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The International Human Rights Internship Program (IHRIP) not only continues to have a transformative impact on the students who participate from year to year, it also further interdisciplinary scholarship on cutting-edge human rights issues through the Human Rights Internships’ Working Paper Series (WPS).

Now in its sixth year, WPS has become an effective platform for dissemination of research with a focus on accessible solutions to human rights challenges. Original ideas and policy proposals by our interns contribute to the work of political and judicial institutions in Canada and abroad, as well as global civil society organizations. Complementing WPS are insightful blogs written by interns from the field inspire and attract new generations of students to IHRIP.

Thanks to the generous support of our friends, supporters, and the Faculty, 26 students pursued internships in 16 countries spread across 5 continents during the summer of 2017. Our students contributed to the work of leading international advocacy groups, such as Human Rights Watch and Avocats sans Frontières, and engaged with important human rights concerns and injustices. They worked with organizations defending fundamental freedoms and dignity. Several interns engaged with the ongoing process of reconciliation with indigenous communities in Canada.

The Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) considers it a privilege to be a steward of this program, and takes pride in having a global network of young leaders who, no matter what they do or where they end up, are dedicated to fostering a more inclusive and just society.

Nandini Ramanujam

Nandini Ramanujam
Director, International Human Rights Internship Program
What is the International Human Rights Internship Program (IHRIP)?

McGill University’s Faculty of Law enjoys a right tradition of human rights education and involvement. Since 1992, the Faculty has established a number of partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Canada and abroad.

Administered by the Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP), the International Human Rights Internship Program (IHRIP) is a fully credited course that allows students to earn six credits towards the completion of the B.C.L. / LL.B. degree. The program is managed by the Faculty’s Human Rights Committee under the direction of Professor Nandini Ramanujam.

Each fall, the Program interviews and selects law students for placements as interns with NGOs, courts, and public institutions for a period of 12 weeks over the summer. Partner organizations provide students with practical work experience in human rights investigation, monitoring and reporting. The internships also provide exposure to the operation and implementation of human rights instruments and norms.
2017 IHRIP Team

Nandini Ramanujam
Director

Sharon Webb
Administrative Coordinator

Sarah Jackson
Student Coordinator

Alex Agnello
Student Coordinator

Emilie de Haas
Student Coordinator
2017 Interns

Joel Badali
Mental Disability Rights Initiative of Serbia | Belgrade, Serbia

Julia Bellehumeur
The Equality Effect | Malawi

Monika Berenyi
One Earth Future Foundation | Colorado

Audrey Boily
RADDHO | Dakar, Sénégal

Sarah Cha
Avocats Sans Frontières Canada | Québec, Québec

Mark Dance
Canadian Civil Liberties Association | Toronto, Ontario

Melisa Demir
Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos | Lima, Peru

Alexa Franczak
Maharirban Calcutta Research Group | Calcutta, India

Taylor Gillespie
Centro de Investigacion y Docencia en Derechos Humanos | Mar de Plata, Argentina

Anastasia Greenberg
One Earth Future Foundation | Colorado

Rebecca Jones
Yukon Human Rights Commission | Whitehorse, Yukon

Jessye Kilburn
One Earth Future Foundation | Colorado

Nathalie Laflamme
Equitas | Montreal, Quebec

Katerina Lagassé
Ateneo HR Centre | Manila, The Philippines

Caroline Lavoie
National Human Rights Council of Morocco | Rabat, Morocco

Elias D. León
The Inter-American Court of Human Rights | San José, Costa Rica

Madeleine Macdonald
Justice Department at the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne | Ontario/Quebec/New York Border

Lucas Mathieu
MBDHP et Equitas | Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

David Matyas
Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik Legal Services | Iqaluit, Nunavut

Ailsa Miller
Centre for Law and Democracy | Halifax, Nova Scotia

Jillian Ohayon
Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) | Kampala, Uganda

Emily Painter
Human Rights Watch | New York, New York

Sara Pierre
Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) | The Gambia

Kevin Pinkoski
Low Reform and Development Commission in Namibia | Windhoek, Namibia

Andrew Rintoul
LICADHO | Cambodia

Sarah-Grace Ross
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network | Toronto, Ontario
North America

*in alphabetical order

Monika Berenyi
Broomfield, Colorado

Sarah Cha
Quebec, Quebec

Mark Dance
Toronto, Ontario

Anastasia Greenberg
Broomfield, Colorado

Rebecca Jones
Whitehorse, Yukon

Jessye Kilburn
Broomfield, Colorado

Nathalie Laflamme
Montreal, Quebec

Emily Painter
New York, New York

Sarah-Grace Ross
Toronto, Ontario

Madeleine Macdonald
Ontario/Quebec/NY Border

David Matyas
Iqaluit, Nunavut

Ailsa Miller
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Can you tell us a bit about OEFF?
— "The One Earth Future Foundation is a non-profit, umbrella organization [...] founded by Marcel and Cynda Collins Arsenault, 10 years ago. OEF consists of several programs, which operate as ‘microorganizations’ on a global, international scale. The programs include: Our Secure Future, Shuraako, Secure Fisheries, Ocean’s Beyond Piracy, Shared Resources, PASO Columbia, OEF Research, and Future Labs. The overarching mission of OEF is that which encapsulates the spirit of achieving long-term “peace through governance”. OEF’s mission statement informs the respective programs which operate under its umbrella, however, all of OEF’s programs have their own research and values statements, which are streamlined with OEF’s overarching mission statement.”

How would you summarize your experience with OEFF?
— “My experience was life altering. Over the duration of 12 weeks, I embraced many new realities, personalities, geographies, and cultural idiosyncrasies, with an overarching perception that ‘all’ which was unfolding before me presented new ways of seeing, learning, and simply ‘being’.”

How did you find the professional work you did with OEFF?
— “The professional work, which I was exposed to and accomplished during my time at OSF, was intellectually challenging. As I navigated through and embraced new paradigms of knowledge and research methodologies, I continuously experienced a personal sense of growth. Working within the matrix of an NGO gave me a rare and important opportunity to draw from all that I had gleaned during my legal education, and previous academic and professional experiences, in a meaningful and dynamic way.”

Any advice you’d like to share for the next intern?
— "I would "strongly” recommend that future interns take courses, which will prepare them to fully engage, and analyze the breadth and depth of material, which may inform future internships. The list of courses I recommend include: Public International Law, Criminal Law, and Family Law.”

Read more about Monika’s time at OEFF through her blog posts—
>> THE STORY AND RELEVANCE OF CHRISTINE DE PIZAN (1364 - 1430) (July 22, 2017)
>> FLAGSTAFF MOUNTAIN AND THE BLUEBIRD (July 5, 2017)
Sarah Cha
Avocats Sans Frontières Canada
Québec, Québec

Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) is an NGO focused on international cooperation and working in several countries around the world to support the defence and advancement of the rights of vulnerable individuals and groups. While there are a number of ASF organizations around the world, the most well-known and active among these organizations include ASF Belgium, ASF France and ASF Canada (ASFC), the latter of which was founded in 2002 and located in Quebec.

