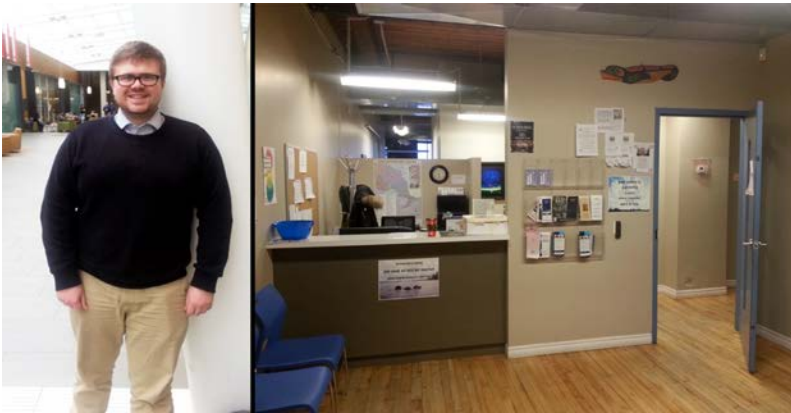




INTENSIVE PROGRAM IN ABORIGINAL LANDS, RESOURCES AND GOVERNMENTS

PRESENTING THE CLASS OF 2017



BEN HOGNESTAD

Osgoode Hall Law School

Aboriginal Legal Services (Toronto)

My placement at Aboriginal Legal Services was by far the highlight of my legal education. ALS is an incredible organization, and I am extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to make a small contribution to their important work. Following are a few highlights from my time at ALS.

Under the guidance of Program Director Jonathan Rudin and Staff Lawyer Caitlyn Kasper, I was involved in an application to intervene in *R. v. Boutilier*, a Supreme Court case challenging the constitutionality of the dangerous offender provisions in the Criminal Code. The application was successful, and ALS will be presenting oral arguments in mid-May. Also, under the guidance of Interim Legal Advocacy Director Emily Hill, I helped create public legal education materials around the appeal process for applications for membership in the Qalipu First Nation. Finally, among many other things, I assisted with two Criminal Injuries Compensation Board matters.

But above and beyond the amazing variety of interesting tasks I was able to perform, the ALS staff really made me feel welcome! Spending a few weeks with the folks who do this vital work day in and day out was enough for a lifetime of inspiration. I simply cannot imagine a better way to finish off my law degree and start my legal career.



BRITTANY HAZELL

Osgoode Hall Law School

Six Nations of the Grand River Territory (Ontario)

My placement with the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory was within the Lands and Resources department. My work focused around the 28 submitted land claims, the self-government claims, and the proposed Global Solutions for matters within the Haldimand tract. Some of the projects I completed were memorandums on the First Nations Land Management Act and how it compares to self-governance, Own-Source-Revenue provisions in self-government claims, and a consultation letter given to third parties during project discussions. Further, I utilized Six Nations' Global Solutions of compensation, royalties, land return and land purchases to further arguments in assignments.

My placement allowed me to gain invaluable knowledge about Six Nations self-governance claim and their objective to ensure that injustices within the Haldimand Treaty area are resolved in a manner that respects past, present and future generations through the Global Solutions.



CAITLIN TOLLEY

University of Ottawa

Office of the Honourable Senator Murray Sinclair (Ottawa)

I was fortunate to have completed my internship in the office of the Honourable Senator Sinclair. During my placement, I worked on files pertaining to policy and legal issues that arose in the Senate. I attended Senate Committee meetings and viewed debates in the Senate Chamber. I wrote policy briefs, drafted suggested speaking notes, legal memoranda's and worked on communiqué's. I gained substantial knowledge into how the Senate functions on a daily basis and the types of files that Senator's work on. I was privileged to meet with Senator Sinclair on a regular basis to receive feedback and guidance pertaining to the documents I was drafting. A highlight of my placement was attending a meeting with Senator Sinclair, Senator Pate and Dr. Cindy Blackstock and having the opportunity to work on the child welfare file.



MICHAEL JOHNSTON

Osgoode Hall Law School

Saugeen Ojibway Nation, Environmental Office (Bruce Peninsula)

I helped arrange my own placement for the Intensive in Indigenous Lands and Resources placement. I was very grateful to work with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environment Office in my own home community. I explored the confluence of traditional and contemporary decision-making protocols in the context of expressions of consent, particularly with respect to nuclear power generation issues in our Traditional Territory. I was also happy to assist with the development of a major project with great potential to improve the viability of our commercial fisheries. I was moved and gratified to be routinely included in meetings and discussions, in a way that valued my input and made me feel like part of the team. I learned a great deal that will be of immense benefit to me and my community when I return to work with them.



SARAH CONFER

University of Victoria

Devlin Gailus Watson (Victoria, BC)

For my work placement, I was placed at DGW Law in Victoria, BC. I really wanted to use this opportunity to experience the work environment at a “real” law firm. Throughout law school, aboriginal law and indigenous legal issues were the areas that most captivated my attention, but what would the day-to-day life of someone actually practising this area of law really look like?

