
International Human Rights Internship Program

2014 Program Report

Centre for Human Right and Legal Pluralism, Faculty of Law, McGill University

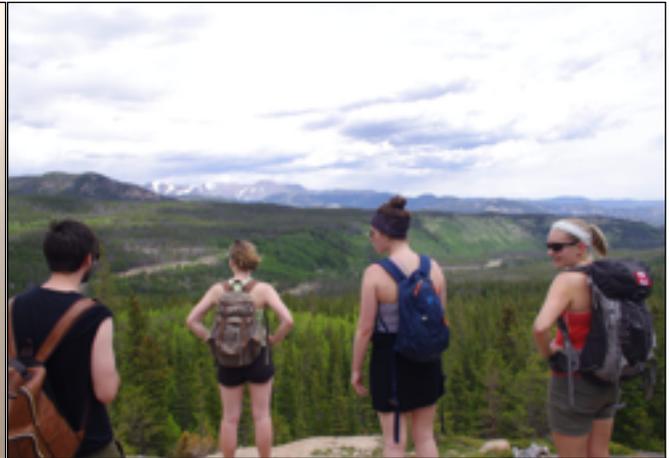


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Introduction

McGill University's Faculty of Law enjoys a rich tradition of human rights education and involvement. In 1992, the Faculty established a number of partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Canada and abroad. Administered by the Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, the International Human Rights Internships Program is a fully credited course that allows students to earn six (6) credits toward the completion of the BCL/LLB degree.

The Internship Program carefully selects law students for placements as interns with NGOs and courts 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 international legal human rights instruments and norms. The Internship Program is directed by the Faculty's Human Rights Committee under the direction of Professor Nandini Ramanujam.

The Internship Program provides students with an opportunity to apply their legal education in a concrete setting and further develop a demonstrated interest and commitment to the defence of human rights. Students participate in the Program as volunteers, with partial funding from the Faculty of Law. Following their summer placements, interns return to the Faculty with practical legal training and personal experience that enrich the intellectual and social life of the law school community.

La Coalition des ONG et OCB du Cameroun

Suzanne Zaccour

La Coalition des ONG et OCB du Cameroun œuvrant dans le domaine des Établissements Humains est un réseau d'organisation basé à Yaoundé, la capitale du Cameroun. Elle a pour mission d'initier et de favoriser des initiatives améliorant la qualité de l'habitat dans une perspective consciente des enjeux de genre et de VIH/sida. Elle réalise notamment des projets de Cliniques de Consultation Foncière afin de défendre, de protéger et de faire valoir les droits des femmes et des personnes atteintes du VIH/sida à la terre, au logement et à la propriété.

L'expérience de Suzanne au Cameroun est difficile. D'un côté, être immergée dans une culture inconnue et participer au travail d'une organisation œuvrant pour une cause qui nous tient à cœur est certainement enrichissant. Suzanne a beaucoup appris pendant ces douze semaines, et elle a aussi découvert la nourriture et la culture associative du Cameroun. D'un autre côté, le harcèlement de rue et la solitude peuvent être difficiles à vivre.

Le stage offert à la CONGEH est aussi difficile à cerner par rapport à l'encadrement reçu. Le ou la stagiaire est très encadré-e dès son arrivée et reçoit tout l'accompagnement nécessaire pour se procurer les choses essentielles dont il ou elle a besoin. Côté travail, cependant, l'encadrement est minimal, ce qui favorise une atmosphère détendue et de l'initiative. C'est une combinaison qui est agréable puisqu'elle répond aux craintes du ou de la stagiaire quant à sa sécurité et à la facilité de son adaptation tout en lui permettant de se sentir autonome et digne de confiance.

Equitas

Diana Arghirescu

Diana été accueillie à titre de stagiaire au sein de l'équipe d'Equitas, au département de l'éducation. La plupart de ses tâches ont eu un lien direct avec le Programme international de formation aux droits humains (PIFDH) 2014, et avec la Session sous-régionale de formation aux droits humains Abidjan, avril 2014.