ASFC’s work is based on the idea that only a state with a strong and independent judiciary, access to justice for all, and with a strong rule of law will be able to protect human rights. The organization engages with a number of different issues and strategies, including the fight against impunity, transitional justice, women’s and children’s rights, and strategic litigation.

What sort of work did you do while at ASFC, Sarah?

““All in all, the work I did this past summer with ASFC varied quite a bit. I primarily carried out research mandates, but I also got the opportunity to sit in on meetings on “mapping” projects in Mali (to map the human rights violations that have occurred in the country over the last few years), to represent ASFC in a conference call with Global Affairs Canada and civil society organizations on the Inter-American Human Rights System, help the Director General prepare for interviews on Omar Khadr’s settlement and legal battles, and much more. Some days inevitably felt long sitting at my desk in the middle of summer, but the work was always fascinating and I learned an incredible amount about not only international law, but also the inner workings of a Canadian NGO.”

How did you enjoy your summer overall, Sarah?

“Quebec City is a beautiful city that I’d visited before, but hadn’t fully appreciated until this summer when I got to thoroughly explore its different neighbourhoods. Being able to engage in a human rights internship in this city so close to home was more rewarding than I could have imagined it to be. My twelve weeks at ASF flew by. It was only when I got back to Montreal that I realized just how much I had learned about international criminal and human rights law in such a short period of time.”

Read more about Sarah’s time at ASFC through her blog posts—

>> Human Rights Lawyering in Quebec City (September 10, 2017)

>> Challenging Narratives: Development, Duvalier and Interning at ASFC (July 24, 2017)
Mark is a third year law student at McGill. He’s worked on Parliament Hill and at Samara Canada. He’s been a Labourer-Teacher for the national literacy organization Frontier College and a writer for the Halifax Chronicle Herald. He’s been a fellow at MaRS Discovery District in Toronto and Lapham’s Quarterly in New York.

He studied cognitive science at Edinburg and humanities at the University of King’s College, Halifax.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) is at once a legal organization, a public education institution and an advocacy non-governmental organization.

What sort of work did you do while at CCLA?
— "My work at CCLA nicely mobilized my skills and allowed me to write, research and formulate positions and strategies with other members of the CCLA team. Working with two different program directors (national security and fundamental freedoms) gave me a well-rounded sense for what CCLA does, as well as an appreciation of divergent approaches to leadership and advocacy."

Any summer highlights to share?
— "A major highlight—and a prominent feature of my summer—was interaction with the other interns in the office, who hailed from law schools across Ontario and into the U.S. I learned much from them and they’ll remain good friends and colleagues in the years to come."

Any advice you’d like to share for the next intern?
— "The best recommendation I can offer is to have a sense before orientation day for the sort of subject matter you would like to tackle. While CCLA is currently going through some reorganization, the division of subject areas at the time of my orientation was fundamental freedoms, equality, and national security and privacy [...] It’s important to have a feel also for whether you think that you would be comfortable doing public enquiries work. This was certainly the most psychologically difficult part of the summer for some summer legal volunteers, since it often involved confronting mental illness and systemic failure."

Read more about Mark’s time at CCLA through his blog posts—


>> DIVISIONAL COURT AS A SMALL WORLD: CULTURAL HOMOGENEITY OR A FORUM FOR DIALOGUE (JULY 7, 2017)
From Anastasia’s road trip to Bruce Canyon, Utah.

Anastasia, can you tell us a bit about OEF’s work?
— “OEF is a highly multi-faceted organization with several distinct departments that are both independent of each other and at times intertwined when working on specific cross-departmental projects. My home department was the Research Department, which produces research reports on many issues tied to political violence in the context of both state and non-state governance issues. Other departments included Oceans Beyond Piracy, Secure Fisheries and Sherako.”

Where is OEF located?
— “OEF is located in Broomfield, Colorado which is a small suburban town situated between Boulder and Denver.”

What work did you do while at OEF?
— “I was working in the Research Department at OEF for my internship under the supervision of Conor Seyle, who was the director of the research department.

Can you tell us a bit more about one of your projects?
— “I participated in and witnessed the burgeoning of several brand new projects. One such project that I was involved in, the Stable Seas Project, is a cross-departmental project with the mandate of creating a Maritime Security Index. While I was on the Output Team who was mainly responsible for quantifying various measures related to maritime security and governance, many other teams collaborated on this project.”

What was your main project while at OEF?
— “My main project was a political psychology experimental project in which I used a large dataset obtained from over 90,000 individuals across 58 different countries to examine how individual-level personal values and attitudes predicted likelihood of support for political violence and war. I also looked at how country-level variables (cultural factors) modulate the relationship between values and violence at the individual level.”

Did you manage to travel around Colorado during your internship?
— “Following the end of my internship, I rented a car and did a two-week road trip across Colorado, Utah and Arizona. The natural landscapes in those states are truly incredible and I would highly recommend exploring those regions if possible.”

Read more about Anastasia’s time at OEF through her blog posts—
>> Research, Policy, Advocacy and the Messy World of International Affairs: My Adventures in Colorado (June 10, 2017)
The Yukon Human Rights Commission promotes human rights in the Yukon by enforcing the Yukon Human Rights Act, receiving and investigating human rights complaints, advocating for legislative reform, responding to inquiries from employers and service providers, and conducting public education and outreach activities. While the Commission investigates complaints and performs a “screening” or “gatekeeping” function in deciding which complaints should not be pursued further, it is the Board of Adjudication (a separate entity/tribunal) which actually makes positive findings of human rights violations and orders remedies.

Can you tell us a bit about the work you did over the summer?

“During the first month of my internship I was mostly engaged in work involving interaction with the public and out of office tasks such as attending workshops and conferences [...] Otherwise, my daily tasks included conducting inquiries with complainants and members of the public [...] I carried out two of my own complaint investigation files during my three months at the Commission. I participated in all aspects of witness interviews by drafting questions, contacting witnesses (or their legal counsel) to schedule interviews, and conducting these interviews. I gathered and examined documentary evidence for relevance, and prepared final investigation reports outlining the legal issues in question, the relevant evidence, witness testimony and current case law. I also contributed to the Commission’s education and outreach mandate by preparing legal information documents and a human rights education presentation for the public.”

Can you tell us a bit about the Commission’s work environment?

“As soon as I arrived at the Commission, I was made to feel welcome. The Commission team is small which meant I was given lots of responsibility from the start. It also meant that the team often felt like a family or close group of friends. In fact, several months after my internship, I am still in touch with many of the Commission staff.”

What were some of the challenges during your internship?

“It was a challenge to answer the phones and interact with clients during my first week. I was required to become familiar with the Yukon Human Rights Act, and the Commission’s procedures quite quickly. However, by diving in head first, I believe that I made the most of my three months.”

Read more about Rebecca’s time at the Commission through her blog posts—

>> “What’s it like, up North?” (October 5, 2017)
>> “Re-Visioning Justice in the Yukon” (July 3, 2017)

Rebecca is a second-year law student who was born and raised in Victoria, B.C. After pursuing a career as a professional dancer in New York City, she moved to Montreal to complete a Bachelor of Arts and Science in Psychology and International Development Studies at McGill. During her undergraduate studies, she focused on global health and sustainable livelihoods, interned at an NGO in southern India.

