

Education Through Work and Travel

MEET
NEW
FRIENDS



Northern
Youth
Abroad

NUNAVUT • NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

SHARE
YOUR
CULTURE



TRAVEL



LEARN
NEW
SKILLS



EARN
SCHOOL
CREDITS

Workplace Handbook 2019

VISION

HEALTHY, CONFIDENT
YOUTH LEADERS
CONTRIBUTING TO
VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES
AND A BRIGHT
FUTURE

I CAN

3

I WILL

THANK YOU

Dear Workplace Supervisors,

Thank you very much for volunteering to supervise a Northern Youth Abroad (NYA) Participant! You are a very important part of our program as you provide our Participants with valuable work experience, helping them to gain skills and to consider future work and career options. Our entire organization is committed to providing supported experiences through travel, hands-on learning, and volunteerism to youth who otherwise may not have access to such opportunities. Keeping this in mind, we take our dedication to our Participants and our volunteer workplace Supervisors very seriously.

A tremendous amount of energy and time from our volunteers and staff is put into each of our programs. Everyone involved in NYA shares a commitment to shaping a unique and extraordinary experience for our Participants. We hope that these efforts result in a rewarding and exciting experience for you and our Participants, and we strive to make the process of accepting NYA volunteers as smooth as possible. That said, no experience is without challenges. As you prepare for the arrival of our Participant, we hope that the information in this manual will outline expectations of the NYA program and give you a better understanding of where these Participants are coming from, and what they might be going through during their first real experience away from home.

Our team is available to you as needed along the way. During the busy summer months, our tiny team of six will grow to twelve this year and will work together to support almost 60 Participants, their Host Families, and our volunteers. With Participants spread across Canada and around the globe it can be quite the task, and we very much appreciate your patience when things are especially hectic! Luckily, we have the support of an amazing organization, under the leadership of a terrifically committed Board of Directors.

In the coming days, we hope that you have a chance to read over the enclosed material. If you have any questions about any of the information, or find that anything is missing, we strongly encourage you to contact us. Clarifying our mutual understanding before our Participants arrive is a key element of ensuring success in the coming weeks.

I am very excited to welcome this year's Participants and hope that you share my anticipation and enthusiasm; I look forward to connecting with you soon!

Qujannamiik! Mahsi Cho! Thank You!



Rebecca Bisson
Executive Director

IN THIS HANDBOOK

This document is here to help prepare you for welcoming a Participant into your workplace, and we recommend reading it as thoroughly as you can to ensure you and your Participant have the best summer ahead! If anything is missing or you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. The NYA Staff are here to help, and we want to address any challenges that arise as soon as possible. We recommend that you forward this to anybody who will be a Supervisor to the Participant over the summer.

Contents

In this Handbook	4
Canadian Program	5
Work Placement Overview	6
Expectations of the Workplace	8
Understanding Participants	9
Culture Shock and Homesickness	10
Things to Consider	11
NYA Language	12
Contact Us	13



CANADIAN PROGRAM

The Canadian Program is NYA's first and largest offering. The program is 10-months in length and is highlighted by a five week placement in one of the 10 southern provinces. Participants are paired, and stay with a host family while completing a volunteer work placement that aligns with their career interests. Participants earn up to 9 high school credits for their efforts while building a variety of skills in a supported environment. Returning youth have a clearer sense of their identity and of their own interests, skills, and career objectives.



TIMELINE

October - December

Youth between the ages of 15-20 living in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories are invited to apply. Each applicant is then interviewed, and selections are made,

January - June

Selected Participants work on a series of assignments with the help of a Mentor in their home communities.

July

Participants fly to Ottawa for a week long **Orientation** Camp before travelling to their host communities

July - August

Participants travel to their host communities where they will stay the next 5 weeks with their host family while completing their volunteer work placement.

