

# CANADIAN ROOTS EXCHANGE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



Canadian  
Roots 

## ABOUT US

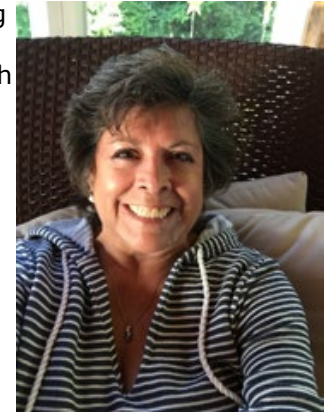
## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Greetings and congratulations to all of the young people who are a part of the Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE) movement across Canada. Each one of you is so very necessary to the building and continuing success of this truly remarkable organization.

I have watched CRE grow from two young men “dedicated to positive change” and myself to a going concern with hundreds of young people actively building their dreams, their networks, and pushing forth their vision for an inclusive and welcoming country. Wow, is the word that always comes to mind when I think of you. You are the vanguard of a strong movement towards reconciliation, the next steps after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission completed their work in June 2015. I expect to meet many of you on multiple front lines, teaching, guiding, inspiring, and opening gateways for other young people looking for a better tomorrow. I expect to see those of you who have been with CRE for many years, finishing your degrees, teaching in colleges and universities and ensuring Canada knows its own history. I expect to see more and more newcomers to this beautiful country called Canada learning about the beauty of Indigenous history and cultural practices through your voices. I expect to see the KAIROS Blanket Exercise being offered in every elementary and post secondary school in every province by Canadian Roots Exchange youth. More than anything, I am delighted and honoured to be a part of your story, to support your efforts, to celebrate your successes, and to carry your story into the many places where I get to teach and visit.

We have much work to do, and since we already know how to join forces, hold hands, and jump right in, I expect we will be very busy over the coming years slaying the dragons of indifference, stereotypes, and neglect and bringing more young people into our growing organization. I long ago learned to simply roll up my sleeves and jump on the CRE bus for the proverbial ride. I am looking forward to our continuing work, and am proud to be a member of such a dedicated community of young leaders.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux,  
Chair, Canadian Roots Exchange  
Thunder Bay, Ontario



### Our Mission

Canadian Roots Exchange builds bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in Canada by facilitating dialogue and strengthening relationships through leadership programs.

### Our Vision

We believe in a society where youth stand in solidarity to promote respect, understanding and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.



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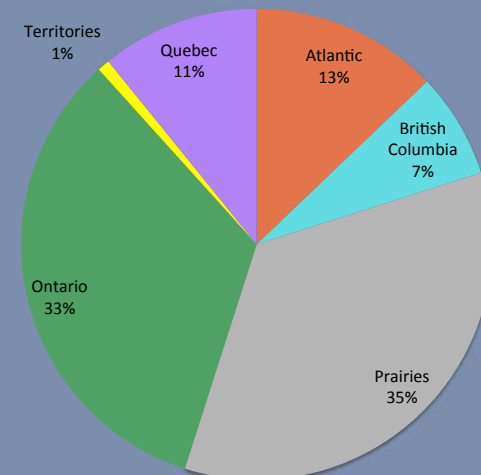
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# YEAR IN REVIEW

Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE) celebrated our 6th anniversary in October 2014. We are very proud to highlight the profound grassroots impact upon youth across Canada.

2014-15 was a year of many new achievements for CRE. We expanded our board and staff team to having 5 full-time staff for most of the year including our first staff person based outside of Toronto: a bilingual (French & English) Communications Officer working from Ottawa. The additional staff members allowed us to reach youth from every province and territory with the exception of Prince Edward Island, reaching 949 youth in total.

