

By Wong Pei Ting

SINGAPORE — Ms Victoria Lim's fervour for the environment was fired up three years ago when she saw how passionate her peers were at a youth conference on climate change.

After that, the then 17-year-old changed her approach towards life. She became a vegan and champion for environmental protection at home. She persuaded her mother to consume less meat, use a tote bag for grocery shopping, and use body care products that are less toxic to the environment.

Instead of going for the "typical" degrees like law or medicine, the SJI International alumnus opted to study environmental studies at Yale University on a Public Service Commission scholarship.

Next Monday (July 23), her passion will get a boost as the 19-year-old will join more than 100 youths from 16 other places, including Ecuador and Micronesia, on a 16-day expedition to the Arctic to witness climate change where it is most apparent.

"I hope that this experience will ignite everyone on the trip, compel (us) to take the lessons we learn and implement them in our own lives," Ms Lim told TODAY.

The undergraduate who had just completed her first year at Yale is the first Singaporean to take part in the awardwinning Canadian educational programme called Students On Ice, which is running for its 19th year.

Ms Lim was able to snag a spot this year as the High Commission of Canada to Singapore reached out to the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Council to send a Singaporean representative. Canada is the founding member of the Arctic Council, and in 2013, under Canada's chairmanship, Singapore became a permanent observer to the Arctic Council.

The prized opportunity to see climate change as "something tangible from one of the most majestic, yet vulnerable northernmost National Wildlife Area.

The trip aims to help students understand the Arctic as a homeland, and will also expose them to the indigenous communities there, including the one at Ajuittuq, where the most northerly community in North America lives.

Ms Lim's trip, which costs S\$18,000, is sponsored by the NYAA Council. The HSBC-NYAA Youth Environmental

Award winner for last year was picked for the expedition after she missed out on a study trip to Costa Rica last July, the original prize for her award, due to her preparations for her upcoming studies at Yale.

"Of course it came as a shock, a happy surprise. Then (I was filled with) gratitude," said Ms Lim.

Although she does not have a "niche interest" in the polar region, the 19-year-old said: "Being able to go to the Arctic is to be able to see how what I learn in the classroom can be applied."

Through this expedition, she looks forward to refining her focus on her leanings towards a specialisation in environmental policy. Her ambition, after she graduates, is to join the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resource or Ministry of National Development.

Ms Lim's expedition leader will be Mr Geoff Green, founder of the Student On Ice programme which started in 2000.

More than 2,700 youth and educators from 52 countries have visited the polar regions under the programme, with the three trips they make each year — one to the Arctic and two to the Antarctic.

Pointing out that small island states like Singapore do get impacted by climate change in the Arctic region, Ms Lynn

McDonald, High Commissioner of Canada to Singapore, said: "I have no doubt that through this expedition, all

students, including Victoria, will be empowered to take action in their own communities when they return home."