

casestudy
John Cawley and Jocelyn Knoester

Joining the global community



In the wake of the events of September 11, Canadians have reacted with an understandable mix of shock, disbelief and anger. At the memorial service for victims of the attacks, the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that these sentiments need to be tempered by a recognition that long-term peace will be built upon a foundation of global justice, and that this justice is in the eye of the beholder.

Canada
World
Youth



Jeunesse
Canada
Monde

By putting the young people into intense learning situations in local communities, the program touches their hearts and hands as well as their heads in a way that classroom learning could never hope to match.

For 30 years, Canada World Youth has been challenging young people to experience and to reflect on the diversity of realities and perspectives that make up the global community. The young people immerse themselves in the realities of another part of Canada with youth from a developing country for several months while working as volunteers in community-based projects. They then move as a group to the partner country and acquire the skills and values necessary to integrate into a vastly different cultural context. Throughout the program participants are challenged to explore a diversity of personal and cultural assumptions that look at issues related to gender, religion, power, economic development and the environment. Through a structured but non-formal educational process, the young people become leaders in their local communities and on the global stage.

Research has shown that the CWY experience genuinely transforms the young people involved at the level of knowledge, skills and values. By putting the young people into intense learning situations in local communities, the program touches their hearts and hands as well as their heads in a way that classroom learning could never hope to match. In the years following their program, participants have demonstrated very high levels of volunteer activity, a high degree of understanding, interest and respect for different cultures, and highly developed employability skills (creativity, communication, analytical, teamwork/leadership), which they attribute largely to their Canada World Youth experience.

As Canadians try to make sense of, adjust to and hopefully maintain some control of the increasing globalization of our world at all kinds of levels (economic, political, cultural, peace), we will be well-served if we give our young people every opportunity to acquire the skills and values to be truly active global citizens.

Do not take my word for it! I would rather that you listen to Jocelyn Knoster, a past participant, tell her own story of how the CWY experience affected her.

JOHN CAWLEY



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Joining the global community

I participated in Canada World Youth when I was 18 years old. I was fresh out of high school, living in rural southern Ontario and looking for something interesting to do with my life. Continuing on to some sort of post-secondary education seemed to be the next logical step, or that's what people told me anyhow. Instead, I heard about Canada World Youth and decided to take a chance.

I didn't know very much about Canada World Youth going in, and I had no idea of the extent to which it would change me. What I learned, however, during the three and a half months in Alliston, Ontario and the three and a half months in the province of Aceh in Indonesia, has completely changed the way I live my life and see the world.

Having a greater sense of respect and tolerance cross-culturally is a very significant aspect of that change. One of the major components of Canada World Youth is living with a counterpart from the exchange country. Mine was an Indonesian woman from Jakarta named Helen Faradini. We shared a room for seven months. The laughter, sharing, frustrations and mostly the learning that came out of that relationship is more than any other I have had in my life. Through her, I learned how to look at things through a lens that extends beyond my own Canadian borders and about the work required in order to really understand where the other is coming from within a cultural context – and to have a great sense of respect for that. But mostly I learned about how wonderful a friendship can be even when you have very different backgrounds and values. Five years later we are still in contact regularly.

When I was participating in the Canadian phase of Canada World Youth, and lived in Alliston, Ontario, I saw clearly the extent to which, as Canadians, our cultures vary extensively. Not just from province to province, but community to com-



Jocelyn Knoester (shown wearing the Snata's hat) with members of her exchange team.

munity and also between individuals. Even though I grew up in Ontario, the experience I had living with a host family in Ontario, not far from my hometown, was very different than what I had expected. The traditions within that single parent home were very different from my home life. But that was the point. Learning to adapt and integrate into that family was a challenge in some ways; it's not easy to feel like a family member in someone else's home, but once the balance was found the rewards were amazing.

It was also in Alliston that I began to learn more about the word "Development". I learned that development needs to be undertaken just as much in every community in Canada as it does in other countries around the world. This might be an obvious observation, but one that many don't realize. What I didn't know before was the extent to which I, as an individual and youth, could have such a huge impact on the things going on around me. This was one of the most significant aspects of my personal growth, acquired from participating in Canada World Youth. Volunteer work placements in Canada World Youth are a very important part of the structure of the program, and while in Alliston, through my volunteer work placement at a subsidized daycare for teenage moms, and through other community based activities such as volunteering with the local chapters of Big Brothers and Sisters, and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority's river clean up activities, I learned how important volunteerism really is in a community context, and how each small contribution can have huge lasting impacts.

Arriving in Indonesia, I realized that no amount of advanced research or questioning could have prepared me for the things I experienced or saw. The structure of the program remained the same in this phase as in the Canadian phase, in

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Depuis 30 ans, Jeunesse Canada Monde encourage les jeunes Canadiens à faire l'expérience des diverses réalités qui composent la communauté mondiale en les jumelant avec des jeunes d'un pays en développement. Mais d'abord, elle les plonge dans la réalité d'une autre région du Canada avant de les introduire au contexte culturel d'un pays partenaire. L'expérience vécue par un étudiant en Indonésie illustre bien la capacité du programme à préparer les jeunes à devenir des citoyens du monde. « Sans cette expérience, je n'aurais pas la perspective que j'ai maintenant, ni le désir de faire le saut là-bas et de sentir que mes actions ont un impact sur le monde. »

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Jocelyn Knoester with members of her Indonesian host community.

the sense that we had the same counterparts, and were living in host families and participating in work projects. But from there, everything was different from what I had previously known. The community that I lived in in Indonesia was very small. The population was approximately 250 people. Most farmed for their livelihoods, although some people, especially young men, were beginning to work in the logging industry. Culturally, Aceh is a wonderfully rich place. It is an Islamic province (as are most in Indonesia), but with very unique traditions and customs celebrating their faith. I was lucky enough to learn and participate as much as I wanted. The generosity of people who wanted so completely to share their lives and teach the culture was overwhelming. But it was a challenge at times. Inevitably I ended up making many slip-ups culturally and due to language barriers, but that's how I learned. Each new friendship I was able to foster, each new challenge I made it through taught me something about myself - like what I can adapt to, what I absolutely am not comfortable with, and where was the necessary balance. Mostly, I went home with a feeling that I wished I had taken more time to experience things that I may never have the privilege to experience again - a feeling true for both the Indonesian and Canadian phases of the program.

Upon completion of Canada World Youth, I stayed involved with the organization, volunteering my time to help out with upcoming programs so I could still feel connected to the program that gave me so much. Along with that, I have continually stayed involved in various community organizations focused on local, national or international development issues. It has become very important to me to feel connected to the world.

Looking back on the program five years later, I understand so completely why I needed to take part in this program. The world is changing. Without the experiences I had during Canada World Youth, I would not have the perspectives I do nor would I have the desire that I do every day to get out there and feel like my actions are making a difference. 🌱

JOCELYN KNOESTER

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Jocelyn Knoester is finishing a degree in International Development Studies at Saint Mary's University, and working as the Administrative Assistant at the Canada World Youth office in Halifax. She was a participant in Canada World Youth's Indonesia/Ontario Program in 1996-1997.

Canada World Youth is a national non-governmental organization that provides young people from Canada and around the world with the opportunity to travel, to live and work in different communities, to learn about local and international development, and to gain important job skills for the future. For more information, see our web site at www.cwy-jcm.org

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