



**Yellowknife, NWT Trip March 23-26, 2026
SD73 International Student Program**



On March 23, 2026, twelve students and chaperones left Kamloops and flew to Vancouver. From there we flew to Yellowknife, NWT for 4 days of northern Canadian winter fun. One of the main draws for this trip was to see the northern lights (aurora borealis) and we were treated to views from the plane as we approached Yellowknife.



We stepped off the plane into the -30 degree air, grabbed our bags, got into our rented vehicles, checked into our hotel, located our rented winter clothes, and headed out to see the aurora. After a short drive out of town, we stopped at a pullout and enjoyed the wonderful northern lights. We stayed out until around 2:30AM while the temperature dropped to -38...





Sleep came easy after such a long day of travel and being out in the cold. We had to get up early for the complimentary breakfast at our hotel and then many of us went back to bed. We met in the early afternoon in full winter gear to drive out to our dog sledding tour. The temperature warmed up to -17 that afternoon and that actually felt ok in the sunshine compared with the -38 in the darkness the night before. At the dog sledding place, we were divided into 2 groups and each enjoyed a dog sled ride through some forest and across some frozen lakes. We enjoyed hot chocolate and some games in a heated building after our tours and then we posed with some of the attractions at the dog sledding property. The students then had some fun playing in the deep snow in the area before leaving. On the way back to our hotel, we stopped at the Welcome to Yellowknife sign and took some more photos.







A Red Fox seen in town that night

After dinner, we met again in full winter gear to go see the aurora borealis (northern lights). After a short drive out of town away from city lights, we were treated to a 30 minute display of this phenomena. Such a treat to see this in person in one of the best places on earth from which to view them. Because Yellowknife is so far from any ocean, there is often high pressure in the winter, which results in no clouds and great viewing opportunities. This night, we were on the scene around 9:45PM and the show was done by 10:30PM or so. We returned to the hotel shortly thereafter, satisfied with our views and pics.



After breakfast the following morning we left our hotel at 10:30 AM and drove the short distance to Nature's North Wildlife Gallery. Here, we saw local wildlife that has been preserved by taxidermy. We were very impressed with the craftsmanship and artistry that led to this extensive exhibit. In addition, we were also shown a behind the scenes look at how taxidermy is done.



We had been hearing that Willow Ptarmigan were common in the Yellowknife area. In the winter, these unique birds turn completely white. After some advice where to look, we found a large group in a residential neighbourhood right in the city and enjoyed some time with these very tame birds.



A short distance from there is the Bush Pilot's Monument where there is a look out over the entire area. We climbed the many steps up to the top, enjoyed the views, and then some of the students enjoyed sliding back down to the vehicles.



One of the experiences of being in the north are the many ice roads. These cut down the time to travel between places and provide conveniently flat transportation for several months of the year. In a landscape covered with lakes, ice roads come in handy. One of them leaves Yellowknife and crosses part of Great Slave Lake to service a small community on the other side of the bay. The sign there says that vehicles can be up to 30 000 KGS! In some areas of clear black ice, it is possible to see the thickness which usually extends to more than 1 meter by March. These roads are typically open from early January until mid-April and are considered real roads with speed limits, signs, etc... We drove out onto one of these roads and spent some time looking down into the ice at clear areas. You can see where we were on the previous photo from the Bush Pilot's Monument.



Another project out on the ice of Great Slave Lake is Snowking's Winter Festival. This involves snow sculptures and buildings with shows all made of snow and ice. This festival runs for the entire month of March and is one of the reasons to visit Yellowknife at that time. We checked out the sculptures made by people from all over the world and then paid the entrance fee to check out the buildings, slides, etc...







After our stop at Snowking, we had free time for dinner before meeting in the hotel lobby at 8:45 to go see the northern lights again. Acting upon some advice, we took a different road out of town this time and ended up on some other ice roads where we enjoyed views for a short time. We then drove past Snowking again after dark to see what it looked like at night with the lights on. The students used flashlights to see down into the ice here as well.





Back at the hotel, some card games were played before heading to bed...

