

2013 International Mounted Games Exchange
Submitted by
Del Zelmer, IMGE Chairman

The 2013 International Mounted Games Exchange was held across three regions of the Canadian Pony Club. The tour was managed in each region by a regional coordinator. The nations competing in this annual exchange are Canada, USA, Australia and Great Britain. All competitors are 15 years of age. The purpose of the exchange is to allow, an opportunity for Pony Club members to meet their counterparts from the other nations. Members have the opportunity to exchange views and experiences, make new friends and broaden the scope of the Pony Club movement. The Exchange culminates in an International Mounted Games Championship.

The tour was made possible, only through the work of many dedicated volunteers who helped shape the final product. There are five main groups that deserve specific recognition. These groups are the Organizing Committee, the financial contributors and donors, the pony lenders, the billet families and the volunteer base that filled the many jobs that needed doing along the way. I would especially like to thank the three regional coordinators. The regional coordinators were Liz Tucker of the St. Lawrence / Ottawa Valley Region, Daina Strickland from Central Ontario Region and Barb Robinson from Western Ontario Region. During the International Championship competition, specific recognition must be given to Alison Rainford, our National PPG Chair, Kevin Durward who ably filled the role of Chief Steward, Jess Ralston for organizing the pony pool and profiles, Danielle Kelton for being the Announcer, Tom Radcliffe for being the Equipment Manager and Jacqui Dennis for being the Safety Officer.

The IMGE tour took place from August 9 - 25. Teams arrived at Pearson International Airport and the Exchange officially commenced when everyone arrived at the Holiday Inn Yorkdale on the evening of August 9. Registration and competitor packages were handled by Barb Robinson, the Western Ontario Region Coordinator. A welcome and orientation session allowed everyone to get to know each other in a relaxing environment. National PPG Chair Alison Rainford welcomed everyone and Del Zelmer Competition Chair outlined the itinerary. The tour left by coach the next morning traveling north with a lunch stop at the Mariposa Market in Orillia. The destination was South Algonquin Summer Camp where the group stayed for the next two evenings. South Algonquin Summer Camp is owned and operated by the Pony Club family of Teri Lindsay. The highlight of our stay was a trail ride / canoeing experience with a wilderness lunch at Elephant Lake where Teri's sister Tami operates South Algonquin Trails.

The next day was an early start at 6:15 with a three hour coach ride to Foresters Falls for whitewater rafting on the Ottawa River. Our coach driver for the duration of the tour was Jim Henry, a former A Pony Club member who represented Canada at the 1972 Munich Olympics in 3-Day Eventing. He also represented Canada in the 1975 Pan American Games. You can read more about Jim Henry on the Canadian Pony Club's Hall of Fame. Everyone got extremely wet on the raft ride and most everyone went cliff diving into the Ottawa River at Lemming's Leap. A BBQ lunch was served on the river on the way back to the rafting centre. It was a one hour drive to Ottawa from Foresters Falls where tour participants met up with their billet families at the Mlacak Centre in Kanata. Everyone had an opportunity to tour the Nation's Capital with their billet families and then meet the following afternoon for a pool party. The group was accommodated for two nights at Carleton University. Everyone was on one floor in two-bedroom

suites. The food was excellent and plentiful with everyone able to choose from a wide variety of food stations. A day on the paintball range produced a lot of fun and a few bruises before heading off to the Mosaika Sound and Light Show which used the Parliament Buildings as a backdrop.

The following day, the tour traveled to Charleston Lake Provincial Park. This was a day to chill on the beach, take in some sun, swim and make sand carvings. Dawn Peace, the Canadian Coach sculpted a life like pony with its unfortunate thrown rider laying close by. The group overnights at Charleston Lake Riding School which is operated by a Pony Club family. A special thank-you is given to Wendy Waller for opening her home and facilities to the IMGE tour. The 1000 Islands Boat Cruise on the St. Lawrence River out of the Gananoque harbor was the last activity prior to leaving the St. Lawrence / Ottawa Valley Region.