Following graduation, Rebecca worked as a diversity educator for a Montreal non-profit, as well as a sexual health educator for Aids Community Care Montreal. These experiences fostered Rebecca’s interest in human rights and ultimately led her to McGill’s Faculty of Law. As a law student, Rebecca facilitates workshops with highschool students for the LEX highschool outreach program. She also works as a research assistant for Professor Colleen Sheppard, conducting research on systemic discrimination.
Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) was the flagship program of One Earth Future (OEF), founded to respond to the piracy crisis off the shores of Somalia. OBP gathers and disseminates information about worldwide piracy, and leverages this information to bring stakeholders together to collaboratively develop solutions to piracy. OBP’s work has recently expanded to include other forms of maritime crime, such as arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, and other forms of smuggling. OBP is gradually transitioning away from a singular focus on piracy to look at maritime crime more broadly.

Jessye, how was your summer at Oceans Beyond Piracy overall?
— “Overall, my internship at OBP was a wonderful experience. Maritime governance was a whole new world for me, and I found it fascinating. The work gave me the opportunity to develop my skills in legal research, and it gave me a behind-the-scenes glimpse of policy-making and the working of the UN and civil society.”

What sort of work did you do while with OBP?
— “My first task was to develop a database of law related to kidnaping and ransom around the world. This was a challenging and interesting task that stretched my skills in researching law outside of Canada. I also wrote summaries of international law as it relates to human trafficking, migrant smuggling, arms trafficking, and trafficking of weapons of mass destruction. I was also given the opportunity to write an amicus brief for a case at the Supreme Court of the United States on corporate liability in international tort law. (This was unusual, and it probably not a task that interns would get every year: it just happened that there was a SCOTUS case that related to piracy!)”

Can you tell us a bit more about Denver, where you lived?
— “I lived in Denver, which is a fun city, but built for cars (the urban geography is very similar to Calgary). Exploring Denver and the surrounding areas on weekends was great, with the only downside being dealing with the slow and frustrating public transit system! The hiking is amazing, especially if you can hitch a ride with a coworker to see the areas you can’t get to by bus!”

Any advice you’d like to share for the next intern?
— “As I was the only one with legal training, [people] often looked to [me to] answer legal questions. This was a great challenge and learning experience, but it was also sometimes difficult to not have a supervisor who was legally trained. It was also sometimes tricky to tow the line between giving helpful legal information, while not giving legal advice. I would recommend that future interns not hesitate to ask their management or put them in touch with someone legally trained if they have legal questions. As law students, we can do a lot, but we don’t have the wisdom that comes from experience, and sometimes it helps to talk to another lawyer.”

Read more about Jessye’s time at OBP through her blog posts—
>> On Mountains, Skies, and Llamas (September 7, 2017)
>> On Oceans, Borders and Belonging (July 15, 2017)
NATHALIE LAFLAMME
Equitas
Montreal, Quebec

Nathalie grew up in Montreal and just finished her first year of McGill Law. In 2016, Nathalie completed a Bachelor’s degree in journalism at Concordia University in the co-op program. During her studies, she was the Editor-in-Chief of one of the student papers on campus, The Concordian. Her work has been published by the Montreal Gazette and the Canadian Press. She has written about human rights abuses and issues, among many other topics.

She is also completing a Pro Bono Students Canada - McGill internship with the Association for the Rights of Household Workers and is an editor of the McGill Journal of Law and Health.

Can you tell us a bit about Equitas?
— “Equitas is a human rights education organization. It used to be called the Canadian Human Rights Foundation and was founded in 1967 by scholars and social activists. They (Equitas staff) develop and facilitate the teachings of human rights curriculum and educational tools for NGOs, formal institutions, such as governmental bodies or various intergovernmental organizations, such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.”

What sort of work did you do over the summer?
— “As an Education Intern, I specifically assisted with the 38th edition of the International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTP). Nearly 100 participants from over 50 countries take part every year from all over the world. Taking part in this program, whether as a participant, an intern or staff, is a truly immersive and unforgettable experience.”

Any advice you’d like to share for the next intern?
— “A lot of my advice related to tasks can be found in the Education Intern’s Manual, which you will have access to once the internship begins. Speaking of the Manual, use it! Most questions can be answered by looking in the manual. In fact, you should read it cover to cover ideally before starting your internships. But also, don’t be afraid to ask for help, especially when it comes to asking the other Education Intern. Equitas works in such a way that certain people are assigned certain tasks, but they always have someone assigned as “support”. Everyone works as a team, which is important to the success of the IHRTP. Everyone always has a lot to do, but if they help you, that also means you can help them with their work after.”

Any last words about your time with Equitas?
— “I have never been in a more multicultural environment in my life.”

Read more about Nathalie’s time at the Equitas through her blog posts—

>>> LOOKING BACK ON MY SUMMER AT EQUITAS (OCTOBER 19, 2017)
>>> A TRULY INTERNATIONAL EVENING (AUGUST 21, 2017)
Known for its practice of “naming and shaming”, Human Rights Watch (HRW) investigates human rights violations around the world. There are geographic divisions and thematic divisions or programs. Emily had the opportunity of working with the International Justice Program, which has a strong focus on advocacy related to the International Criminal Court. This program produces reports, news releases and often meets with State parties and diplomatic representatives or the ICC prosecutor in order to influence them in making certain decisions related to the prosecution of international crimes.

Some of the highlights of Emily’s time at HRW were drafting a memo on international standards for a fair trial to support legislative reform in Sweden (for the purpose of universal jurisdiction claims for victims of war crimes in Syria), attending a debrief on the publication of HRW’s report on Central African Republic at the UN and attending the High Level Panel on Rule of Law and Development at the UN.

Emily, can you describe your first day at HRW? What you have learned since then?

— “Arriving on my first day with little knowledge about the inner-workings of the ICC or the rapidly-changing world of international justice, my future assignments challenged me in the best possible way. They confronted my ideals about international standards for a fair trial and the rights of the defence, they pushed me to consider alternatives to the ICC (such as universal jurisdiction and special criminal courts), and allowed me to gain insight into the advocacy strategies of organizations like HRW and the challenges of human rights diplomacy.”

Any advice you’d like to share for the next intern?

— “Researching crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and other serious human rights violations is at times exhausting and emotionally demanding. Be kind to yourself and don’t shy away from joining in on the conversation other people around the office may be having on other topics.”

Any last thoughts about your time at HRW?

— “Overall, I greatly enjoyed my time in New York City and my internship at HRW, and am immensely grateful to IHRIP and its generous donors for this incredible opportunity for personal and professional growth. I left this internship with a renewed sense of purpose for my legal studies, and an even greater appreciation for the tremendous work of HRW.”

Read more about Emily’s time at HRW through her blog post—

>> Anna’s Retirement Party (September 6, 2017)
What kind of work does the Legal Network do?

"The Legal Network fights for the health and social justice of people with HIV or AIDS (and people at high risk of contracting HIV), combatting factors that contribute to the HIV epidemic (such as drug policy, sex work conditions, and discrimination), and LGBT issues internationally. The methods through which the Legal Network defends the rights of people living with HIV or AIDS, and related groups such as women and Indigenous communities, is through producing publications through legal and policy research, creating dialogues with governments and human rights bodies such as the United Nations, advancing strategic litigation in the courts, and being vocal spokespeople in the media."

