



YMCA YOUTH EXCHANGES CANADA

Module 6 – Post-Exchange



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Canada

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Your YMCA's charitable registration number is 11930 7080.

Workbook for YMCA Exchange Leaders

Module 6 – Post Exchange

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Post-Exchange

Post-exchange activities are essential to putting the whole experience of the exchange together and giving both group leaders and participants the chance to reflect on and share their learning.

Another purpose for the post-exchanges activities is to strengthen a sense of community for all parties involved in the exchange, by allowing for opportunities to share their stories and what they learned.

Debrief

A few days after the second half of the exchange, hold a meeting to talk about the overall exchange experience. Discuss how to record the trip for yourselves and how to best present your experience to your community. The results of this discussion will help you when you are completing your evaluation for the YMCA Exchange office.

Questions to debrief with group members

- Refer to the end of this document for example debrief activities.
- Encourage youth to use "I" statements, when talking about the community they visited, and talk about their experience and observations. General statements can contribute to reinforcing stereotypes.
- What was your favorite part about the exchange?
- What did you learn about your twin community? Your own community?
- Ask students to compare what they see with what they already have heard and known about the community they visited.
- Ask them to compare the destination and their own country and community. What are the most striking differences and similarities in the way people go about their lives, and what does it mean?

Ask hosts

- How did you benefit from the hosting experience?
- What did you learn from your visitor? What did you learn about Canada?
- What suggestions do you have for future exchanges?

Thank You

Thank-you letters go to:

- Hosts
- All the families who participated
- The individuals and groups who helped make the exchange possible.

Other ideas:

- Put a “Thank you!” ad in the newspaper, naming all your sponsors and volunteers.
- Ask the school principal or association executive director to send a thank-you letter to the principal or executive director of your twin group.
- Each group member can write one letter on behalf of the group to a sponsor or person who helped.

YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada is funded by the federal government. You may wish to send a letter or postcard to thank your Member of Parliament (postage is free to MPs). Or write to:

Youth Exchanges Canada Program
Citizen Participation Branch
Department of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy Street, 8th floor
Gatineau, QC, K1A 0M5

Programme Échanges jeunesse Canada
Direction Générale de la Participation des citoyens
Ministère du Patrimoine canadien
15 rue Eddy, 8e étage
Gatineau, QC, K1A 0M5

Or send an e-mail to PCH.echanges-exchanges.PCH@canada.ca This will help make sure that other young people will benefit in the future.

Share the Experience

Here are some ideas on how to share your exchange experience with your community.

Slide show

Create a slide show for an evening of celebration.

Display

Put up a floor or bulletin board display in your school or organization.

Book

Compile a record of your trip in a scrapbook or a collage and present it to your school or association library.

Newsletters and articles

Edit journal entries for the school or association newsletter. Produce a newsletter in which each group member writes about one aspect of the exchange and send it to host families, exchange sponsors, politicians. Write an article for your local newspaper or magazine.

Video

Create a video documenting the exchange experience. Use the exchange as a basis for study at your school.

Website & social media

Create a website for your photos and articles, perhaps along with your twin group. Share photos and write about the exchange on your school or organization's social media networks.

Thank you event

Organize a thank you event for your supporters.

Presentation

Give a presentation or prepare a skit about the exchange to other members of your organization, school, Community Education Council, board of education.

Share souvenirs

Share souvenirs with other community youth and families.

Leave a Record of Your Exchange

A written summary of the entire experience, from orientation to travel to follow-up, may be helpful for you and your organization or school.

“After recovering from the intensity of the exchange, we dubbed a video for the student body, grades 8-12. Students also updated daily journals from the trip and made scrap books from pictures they had taken. A slide presentation was made to the Kinsmen Club, and several students and I were interviewed by one of the local newspapers.” – Group leader

“The main event was an evening where we celebrated the exchange highlights with parents, friends and community. Students presented speeches on selected highlights, various artifacts were displayed and talked about, scrap books were put on display, the video and slides were shown, and time was given for refreshments. Some of the journal highlights are being edited for the school quarterly paper.” – Group leader

Staying Connected with Your Group

Here are some ways to help keep youth engaged after the exchange, to solidify and pass on their learnings, and to stay in touch as a group.

Youth ambassadors for engagement

Empower participants to take initiative to prepare future students for youth exchanges. Provide opportunities for active engagement and networking. Utilize their leadership skills to recruit youth for future exchanges, create presentations or organize group discussions.

Their experiences of staying with host families, experience in managing miscommunications, language differences and navigating different cultural backgrounds or expectations will allow youth to reflect and grow from their experiences.

Develop a culture of mentoring

Ask participants about the common interests or themes they learned with their twin and provide opportunities for collaboration. For instance, if two participants connected on a shared passion for learning languages, they could research internships or programs in their regions and share with their classmates.

Creating 'traditions' and 'anniversaries'

A collective memorable experience of the exchange can be celebrated as a tradition even after the exchange is over. For instance, every month on the date of their travel, youth can connect with their twins, commemorate the experience of meeting each other, and foster new relationships.

