

Exploring Canada's Pride in Ottawa – by Anne Shileche QEScholar

Not so long ago, I added a Weather App on my mobile phone to enable me to stay on top of weather matters. I was cautioned against trusting the App too much as sometimes what it read was not the same as how it felt. However, on this particular Sunday in the beautiful month of September, the temperatures felt just like they read, currently 28 degrees Celsius. Thanks to my Weather App, I was dressed appropriately and ready to take on the heat. I was in Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, and a city described as ‘Canada’s pride.’ I had been invited to a Queen Elizabeth II Scholars event and decided to take a few more days to explore the city. It was an exciting three days that included site-seeing, meeting fellow scholars, and sleeping in a jail. Let me explain that last one.



I found Ottawa extremely beautiful, very spacious and easy to navigate. The warm weather made it even lovelier. I got a chance to visit the Parliament Buildings, the National War Memorial, the busy Byward market, and the Rideau Canal. I also took a double decker bus tour to enable me to see much of the city. Overnight, I slept in jail. Well actually it is a hostel that was the jail many, many years ago. I got the idea from my professor and thought why not - where else will I ever “do time without committing a crime” if not here. A tour of the hostel left tears in my eyes as they narrated different ordeals prisoners went through – thankfully these are long past.

Visiting Parliament Hill Building

Compared to Charlottetown, Ottawa is a much larger city with many high-rise buildings, more population and busy with some heavy rush-hour traffic. English and French languages are widely used. There were lots of tourists coming to enjoy and explore the city along with me. It was breathtaking to view the Rideau Canal, and the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau from the Interprovincial Bridge that crosses the Ottawa River in behind the Parliament buildings.



Enjoying a tour through Ottawa city

I was in Ottawa representing UPEI attending two events for the Canadian Queen Elizabeth Scholar's program. One was a dinner at Rideau Hall in honor of leaders and funders of the QES program and the second, a breakfast meeting to meet other participants in the program and exchange ideas.



During the dinner I had the opportunity to interact with program leaders including the Governor General of Canada, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnson and his wife, former Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien and his wife, and the President of Universities Canada, Paul Davidson and his wife, among others. I also met eighteen other QE scholars. We shared highlights of our research projects and experiences in Canada and home countries. Following dinner, three scholars spoke to the group about the enormous contributions made in their lives by the QES program. One spoke of the opportunity to be the first female to study for a Ph.D. in her family; the other testified that the program inspired him to be in school and gain skills in his Aboriginal language. The third scholar spoke in fluent French, which threw me a bit. Here was another new experience for me in Canada. We were treated to a very delicious meal, music and company.

With some scholars during the QE dinner

The morning after the dinner, I attended a breakfast meeting with QES program staff and other scholars. We were invited to share our perspectives and thoughts on why we applied for a QE scholarship, how we feel engaged within the program and a brief description of our QES experience. I formulated three words to describe my experience - Global-Experiential-Local. This program has given me a great chance to gain a global perspective on issues while allowing me to make use of my thinking locally. We were urged to promote the QES program as much as we can.



With fellow QE Scholar Elizabeth Opiyo



**Posing next to a living sculpture
created with plants.**

Finally, I visited the Jacques-Cartier Park and the Museum of History. The park was hosting the MOSAÏCANADA 150/Gatineau 2017, the biggest horticultural event in Canada. I marveled at the sculptures; they were genius artworks made out of plants, and represented Canada's history, values and culture. The passion and creativity poured into them were so distinct; you would think they were real.

There was so much to see at the History Museum that even after spending three hours, I was not finished. My love for art and history was a blessing, it took me through this long but enjoyable day.