What were some of your work highlights?

"There were many highlights of my internship. One in particular was that I was able to make use of my background knowledge to implement Indigenous awareness training at the Legal Network and integrate Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations into their policy work. [...] I was also fortunate enough to see the fruits of my labour on two major projects: I provided research and writing support to a staff lawyer in preparation for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Armed with our written brief and a research-backed strategy that I helped develop, our staff lawyer attended the Committee's review of Canada’s racial discrimination track record and lobbied for the Committee to recognize the racial impacts of Canada's drug policies. And they did, which was a monumental success. This success followed on the heels of another UN research project. This time I was compiling the strongest UN avenues for eastern European activities to pursue in their home countries when advocating for the rights of gay men and transgender people. This research was turned into a workshop that was presented for the first time by the Legal Network's Russian lawyer in August 2017."

Can you share with us a bit about the office environment?

"I found the work culture at the Legal Network to be relaxed and collegial, making for a fun and stress-free summer. Due to the small size of the organization (13 people), there was ample time over the summer to get to know my colleagues and the other summer student."

Insight for the next intern?

"The dress code of the office is business casual (or sometimes more casual than that). Take advantage of the chance to wear your comfortable everyday clothes at an office job!"

Read more about Sarah-Grace’s time at the Legal Network through her blog post—

>> Close to home (July 20, 2017)
What kind of work did you do while at the Department?

"My main assignment was to compile the legislative history of all the Akwesasne laws, which involved some work in the archives. However, this project was dependent upon receiving information through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through an Access to Information (ATIP) request, and I unfortunately still had not received the information by the time I left. I did however have the opportunity to contribute to a fascinating interjurisdictional criminal file and attend a hearing at the Quebec Court of Appeal. I also participated in the Youth Justice Camp as a support counsellor, which was a personally rewarding experience, and worked on a small claims file, in which the Mohawk Council was the defendant. Additionally, I wrote a brief on the new cannabis legislation, made recommendations, and attended a quadpartite consultation meeting on the law between Akwesasne, Ontario, Quebec and Canada. Lastly, I attended a culturally celebration for aboriginal inmates at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre."

Can you tell us a bit about the work environment at the Department?

"The environment is friendly and collegial. Colleagues often go to lunch together and spend quite a bit of time together. Everyone is treating equally and with respect, and I did not experience any differential treatment as a female or as a non-community member. There are often jokes being exchanged overtop of the cubicles which helped create a light-hearted environment. Because my colleagues were so easy going, I did not find fitting in at the department difficult."

What did you get up to in Cornwall, Ontario?

"There are gold courses around and several sites to visit on days off, including breweries, historic sites, and parks. There is some kind of festival every other weekend, and the aquatic centre has waterslides. I tried out a few golf courses, and Archie's driving range is accompanied by a mini putt and an ice cream shop."

Read more about Madeleine's time at the Department through her blog post— National Aboriginal Day at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (August 10, 2017).
Every morning, David would walk 35 minutes to work from Iqaluit’s Tundra Valley to Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik Legal Services. Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik is the Qikiqtaluk (Baffin Island) branch of the Legal Services Board of Nunavut (LSB), which provides legal services in criminal law, family law and civil/proper ty law to qualifying low-income individuals in the region.

For forty years, Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik (through its legal aid clinic) has been geared towards public legal education, law reform and client representation. Today, there are 8 criminal law lawyers, 3 family law lawyers, 1 poverty law lawyer, 2 full-time Inuit court workers based in Iqaluit, with other Inuit court workers based in Qikiqtaluk’s 12 communities. Together, this team works to ensure that access to justice remains paramount in Nunavut. Reflective of the demographics of the territory, many of the clients that seek LSB’s clients are Inuit.

A peek into what David did during the summer:

- Drafting memos for criminal counsel & a lawyer based in Cambridge Bay.
- Drafting submissions, including notices of application and a factum.
- Seeking quick answers to legal questions & submitting findings to counsel.
- Helping duty counsel prepare for a trial (from tracking down witnesses to serving subpoenas to managing the client).
- Participating in a circuit court in Baker Lake.
- Helping prepare books of authorities, filling court forms and contacting the RCMP and Ottawa Police to release files.
- Visiting the cells at the RCMP detachment and listening to 10b advice, as well as Baffin Correctional Centre, where counsel was speaking to a client.
- Working to jumpstart the office’s Public Legal Education Program by gathering resources, making an inventory of content and meeting with external actors such as the Nunavut Law Society to request additional resources.

A little snippet of life in Iqaluit?

— “Iqaluit is the type of place where you see the postal worker on your weekend hike, and bump into friends at the grocery store.”

Who do you think might like to pursue this internship in the future?

— “I would highly recommend this internship to anyone interested in learning more about the criminal justice system in northern Canada, and gaining a deeper understanding of Nunavut. It is a landscape that reveals itself gradually and I feel extremely privileged to have been able to spend some time in the territory.”

Any office tips for the next intern?

— “Build relationships with the support staff and the court workers. Both professionally and personally, they have wonderful insights into the working of the clinic, Nunavut court system, and life in the city. If you ever need to track down a witness, serve a subpoena, etc., they are an invaluable source of knowledge.”

Any living tips for the next intern?

— “For the average lazy evening, come prepared with a harddrive of shows/movies. Internet is slow and expensive, so streaming or downloading is usually a no-go.”

Read more about David’s time in Iqaluit through his blog posts—

>> FOLLOWING THE HEED (JULY 22, 2017)
>> QAMUTIK (JUNE 14, 2017)
A little snippet of summer life in Halifax?

“...I can’t speak highly enough of it. Halifax is the biggest city in the east but it still has a small-town feel. True to the stereotype, people were extremely friendly. They enjoy making small talk and never seem too busy for you. I think the best way to describe Halifax is that it has at least one of all the amenities that a city should have but without many of the downsides.”

What was your biggest takeaway from your summer at CLD?

“...Before working at the CLD, I knew little about access to information as an area of law. However, after my 3-month internship, it is clear to me how vital the right to information is not only to freedom of expression but also to democracy more generally. The empowerment of citizens and their participation in the democratic process depend on their having access to information about their government. Needless to say, right to information is not a boring area of law. Rather it relates directly to the operation and preservation of democratic institutions.”

What kind of work did you do while at CLD?

“...Some projects of note included: drafting recommendations for UNESCO’S inaugural access to information policy and the Asian Development Bank’s updated policy; commenting on amended cyber crime legislation in Trinidad; assisting with the redrafting of Sweden’s access-to-information legislation; training information officers in Jordan; drafting a civil society submission for the United Nation’s 2017 Universal Periodic Review Process (UPR); and assessing the effectiveness of Canada’s access to information system. The latter project involved sending request under the access to information act two federal agencies to assess the completeness of their responses, their compliance with the Act and the deadlines therein. This project was underway when I left.”

Any living tips for the next intern?