**Youth Participation by Region (2014-2015)**



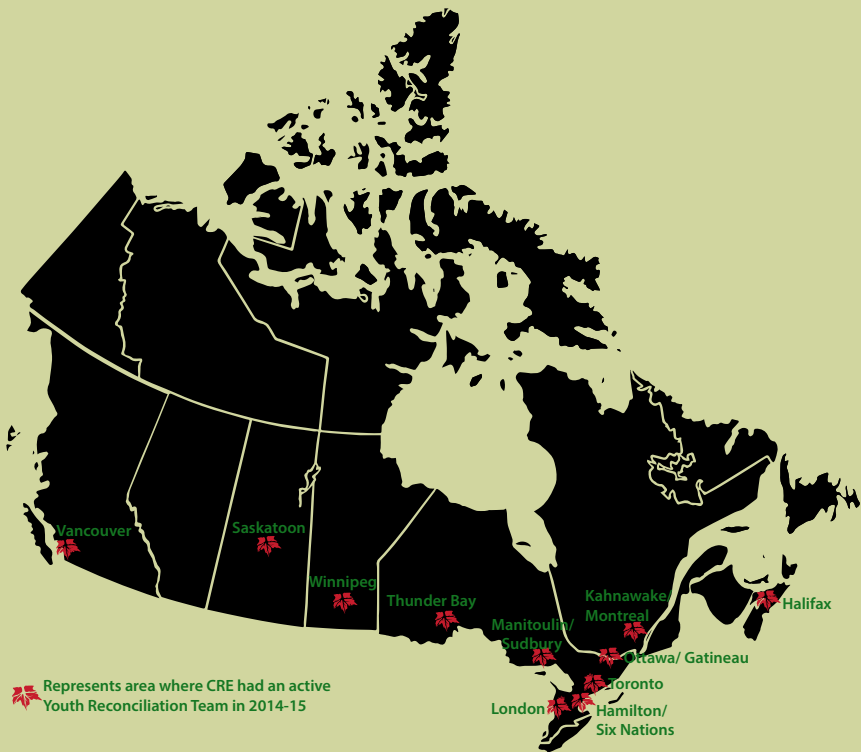
Our youth alumni continued to open new doors for our exchange programs as we completed our first exchange in an Inuit community. Youth from Kuujuaq and Winnipeg had the privilege of spending a week in each other's community. We also expanded our national conference to a 3 day program held in Winnipeg for the first time. In addition to seeing CRE alumni transition from volunteers to staff, we also successfully supported 2 past CRE volunteers and trusted youth who created and managed their own projects with the Stories Beyond Borders and Sisters of the Soil initiatives.

We are proud to see CRE co-founder and Board Chair, Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux named as an Honourary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In addition, CRE was awarded the Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity Award for Service & Innovation from the York Region Community Inclusivity Equity Council. Our successes and continued growth would not have been possible without the tremendous contributions of our dedicated youth volunteers, community members, board, donors and other supporters. We'd like to thank you for a very successful year!

## Youth Reconciliation Initiative

Our Youth Reconciliation Initiative continues to grow. In this initiative, teams of 3 to 5 youth work together in their own region and are provided with training and support to promote respect, dialogue, reconciliation and solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. During the year, we supported teams in 11 different regions across Canada. Each team is comprised of youth from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, who model shared leadership and reciprocity.

Teams organize monthly activities for youth in their communities. Activities include awareness-raising workshops, Indigenous walking tours, arts-based activities, film screenings and discussions and intergenerational events to build community. In 2014-15, 28 different active youth volunteered as part of our Youth Reconciliation Initiative contributing over 2,500 volunteer hours in their communities.



Represents area where CRE had an active Youth Reconciliation Team in 2014-15

In 2014-15 we had active Youth Reconciliation Teams in Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto Area, Hamilton-Six Nations, London, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal-Kahnawake and Halifax Area.

Youth teams are trained with a focus on reconciliation and conflict resolution. Youth from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities make connections and linkages with other cultural communities through these networks.



Workshops are facilitated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and help participants to dispel stereotypes and deepen their knowledge of our history including the struggles and triumphs of Indigenous peoples and other diverse communities across Canada.





## “Bridging the Gap” National Youth Conference March 5-7, 2015



Since 2013, CRE has continued to host an annual national youth conference. Using a youth-to-youth model, our conferences have become one of our yearly highlights. This past year, CRE held its first national conference in Winnipeg and attracted over 200 youth from across the country.

“Bridging the Gap” was the theme of CRE’s 2015 conference with an overall aim to develop leadership and strengthen connections between Indigenous & non-Indigenous youth. A catalyst for having the conference in Winnipeg was Macleans magazine rating Winnipeg as the “Most Racist City in Canada”. Several youth involved with CRE argued that this infamous distinction misled people from many positive happenings in Winnipeg.