August

Participants travel back to Ottawa for a 4 day Re-Ori-entation debriefing camp before travelling home

August - December

Participants work on a series of debriefing assignments back in their home communities

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Earning High School Credits
- Cross Cultural Learning
- Volunteerism
- Job Training
- Career Exploration
- Leadership Development
- Increased Self-Confidence
- Increased Self-Esteem
- Community Development
- Support of Healthy Lifestyles
- Path to High School Graduation

PARTICIPANT BENEFITS

- 9 High School Credits
- Minimum 150 hours of hands on work experience
- A unique opportunity to experience a new culture
- Sessions on Career Planning and Goal Setting
- Workplace Safety, First Aid, and Swim2Survive Training
- Increased communication, independence, and confidence
- The ability to share culture and traditions

WORK PLACEMENT OVERVIEW



NYA provides a foundation for career planning, skills development, hands-on work experience, and training to Northern youth. Volunteer work placements are a crucial component of NYA's programming because they allow participants to explore career interests and prepare for their futures. Through volunteering in an area of professional interest, Participants develop professional skills and gain valuable workplace experience that is often not available in their remote home communities.

It is through volunteer work placements that youth learn to work in a professional environment, test out a potential career path, and gain important skills and knowledge. Ultimately, our goal is that each Participant will return to their home community with an enhanced skill set, higher confidence, and greater motivation that will benefit them in their professional careers and personal lives.

WORK PLACEMENT OVERVIEW

“I can’t wait to tell my friends and family about this experience! I am extremely honoured and thankful!”

Laila Onalik

Alumna from Kimmirut, NU

PROGRAM DATES

Orientation in Ottawa: June 30th - July 3rd

Travel to Host Community: July 4th

Meet and Greet with Workplace: **July 5th**

First Work Day: **July 8th**

Last Work Day: **August 7th**

Re-Orientation in Ottawa: August 8th - 14th

THE WORKING DAY

The ideal work schedule for Participants is a 7-hour work day, Monday to Friday (**for a total of 35 hours per week**). Participants should not work on evenings or weekends as this time is used to get involved in their host community's summer activities and share experiences with their host family. If the operating hours of the workplace conflict with the suggested work schedule, there are arrangements that can be made to coordinate a schedule that appeals to all parties.

EXPECTATIONS

Participants are expected to work a minimum of 125 hours over the course of their 5 week volunteer work placement.

STAFF VISIT

During the summer, a pair of NYA Staff will be visiting the community to check in with Participants, Host Families, and Work Placements. This is a great opportunity to bring up any challenges or to share feedback about NYA! We will be in contact in July to arrange these visits.

PARTICIPANT PREPARATION

Each Participant arrives to their host community having just completed NYA's Orientation where they have participated in a number of sessions and workshops to prepare them for their summer experience. At Orientation Participants learn about group dynamics, independence, leadership techniques, communication, and coping with any cultural differences.

Beyond these workshops, the youth also receive training in many areas that are directly applicable to the workplace, such as:

- Criminal Record Check
- Mantoux Test Results
- Basic First Aid Training
- WHMIS Training

ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE SUPERVISOR

The Workplace Supervisor is to foster a safe, healthy, educational, and productive work environment for an NYA Participant.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE WORKPLACE

SUPERVISOR CHECKLIST

Day One of Placement:

- ☐ Provide workplace orientation for Participant (i.e. introduction to co-workers, overview of expectations, responsibilities, work schedule & daily routine, etc.)
- ☐ Inform Participant of Workplace Safety (i.e. off-limit areas, chemicals, dangerous products, etc.)
- ☐ Review Work Placement Profile and Work Placement Contract with Participant and help Participant send it to NYA by July 12th.

Throughout Placement:

- ☐ Sign off on Work Placement Time and Activity Sheets for Participant at the end of every week. Participants should fill out these forms ahead of time.
- ☐ Support behavior guidelines that Participants are required to follow by NYA (like not drinking or partaking in risky behaviour)
- ☐ Assist Participant in completing all program requirements (such as presenting about their culture/home to the workplace).
- ☐ Create a work environment for Participants that provides them with the opportunity to gain hands-on skills and work experience.
- ☐ Offer training and guidance to Participant in your area of expertise and encourage skills development to foster professional development.