Diana a participé à l'élaboration d'une partie du rapport annuel préparé par Equitas pour son bailleur de fonds principal, l'Agence canadienne du développement international. Cette analyse était censée mesurer l'impact et l'efficacité des programmes d'Equitas dans ces deux contextes, à partir de l'interprétation des données qualitatives et quantitatives recueillies par Equitas. Cette recherche d'évaluation à laquelle elle a collaboré était conçue en vue de refléter et mesurer le potentiel concret des participants pour accomplir les objectifs de ces formations en droits humains, leur capacité d'agencer une intervention sociale efficace dans leurs communautés en matière de droits humains et de l'éducation en droits humains.

Diana a aussi travaillé était une recherche sur le Manuel des animateurs contenant la suite des leçons du programme d'éducation, l'approche participative, les stratégies et techniques utilisées pour chacun des thèmes du programme. Il s'agissait de parcourir le Manuel des intervenants (« Training of Trainers- Designing and Delivering Effective Human Rights Education ») dans le contexte duquel chaque leçon contenait plusieurs techniques et activités en lien avec l'approche participative.

Arielle Corobow

Arielle's summer at Equitas in Montreal allowed her to meet a lot of fantastic people involved in domestic human rights campaigns that have international dimensions. Equitas (the Canadian Human Rights Foundation) is dedicated to the defence and promotion of human rights through education. Its education programs support the development of pluralistic and democratic civil societies.

One highlight of Arielle's internship was the International Human Rights Training Program, which has been organized by Equitas for the past 35 years. Participants from all around the world gather to learn from one another and explore methods of human rights education. Over the years, the program and its curriculum has evolved but maintained a strong focus on education and gender. Arielle was incredibly impressed by Equitas' training program for human rights educators. The organization does a fantastic job of creating a comprehensive manual and emphasizing the participatory element of education. Arielle observed the fine balance that needed to be taken between selecting topics that would be universally engaging while avoiding the common pitfalls of western-centric programming presented as universally applicable to everyone.

Arielle recommends this internship to students looking to learn more about domestic human rights organizations and opportunities with international dimensions. Equitas represents an excellent opportunity to stay in Montreal, improve your French, learn a number of different planning and logistical skills, and work within a dynamic group of human rights professionals.

Ligue de Défense et Promotion des Droits de l'homme au Cambodge

Jonathan Coulombe

Dans le cadre du *Human Rights Internship Program* de la Faculté de Droit de McGill, Jonathan est parti au Cambodge à l'été 2014 pour travailler au sein d'un organisme s'appelant la LICADHO (Ligue de Défense et Promotion des Droits de l'Homme au Cambodge).

Au cours de l'été, on lui a demandé de faire principalement des tâches administratives pour combler à un manque s'étant développé au cours de la dernière année. Il a donc produit un rapport de mi-année, des documents d'information sur les forces de l'ordre du Cambodge, des dépliants promotionnels et a retranscrit les notes d'un procès hautement politique.

L'organisme lui a très bien reçu. On lui a rapidement trouvé un appartement où il a pu rester l'ensemble de mon stage. Ses collègues comme la population cambodgienne étaient incroyablement accueillant aussi. Il a ainsi pu me rapprocher des consultants (des étrangers) tout comme des Cambodgiens. Ils ont même créé une équipe de soccer de la LICADHO et jouions chaque semaine.

Le stage s'est très bien déroulé, quoique le début du séjour fût un peu plus ardu. Jonathan recommanderait, pour les années suivantes d'envoyer un Anglophone, préférablement avec une aisance d'écriture (des expériences en communication par exemple) et affichant une grande ouverture d'esprit et une grande capacité d'adaptation face à la tâche très diversifié pouvant s'offrir au stagiaire.

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Isabelle Rémillard

Isabelle travelled to Toronto to intern at the Canadian HIV / AIDS Legal Network. The Legal Network is a human rights organization at the intersection of law and health that promotes rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV / AIDS, both in Canada and abroad. It does so through different approaches, namely through research and analysis, advocacy and litigation, as well as public education and community mobilization. Isabelle's summer internship was rewarding and meaningful. Having never worked for a legal organization before many of the tasks assigned to her were new: carrying out legal needs assessments or drafting human rights recommendations for a foreign country's bill. However, she was given great guidance both before and during the execution of these tasks, and received constructive feedback afterwards.