An opening address was given by the Mayor of Winnipeg, Brian Bowman. Mayor Bowman affirmed the commitment of Winnipeg to bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. From the municipal level, he shared practices to address inequalities and create safer spaces. Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, Marie Wilson then followed with her address. She touched on important social themes and posed an important question to her audience of youth, school teachers, and media to consider. She asked: are we still neighbours? These opening speeches framed youth dialogues as imperative to envisioning an inspired Canada that is united through reconciliation.



## Children of the Earth High School Winnipeg, Manitoba

“Bridging the Gap” featured 48 inspired youth facilitators and 205 participants from across Canada. Youth from 12 of the 13 provinces and territories participated in the three days of programming. The 2015 conference was CRE’s largest conference to date and we were very proud to engage a rich diversity of youth including young parents, newcomers, youth of colour, Inuit, First Nations, Métis youth, participants from rural and remote communities, queer, transgendered, two spirited people, and people with disabilities.

Sessions used arts, hip hop, spoken word, dance, video, poetry and story telling to stimulate critical discussions about building a more united Canada. Workshops generated dialogue on Indigenous and Canadian history as well as Indigenous world views and cultural practices.

Some session highlights included: Indigenous planetarium and astrology; Water Teachings; What is Mental and Sexual Health?; Empowering and Supporting 2 Spirit Youth; Diaspora and Indigenous Narratives; Reclaiming Creativity: Arts Based Reconciliation; Confronting Stereotypes in the Media; Giving Youth a Voice in Government; Indigenous Femininities: Re-Shaping and Centering Femininity; Discussing Indigenous Masculinities; Trading Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Stories through Hip Hop, Poetry, and Spoken Word.

In addition to the numerous sessions that youth were able to choose from, the conference included 4 incredible key note speakers: youth activists Michael Champagne, Gabrielle Fayant and Sappfyre McLeod along with adult ally Wab Kinew.

This was the first year CRE expanded the conference to 3 days including guided off site excursions as part of the programming. A visit to the Museum of Human Rights provided youth with interactive insights into the history of human rights, particularly, Indigenous perspectives of human rights and human rights events in Canadian history. Meanwhile, a guided tour of Louis Riel’s memorial site and Métis cultural museum also provided an invaluable opportunity to appreciate the richness of Métis identity and the fundamental role of Métis peoples in shaping Canadian national identity and history. The conference provided new networks and tools to youth leaders from different parts of the country.

We are excited to bring our national conference to Sudbury, Ontario in March 2016. Please visit our website for the different ways to be involved this year!



# YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

**Dauida Bentham**, 24, Saskatoon, SK

## What motivated you to get involved with Canadian Roots Exchange?

I was involved with a program called Building Bridges on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan. This program creates dialogue between students of various ethnicities. I had an opportunity to be part of the CRE conference in Saskatoon in 2014 and was excited to be part of an organization where I could meet other youth with similar interests and values who were also working towards a more united Canada.



## Why do you feel youth reconciliation work is important in Saskatoon?

In Saskatoon, communities can become very siloed. It is difficult to meet people from backgrounds different from yourself. The population here is changing fast and there are more and more Aboriginal people and newcomers in the city. Programs such as CRE allow newcomers, Aboriginal youth and other communities to engage in these important conversations. Dialogue between people of various ethnicities and cultures can be very powerful. It is exciting to bring together youth with similar interests and values for a more united Canada.

## What is something that you take with you from your past involvement with CRE?

I had the opportunity to help organize an exchange between high school aged youth in Toronto and Saskatoon. In both groups there were Aboriginal and newcomer youth. I really appreciate how genuine youth can be when they have the opportunity. I saw how open youth were with one another and how they took as much as they could from the exchange. On the last day, the youth wrote thank you cards and I was amazed at the sincerity and seriousness in the efforts made to write the cards. The youth were able to appreciate everything that contributed to their experiences. I see that there is a younger generation of youth who are committed to doing things differently and it gives me lots of hope.

