

IMGE Report 2013 by Walker Breen

Right from the beginning it was an awesome adventure. It all started at Dawn Peace's house one week before the teams all met at the hotel in Toronto. Dawn's place was the first time I fully met the rest of the Canadian team. This is where we learned many important things. We first of all learned who else was on the team, and also the many different personalities on our team. Throughout the one week we were there, we did a lot of practicing. This was of course what we needed to do, but it would have never been possible without the many generous pony lenders that let us experience many different types and skill levels of ponies. This was also the stage where our team met our chaperone and really had down time to get to know each other. As our journey continued we headed off to Toronto to meet at the hotel with the rest of the IMGE teams.

At the hotel we had a few hours to relax and get settled before the rest of the teams showed up. We used this time to do some shopping. Once all four teams had arrived we headed for our first meet and great. This was when we learned who was going to be our driver for our tour and also some of the awesome things we would get the opportunity to do. We also had a nice dinner where we were able to relax and get to know the other competitors. We stayed at the hotel for one night before heading off to the camp in Algonquin.

At the beautiful camp we had a wide arrange of activities. From barrel racing to canoeing, we had a lot of fun. The girls all stayed in a large farm house and the boys stayed in a trailer full of bunk beds. This was perfect for the boys. Plenty of room and a nice warm shower. The girls had more living room but didn't end up having a warm shower so we found many of them asking to use our shower. We had a lot of fun trail riding and playing soccer and riding many horses, but we had to keep moving.

Next we headed to Ottawa where we stayed at our first billets and also at Carleton University. We had a lot of fun there. For me, the white water rafting was my favourite part. It was a lot of fun! We also got to see and compete in a demonstration done by the local pony club. But then we had to leave.

Our next stop was in Niagara Falls. We stayed at Niagara College and also our second billet at this time. We had a great scramble competition done in Woodville where we could see the more competitive side of our new friends. This was also the time we got to go and experience Canada's wonderland. In the city of Niagara we had a great view of the falls on the Maid of the Mist boat tour, Marineland, fireworks, great food and some new experiences for most. Next we headed towards Guelph.

On our journey to Guelph our next billets where in the Fergus/Guelph area. Here we met with some new faces and new landscapes. We had the amazing opportunity to explore the life of the hunt. With the help of the Waterloo Wellington hunt, we experienced a fun filled day. Soon after, we had the pony lender dinner, where we met all the wonderful people who lent their awesome ponies to us for our competition. As we moved on we headed to our hotel in Guelph which was full of much needed downtime. From here we went to the actual competition.

Western Ontario Region did a great job of hosting the event. It was especially fun to see all of the ponies I've known for years compete so well at the competition. It was also nice to see so many of the Canadian IMGE alumni from other years come out to cheer us on and help out. The weather was perfect and I needed to stop at times and make certain to really enjoy each awesome moment. In the end Team Australia did an amazing job and won.

Our last night together included the delicious banquet and a lot of tearful goodbyes. I've kept in touch with all of the participants since we've parted and have been invited to travel to ride in Great Britain next year. A big thanks to all the Canadian Pony Club families for making this trip possible. It is really a life changing experience, I will never forget.

Walker Breen

Guelph Pony Club