As an intern, Isabelle had the opportunity to work on many of the Legal Network's main issues, notably on projects regarding Aboriginal communities, criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, sex work, women's rights and international issues such as forced sterilization in Namibia and a proposed legislation on HIV in Uganda. She greatly enjoyed the friendly and informal work environment, developing strong relationships with most of the employees. Informal conversations helped Isabelle get a better idea of the career path she wants to follow.

Isabelle highly recommends the Legal Network to future students because it provides exposure to cutting-edge human rights issues at the national and international levels. Working at the Legal Network allows you to be at the forefront of recent HIV-related developments and to work alongside passionate and motivating people.

Ateneo Human Rights Center

Katie Spillane

The Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) is housed by the Ateneo Manila Law School. Established in 1986, it was among the first university-based institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights in the Philippines. The AHRC seeks to realize its mandate through programs focused on the continuing formulation of human rights lawyers and advocates, the monitoring of the human rights situation in the Philippines and abroad, research, education, publications, and legal assistance to victims of human rights violations.

Katie was greatly looking forward to her internship and is grateful for the detailed conversations she had with last year's intern. Her internship exposed her to a number of different human rights issues, including women's rights, diplomacy, economic development, and health issues. Unfortunately, Katie did not get a chance to delve deeply into one particular areas, but the upside of her work was the opportunity to gain a breadth of experience. Her work was extremely flexible and she was able to discuss any concerns she had with a number of supervisors.

Katie was also able to spend a lot of time with local grassroots activists who were involved in a number of different grassroots organizational efforts. This provided a nice contrast to the office-oriented work she performed during her internship.

Katie feels that there are a number of potential organizations operating in Manila that prospective McGill interns would enjoy. She sees a number of untapped opportunities to do great work in Manila. Overall, Katie loved her internship—it was the ideal way to spend her last summer in law school.

The One Earth Future Foundation

Stacey Smydo

During her time at OEF, she worked in the Research & Development (R&D) department on two main projects: a discussion paper on the academic-practitioner divide in peace and conflict organizations and a report outlining proposals to reform the United Nations.

Her first project began as an internal stakeholder analysis and was eventually published as a discussion paper on “bridging the gap” between academics and practitioners working in peace and conflict organizations. The project involved collecting data on what these individuals and organizations produced and cited in their work as well as what they shared on social media. The results were so interesting to OEF that the research team expanded their observations into a discussion paper on “bridging the gap” between academics and practitioners in this area.

Her second project at OEF was to produce a report on proposals for reform of the United Nations. Marcel, OEF’s founder, wanted to start a fifth implementation team with the goal of reforming the United Nations. Stacey was tasked with conducting the preliminary research on existing proposals and suggesting possible points of entry for this team. While this task seemed insurmountable, the team succeeded in producing a concise report outlining the areas of potential reform along with possible plans of action for each. The team’s final report outlined previous initiatives and possible points of entry for reforming the security council, supporting public-private partnerships with the United Nations, reforming peacekeeping operations, improving the efficiency, competency, and effectiveness of United Nations staff, and supporting data collection and evidence-based policy throughout the United Nations system.

Stacey highlight enjoyed living in Colorado and highly recommends doing one or several camping trips in the nearby areas.

Kyle Best

Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) is a project of the One Earth Future Foundation. The project was launched in 2010 and focuses on supporting sustainable, long-term solutions to maritime piracy. OBP has a particular geographic focus on activities in Somalia, India, and West Africa.

Kyle was the second McGill IHRIP to work with OBP. His internship provided him with considerable practical experience in the areas of maritime and admiralty law and policy. A large number of his co-workers were formerly members of the US Air Force and US Navy and had hands-on experience that made the work environment extremely engaging and entertainment. Kyle, for instance, enjoyed hearing workers describe his co-workers anecdotes about working on ships and flying planes.