“...As I mentioned in my summary, it is important for future interns to understand the nature of the work that they will be engaged in at the CLD. First, you will not be “on the ground”, so to speak. You will be in an office, at a desk, on a computer. You will sometimes feel out of touch and may question whether any of the work that you are doing will realistically have any impact on the daily lives of individuals. However, it is important to realize that this is the nature of a lot of human rights work. And it is especially important not to underestimate its value.”

Read more about Ailsa’s time in Halifax through her blog posts—

>> The Oppression Tree (October 7, 2017)
>> A Kindness Is Never Wasted (July 24, 2017)
LATIN AMERICA

ARGENTINA
Taylor Gillespie
Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Derechos Humanos

PERU
Melisa Demir
Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos

COSTA RICA
Elias D. León
Inter-American Court of Human Rights
The Center for Research and Human Rights Education (Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Derechos Humanos) is based within the Faculty of Law at the National University of Mar del Plata (www.mdp.edu.ar/derecho). Its primary goal is to strengthen education and capacity building in human rights in Argentina and the region. The Center has three core areas of research: transitional justice and human rights, political economy and human rights, and disability and human rights. The internship was with the Center’s Disability and Human Rights Unit, which is directed by Professor Dr. Agustina Palacios, one of the most distinguished experts in the field in Latin-America.

A little snippet of summer life in Argentina?
— “Mar del Plata is an unbelievably beautiful city stretching along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Personally, I thought the size of the city was perfect because it was not overwhelming like Buenos Aires, but at the same time is still lively enough that you’ll never be bored.”

What was your biggest takeaway from your summer at CIDDH?
— “My internship was as much about personal growth as it was about doing actual human rights work. The more I think about my experience, the more I realize what a powerful opportunity it was on my own self. I arrived with no place to live, nobody to talk to, and no idea what to expect, but I left with beautiful memories, everlasting friendships and connections, and a solid personal understanding of what human rights work is all about.”

Did you experience any challenges during your internship?
— “When thinking about challenges I faced during my internship, two main things come to mind. First, the idea of taking a summer off of work and not generating any real source of income (as per the financial chart below, after the stipend I came out roughly scratch). Second, and more importantly, I found that my biggest obstacle while on my internship was that the work pace was much slower than what I was expecting.”

Read more about Taylor's time in Argentina through his blog posts—
>>> [BUENOS DIAS DESDE ARGENTINA] (Jul 5, 2017)
The Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos – IDEHPUCP) is an academic center attached to the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Its goal is to strengthen democracy and the respect for human rights in Peru through academic and professional training, applied research, and the promotion of public policy with the state and civil society. Since its foundation in 2004, the IDEHPUCP has been closely working with diverse national and international organizations, regional and local governments, civil society organizations and citizens devoted to the country’s democratic culture.

How was your experience interning with IDEHPUCP?
— “My internship experience at the IDEPHUCP was an incredible learning experience and an unforgettable adventure. Even after being home for awhile, I still have trouble describing it.”

What was your biggest takeaway from your summer?
— “My work was not always “detached” from the reality of human rights violations. Because of how prestigious the IDEH is and due to its affiliation with the top university in Lima, we were often hosting or invited to sit in on conferences and events in which I got to witness the human aspect of my work. I witnessed people at conferences demanding explanations from the government for the lack of due process in their cases, and listened to a Venezuelan woman fall to tears as she thanked the Peruvian government for their hospitality when she had to leave her family behind to find work during the ongoing crisis in her country. These opportunities to see the human side of human rights work – how our work affects the lives of others – was extremely powerful, and definitely helped serve as a reminder as to how important all aspects of human rights work are, even if at times, we can feel powerless behind our computer screens.”

Anything you’d like to share with the next intern?
— “Overall, I felt like my work was useful, made great friends, had an amazing family, and fell in love with Lima very quickly. Anyone who has the chance to complete this internship is very lucky, and if their summer is anything like mine was, they will have the experience of a lifetime.”

Read more about Melisa’s time in Peru through her blog posts—
> Learning to Sing: A Look Back on My Summer in Peru (September 10, 2017)
> Be Patient; Stay Fearless (June 29, 2017)
Established in 1979, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) is the primary judiciary organ of the Organization of American States (OAS). It is composed of seven judges elected by the OAS’ General Assembly and the Secretariat. The Secretariat plays a vital role as it is the primary body of the Court that handles all of the cases as the judges are only present during four periods of two-weeks throughout the year.

The Secretariat relies on the legal expertise, determination, and team-work from its lawyers, visiting professionals, and interns. Elias joined a legal team consisting of one senior lawyer, two junior lawyers, four visiting professionals, two paralegals, and one legal secretary. Alongside his team, he worked under the guidance and expertise of a presiding judge on two cases.

Elias’ responsibilities included comparative legal research, drafting legal memos, interpreting legislation, jurisprudence and doctrine in Spanish, English and French, and assisting with the organization and delivery of court hearings. Needless to say, his transsystemic law degree came in handy.

What did you love most about your time at IACHR?
— “One of the strongest assets of the Secretariat is how diverse, intellectually stimulating, and collegial the work environment is. From working with highly respected jurists across the Americas and developing friendships, this internship is the ideal place to improve and develop new skill-sets transferable to McGill Law students’ career development.”

Can you give us a run down of your typical day in San José?
— “Everyday life in San José consisted in waking up and enjoying freshly brewed Costa Rican coffee, followed by an intellectually stimulating day of work at the Court filled with real-life anecdotes from colleagues or from reading jurisprudence and legislation on human rights. During the evenings I would assist lectures, conferences, cocktail receptions organized by embassies or local/international organizations on human rights.”

What was the food like in Costa Rica?
— “The gastronomy in Costa Rica is a culinary experience in its own. There are endless options to eat near the Court and near the house I was living in, from farmers’ markets and food trucks to traditional and contemporary cuisine restaurants.”

What words of wisdom would you pass on to future interns?
— “I would strongly encourage future interns to read articles or textbooks about the Inter-American System of Human Rights, including its rules of procedure, jurisprudence, and mandate. Frankly, I felt intimated by joining my legal team because every member was a lawyer with a significant amount of experience clerking for judges and practicing law in their respected countries.”

Can you tell us a bit about the work environment at IACHR?
— “The collegial work environment is one where you get to know the judges, senior and junior lawyers, interns, visiting professionals, paralegals, legal secretaries, and security and maintenance personnel. Outside of working hours, I constantly met colleagues for luncheons, birthday celebrations, dinners, and weekend get-aways.”

A BCL/LLB candidate at McGill, Elias currently serves as a Senior Editor in the McGill Journal of Dispute Resolution, as well as a student advocate for the International Refugee Assistance Project. Prior to attending law school, Elias was the Director for the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Division of the United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC). He also previously took the role of Advisor to the Permanent Delegation of Saint Lucia to UNESCO where he contributed to policy making in the Social Science and Culture commissions of the 37th General Conference of UNESCO and the 19th World Heritage Convention. Subsequently, he played a leading role in drafting a proposed legal strategy to protect human rights and natural resources in Cameroon while working with the Human Rights, Economic Development and Globalization Clinic at Sciences Po Law School. Elias also volunteered in the Hill Office of the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau at Parliament of Canada. Elias graduated Magna Cum Laude with an Honours Degree in International Studies and Modern Languages from the University of Ottawa and holds a Certificate in Social Sciences and Humanities with a specialization in International Law from Sciences Po Paris.
CAROLINE LAVOIE
National Human Rights Council of Morocco
Rabat, Morocco

Caroline, can you tell us about your time at IHRDA?
—“Although the internship at IHRDA was not my first choice, in hindsight it would have been. I thought it was a great opportunity to be on the grounds in a country which was undergoing transitional justice.”