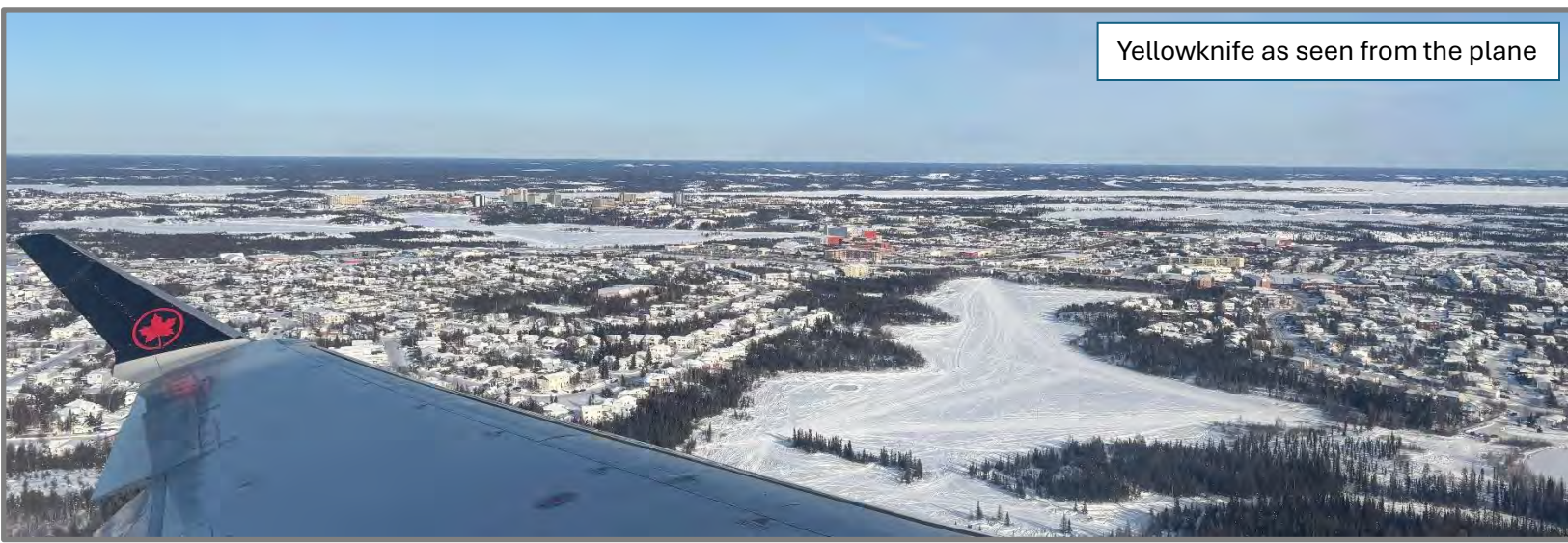


On our last day in Yellowknife, we checked out at noon after breakfast and visited the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. This is a museum that showcases northern history and wildlife.



We then checked out of our hotel, returned our rented clothes, dropped off our rental cars, and flew out at 5:30PM. Our flights went well and we landed back in Kamloops around 10:30 PM after a 2 hour stop in Vancouver.

Students on this trip were from: Germany, Japan, Taiwan, and Switzerland.



Yellowknife as seen from the plane

My Favourite Moment

1. Sarah L – Watching the northern lights and seeing the stars.
2. Ricky – The first time we saw the aurora because it was my first time seeing it. Even though it wasn't that clear, it was so much clearer than when seen in Kamloops.
3. Dino – Seeing the aurora on the second night because it was very beautiful.
4. Josefine – watching the aurora on the second night because it was a really magical moment.
5. Summer – To see the aurora the first time because it was magical.
6. Finn – Seeing the aurora on the second night and playing cards with everyone.
7. Yuzuki – Seeing the aurora on the first night because I liked the colour.
8. Sarah A – Laying in the snow admiring the aurora because it was peaceful and incredible to see how nature works that way.
9. Jonathan – Seeing the aurora for the first time because I've never seen it before.
10. Amadine – Seeing the aurora because it was the first time I've seen it that much. You should see that once in your life.

One Thing I Learned

1. Sarah L – How to do taxidermy. It's a long and complicated process and requires a lot of precision.
2. Ricky – Even though it seems there is no hope, with a little bit of patience you can see things. Even if the aurora forecast wasn't good and the weather said it would be cloudy we still saw it.
3. Dino – Never give up because the last night we thought we wouldn't see the aurora but finally we did.
4. Josefine – the big dipper is called the big dipper in English.
5. Summer – What the Orion's Belt was.
6. Finn – How taxidermy works. How to skin the animals and put their hides over a styrofoam frame.
7. Yuzuki – I learned about the history and animals of the Yellowknife area at the museum.
8. Sarah A – There was a diamond in space in 2009 and you can find it in the Prince of Wales Museum in Yellowknife.
9. Jonathan – That Yellowknife is a big town. I first thought it was a small village.
10. Amandine – All of the different kinds of aurora. Like forms and shapes.