At the End of Placement:

- ☐ Discuss the Participant's performance with him/her at the end of the placement period.
- ☐ **Complete Workplace Supervisor Evaluation Form online during the last week of the placement.**

“I learned that I’m a hard worker, creative, and mentally strong. I got to meet people that helped me grow, break out of my shell, and gain confidence around people”

Valerie Mackenzie
Alumna from Behchoko, NWT

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

Participants are expected to be helpful, reliable, and hard-working volunteers that enhance the workplace through their culture, unique experiences, skill sets, and commitment. Every participant has different abilities, experiences, and circumstances that make each work placement unique, and not always without challenges. That is why the Workplace Supervisors are so integral to the success of our program; they provide a forum for a young person to improve their abilities, gain experience, and grow as an individual.

Though NYA's work placements are often the first work experience for many Participants, the value they add to their work places is often lauded by supervisors and staff. Our goal is for supervisors and staff to finish the summer feeling excited and grateful for the positive experience.

Understandably, some Workplace Supervisors have some reservations about hosting a teenager they have never met and know little about. It is important to know that Participants are made aware that they will be treated as employees while at work. They understand they are volunteers who have been welcomed into work places by their supervisors and colleagues to learn, but also to perform the duties asked of them and contribute to the workplace. Participants know that they must follow the rules set out by their supervisor. Participants receive training at Orientation about general workplace expectations and the importance of professionalism.

“I enjoyed teaching my host family and co-workers about my Inuit culture”



Mahasi Nateela
Alumnus from Arviat, NU

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

CULTURE SHOCK AND HOMESICKNESS

For many Participants, NYA is their first time travelling outside of the North. Naturally, this can be a huge adjustment for some youth and Culture Shock and Homesickness are very common challenges that can manifest throughout the summer. These issues stem from being cut off from familiar cultural cues and patterns that our Participants usually depend on, having their values brought into question, not knowing how to fit into new surroundings, and the feeling of being unable to live up to new high expectations without adequate support. It is important to recognize the signs of Culture Shock and Homesickness and offer an understanding, sympathetic environment to help Participants overcome these difficulties.

Participants take part in workshops on coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with these issues at Orientation, however, they will still need support overcoming these challenges.

The most important thing is to recognize when a Participant is exhibiting signs of Culture Shock and Homesickness and differentiating that from plain rude or disengaged behaviour.

Strong methods for addressing Homesickness include: allowing the Participant to talk about home and express their feelings; staying busy to prevent time for idle/negative thinking; taking it day by day rather than how much longer the summer is; and finding things to look forward to on placement. In terms of dealing with Culture Shock, the most important thing is to avoid judgment of cultural differences. Expressing an interest in the Participant's home and culture, encouraging the Participant to be positive and avoid negative outlooks on their new surroundings, and highlighting the benefits of such a unique opportunity to learn and grow are all good tactics to curb Culture Shock.

Symptoms of Homesickness:

- Sadness, depression
- Preoccupation with thoughts of home
- Frustration
- Anger
- Recurring headaches
- Upset stomach
- Crying
- Oversleeping or sleeplessness
- Social withdrawal
- Homesickness

Signs of Culture Shock:

- Homesickness and physical illness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal from others
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating/drinking
- Irritability, hostility, tension
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Overly-critical, negative attitude
- Loss of ability to work effectively
- Inexplicable crying

Of Note:

Inuit use a lot of non-verbal communication. For example, to say yes, Inuit often raise their eyebrows, and to say no, they scrunch their noses. If you have Participants from Nunavut, they may answer you with their facial expressions rather than saying yes or no. In previous years, some Host Families and Supervisors have remarked that they feel the youth are shy, reserved, and not very talkative. **If your Participant is quiet, this does not necessarily mean that they are being rude or that they don't like you. It is simply a cultural difference that Northerners tend to not be very chatty.** Additionally, as with any individual, it can take some time for the youth to feel comfortable in a new environment and share with others.

