

travel to an African country for five weeks to apply their skills and educate schools and communities on human security issues.

Véronique Côté was a human security intern in Tunisia in 2002. "The experience changed me," she says. "I was able to open up to another culture and exchange thoughts with people whose outlook was sometimes different from mine." Interns produced videos, organized meetings with local officials and, says Véronique, "taught children that rights exist to ensure that our needs are met."

Programs at home

For young people who prefer to stay in Canada, DFAIT offers other opportunities to get involved with key foreign policy issues. One is the Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program, delivered in cooperation with Mines Action Canada and the Canadian Red Cross; this unique program is designed to raise community awareness and involvement. Organizations across Canada act as hosts each year for the Youth Ambassadors, who teach about the deadly toll of landmines on innocent civilians and their communities. Their work helps Canada carry out its commitment to the global ban on landmines.

Since its inception in 1998, some 33 Youth Ambassadors have participated in the program. One of them was Darryl Toews of Morden, Manitoba, who worked with teachers and students throughout his province. "I saw my role as being a resource," he says, "and trying to motivate people to go beyond simply learning about the issue and instead doing something to help solve the problem."

During his 11 months as a Youth Ambassador in 1999–2000, Darryl organized presentations, fund-raisers and other activities. The aim was to raise awareness of the global landmine problem, and to inform the public about Canada's efforts to implement the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines. The response, he recalls, was often overwhelming: "I was very inspired so many times by what young people were doing here, and for me that was the best part."

Another extraordinary opportunity to get involved in policy making was the Winnipeg Conference on War-Affected Children, held in September 2000 (see *Canada*

World View, Issues 9 and 10). At this event youth sat at the decision-making table with adults, and once the conference ended they acted as advisers on other projects involving war-affected children.

Under its International Criminal Court Campaign, DFAIT also helped War Child Canada organize a youth forum on international criminal justice in Ottawa from March 1 to 3, 2002. Fifty high school and university students from across the country attended the conference to learn more about international justice and the Court.

An opportunity to be seized

To youth who are considering any of the Department's youth initiatives, Philip Strong advises, "Don't let an opportunity such as the internship program pass you by."

"It will be an amazing year," says Darryl Toews of the landmine action program. What is particularly rewarding, he finds, is getting to see the results of your work.

Annik Lussier knows that participants may well encounter frustrations and some trying times in the DFAIT youth programs. But much more important, she says, "In the end you will be enriched by the experience." 🍁

For more information about DFAIT programs for youth, visit:

Youth International Internship Program
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/interns

International Youth Programs
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/123go



Darryl Toews and fellow Youth Mine Action Ambassador Carla Potts observe demining in a cleared neighbourhood of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 2000.