



## **Markham College – Lima, Peru Malich Altman '14**

I did a student exchange through Round Square in my grade 9 year at LCC. I spent two months abroad living a very different lifestyle than the one I am used to. For my exchange I was very fortunate to go to Lima, Peru. I remember walking out of the airport wondering what the next two months of my life would be like, and I was terrified of being so far out of my comfort zone, but then I saw my exchange student and thought “well, there is something familiar” (he visited Montreal before I went to Peru). After the first 24 hours I started to feel a little more comfortable.

Markham College is one of the most beautiful schools I have ever seen. The first thing that I realized when walking through the entrance gates was how large and open the whole school was. I walked through the cafeteria and straight into the locker area and to my surprise we were outside, beneath the sun. It was unbelievable to get the chance to walk under the sun from class to class, since each classroom was a separate building. While on exchange I had the chance to take woodworking and participate in a community service group. This group went to parts of the city where young children would come to get extra help with schoolwork. They would be tutored by Markham students once a week and I wanted to help out.

When reflecting on my experience there are two things that come to mind. First, I think about the trip to Lunahuana. It is similar to our grade 7 Nominigie trip except with younger students and members of the graduating class get to be the camp counselors. I was very fortunate to go as a camp counselor considering I was two years younger than the graduating class, but since I was on exchange they made an exception. I was with a group of kids who were about 10 years old and full of energy, but still nervous since they didn't know the person sitting next to them on the bus. This was a really interesting experience because of how I was able to communicate with them, even though I didn't know how to speak Spanish, their mother tongue. All the kids were fascinated by the idea of an older guy who lives in igloos! They didn't believe that their summers are similar in temperature to our summers.

Another trip that really spoke to me was to Las Palmas. I was lucky enough to go with an all-English girls school from Bermuda. This township is a very poor area with a reliance on community service projects to help them. LCC has done a few projects in the same area. When I arrived I immediately recognized the place from our weekly school assemblies. After a few days of work, I saw an older man walking by with a stained Heward House LCC gym T-shirt. That's when it hit me; that's when I realized how much of an impact some of our students have had on the community of Las Palmas. I knew that LCC had built a staircase, a roof, a bakery, etc. But I didn't realize the connections some of our students had made with the members of the community. I realized that one of our students decided to take the shirt off his back and give it to an elder man as a sign of respect. This really touched me profoundly.

Going on exchange has helped solidify my values, such as respect, service and internationalism. I strongly urge any students considering going on exchange, to take the risk and jump outside of their comfort zone.