What was the work culture at IHRDA?
—“Everyone at IHRDA was very friendly and welcoming. I felt so comfortable there that on Canada Day, I taught everyone a hip-hop dance to a Justin Bieber song.”

What kind of work did you do over the summer?
—“My tasks consisted of a lot of research. I would conduct research for presentations (such as presentations on the history of women’s rights, freedom of conscience and freedom of assembly and the right to freedom of expression for artists and journalists). This was my favourite kind of research because I loved the educational aspect of it. It felt like I was making a tangible difference for those who would be receiving this information at the trainings. I loved sitting in on those capacity-building workshops too, which IHRDA encourages the interns to do. I would also conduct research to help arguments on pending cases, whether they had to do with the substance of the case or procedural issues. This was one of my first tasks and I got to watch one of my supervisors plead before the court on a YouTube live stream. Researching jurisprudence was a great way for me to get to know the African human rights system.”

What were your impressions of living in The Gambia?
—“It was my first time in The Gambia, and in fact my first time in any African country. When I told people this, they told me that The Gambia was a good country to start. Life isn’t as busy as some other big cities. It is a very popular tourist destination, especially for Brits, but not during our summer months. Still, there were tourists on the strip called Senegambia. This is the area where I faced a lot of harassment, walking down the street and walking on the beach. Besides from people catcalling and trying to sell me things, I always felt safe in the country.”

Read more about Caroline’s time in Morocco through her blog posts—
>> REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (November 5, 2017)
>> FIRST LESSONS AND IMPRESSIONS (July 14, 2017)
Audrey est étudiante en troisième année en droit à l’université McGill. Avant d’en-tamer ses études à McGill, elle a complété un DEC en sciences humaines au Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf. Elle s’intéresse particulièrement à la responsabilité civile ainsi qu’à certains enjeux de droit constitutionnel, notamment le droit à l’égalité. Elle travaille actuellement comme assistante de recherche pour le Centre de génomique et politique de McGill. Auparavant, elle a œuvré en tant qu’assistante de recherche à la Faculté de droit de l’Université McGill dans le domaine du droit à l’égalité sur la scène internationale.

Alessandra: Pouvez-vous nous expliquer un peu le travail que fait la RADDHO et quel a été ton rôle au sein de l’organisation?

—“La RADDHO est une organisation locale qui a été fondée par des Sénégalais en 1990. Elle réalise des projets et fait de la recherche sur tous les types de droits humains, à l’exception des droits des minorités sexuelles. C’est une organisation qui a une excellente réputation à Dakar et au Sénégal de manière plus générale, ainsi que dans l’ensemble de la sous-région africaine, soit au Sénégal, au Burkina Faso, au Cap-Vert, en Côte-d’Ivoire, en Gambie, au Ghana, en Guinée, en Guinée-Bissau, au Liberia, au Mali, au Maroc, au Niger, au Nigeria, en Sierra Leone et au Togo. Une dizaine de personnes travaillent à la RADDHO à temps plein; j’étais la seule stagiaire à temps plein cet été. La RADDHO, comme la plupart des organisations de la société civile, fait face à des défis. J’ai vraiment pu voir comment fonctionnait une ONG sénégalaise sur le terrain. Il est intéressant de constater de ses propres yeux que les organisations de droits humains ne sont pas toujours des plus efficaces et qu’elles ne sont pas toujours des modèles de bonne gouvernance.”

Alessandra: As-tu eu la chance de visiter des pays voisins?

—“Je suis restée au Sénégal pour y découvrir des lieux magnifiques. À toutes les deux semaines, je visitais un lieu touristique avec d’autres stagiaires québécois. J’ai donc visité le Lac Rose, la réserve de Bandia, l’île de Gorée, la place de la Renaissance africaine, ainsi que les plages de Yoff et de Toubab Dialaw. J’ai également eu l’immense honneur de faire découvrir à mes parents et à l’une de mes tantes le pays qui m’a accueilli.”

Any recommendations for future interns?

—“I would recommend this placement to students with a strong interest in mental health, disability rights, and/or psychiatry. Students should also be somewhat familiar with mental health issues, psychiatric standards of care, and the history of psychiatry to fully benefit from the internship, although the internship itself may provide opportunities to learn about these aspects. Students may wish to take a course in psychiatry and law and/or disability rights beforehand, or research legal capacity of peoples with mental disabilities prior to commencing their placement.”

Pour en apprendre davantage sur l’expérience d’Audrey au Sénégal, lisez ses billets de blogue ici—

>> My Stay in Dakar (September 12, 2017)

>> Au Pays de la Téranga (June 12, 2017)
Sara, can you tell us about your time at IHRDA?

—“Although the internship at IHRDA was not my first choice, in hindsight it would have been. I thought it was a great opportunity to be on the grounds in a country which was undergoing transitional justice.”

What was the work culture at IHRDA?

—“Everyone at IHRDA was very friendly and welcoming. I felt so comfortable there that on Canada Day, I taught everyone a hip-hop dance to a Justin Bieber song.”

What kind of work did you do over the summer?

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What were your impressions of living in The Gambia?

—“It was my first time in The Gambia, and in fact my first time in any African country. When I told people this, they told me that The Gambia was a good country to start. Life isn’t as busy as some other big cities. It is a very popular tourist destination, especially for Brits, but not during our summer months. Still, there were tourists on the strip called Senegambia. This is the area where I faced a lot of harassment, walking down the street and walking on the beach. Besides from people catcalling and trying to sell me things, I always felt safe in the country.”

Read more about Sara’s time in The Gambia through her blog posts—

>> Reflections on Human Rights Education (November 5, 2017)
>> First lessons and impressions (July 14, 2017)
Peux-tu expliquer ce que tu as fait comme travail avec le MBDHP?

—"L’essentiel de mon travail consistait à offrir un appui logistique à la responsable locale du Projet PTF pour la mise en place d’une formation nationale en septembre 2017 à Léo ainsi que de sessions sous-régionales de formation sur les droits humains à Ouagadougou en mars 2018."

As-tu trouvé que vivre au Burkina Faso a été une expérience enrichissante?

—"Au niveau personnel, vivre à Ouagadougou pendant trois mois fut une expérience extrêmement enrichissante, oui. J’ai pu découvrir la culture locale et voyager à travers le Burkina avec le MBDHP, forger des amitiés avec des Burkinabés et d’autres expatriés occidentaux; j’ai même exploré la scène de Poésie Slam locale. J’ai mangé des plats auxquels je n’avais jamais goûté, j’ai écouté (et dansé) sur de la musique que je n’avais jamais entendue et j’ai vu des paysages que je n’aurais jamais pu imaginer. J’avais décidé de faire ce stage pour sortir de ma zone de confort et expérimenter une réalité différente de la France, du Québec et de ma bibliothèque. J’avais faim de découverte, de logiques qui ne soient pas les miennes et de systèmes dont je n’avais pas les codes. Je n’ai pas été déçu."