DGW is a small, 10-associate Aboriginal law firm which provides a range of services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including litigation, negotiation, economic development and strategic advice.

I had the amazing good fortune to be able to contribute to two “rock-star” projects: a Supreme Court of Canada appeal and an Aboriginal title case. Both of these cases were in their infancy when I was there, so my work was focused largely on background research or other preparatory work. That said, the experience allowed me to delve deeply into a fascinating and complex area of law (Aboriginal title...to the seabed) and also gain some practical experience in some of the more procedural aspects of litigation.

The team was really inclusive, and let me sit in on client meetings and conference calls. One of the lawyers on staff really took me under her wing, inviting me to indigenous events outside of office hours, and connecting me with other Aboriginal lawyers working in the area. All in all, it was a great experience and the time absolutely flew by! Seven weeks felt like a day, and I would do it all again in a heartbeat.



SHEREEN SMITHANIK

Osgoode Hall Law School

Upper Skeena Counselling and Legal Assistance Society (Hazelton, BC)

I was placed with the Upper Skeena Counselling and Legal Assistance Society (USCLAS). USCLAS operates as a clinic serving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the beautiful, isolated and historical town of Hazelton and surrounding areas.

This region in Northern British Columbia consists of several Indigenous groups of primarily Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en heritage. The clinic offers variety of services in the community pertaining to poverty law, and even animal rescue. I worked with an especially informed supervising lawyer, Linda Locke, who has transferred a wealth of knowledge to me. I performed a variety of legal work including criminal, family and wills, and I even adopted a beautiful dog in the process. I am also working in the development of the first First Nation Court in the area as a result of the placement. The most enlightening moment from this experience for me, however, is one that I believe is impossible to fully grasp in law school, which is that lawyering in Indigenous communities requires more than a superior understanding of the law, but an appreciation of the term "community". Travelling to different villages, listening to stories and taking part in local traditions have given me a deeper understanding of Aboriginal law and further solidified my aspirations to practice in this field.



THOMAS LABOUCAN-AVIROM

University of Victoria

Maya Leaders Alliance (Punta Gorda, Belize)

The Maya Leaders Alliance (“MLA”) is a non-profit group that works in conjunction with the Toledo Alcaldes Association as the voice and strategic mind of the Maya Communities of Belize, predominantly of the southern Toledo district. The group had a landmark win before I arrived in the Caribbean Supreme Court that gave the Maya land title to all Mayan territory in Belize.

During my time with the MLA I was able to witness the relationships between the Maya and the Belizean government, justice system, and businesses. Work was dynamic and could range from legal research on an upcoming trial, to Economic development research, to learning customary Maya laws in the forest, to drafting reports, to attending meetings between the Maya and the government representatives all within a single week.

I would not change a thing about my placement. It was true experiential learning on the practical level, but it was also learning on the human level that not everything is as straightforward as we are sometimes taught in law school. I also had a taste of the unique nature of working within the law in international experiences I feel will help me when I practise in Canada. Indigenous people share commonality in that they are fighting for their rights across turtle island, but this experience also taught me that each situation and Nation is unique. However, it gave me hope to witness great leadership first hand, and that worldwide the Indigenous struggle is one of the most important in our lives for the sake of equality, protecting the land, and justice.



YASMEEN PEER

University of Windsor

West Coast Environmental Law (Vancouver, BC)

WCEL is a non-profit environmental law and public interest organization that is dedicated to safeguarding the environment through law. It was a rich experience. It was an honour to work at this boundary pushing leading environmental and public advocacy law organization. I loved the warm, engaging staff and friendly working environment where my voice was valued and respected.

While at WCEL, I worked on RELAW Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land Air and Water project, launched in 2016 with the Indigenous Legal Research Unit (ILRU) at the University of Victoria, Faculty of Law. I travelled with lawyers from RELAW and ILRU to Tsilhqot'in territory to facilitate a workshop on Indigenous law with community members from the various Tsilhqot'in communities. We engaged in stories using ILRU's invaluable case briefing methodology to explore legal principles related to water. It was a fantastic experience to learn from the lawyers facilitating the workshop including a Tsilhqot'in lawyer and from the community members who shared important insights and teachings about the water, trees, animals and about the negative impact clearcutting has by lowering the water table and drying out the forests. After having read the Tsilhqot'in decision in 1L it was incredible to meet with members of the Tsilhqot'in nation and see and experience their vast and beautiful territory.

I spent most of my time at WCEL working on a project designing and creating content for a draft of Trappers handbook with my supervising lawyer and alumni of IPALRG, Hannah Askew.

Hannah is a wonderful supervisor. I feel fortunate to have worked with her on the Trappers Handbook as she spearheaded this project and is extremely passionate and knowledgeable about it. From my second day at WCEL she put me in direct contact with Indigenous trappers from Treaty 8 territory and gave me the honour of interviewing them. I learned a great deal about the plight of First Nations' trappers in T8 and how their treaty rights to hunt, fish, and trap are being encroached by logging, oil and gas, and mining industries.