

St. John's Students Participate in MODEL UN

Move over Foreign Affairs Minister MacKay- there's a new group of young, Canadian diplomats to contend with! A delegation of eight Senior School students including Zoe Kramer, Alex Ackerman, Graham Russell, Owen Marmorek, Stewart Hemingson, Amber Cheema, Megan Dwyer and Jenna Rawji attended the annual Vancouver Model United Nations (VMUN) Conference. It took place at the Marriott Pinnacle Hotel from January 18 to 21.

VMUN is the largest high school Model United Nations in Canada, attracting more than 320 student delegates from across Canada, the United States and Europe. This was the first time in recent years that there was a large St. John's delegation to a Model United Nations conference and we were very pleased to have been invited to represent the school at this event.

Essentially, all students took on the role of a diplomat for the three and a half days of the conference. Students were expected to look like a diplomat by dressing conservatively in a business-like fashion rather than in school uniforms. This was because there were numerous public school students from across the country participating as well. They also strove to speak like diplomats.

Each student was assigned a country and a UN committee about which they had to prepare significant research before the conference began. At the conference, they engaged in lengthy, detailed discussions on issues such as globalization, the role of NATO in post-conflict areas of Kosovo and Afghanistan, Iran's sovereign right to nuclear technology, human rights issues, and access to clean water in developing countries. The highlight of the event was having to meet from 3:30 to 4:30 am on Saturday for committee meetings to resolve a mock crisis – related to either health or world trade. Despite a lack of sleep, the students were able to successfully resolve the issues.

Model United Nations is an excellent activity to enhance the senior school Humanities curricula. It provides students with an opportunity to actively debate and constructively build compromise in real-life issues. Active participation in Model United Nations instills in students a knowledge of international affairs, current events and a genuine interest in fostering diplomatic outcomes to world problems. While VMUN might be large by local standards, it is a relatively small conference compared to the numerous international Model United Nations conferences that take place all year long. Our students got some valuable local experience this year, and possibly may look at more ambitious conferences for the future.

Two of our younger delegates, Alex Ackerman and Graham Russell also participated in the Vancouver Youth Model United Nations conference on the UBC campus in October. They represented our school with skill and enthusiasm. While they are among our younger delegates, they have the most experience with Model United Nations at SJS.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow teacher chaperones who helped to supervise at the VMUN event: Ms. Gallivan, Mr. Nguyen and Mr. Brunner.

by Ms. A. Arnold