

PEARSON COLLEGE



Submitted Article

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The Canadians are coming to Pearson!

If you need words to rouse your spirits out of the summer doldrums, then read on...

“I come from a country where the girls and women have very restricted opportunities to study and go to university – in fact, the opportunities are close to zero. As a girl who has been raised with better chances I’m motivated to fight against these traditional and unreasonable restrictions. I’m going to create a chance for girls to get an education.”

The young woman who wrote the words above is slated to attend Pearson College UWC this fall and the multilingual, multi-scholarship winner, originally from Afghanistan, is looking forward to expressing her thoughts, culture, traditions and “being able to learn, learn, learn” together with the more than 100 other Year 46 students from around the world arriving on the Metchosin campus in late August.

Nina Moroso, UWC National Committee of Canada (UWC-NCC) Executive Administrator, knows the stories of the 57 Canadians chosen to attend either Pearson or one of the 17 other UWC schools this academic year, having interacted with most and having met many of them. The quote above represents one of the most compelling stories.

Altogether, about 28 Canadian students – all with their own unique stories to share – are scheduled to attend Pearson in 2019-20. Coming from virtually all provinces and territories, and for non-resident Canadians, from lands as diverse as Malawi, Japan, Switzerland, Hawaii and Belgium, they represent a rich milieu of experiences and motivations.

For example, a young woman originally from a community on the shores of Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories who left her home to pursue studies in Yellowknife proudly declared that she saw this as a way to help her pursue her passion for bringing environmental science in closer harmony with the culture of the Dene Nation and people and their connection to the land and the water.

Another young Indigenous woman from Haida Gwaii is a member of the Gwaii Trust Youth Board, which is part of the Gwaii Trust Society that owns and manages a perpetual fund for the benefit of all the people of Haida Gwaii. She is also part of a group of young activists working to ban the use of single-use plastic bags on the archipelago.

Moroso, together with UWC-NCC Chair Jennifer Dueck, an alumna of UWC Li Po Chun in Hong Kong, were quick to point to the dedicated and thoughtful work by volunteers with the national committee, as well as provincial and territorial chapters, whose commitment powers the unique, merit-based UWC student selection process in Canada.

“UWC-NCC volunteers are among the most energetic and dedicated people I’ve ever met,” she added. “Most are alumni from Pearson and other UWCs who bring a diversity of perspectives and experiences to the table and commit thousands of hours of work to make the Canadian selection process fair, exacting and successful.”

As in past years, several common themes emerged from the applications completed by students selected to attend UWC schools. Many received the “tap on the shoulder” from a loved one or an influential person who told them about their own UWC experience. Other applicants attended a UWC summer program, such as the Pearson Seminar on Youth Leadership (PSYL).

“And, this might be a first, but one successful applicant heard about UWC through her grandmother who was also a student at Pearson,” said Moroso. “This student is also from an isolated community in Canada’s north and works to sustain traditional ways of life, learning and language in her family’s region of the Arctic.”

She noted that the parents of another ultimately successful applicant actually met while students at Pearson, “back when (former Pearson Board Chair) Tony Macoun was Head.”

The story of students coming to Pearson is also one of individuals from rural areas, small towns and distinct neighbourhoods in major metropolises – young people with part-time jobs at a local Burger King who worked to keep the family afloat financially and quiet leaders who raised thousands of dollars to support research into chronic conditions simply because an aunt lives with Multiple Sclerosis.

For many, a common core of athleticism runs through their lives, whether that takes the form of competing in long-distance cycle events, wrestling in the Arctic Games or learning new routines at circus performing school performing. A love of the outdoors and wilderness pursuits also, not surprisingly, is sprinkled throughout many of the applications.

And, of course, a core value that so many incoming students display is passion – passion for social justice and positive community and nation-building, passion for specific causes close to their hearts, family and friends and, across the board, a burning desire to leverage the remarkable opportunity of a UWC education. And these young people are realistic and enthusiastic about what lies ahead.

As one student put it, “I need a path with many barriers because I like breaking them!”

About Pearson College:

In 1974, Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific was founded on a forested campus along the shores of Pedder Bay in Metchosin. We are proud and grateful to be living and learning on the unceded territory of the Scia’new (Beecher Bay) First Nation. Pearson is one of 18 United World Colleges (UWCs) worldwide.

Pearson’s mission – *To make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future* – is transformational. Pearson is a two-year pre-university school for nearly 200 students aged 16 to 19 selected from up to 160 countries and all Canadian provinces and territories. This year, nearly 90% of students attend on full or partial scholarships made possible through individual and organizational donors. The non-profit, charitably-registered school’s commitment to deliberate diversity

draws students from regions of conflict, refugee backgrounds and often from challenging socioeconomic backgrounds.

Pearson College UWC offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, the most recognized and respected high-school diploma in the world. Students embrace a whole education that pays equal respect to academics, service, leadership, physical pursuits, creative expression, experiential learning and the lessons of learning and living together. To date, 14 [Pearson alumni](#) have gone on to become Rhodes Scholars.

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