**Jordan Omand** 25, Winnipeg & Norway House First Nation

## What does reconciliation mean to you?

As an Indigenous youth in Canada, to me, reconciliation starts when people come together as one to meet, listen, share, and learn from each other to establish positive relationships, respect and a mutual understanding about our history.

## Why is it important to have CRE programs available for youth in Winnipeg?

It is very important for our youth to have these kinds of programs available to them because of the very large diverse group of gifted young people we have in our city. The Canadian Roots Exchange Initiative is all about empowering our young people, building their capacity and providing very unique opportunities.

## You were a very strong advocate that CRE choose Winnipeg to host our national youth conference in 2015. Why did you feel that Winnipeg was the ideal location to host the "Bridging the Gap" National Youth Conference?

I had an opportunity to be at CRE's National Youth Conference in Saskatoon in 2014. I knew that Winnipeg would be the perfect place to host the next conference because of our diversity, our large Indigenous population, the Idle No More movement and all the positive things that were happening in our city. When MacLeans characterized Winnipeg as Canada's "Most Racist City" there was a lot missing to that story. I was very excited when the conference became reality in Winnipeg.





## Exchanges Unite Us

During 2014-15, 138 youth participants took part in overnight exchange programs. These programs, typically 1 to 2 weeks long, bring youth together to focus on leadership development, reconciliation and community building through group and personal reflection. Each program is led by CRE group leaders and involves local community educators. In CRE exchanges, half of the youth come from First Nations, Inuit or Métis backgrounds and the other half from non-Indigenous backgrounds. Our groups have included youth from a diversity of communities who speak different languages. Exchanges have facilitated strong friendships and connections, giving youth a deeper and broader understanding of what it means to live in Canada.

The following communities hosted CRE exchanges in 2014-15:

- Manitoulin Island, ON
- Montréal-Kahnawake, QC
- Six Nations of the Grand River, ON
- Greater Toronto Area, ON
- Similkameen Valley (Okanagan First Nation), BC
- Winnipeg, MB
- Saskatoon, SK



Since 2014, CRE has partnered with the YMCA Youth Exchanges Program to provide more exchange opportunities to high school aged youth. Our National Youth Reconciliation Teams have provided opportunities to high school aged youth from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds to participate in CRE local programming prior to planning a week long exchange in their own community. Each local group is paired with another CRE group in a different part of the country. These programs have allowed Youth Reconciliation Leaders to further strengthen their leadership skills through supporting and supervising younger youth. The partnership with the YMCA has helped provide many youth with their first opportunity to travel outside of their home province.

In addition, CRE continues to offer other exchange programs that enable participants to be immersed in Indigenous communities and other outdoor based programs that involve Indigenous knowledge through connecting with the land.

In the past year, CRE organized youth exchanges in both rural and urban centres which enabled youth to engage with Indigenous community members. Both high school and post-secondary aged youth had opportunities to travel and learn outside of their own communities. Each year we are getting closer to our goal of offering exchanges every year in every province and territory.







## AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT MARCH 31, 2015

	2014	2015
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<i>Current assets</i>		
Cash	\$9,330	\$32,762
Guaranteed investment certificates	55,180	90,804
Amounts receivable	75,246	35,023
HST recoverable	59,21	8,159
	<u>\$145,677</u>	<u>\$166,748</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<i>Current liabilities</i>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$25,679	\$27,472
Deferred revenue	32,686	41,187
	<u>58,365</u>	<u>68,659</u>
Net assets	87,312	98,089
	<u>\$145,677</u>	<u>\$166,748</u>

### STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2015

	2014	2015
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Grants	\$290,021	\$337,748
Earned income	38,368	44,361
Contributed materials and services	33,760	42,610
Donations	36,308	33,463
Interest	379	732
	<u>\$398,836</u>	<u>458,914</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Personnel	\$145,344	\$207,552
Participant travel and accommodation	81,609	95,189
Program	54,112	62,372
Rent	29,160	40,110
Honoraria	24,285	19,455
Staff travel and accommodation	8,522	9,813
Insurance	3,780	3,926
Professional fees	3,108	3,898
Office and general	5,153	3,105
Website	1,011	2,717
Documentary production	2,250	-
	<u>358,334</u>	<u>448,137</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR</b>	<u>40,502</u>	<u>10,777</u>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<u>46,810</u>	<u>87,312</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<u>87,312</u>	<u>98,089</u>