Comment est-ce que tu as divisé ton temps entre les différents projets?

—“J’ai aidé la coordinatrice locale du projet PTF avec Équitas, pris part aux activités de Centres d’écoute et d’appui-conseil (ce que nous appelons les cliniques juridiques) du MBDHP, accompagné le secrétaire général du Mouvement dans ses voyages aux différentes sections provinciales de l’organisme et débuté la refonte du site web de l’association."

Pour en apprendre davantage sur l’expérience de Lucas au Burkina Faso, lisez ses billets de blogue ici—

>> Les "Gardiens de la Brousse" (September 10, 2017)

Kevin, can you give us a quick overview of your summer?

—I had an exceptional time interning at the LRDC and living in Namibia. The Commission is a very exciting place to work. I worked directly under Ms. Dausab, the chair of the LRDC, as her personal researcher, advisor, and assistant. This was definitive to my experience.

What was the work culture at LRDC?

—”The office environment is generally relaxed for most of my colleagues. Most of the researchers are young lawyers, many with only a few years experience in both private and public practice. Many have chosen to work at the LRDC to gain experience prior to careers in private practice, or have chosen to work in public practice in order to manage other career endeavors. Everyone at the LRDC is very helpful in terms of familiarizing you with Namibian law, life in Namibia, and Namibian society.”

Did you do much external facing work with LRDC?

—”Because of Ms. Dausab’s important role in Namibia’s judiciary and political environment, we attended a variety of events, meetings, and conferences. This included everything from meetings with the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, the Ombudsman, as well as meetings organized by Air Namibia, the World Wild Life Fund, the University Qualification Authority, and more. Ms. Dausab’s work, and consequently mine, shows how important a legal perspective can be to any number of organizations.”

What were your impressions of living in Namibia?

—”Compared to a city in Canada, Windhoek can feel dangerous. But compared to a city in Africa, even in Southern Africa, Windhoek is quite safe. Expect most homes to be gated and fenced, and most houses to have butlers and housekeepers. There are street sellers, people panhandling in creative ways, and people selling newspapers; they will spot you as an outside and always say hello!”

Read more about Kevin’s time in Namibia through his blog posts—

> Defining Equality, Namibia’s Supreme Court and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (August 17, 2017)

> Ag Shame! We Can Only Do Law Reform (July 31, 2017)
Julia, you were initially supposed to be in Kenya, and then things shifted to Malawi at the last minute. Did this impact your experience?

—“My internship in Malawi was an unforgettable, and overwhelmingly positive experience. As an intern for the Equality Effect in Malawi I worked on projects with WLSA (Women and the Law in Southern Africa) to challenge the Corroboration Rule in sexual offence cases. Although I thought my internship would take place in Kenya until about 3 days prior to my departure from Canada, and although my tasks, my living arrangements, and my expectations for the internship changed dramatically as a result, I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn how to navigate the ups and the downs of working in a field where it is essential to continuously adapt to ever-changing circumstances.”

What was the main focus of your work during the summer?

—“One of my primary tasks in Malawi was to help increase support within the legal and judicial community for ending the Corroboration Rule. I met with police officers, prosecutors, lawyers, legal experts, doctors, and social workers and asked them about the challenges they saw for survivors of sexual violence in their daily work. One major barrier to accessing justice repeatedly brought up was the cost of transportation and fuel to bring survivors to the court house or to police stations. Many other impediments to justice such as social stigmas, rape myths, and systemic barriers were more familiar to me as a Canadian law student. The Corroboration Rule in Malawi for example stems from the myth that women and girls tend to lie about sexual violence. This rule may no longer exist in Canada, however in practice the myth behind the rule still lingers. What I loved about my work with the Equality Effect was how we placed importance on taking a holistic approach to creating systemic change through the law.”

Read more about Julia’s time in Malawi through her blog posts—

>> ZIKOMO, MALAWI (SEPTEMBER 12, 2017)

>> UPDATES FROM MALAWI (JUNE 25, 2017)

Julia holds a BSc from the University of Toronto in environmental studies and psychology, and is currently a bilingual student in her second year of law school at McGill University. As an undergraduate she was a varsity volleyball athlete for four years and interned for the Canadian Environmental Law Association. During the summers she found herself in an Amazon rainforest in Ecuador for a summer abroad program, planting trees in northern BC or coaching youth volleyball in Ontario. More recently Julia has immersed herself into her community. She is the President of the McGill branch of Avocats Sans Frontières, a junior advocate assisting students at the university, and the elected representative of her 2L class. She is also an executive team member of #LawNeedsFeminismBecause and volunteered for the Legal information Clinic at McGill. Her driving force is her passionate belief in women’s and girls’ rights and equal access to justice.
Jillian, how was your overall experience?
—“My overall internship experience was very positive. I learned as much outside of the work setting as I did within it. It was my first time working in an NGO environment, and I was deeply impressed by the passion and dedication of CEHURD’s staff. I had the chance to gain versatile experience; I attended court, I worked directly in the villages, and I conducted research on various health-related topics.”

How was living in Kampala?
—“Living in Kampala was unbelievable. Sometimes, I can still close my eyes and remember the energy of the city and how good it felt to be right there in the middle of it all. I lived in a great apartment within walking distance from CEHURD’s offices. I made so many great friends with other expats living in the city, and still speak to many of them today. I also got the chance to do some exciting travelling, which included swimming in the Nile, hiking, going a safari, and visiting Rwanda.”

Did you have a chance to attend court during your internship?
—“I attended court on my first day and on my second-to-last day at CEHURD. The first time, I sat in on a live proceeding regarding the advertising of tobacco products. The second time, I watched a mediation on a case whereby a man’s newborn baby had been injected with the wrong medication and had died as a result. This had happened because the student nurse who administered the injection had not been properly supervised. My only job in court was to sit and listen. Actually, I am now able to say that my first time ever being inside of a courtroom was in Uganda!”

Read more about Jillian’s time in Uganda through her blog posts—

>> Perceptions, Misconceptions, and Reverse Culture Shock (September 9, 2017)

>> Access to Justice and Health Services for Women in Rural Uganda (July 13, 2017)
ASIA & EUROPE

**SERBIA**
Joel Badali
Mental Disability Rights Initiative of Serbia

**THE PHILIPPINES**
Katerina Lagasse
Ateneo HR Centre

**CAMBODIA**
Andrew Rintoul
LICADHO

**INDIA**
Alexa Franczak
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group
Mental Disability Rights Initiative (MDRI) is an organization devoted to the rights of people with disabilities, primarily those with intellectual and other serious mental disorders. MDRI provides various functions from advocacy in the public arena and within the Serbian government, mobilizing civil society organizations in promoting the rights of people with disabilities and international standards of care, and monitoring the conditions of institutions where people with disabilities are often held in violation of their human rights.

What work did you engage in while at MDRI?