The coach ride ended in Newmarket, where the IMGE group met up with their Central Ontario Region billets. The following day had the group assembled at Brelview Farm in Woodville for a friendly scramble competition called the Maple Leaf Mélange (a mix or hodgepodge). The mixed teams consisted of at least one member from each country. Teams were named after typical Canadian wildlife. There were Beavers, Prairie Dogs, Moose and Polar Bears. The victorious team at the end of the day was the Polar Bears comprised of Walker Breen (Canada), Lauren Brewer (Australia), Jessica Beachill (Great Britain), Allyson Ross (Great Britain) and Margot Miller (USA).

The following day was spent at Canada's Wonderland. The group was then bussed to the Niagara area where they were treated to an evening of Fireworks over the Falls which were quite spectacular. Accommodation for the next two evenings was at the modern facilities of Niagara College. The first day in the Niagara area started with a Maid-of-the-Mist boat cruise in the morning, followed by a visit to Marineland Niagara in the afternoon. Canadian team member Alyssa Yu's dad, Dr. Tony Yu, a veterinary dermatologist arranged a behind the scenes tour. Everyone had the opportunity to personally pet and feed the dolphins. The park's trainers gave a private presentation to the group and introduced dolphins, Beluga whales and walrus and explained the training techniques that they use. A question and answer session gave everyone the opportunity to learn more about these sea creatures. This certainly was one of the highlights of the tour. The day ended with dinner at Planet Hollywood before returning to the College.

The second day in the Niagara area started in Niagara-by-the-Lake. Bicycles were provided and everyone was free to bike at their own pace along the Niagara Parkway. A scenic bike-path snakes along the Niagara River all the way to Niagara Falls. The Aussie team biked the 28 km route to Niagara Falls including the steep incline at Queenston where the Brock Monument stands as an imposing reflection of the War of 1812. At the end of the day the group was bussed to Fergus where they met up with the Western Ontario billets at the Radcliffe family. Everyone enjoyed a pot luck dinner before departing with their billets. The following day gave the group an opportunity to get back on a horse and ride with the Wellington Waterloo Hunt. The Hunt also graciously provided lunch for everyone. The group spent a second night with their billet families. The next day was Market Day in the Mennonite community of St. Jacobs. It was like going back in time to see all of the horses and buggies in town for this weekly event. The group then checked in to the Hampton Inn where they stayed for the remainder of the tour.

The coach picked the group up at the Hampton Inn and took them to the African Lion Safari. A park bus took our group through the compound. A wide variety of animals were seen including cheetah, lions, giraffes, rhinoceros, and zebra but the favorite to watch were the baby monkeys and baboons. An elephant trainer explained the training process to us and it was interesting to watch the elephant herd swim in the lake and diving to completely submerge themselves. A parrot

show and a birds of prey show were also featured. The coach then took everyone to Breslau to the home of Dawn Peace, the Canadian Coach where a whole roast pig was the feature dinner item. Here we joined up with the National Masters competitors, billets, pony lenders and family members of international competitors. International competitors did a review of the props for the next day's International Competition. An international meeting, outlining the rules and procedures for the next day's International Competition was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Steward, Kevin Durward.

August 25, the competition day had finally arrived. The International Championship was held concurrently with the National Masters Championships at the Fergus Fair Grounds. The Australian team was very strong, taking first place. Great Britain was second, U.S.A. third and Canada being the gracious host was fourth.

With the competition over, the teams freshened up and donned their dress uniforms for the awards banquet and farewell dinner held at the University of Guelph Arboretum. Joining the group at the banquet were the PCIA delegates whose meetings were held in Toronto over the preceding 3 days. Everyone had developed a close friendship over the previous two weeks of the tour and so did their best to stay up all night knowing that tomorrow they would have to bid farewell to their new Pony Club friends before departing to their home destinations.

Participants filled out an evaluation form at the end of the tour. The best billeting experiences were always at homes that could house large groups of 4 – 6. Homes that could only take 2 or 3 members did not fare nearly as well. One can deduct that the kids like to be together as a group as much as possible to interact and feel comfortable. They also rated accommodation such as the universities and colleges highly for this same reason. Hotels were rated well, but I think they felt a few more restrictions in these business establishments. As an organizer, the price and value at colleges and universities can't be beat at approximately a third of the price that has to be paid at commercial establishments.