

## German-Canadian Student Exchange Report

### 25th August - 17th November

When we got the phone call that they had found an exchange partner for me in Canada, I was very surprised. I didn't expect to have the chance to take part in this program but I was very happy and excited.

On August 25<sup>th</sup>, we started our flight in Frankfurt and arrived in Edmonton the next day. I spoke with my host family a few times via Skype, and once I returned home, we talked a lot even though I was very tired after the long flight.

When I arrived, they still had one week of summer break left so my exchange student had the time to show me Edmonton. On the first weekend we drove with the family to "The Lake" about 150km Northeast of Edmonton. I don't know the real name, but before I arrived they had told me a lot about it, so I was very excited to see what it was like. We went tubing, attended a deep-fry party, and I saw the Northern Lights and a bear for the first time.

On my first day at Strathcona Composite High School, I followed my exchange partner to her classes, but she only had two classes that day. At the end of my first day of school, I received my own schedule. I took Foods and Physical Education every day and Social Studies, Graphic Arts, English and Psychology every second day. I also joined the Cross-Country team at school where we practised twice a week and had a race every Wednesday. At the City Championship I qualified for Provincials which took place in Medicine Hat; a city close to the US border. We started our six-hour bus ride on Friday at lunch time. I had made some friends on the team prior to the trip, as such the drive wasn't boring. We slept in a hostel and drove to the race on Saturday. Medicine Hat is more like a desert; not how you imagine Canada. It was the hardest race I have ever run, continually up and down the hills. Anyway, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is something special to say that I'm Provincial Champion of Alberta for their school team. I wasn't the only exchange student at Strathcona Composite High School and so I became close friends with three other German girls and a German boy whose family invited us to his home a few times. We watched almost every senior boys and girls' volleyball games and became their biggest fans. After a few days I got used to my daily routine and I really liked going to school, it was so much fun.

Three weeks after our arrival, all the German exchange students met again at the Adventure Camp. We hiked, did rock climbing, canoeing, swimming and had a lot of fun together.

One weekend later I went with my exchange partner and her parents to Calgary and we visited her grandparents. The next day was my birthday and we travelled to Banff National Park and hiked for 4 hours at Johnston Canyon.



After that, we went to the Hot Springs in Banff and the next day we drove to the famous Lake Louise. The weather was perfect; warm and sunny, and I took many photos of the breathtaking Canadian landscape. That weekend was my personal highlight; I was inspired by the beautiful blue and turquoise water in the amazing Rocky Mountains.



One day I went with my host dad to Rogers Place, home of the Edmonton Oilers, to watch an ice hockey game. We also watched the Edmonton Eskimos; the local football team plays at the Commonwealth Stadium. I went shopping to West Edmonton Mall a few times, visited the World Water Park and the Telus World of Science.

It was very interesting to celebrate Halloween in Canada because it is quite different compared to Germany; it's more like carnival and almost everybody at school wears a costume. We also celebrated Thanksgiving with the whole family; we ate turkey and played a lot of games.

I often watched movies with my host family; we walked outside with the dog, cooked or baked together, played games or just talked about politics (especially during the federal election), school, music or whatever.

When the day of my departure came closer, I was very sad. I never really felt homesick, although it was the first time for me being away for such a long time and far away from home. It was hard to leave my Canadian friends and teachers at school. They were awesome and I really miss them. At the airport we had to say goodbye to our host families. My family had done a great job; they were very friendly and I felt like a part of their family for this time.



All in all, I can say it was the best and most exciting time of my life. I'm glad I had the chance to experience a new culture and especially the high school spirit. For me, it was fantastic and I recommend it to everybody who is interested in Canada, the landscape, the culture and the people there.