault (center) of Sir Robert Borden High School.

Look for this poster and mark your calendar for OCENET’s Second Annual International Education Info-Fair on Saturday, April 25, 2015, 10AM-2PM

The Branches of OCENET

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Summer Study

OTTAWA-CARLETON EDUCATION NETWORK

OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Please direct any comments, questions, or suggestions to: ross.laing@ocdsb.ca