

Ken Hegler

The Outstanding German Exchange *in BC*



For just over three decades, BC students learning German in either Grade 10 or 11 have had the opportunity to participate in a mutual exchange program to experience life and learning in a German-speaking environment.

This program came about after a delegation of German ministries of education visited Canada. Initially, it began in Vancouver and North Vancouver and included the German jurisdiction of the Rhineland-Palatinate. A year later, Bremen became a partner.

To date, more than 1000 BC students and their German counterparts have taken good advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime chance to promote international understanding. Originally, the exchange period ran for 3 months, but it has been pared down to 10 weeks to better reflect the current constraints of the BC school system.

Once administered by the BC Ministry of Education, the original program that centred on the Lower Mainland has become a province-

wide support of German language learning. It is now administered by the British Columbia Heritage Language Association (BCHLA), in close cooperation with the two German jurisdictions.

Students return with amazing language skills and an understanding of how the most vibrant area in Europe functions so well.

Students return with amazing language skills and an understanding of how the most vibrant area in Europe functions so well. At present, German language speakers are the largest first-language group in Europe. They are a vital force in economics and world trade, education, and research. Germany is fast becoming a multicultural society.

Prior to the German arrival and the Canadian departure, the BCHLA holds regional orientation sessions to better prepare the Canadians about expectations and realities of hosting here and living in Germany.

The BCHLA also acquaints Canadians with survival tactics and success strategies. This gives them self-confidence in their

undertaking and leads to greater success in the program.

The selected German partners arrive in BC in late August, are collected by their host families, and attend schools in BC. Their reluctant return is in the middle of November.

At the beginning of March, the Canadian students depart for their half of the exchange. They, too, are sad to leave at the end of their stay in the City State of Bremen or Greater Mainz and other Rhineland-Palatinate locations.

The German Academic Exchange Programme is the only one officially recognized by the BC and German governments. In fact, is the largest and longest-running program of its scope in Canada. Thirty years of student success are but the first step to better understanding the way the world works.

In the following article, Sean Workman offers first-hand insight about his experiences in Bremen last year. Sean continues to keep up the friendship with his exchange partner.

For more information, please contact Ken Hegler, German Exchange Coordinator, BCHLA. ▲

Voice: 604 298-4526
info@bchla.net
www.bchla.net