Kyle spent a large part of his summer working on a hostage release case that OBP was tipped off to. He felt that his supervisors valued the research and work he produced. This was extremely gratifying because it felt like his work made a real difference. Moreover, Kyle enjoyed the fact that his supervisor cultivated a practical environment trying to respond to concrete problems associated with piracy. He noted that his supervisor was less-concern with academic criticisms and discourse on the topic of piracy. This was a nice contrast to his law student experience, which at times, presents issues in a highly theoretical manner.

Matthew Millman-Pilon

Matthew was the second intern to work at the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) program at One Earth Future Foundation. R2P declares that states have a responsibility to protect their citizens from mass atrocity crimes. When states are unable or unwilling to protect their populations, the responsibility to protect shifts to the international community. The international community may aid states in protection, or can intervene to enforce the principle. R2P does not exclusively refer to humanitarian or military intervention and may also be diplomatic, economic, or legal. The R2P program focuses specifically on the role of the business sector in implementing R2P.

Much of Matthew's work consisted of research in support of the implementation of projects that dealt with human rights concerns pertaining to resource extraction (oil and natural gas). He learned about how local communities living near extraction zones are often most-impacted by this activity even though they are an after-thought in the approval of resource extraction projects. Matthew's research involved the accountability mechanisms (including enforcement) of companies that have state-sanctioned approval to conduct industrial activity. Matthew learned an incredible amount about issues of governance, accountability, and the relationship between human rights and business.

Matthew enjoyed the 9-5 office job. His work provided structure and he had very pleasant interactions with his co-workers, many of whom were interns from other schools. While Matthew did not get as much feedback on some of his work as he wanted, he is extremely grateful to have had such a rich learning opportunity.

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada

Lucia Westin

Lucia Westin was an intern at a new internship placement. Her experience was tremendously valuable in illuminating the state of human rights in Canada as well as her own capacities to work in the legal field. By working intimately with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada on their First Nations child welfare discrimination case, Lucia expanded her understanding of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The process required to argue a human rights violation before this tribunal, including the role of the Human Rights Commission. Her time working on, and attending testimonies for, the Caring Society's case taught her about this method of fighting for human rights in Canada. Lucia's research tasks also gave her tremendous insight into Aboriginal law and its important role within Canadian law.

Lucia's supervisors at the Caring Society encouraged her to attend the examinations of witnesses before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and various educational events in which the Caring Society was involved.

Lucia very much enjoyed her work environment, which was very encouraging for students with human rights passions. Lucia learned an incredible amount about the Canadian Human Rights Code as a vehicle to protect human rights. She was also inspired by the hard work of bright individuals who were dedicated to fighting for human rights in the legal domain. These same individuals encouraged me personally by affirming my capabilities. Overall, Lucia is very confident that she will apply her legal skills to the field of human rights and social justice causes.

Avocats Sans Frontières

Nicolas Aubin

Avocats sans frontières Canada (ASFC) est une organisation à but non lucratif située dans la ville de Québec dans la province de Québec (Canada) fondée en 2002 par les maîtres Dominique-Anne Roy, Pierre Brun et Pascal Paradis. Originellement nommée *Avocat sans frontières Québec* (ASFQ) la structure organisationnelle et les mandats d'ASFC sont similaires à ceux de l'organisme *Avocat sans frontière* (Belgique) fondé en 1992. ASFC s'est confié le mandat de contribuer "à la défense et la promotion des droits humains et de la primauté du droit, à la lutte contre l'impunité, au renforcement de la sécurité et de l'indépendance des avocats défenseurs des droits humains, à la tenue de procès équitables et à la formation continue des intervenants de la justice et des membres de la société civile."

Les tâches que Nicolas a accomplies au bureau d'ASFC à Québec étaient très variées. Il était rédacteur le 13 mai 2014 d'un document explicatif des faits et les litiges juridiques en cause dans l'affaire *Canada (Citoyen et Immigration c. Harkat)*. Aussi, il a préparé une note de service sur les impacts de l'adoption de la loi fédérale *anti-pourrielle* du 1 juillet sur les activités informatiques d'ASFC et d'autres organismes à but non lucratif.