## OUR TEAM

### Staff (2014-15)

Candice Jacko, *Financial Officer*  
 Christine Luza, *Program Coordinator*  
 Denver Lynxleg, *Financial Officer*  
 Fallon Andy, *Digital Media Officer*  
 Jaya Bordeleau-Cass,  
*Communications Officer*  
 Latisha Reddick, *Program Officer*  
 Lindsay DuPré, *Summer Intern 2014*  
 Rinchen Lama, *Community  
 Engagement Facilitator*  
 vibhor garg, *Executive Director*

### Youth Reconciliation Leaders & Facilitators (2014-15)

Aliesha Arndt  
 Amber Bellegarde  
 Bernice Chau  
 Caitlynn Gaudette  
 Clyde Moonias  
 Coty Zachariah  
 Davida Bentham  
 Diandre Thomas-Hart  
 Donovan Erutse  
 Emma Bilodeau  
 Emely Baker  
 Emily Nguyen  
 Emily Spitzer  
 Esmonde Jamieson  
 Hala Sayed  
 Harry Au  
 Hazem Sabeh  
 Janelle Pewapsconias  
 Kaylin Parker  
 Killa Atencio  
 Moussa Sene  
 Patricia Herrera  
 Ruth Mesgna  
 Sacha Favel  
 Samhita Misra  
 Sarah Nelson  
 Shawna Peloquin



### Exchange Leaders (2014-15)

Cameron Adams  
 Holly Laforge  
 Ivan Arturo Escobar Moreno  
 Jade Montgomery-Waardenburg  
 Jordan Omand  
 Katrina Derbecker  
 Kaylin Parker  
 Lynzii Taibossigai  
 Mehrangiz Mosef  
 Nicole Wemigwans  
 Olivia Ikey  
 Rosemary Costelloe  
 Shane Kelsey  
 Tessa Terbasket

### Practicum Students

Jordan Moses-Williams  
 Lindsay DuPré

### Board of Directors

Alysha Li  
 Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux  
 Diana Pirri  
 Judith Rae  
 Justin Wiebe  
 Max FineDay

## KEY FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Artreach Toronto  
 Department of Canadian Heritage  
 Healthy Minds Canada  
 Inspirit Foundation  
 KAIROS Canada  
 Lakehead University  
 Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training  
 Ontario Trillium Foundation  
 University of Toronto - Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

*CRE also would like to acknowledge the generous support of all individual and monthly donors. Your support is greatly appreciated!*

