

# PRESS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ

## Generation Inspiration – Experiences Canada 150&Me Project Giving Youth Opportunities to Change Their World



**(Winnipeg, Manitoba – May 30, 2016)** –To celebrate Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, an innovative project will honour the past and also engage this country’s next generation of leaders in a national conversation about the future. Experiences Canada today announced that Winnipeg will have a central role as one of five host communities for the project. Lead partners include Great-West Life and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

“This is a milestone moment for Canada. Milestones are not just meant to mark how far we’ve come, but they are an opportunity to stop and think about where we want to go next” explained Deborah Morrison, CEO & President of Experiences Canada. “Who better to lead that exploration than those who will be the stewards of that future? More than any generation previously, they have the tools and the desire to effect change, and I believe their fresh perspectives are the very thing we need most to identify new ways of tackling some of our longest-standing problems.”

The Experiences Canada 150&Me Project from Experiences Canada will recruit thousands of Canadian youth from Winnipeg and across the country, aged 14 to 19, to become active participants in shaping an agenda for this country’s next 150 years. Teens will be asked to tell us what they think the greatest opportunity or challenge is for their generation using whatever medium they choose, music, video, art, spoken or written word.

“Canada’s youth are tomorrow’s leaders, and their ideas will generate new possibilities for Canada’s future,” says Dave Johnston, President and Chief Operating Officer for Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life. “The cultural exchanges coming out of the 150&Me project will surely result in fresh perspectives and promising ideas for our nation. We are pleased to participate in this important program as part of our commitment to building stronger communities.”



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The 150&Me Project will bring together some of Canada's most passionate youth through cultural exchanges both online and onsite at four regional forums to be held in April and May of 2017, including one in Winnipeg at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR).

"As a new national museum committed to education, thought and discussion about human rights, we are very pleased to act as a partner and host for this exciting project," remarked CMHR president and CEO John Young. "Empowering young people to become human rights champions can generate amazing results for Canada and for the world. This museum is full of examples of what can happen when youth take action."

University of Winnipeg Collegiate students in Jennifer Janzen's history class are among the first to begin creating their history and art projects for the Experiences Canada 150&Me Project. Janzen says, "I believe that taking time to reflect is the only way to make positive change. This 150 remembrance is important for youth to contemplate issues such as the environment, diversity and Canada's place in the world. It's the young people that have the biggest stake in the future and their ideas and voices must be heard."

Student Sophie Smith-Dostmohamed is participating in the project and says "2017 is not just another year; it is a chance to change the course of history." Her project is a spoken word and video piece depicting human rights in Canada and the women in history who were pivotal in achieving equality for women. Sophie features Nellie McClung, the Famous Five activist who, according to a recent Angus Reid online survey, is the number one choice to become the first Canadian woman on the face of one of the country's banknotes. She also features Helen Betty Osborne and interviewed many women of all ages, asking them what challenges and opportunities they feel they face based on their gender. Other student projects include videos and artwork featuring Aboriginal issues and reconciliation and Canada's place in combating climate change.

The highlight of the regional events will be the youth forums anticipated to draw over 500 youth on site and hundreds more online, but the students selected to travel and their local host family "twins" from local area schools including the Collegiate and College Louis-Riel will be rewarded with a full week of other events and activities. Participants in Winnipeg will visit the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, explore Fur Trade sites and take a Winnipeg General Strike guided walk. Two days of the exchange will be devoted to working with local not-for-profit organizations where youth will volunteer their time and learn more about some of the strategies and actions already in place to address the challenges and concerns they've identified.

David Northcott, executive director of Winnipeg Harvest realizes the importance of our youth in shaping our world and says, "We need to build on our history of human rights and our history of struggling with hunger and poverty issues locally and internationally. Our young leaders of today and the future can work with the seeds of justice that have been planted and harvest them for a prosperous future for all. The past and present working together for a better future for all Canadians is something we can all celebrate!"

150 participants in total will then be selected from the four regional forums to travel back to Ottawa the week before Canada Day 2017 to meet with government, business and community leaders and report on



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their discussions. Throughout the week they will also work as volunteers for Ottawa 2017, Canada 150 and our national institutions so they aren't just visiting Canada's birthday celebrations; they are in integral part of making them happen.

**Media are invited to the official launch in Winnipeg of the Experiences Canada 150&Me Project on Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 11am at the University of Winnipeg Collegiate, Wesley Hall, Room # 1W06 (515 Portage Avenue). Students from the Collegiate will present their 150&Me projects. Experiences Canada along with community partners including Great-West Life, Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Winnipeg Harvest will be in attendance as the Experiences Canada 150&Me website is launched and student projects shared with media.**

### ***About Experiences Canada 150&Me:***

Experiences Canada 150&Me will present four regional forums and exchanges in communities across Canada in April and May of 2017. The topics covered at each Forum will vary from place to place, allowing for a more in-depth focus and discussion on the key themes as identified by our youth. These themes may include: Environment; Human Rights; Relationship with Indigenous Communities; Canada's Place in the World; Immigration; Diversity and Canadian Identity; Education and Innovation.

The project will culminate with a leadership group of 150 students, representing all of the regional forums, travelling to Ottawa from June 27-July 2, 2017 to present their findings to government, business and community leaders and to participate as volunteers throughout the week in Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

### ***About Experiences Canada:***

Experiences Canada (formerly SEVEC) is a national charitable organization and a leading provider of youth travel and exchange opportunities in Canada. Through its flagship program, which is generously supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage, thousands of young Canadians deepen their understanding of Canada's history, geography, linguistic, cultural, and social diversity. Experiences Canada seeks to strengthen young Canadians' connection and commitment to their communities and their country, by preparing them to become active citizens and global leaders.

### ***For further information or to arrange an interview with teachers, please contact:***

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