Le travail réalisé à ASFC est probablement l'un des plus motivants que Nicolas a connu au cours de sa vie! Non seulement les sujets abordés sont très intéressants pour un étudiant en droit (particulièrement si ce dernier apprécie traiter de droit international et des droits de la personne), mais devant la manifestation d'un intérêt extrajuridique, tel que l'informatique, les membres d'ASFC se feront un plaisir d'assigner au stagiaire des tâches couvrant cet intérêt, si cela leur est possible.

Jesuit Refugee Services

McLean Ayearst

McLean's internship was a late addition to the IHRIP. Jesuit Refugee services were created in 1979 and work to assist forcibly displaced persons in 8 countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Timor Leste, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia. JRS undertakes services at national and regional levels.

McLean's experience his experience was invaluable and shaped his interest in Refugee Law more broadly. In fact, McLean insists that his time as a Legal Officer at Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provided a glimpse of what it will take to be a good lawyer. This role was similar in many ways to that of a practicing lawyer. McLean acted as clients' legal counsel, and used his knowledge of the law, procedures and guidelines to help clients navigate a legal system and to secure fair and correct outcomes. McLean was given an incredible amount of responsibility in this role and I learned a lot about essential skills that he would like to continue to develop as he advances in his legal career. McLean learned invaluable lessons about what it will take to be a good lawyer including organization, communication, and strong interpersonal skills.

Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik Legal Services

Martha Chertkow

Martha ventured to the north for her internship at Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik Legal Services, which provides Legal Aid services in Iqaluit. The office serves the Baffin region of Nunavut and staff lawyers work in criminal, family, poverty and civil law. The largest section is the criminal law section. As a legal intern, Martha jumped at the opportunity to interact with clients, work on their files, and represent them in court. Her internship provided her with these opportunities. She attended court for bail hearings, working on a number of files of detainees. This required Martha to meet clients at the local jail to make a bail plan. Martha had an excellent legal supervisor who provided her with considerable ad hoc training and also entrusted her with a lot of responsibility from the outset.

Martha also dealt with a number of family law cases. This was a particularly challenging aspect of her internship. A number of the cases involved going through affidavits documenting child abuse and domestic violence. Sometimes graphic photos were included in the files. This alerted Martha to the challenges of working with family law where incredibly personal details of the clients' domestic life are divulged as part of the evidence.

Martha absolutely loved her internship experience. She thrived being in a legal environment with a great deal of practical environment. Martha can now see herself returning to Iqaluit upon graduation to work in legal aid after graduation.

Human Rights Watch

Amanda Ghahremani

Amanda went into her internship experience in the Big Apple at Human Rights Watch with a blank slate. And the internship far surpassed her expectations. Human Rights Watch is an international organization that defends human rights and exposes human rights abuses around the world. HRW also pressures governments and other powerful stakeholders to abide by international human rights standards.

Amanda's internship comprised mainly of legal research on areas in the Middle East, including the human rights situations in Libya, Syria, and Gaza. Since these topics were timely, Amanda was able to utilize news reports from diverse sources as they were released in real time. Amanda immensely enjoyed her role as a legal research.

While she enjoyed her work, Amanda had a number of critical reflections she brought with her. She noted the nepotism that is common at larger international human rights organizations. She also felt that many of the opportunities were inaccessible to many as they required considerable education and access. These insights, however, gave her a better understanding of what it's like working for a big human rights organization. The most rewarding part of her internship was the fact that it confirmed for Amanda that she sees a future for herself in law. Her work was directly connected to human lives and ongoing human rights concerns.

Calcutta Research Group

Peter Grbac

Peter was the second intern to spend 12 weeks at the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) in Calcutta, India. The CRG grew out of its support of the peace movement in West Bengal, particularly during the 1996 Third Joint Conference of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy. The CRG is a think tank that was founded by a group of researchers, trade unionists, feminists and women's rights advocates, academics, journalists, and lawyers.