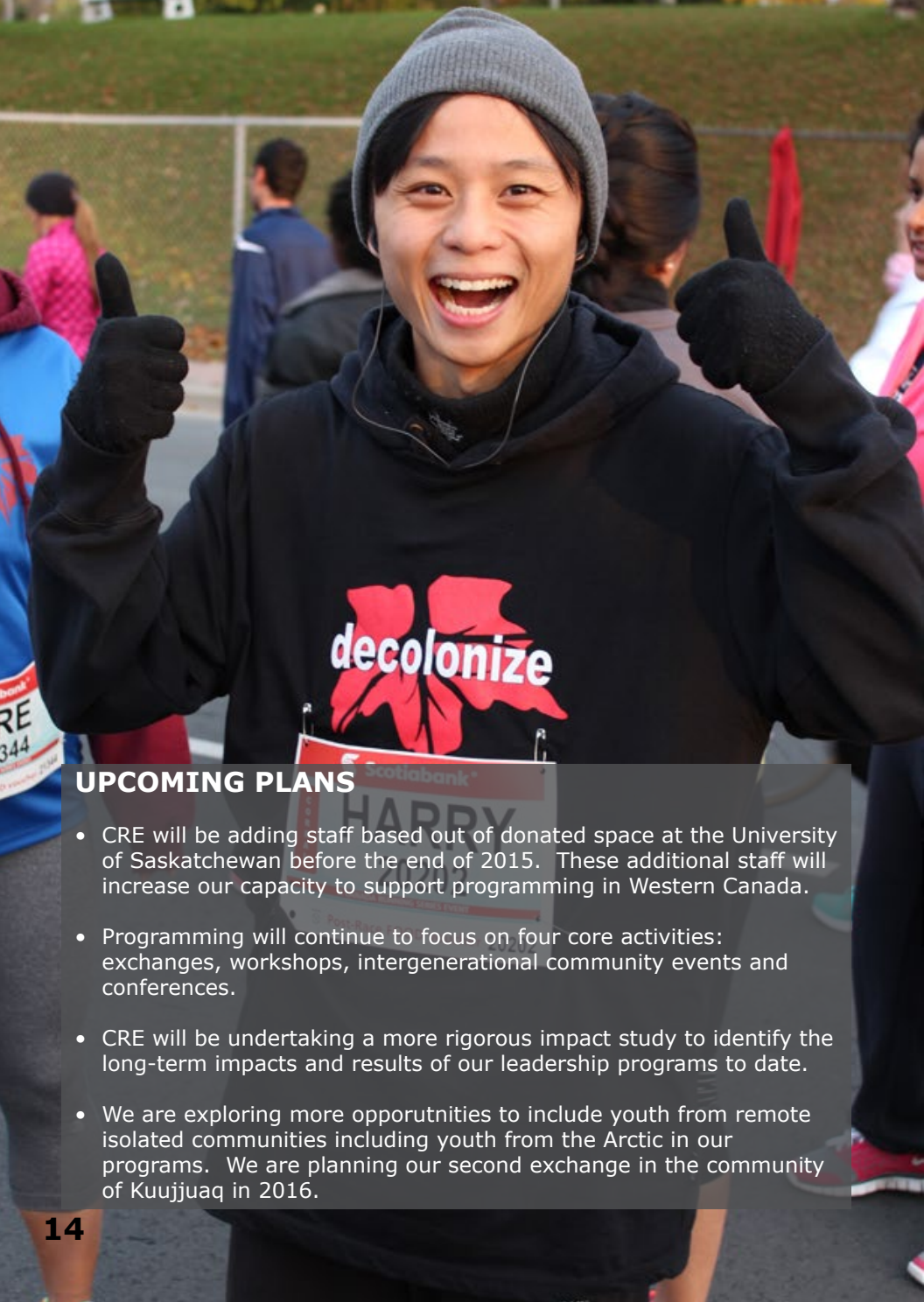


### YOUTH EXCHANGE HOST COMMUNITIES

Cawston, British Columbia  
 Kahnawake, Quebec  
 M'Chigeeng First Nation  
 Montreal, Quebec  
 Okanagan First Nation  
 Ottawa, Ontario  
 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
 Six Nations of the River Grand  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 Wikwemikong First Nation  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba



## MOVING FORWARD



### UPCOMING PLANS

- CRE will be adding staff based out of donated space at the University of Saskatchewan before the end of 2015. These additional staff will increase our capacity to support programming in Western Canada.
- Programming will continue to focus on four core activities: exchanges, workshops, intergenerational community events and conferences.
- CRE will be undertaking a more rigorous impact study to identify the long-term impacts and results of our leadership programs to date.
- We are exploring more opportunities to include youth from remote isolated communities including youth from the Arctic in our programs. We are planning our second exchange in the community of Kuujjuaq in 2016.

## GIVE US A HAND

### Support CRE!

CRE operates on a very modest budget. Donations go a long way in continuing to support the work we do. We are a registered charity and can issue tax receipts for all eligible donations. Donations can be made by credit card through our website or you can contact us directly. We especially encourage our supporters to become monthly donors. All monthly donors, small and large, allow us to plan ahead for our programs. We also accept donations of Aeroplan miles which provide opportunities to youth from more distant communities to participate in our annual conference or an exchange program. Please visit our website ([www.canadianroots.ca](http://www.canadianroots.ca)) for more details about becoming a donor.



### Workshops & Partnership Opportunities

Canadian Roots Exchange is committed to providing more leadership opportunities for youth. We are open to working with small grassroots organizations and larger organizations to help us expand our reach to youth in communities across Canada. We also have worked with both youth and adults. If you would like to request CRE facilitators to come into your school, workplace or group, we can design sessions to suit your audience. Feel free to contact us if you see an opportunity to collaborate!





**Canadian Roots Exchange**

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