



a YOUTHFUL TAKE on landmines

Classrooms across Canada will be hearing about landmines this year. As part of a public outreach campaign, the Youth Mine Action Ambassador (YMAA) program was launched in September by Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy.

Denis Dreaver



Meet the Youth Ambassadors

The program is the creation of three sponsoring organizations who have long been involved in the international campaign: Mines Action Canada, the Canadian Red Cross and the Mine Action Team of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Five Youth Ambassadors are working across Canada to educate youth about landmines and the progress made in resolving the problem. They are emphasizing the obligations of the global ban treaty, Canada's continued international efforts on the issue and opportunities for young

Canadians to get involved. Presentations, mine action events and fund-raising activities are being

"A lot of work must be done to ensure that this issue remains in the forefront of Canadians' minds for years to come. There is a lot of optimism about the YMAA program in the region. Unlike past projects, our program is able to span government, NGOs and non profit agencies as they are all partners with a stake in increased awareness of the landmines issue."

— Alison Clement, Winnipeg

organized in various communities.

Based in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montréal and St John (NB), the Youth Ambassadors have already made contacts in their communities and organized presentations in universities, church halls, and schools. The ambassadors are hosted by local NGOs active on the landmines issue: Mines Advisory Group, Mines Action Canada, Red Cross and Unicef Québec.

The two biggest events on the Youth Ambassador calendar are the Treaty anniversary on December 3, 1998 and its Entry into Force on March 1, 1999. Upcoming events include a speakers' forum of experts, a

Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy, Pierre Duplessis of the Red Cross, and Debbie Grisdale of Physicians for Global Survival with Canada's Youth Ambassadors.

poster contest, letter and e-mail campaigns, radio interviews, cross-border and school twinning initiatives, and video festivals.

To find out how you can get involved, or for more information, please contact Marc Lemieux, National Co-ordinator, Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program. E-mail: mlemieux@redcross.ca, Tel: (613) 740-1941. •

"The response from the youth, schools, and communities on the landmine issue indicates excitement and interest. After completing a presentation at Hampton High School in New Brunswick, the teacher, Kevin Foster, and students felt that the landmine issue would be an integral part of their Human Rights Week. Many teachers and organizations have expressed a desire to take some training on landmines so they can promote sustainability on the issue."
— Kate Coldwell, St. John

"My experience so far as a YMAA hosted by Mines Action Canada has been a rush in every sense of the word. I will have been to Kingston, Sudbury, Kitchener and Peel for a number of events before 1999 is over. It has been an excellent opportunity to see what is being done around the landmines issue. Youth really can and want to play a role in enforcing the Ottawa Treaty. We realize that we will inherit this problem if we do not help eradicate it."
— Sophie Sauvé, Ottawa

"Through a partnership between the Lower Mainland Red Cross and myself with the Mines Advisory Group, we successfully launched a landmines public outreach and awareness program in conjunction with the United Nations Disarmament Week (October 26-30). Over fifty media were invited to attend a press conference where myself,

George Chandler of the Red Cross, Valerie Warmington of Mines Advisory Group and photo journalist and activist Robert Semeniuk spoke about landmines and our roles in motivating community action to support mine affected communities worldwide."
— Anne Kayal, Vancouver

"Several awareness and education activities have taken place in the Montréal region since the launch of the YMAA program. Students at Armand Racicot Primary School took the initiative to write an article in their student newspaper and to do displays to others in their school, following a presentation on landmines. Maude, a grade 4 student, said she was especially shocked by the fact that mines kill or injure someone every 24 minutes."
— Mélanie Gagnon, Montréal