Peter approach his role as an intern primarily as a researcher. He conducted considerable academic research on issues involving development. His work was research-intensive and did not have a lot of practical hands-on work. Peter made up for this by expanding his knowledge of the history and culture of India and some of the social movements that have driven reforms in the country.

Living in Calcutta was a tremendous highlight of the internship for Peter. He explored the city considerably and his accommodations had no heat or water. He really enjoyed the cultural diversity and dynamism of Calcutta and recommends the internship for students looking to travel to India and immerse themselves in the local community. Peter also recommends this internship for students looking to improve their academic research and writing skills.

Equality Effect

Annie O'Dell

Annie spent her summer in central Kenya at the Equality Effect. The Equality Effect develops creative legal solutions to address the inequality of women and girls in Africa who are subject to some of the most appalling human rights abuses. Currently, the organization is active in Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi. The organization is part of an international network of human rights advocates (including grass roots community members, artists, musicians, film makers, health care workers, journalists, lawyers, teachers, students, judges and Parliamentarians) working together to improve the lives of women and girls by using existing human rights law for the empowerment of women and girls.

Living in rural Kenya with other interns from Canada was definitely a challenge for Annie. There was no electricity or access to transportation, which created a sense of isolation. On the other hand, this created more opportunities for Annie to immerse herself within the local village in which she lived.

Annie worked on a number of projects that dealt with children's rights in a number of avenues. For instance, Annie was involved in the "160 Girls" project, a legal initiative that aims to achieve justice and protect against rape for all girls in Kenya. The project is in the process of initiating litigation to secure legal remedies calling upon the Kenyan state to enforce existing laws to protect girls from sexual violence and to hold rapists accountable. This project aims to mobilize the law to secure concrete change for women and girls.

As someone who is passionate about anti-violence work and who identifies as a feminist, Annie enjoyed the opportunity to work on these issues in a different region of the world. She recommends this internship for students who can work in self-motivated environments and who are looking for a different pace of life.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Jacinthe Poisson

La Cour interaméricaine, située à San José au Costa Rica, est composée d'une vingtaine d'avocats et d'une trentaine de stagiaires et visiteurs professionnels qui y travaillent de 2 à 9 mois. Comme stagiaire, Jacinthe ne travaille pas auprès d'un juge comme dans les tribunaux canadiens. Neuf équipes de deux avocats (un junior et un senior) et deux ou trois stagiaires travaillent sur environ quatre cas à la fois, qui sont généralement à des étapes procédurales différentes. Un « juge-relateur » est attribué à chaque cas, mais vous ne serez pas amené à travailler avec lui. La première moitié du stage, Jacinthe a reçu des tâches de l'avocate senior, ensuite seulement de l'avocate junior. Elle avait très peu de contacts avec l'avocate senior, mais l'avocate junior était très sympathique (et très drôle!). L'ambiance de travail à la Cour est généralement excellente et coopérative. La majorité des avocats sont très ouverts à discuter et certains s'intègrent même aux activités sociales organisées par les stagiaires!

La majorité des stagiaires proviennent d'Amérique latine, mais il y a quelques stagiaires des États-Unis, souvent de descendance latino-américaine. Le groupe de stagiaire qu'elle a côtoyé était extrêmement inclusif, ouvert, une vraie famille! Même si l'espagnol est votre deuxième langue, vous verrez que de nombreux avocats parlent anglais ou français et sont très patients avec les erreurs en espagnol, n'ayez pas peur!

La charge de travail dépend grandement de l'équipe mais était généralement raisonnable. Des amis stagiaires de d'autres équipes ont toutefois vécu une situation différente et ont dû travailler tard souvent et se sentaient stressés par leur travail. Elle croit qu'il faut mettre ses limites avec son équipe, mais accepter d'être flexible : vous risquez d'être tellement passionnée par le travail qu'on vous donne que vous ne verrez pas le temps passer.