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPANTS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Dealing with the heat:

Dealing with the summer heat is a challenge for Participants as a typical summer day in most Participants' home communities is usually 10 degrees Celsius. Difficulty adjusting to the 30+ degree weather in southern Canada often causes other problems beyond physical wear. Being too hot can lead to higher levels of frustration and homesickness, irritability, missing work, and wanting to spend time exclusively indoors where air conditioning is available. We encourage Participants to drink lots of water, wear comfortable clothing, and take breaks when it gets too hot, but please reinforce these points with them. Also note that Participants may not want to wear shorts or tank tops, since they are not accustomed to doing so back home, they may choose modest dress regardless of the outside heat.

Smoking:

There is little to no social stigma attached to smoking in the North. Youth are accustomed to having access to cigarettes, smoking regularly, and not being judged for their habit. If your Participant is a smoker, it will be necessary to make your expectations about smoking privileges very clear, including identifying areas in which they are permitted to smoke and how to safely dispose of cigarette butts. NYA advocates for Participants to consider using their time away from home as an opportunity to quit smoking however, NYA respects the right of each participant to smoke if they so choose.

Trauma Informed Care:

Due to statistics indicating high rates of trauma in the North and Canada in general, NYA assumes that any Participant could have experienced some form of trauma. Trauma-informed care is defined as practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment and healing. This involves approaching Participants with compassion and tolerance and considering past trauma and resulting coping mechanisms when trying to understand someone's behaviour.

Punctuality:

Daily living and working patterns for many Northern families are often to be guided by the weather, environmental conditions, hunting season, and amounts of daylight and darkness. Consequently, little emphasis is placed on maintaining a structured work schedule in the north as compared to lifestyles in the south. Participants are often laid back about schedules and being on time. Learning these new expectations and how to adapt to them is an important part of the Participants' education over the summer. Workplace supervisors should expect Participants to be punctual, but should also be understanding of the fact that Participants will have a difficult time adjusting to such routines. Being late is generally not meant by Participants to be disrespectful. As an employer, we understand you have expectations and responsibilities in your workplace that must be adhered to, however we would appreciate if you could take these considerations into account regarding the Participant's time with you.

Cell Phones:

A recurring theme among work placement feedback has been Participant's overuse of cell phones during working hours. We address workplace conduct extensively during our Orientation, and take many steps to ensure that Participants understand the expectations of the workplace. We encourage work placements to set guidelines regarding cell phone use during work on the first day, and to be open with Participants about your expectations.

NYA LANGUAGE

The volunteer you host may talk about things from the NYA program that might not make sense if you are hosting an NYA Participant for the first time. This might help you understand NYA and the Participant a little better.

Host Family

Each year, NYA accepts applications from potential Host Families all over Canada. Host Families are rigorously assessed and are chosen based on their ability to provide a safe and welcoming home for youth while they complete NYA. Host Families welcome youth into their homes and treat them as family. Much like how a Work Place Supervisor can expect a youth to volunteer and take responsibility like an employee, Participants are expected to contribute to the family unit.

Buddy

Participants are paired together with another youth from the North. The Participants usually do not know each other before they start NYA, but they live together in their host community. Although their buddy is a strong part of their support system, we try to not place two buddies in the same work place. This allows each youth to have their own unique experience, which we feel helps them develop their independence. If you are a workplace that is hosting two NYA Participants, try to have them work on different projects or in different areas.

Presentation

Your Participant may mention their “presentation”. This is a short presentation that is part of their assignments for NYA, that they present to their work place or host community during the summer. It is about their home and culture, and helps them practice public speaking in a comfortable setting. If you have the time we encourage prompting your Participant to share their presentation with you!



CONTACT Us

NYA has six full-time staff members, a northern-based Board of Directors, and many dedicated volunteers throughout the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and southern Canada. **Please do not hesitate to reach out to us throughout the summer.** We want to help you in supporting our Participants, and the best way to do that is through open communication.

Depending on your timezone, you may reach an emergency line or an on-call staff if you call the office. We take a team approach, so you might not always speak to the same staff member but rest assured that you will always have the full NYA team behind you. We are all working together to have the most successful summer yet!



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