—"Near the beginning of my internship, I was delegated to attend a civil society organization conference at the United Nations in Belgrade to note-take on the instructions and training provided on attaining the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals in view of Serbia’s tentative accession to the EU. The role of civil society organizations in mobilizing various government bodies and agencies to reach targets set out by the UN are discussed in many UN publications, all of which I reviewed and summarized with reference to disability rights in Serbia. I also participated in several training events, a field visit to an institution and supported living facilities, and assisted in the drafting of proposals for Balkan region mental health initiatives. Using some of the connections I made at these conferences, I was able to make a day trip to a town outside of a city to the north of Belgrade (Novi Sad) to visit a psychiatric institution and a couple supported-living homes."

What was a typical day at the MDRI office?

—"I would arrive at the office around 10 or 11am, or earlier for special events, training, or meetings. My colleagues at the office, or supervisors, would provide me with work in English on a day-by-day basis. Typically, this meant that I would spend a few hours conducting research for a grant proposal in English, or building on informational packages that MDRI-S disseminates. Often, I found that taking my own initiative was important especially while my supervisors were on vacation leaving the organization relatively short-staffed and occupied."

Read more about Joel’s time in Serbia through his blog posts—

>> AIRING MY IGNORANCE (September 4, 2017)
>> ON WRITING A POEM – OR NOT (August 31, 2017)
ANDREW RINTOUL
LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights) Cambodia

Andrew is a first year student at McGill’s Faculty of Law who hails from Toronto. He holds a B.A. Honours degree in International Relations from Mount Allison University, with Minors in French, Environmental Studies, and Political Science. In his third year, he studied abroad at the Université de Strasbourg in France. Andrew is passionate about global health and international development. Near the end of his B.A., Andrew received an Independent Student Research Grant from Mount Allison, where he undertook an extensive research project examining the inadequacies of global health governance as revealed through the Ebola epidemic of 2014. At the Faculty of Law, he is a member of the Education and Outreach Committee of Innocence McGill, the Research and Advocacy Committee of CARL (Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers) McGill, and participates in the LEX educational outreach program. Andrew is very excited to set foot into the human rights arena this summer by working with LICADHO in Cambodia.

Any advice you would give for settling into Cambodia?
—“I would say that the more you embrace and immerse yourself in the culture, the more enjoyable and impactful your experience will be. With each new Khmer word I learnt and with each new local dish I tried, I felt I was getting more out of the place around me. The people of Cambodia were extremely warm and enjoyed showing me new things and laughing at my attempts to say different phrases in their local language. I found the culture to be one of sharing and at meals it was customary to bring your own rice and then one meat or vegetable to pass around the table for everyone to try. As a whole, individualism and materialism seemed far outweighed by collectivism and comradesy.”

Any tips for next year’s intern?
—“Though I am confident anyone would experience tremendous growth while working at LICADHO, I believe next year’s intern should be someone who is particularly open to trying new things and willing to push the limits of their comfort zone. The national election next year will bring a new dimension to the internship, and though I felt this in part with the commune election this summer, it will likely be far more intense in 2018.”

Read more about Andrew’s time in Cambodia through his blog posts—
>> CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA: A CORRIDOR OF ILLUSIONS (JULY 27, 2017)
>> ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA: REDIRECTING FORCES OF REPRESSION INTO WINDS OF CHANGE (JULY 3, 2017)
KATERINA LAGASSÉ

Ateno HR Centre
Manila, The Philippines

Katerina is in her third-year of the BCL/LLB program at McGill. She is originally from Halfmoon Bay, British Columbia and she holds a Bachelor of Arts and Science with a Specialization in Communications Studies and Art History from Concordia University. During her undergraduate degree, she worked at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as well as the FoFA Gallery at Concordia University. Prior to starting her studies at McGill, she was the Curatorial Assistant at the Leonard & Bina Art Gallery. She has also worked on exhibitions in New York, Reykjavik and Montreal. Last summer, she volunteered at the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay. She is passionate about cultural heritage. She is currently a volunteer with Pro Bono Students Canada at the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal, is an active member of the Indigenous Law Association and the Law Student Associations’s Art Committee.

Katerina, can you tell us what sort of work you did while at the Ateno HR Centre?

“At the beginning of my internship I was provided with two research question’s to pursue. The first topic was on gender stereotyping and the second was an analysis of corporate social responsibility and children’s rights within the ASEAN context. These research questions enabled me to be productive when I was not working on time sensitive research issues or attending meetings etc. A few of the other research areas I addressed included the history of martial law, corporal punishment laws and children, as well as mechanisms for judicial monitoring. In particular, the research on martial law provided an opportunity to read in depth the constitution of the Philippines and grasp the historical context in which it was created.”

What were some of the challenges you experienced while living in Manila?

“The main challenges I faced were not necessarily at the site of my internship. Metro Manila is densely populated and the sheer volume of traffic, the heat and reading the morning headlines made for a few challenges at the beginning. The challenges were mainly in the first couple of weeks due to the political climate. A few days after my arrival, martial law was declared in the southern region of Mindanao in response to a potential ISIL infiltration (however the history of the region has had insurgencies and private armies for decades). Furthermore, within the same week a random attack by an individual in a Casino resulted in the death of nearly 40 people and was thought to be ISIL related - sparking fears that martial law would be declared in Manila. However, the incident was deemed to be isolated. These incidents made me weary of attending a training session in Baguio the first week I was there. In hindsight, it was perfectly safe to go. That being said, I would read the news with caution and not become overwhelmed by it.”

Read more about Katerina’s time in Manila through her blog posts—

>> Septembers – Regional and International Protections on the Rights of Children (August 30, 2017)

>> [The Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) and Human Rights Education (August 30, 17)]
What kind of work does the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group do?

— "The Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) is a private research center focused on issues within South Asia related to migration, displacement, social justice, and gender. The centre is officially led by Dr. Paula Banerjee and by Dr. Ranabir Samaddar (soon to be led by Dr. Anita Sengupta), and composed of several researchers working on different projects related to contemporary events in South Asia. The office publishes the academic journal Refugee Watch twice a year, in addition to running an online blog of the same name. The work is mostly anthropological and sociological."

What did you tackle during your internship, Alexa?

— "The internship at CRG consisted of planning and completing a self-directed research paper, culminating in a presentation near the end of the internship."

What was the most enriching part of your summer?

— "The most enriching aspect of the internship was exchange with those associated with CRG, as it was stimulating to learn about the various projects and interests of current and past researchers at the organization. I also greatly appreciated the friendships that I developed while I was there. The office environment was informal, with people showing great generosity in helping me with any issues I faced, including those related to living in Kolkata."

What was it like living in Kolkata?

— "I immensely enjoyed living in Kolkata for twelve weeks, a city so evidently rich in culture and history. There was never a time where I was lacking something to see or do, be it a Hare Krishna parade or French film festival. Compared to other cities in India, it was fairly easy to integrate myself into society and live in the city despite being visibly foreign."

Read more about Alexa’s time in India through her blog posts—

>> A ViSIT To The high court of Dehli (september 1, 2017)

>> The exclusion of Women’s interests in India’s right to fair compensation and transparency in land acquisition, rehabilitation, and resettlement Act, 2013 (august 27, 2017)
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