Akwesasne Mohawk Council

Cécile Capela

Cécile was the first McGill IHRIP intern at the Akwesasne Mohawk Council located near Cornwall, Ontario and borders the countries of Canada and the United States of America. At a time when the Government of Canada is advocating Partnerships and Native Self-Government, Akwesasne is well on its way, using its own initiative. We are ready to responsibly manage our internal structures, our numerous Human and Natural Resources, and to build a viable Sustainable Economy.

The internship provided Cécile with the opportunity to work in the community on legislation using community values and principles, which were presented in front of a Mohawk-run Court law. Cécile was extremely excited to work in the Mohawk community; however, she faced a number of logistical challenges. Firstly, Cécile and her supervisor had an initial misunderstanding and Cécile was informed that she needed to obtain a vehicle as transportation. This required Cécile to mobilize a tremendous amount of resources in a short amount of time to get a vehicle. However, Cécile remarked on the tremendous generosity of the community. Several residents offered her an apartment and helped her locate essential services during her internship.

Cécile's internship role including working a lot at the Mohawk-run court and researching ways to establish an inherent right court self-governed by First Nations. This is governed by s. 75 of the *British North America Act*. Her work on this forced her to look more deeply at the historical relationship between the Canadian government and First Nations, including the history of colonization and the failure to acknowledge Indigenous ways of self-government.

Despite the logistical challenges, Cécile highly recommends this internship to students interested in Aboriginal law and working within an Indigenous community. An ongoing challenge for future interns will be locating an affordable vehicle.

Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa

Guilhem de Roquefeuil

IHRDA was founded in 1997 as a pan-African non-governmental organization based in Banjul, the Gambia. IHRDA works to create awareness about the African regional human rights mechanisms and to increase their accessibility, usage and effectiveness. It has observer status with African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACmHPR) and the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), both organs of the African Union. IHRDA works on legal advocacy, litigation, capacity building, research and publication and more broadly cooperating with the African regional human rights system.

For Guilhem, his 12-week internship was life changing. He loved living in Banjul and was able to take in the city's beautiful scenery and days on the beach. At IHRDA, Guilhem was given meaningful legal work and was entrusted with a lot of responsibility from the outset. This gave him the opportunity to take initiative and learn by doing. This surpassed his expectations since Guilhem had initially thought he would be doing more research-oriented work in human rights law in Africa. His work made Guilhem question the meaning of terminology such as 'developed' and 'developing' country—he found many descriptors for the Global South to be regressive and inaccurate given the dynamism within emerging countries in Africa and the rest of the so-called 'Third World'.

Guilhem recommends this internship for students looking to step up and dive in and take on a lot of responsibility from the outset. Interns at IHRDA will work in a calm environment but will be entrusted with considerable responsibility—a keener's dream.

Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities & the Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development

Matthias Heilke

Matthias travelled to Kampala, Uganda for a joint placement at Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities (LAPD) and the Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD). This is one of the IHRIP few joint placements for interns to work simultaneously with two organizations. LAPD was formed by lawyers with disabilities in 2005 and provides free and sustainable legal aid to poor people with disabilities, monitors compliance of disability related provisions in legislation, advocates for the protection of rights of people with disabilities, lobbies for policy reform and implementation, and raises public awareness. CEHURD is an indigenous, non-profit, research and advocacy organization which is pioneering the enforcement of human rights and the justiciability of the right to health in Eastern Africa.

Matthias worked a lot with CEHURD on a number of right to health initiatives, including strategic litigation on enhancing the right to health in domestic courts. Areas of research including intellectual property issues that affected access to medicines, maternal health, and HIV / AIDS. He drafted a blogpost on the polluting of two villages by a Chinese quarrying company in Uganda's Mukono District and discussed CEHURD's filing of an injunction to compel the mining company to clean up its environmental destruction.

Matthias really enjoyed working with the staff and his supervisors who were very helpful and encouraging. He also loved living in Kampala for the summer and wishes he had taken more opportunities to travel outside Kampala and see the rest of Uganda. He recommends this for future interns.