A pizza party, local excursions or youth led activities can be a great way to mark the day. Group leaders could use these opportunities to share their views on the changes and growth of the participants they have observed since the exchange.

Staying Connected with Your Twin

Here are some ways to encourage youth to stay in touch with their twin and maintain the connection after the exchange is over.

Journal swap

Ask youth to write about themselves and their day-to-day in a journal. Then when they have journaled for a month, get the twin's mailing address, and ask them to send each other their journals.

Once they receive the twin's journal, they can continue writing in their twin's notebook and read what they went through each day. This way they can see what they missed since they have been apart and get the catharsis of writing a day-to-day letter to the person they are missing.

Post-cards and letters

Encourage youth to send written letters and postcards in the mail to their twin. Sending post-cards or hand written letters is personal and lets the other person know they were thinking of them.

Social media

Encourage youth to stay in touch through social media or an established group for both twin groups.

Do the Official Paperwork

Within one week of the exchange, you will receive links to an online evaluation and a post-exchange questionnaire. Youth, parents, and group leaders will need to complete the online evaluations.

Please send to your Regional Coordinator a copy of your final host program, which includes any changes you made from the detailed program you sent in before the exchange.

Evaluations are a vital tool the YMCA uses to improve the program. The funder requires evaluations, so please complete them promptly. Please include any newspaper clippings and photographs that help describe your exchange experience.

Self-Care after the Exchange

Debrief

You and your group are likely feeling overwhelmed with excitement and exhaustion. Debrief with the group how the exchange went and how everyone is feeling about it.

Take time off

If possible, take off a few days immediately following the exchange to give yourself a break from the hard work you just did.

Organize your workload

If possible, leave yourself with a moderate or light workload for the days when you come back.

Take time for you

Make time for activities that nourish your mind and body (rest, exercise, family/friends/me time, etc).

Practice gratitude

Recognize how many things you learned or saw and are thankful for. We encourage you to mention this during your group debrief as well to give the participants a chance to express what they are grateful for after this amazing experience.

Example Activities

Memories

Objectives: To reflect on positive memories with each group member and create a personal souvenir.

Supplies: Sheets of unlined paper, pens

1. Have all participants sit in a circle either around a table or on the floor. Ask them to write their name on the bottom right corner of the paper (you should also take part) and put a small box around their name.
2. Explain that this is the end of a very intense exchange with many positive memories. Explain that this activity will be done in silence. Ask them think about the positive memories they have of each other member of the group.
3. Have them pass their paper to the right. Ask them to write a maximum of three lines about their most positive memory of the person whose name is on the paper. When they finish their entry ask them to fold the sheet so that their note is hidden. Then they pass the sheet to the right. Continue until you receive the paper with your own name.
4. Give the group some time to read their own paper. Participants can take a walk or read in silence.

Alternative: You can have the group write a sentence describing what they most appreciate about each person. This activity can be combined with other farewell activities.

Developed by 2 Worlds Training and Consulting, www.2worlds.ca

Thoughts and Feelings about your Exchange

Objectives: To guide participants in reflecting on their experience to enable participants to recognize the similarities between communities to have participants link their experiences to the learning objectives

Supplies: Copies of your version of this form, paper and pencils

In point form record your findings.

1. What is the most interesting thing about your twin family?
2. List the similarities and differences between your twin family's lifestyle and your family's lifestyle.
3. Indicate similarities or differences that you have noticed.

Twin community

Home community

- music
- leisure
- rural or urban development
- building design
- employment
- cost of living
- religion

4. Interview your twin family about _____
 - a. Record this information.
 - b. What do you think and feel about this matter?
5. As our theme is environmental issues, what do you notice about:
 - a. smoking regulations
 - b. automotive and industrial pollution
 - c. music pollution
 - d. acid rain
 - e. recycling
6. How has this exchange changed your outlook about Canada?

Developed by the Edward Milne School Visions Exchange group, Sooke, British Columbia

Head, Heart, and Feet

Objectives: To reflect on the exchange and articulate what members learned and felt during the exchange.

Supplies: Flip chart, markers in three colours (one for head, heart, and feet)

1. **Creating the chart.** On a flip chart, draw a picture of a person. Be sure to exaggerate the head, chest, and feet. Draw a heart on the chest.
2. **Setting the context.** Explain to the group “To close this exchange, we’re going to reflect honestly on what we learned, what we felt, and what we will do when we leave this meeting. That’s the head, heart, and feet, you see on this drawing”
3. **Sharing and learning from one another.** Provide examples to the group. Have group members share their responses and using markers in three different colours, write their comments next to the corresponding area on the flip chart paper: head, heart, or feet. Use more paper as needed.
4. **Reflecting.** Process the activity using the following questions:
 - a. What themes did you hear?
 - b. What insights do you need to remember?
 - c. In what future situations can you use these insights?
 - d. How can you apply them?

Adapted from innovationcenter.org