



The International Sail Training and Tall Ships Conference was held in Canada within the beautiful fairytale like building the Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac. Towering above the City of Quebec and dominating the skyline with breath taking views across the St Lawrence River, it easily accommodated over 400 attendees from around the world.

Quebec City is one of the oldest European settlements in North America since 1535, and is the only walled city complete with cannons to protect it, north of Mexico. Arriving in the midst of winter, the weather was “the warmest in 37 years” according to one shop owner. Only the local ferry and the odd container ship cut the ice there. Everyone was challenged to not slip, slide or skate as we eagerly waited for some snow to fall.

Delegates, trainers, crew members, ‘tall-ship groupies’ arrived every which way but by sea. This conference had tailored programmes to meet the needs and interests of the Sail Training community to gather, network, share practical advice, offer each other support and talk to experts.

Examples of presentations were Marketing Sail Training, Tall Ships and Tiny Boats: Leadership Strategies for Everyone, Connecting Sail Training & Mainstream Education, Climate Change, Safeguarding, Welfare and Safety of Trainees, Effective Youth Mentoring; amongst many others.

Please take the time to look at some of the conference videos and presentations that Sail Training International have provided on their website: <http://www.sailtraininginternational.org/events/annual-conference/quebec-conference-2016>

Efforts to connect land based students with sailors and students on-board by means of video conferencing and other interactive programmes are popular. Much was spoken about the expectations of youth these days to be involved with resources and technology they are familiar with. If a tall-ship organisation can invest money, time and resources to be able to keep abreast with the latest technological changes and social media outlets, then it appears to be more successful in being able to attract and keep youth interested in tall ship sailing, maintenance and promotion.

Drone cameras are being used for advertising purposes like showing the ship / boat sailing through the water or whizzing around the deck as people are working. A

popular choice for ships that offer interactive sessions with students was placing a live camera on the mizzen mast to broadcast live activity on-board.

A brainstorming session on how to attract people revealed that none of the attendees had an app for people to access. The development of one become the number one concern that if it hasn't been done yet, it should be a number one priority as websites are not convenient or appropriate to devices that rely on apps.



Captains I spoke to thought that swapping crew members is the best way to share ideas, experience and skills to promote sailing and training programmes for crew and students. For example, the Spirit of New Zealand's long standing sail training programme is well regarded as is the restoration efforts of the James Craig tall-ship in Sydney. There are national and international opportunities available to everyone to achieve personal and professional goals.

Socially it was a great time to meet new and familiar faces again. Nancy Richardson from the USA was given an award to an outstanding contribution to international peace and understanding of sail training. She has an impressive record of sailed the seven seas on 96 different Tall ships. A gobsmacking achievement! She is an inspiration and regarded as a great mentor whose enthusiasm and experience endears her to many.

I would like to extend my thanks to AUSTA for giving me the opportunity to go to this conference. If you are thinking of going to the next one, it is well worth it!



Photo credit: Sail Training International