

## Masters of Social Work: Study Plan

In the past year I had the privilege of working for two exceptional non-profit organizations: Glen Eden Multimodal Centre and Children of the Street Society. This work provided me with life-changing experiences and motivated me to learn and do more in my community. After completing a Bachelor of Arts (UBC) and a Bachelor of Education (UWO), I expected to teach in a standardized learning environment. Instead, I became an Education Coordinator, responsible for up to 15 students who had multiple mental health diagnoses and were often physically aggressive. As part of my duties I was the educational resource for 13 other staff - many of who were older, held masters' degrees, and had greater life experience. I didn't anticipate that this year would change my career path.

Glen Eden was drastically downsized due to cuts in government funding and although I obtained another placement for myself, the students had limited alternative placements available to them and their families. The affected community lobbied hard and did receive an anonymous donation that allowed the school to continue to provide its services to the students for a limited time. This circumstance however made me acutely aware of the importance of adequate planning and resource management to service the vulnerable sectors of our community.

My second eye opening experience was with Children of the Street Society, an organization that is focused on crime prevention and the education of youth. As a workshop facilitator at Children of the Street Society, I spent a month

in training, learning about the topic of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. I met with a number of the organization's partners, including the Ministry of Justice, RCMP, VPD, representatives of the LGBTQ and First Nations communities, and former sex trade workers. With the knowledge gained from the discussions with our partners, my team created three separate 60-minute workshops for elementary, middle school, and high school students.

The workshops included original dramatic role-plays and discussion. By October we were presenting in the schools and our unique and youth-friendly delivery allowed for conversations about serious issues including human trafficking, sexual exploitation, child pornography, gang membership and online information sharing. In the first two weeks of workshop facilitation, we were already receiving disclosures from students surrounding the Vancouver area. Our team is still accepting disclosures and is now travelling throughout BC. We will deliver over 550 workshops to approximately 30,000 students in schools and community centers.

The expectation for each workshop facilitator is that after the completion of our one-year contract, we will continue to advance our knowledge and contributions to the community through further education or work experience. For myself, I believe an MSW will provide me with a better ability to make an impact in a community where I will serve. With a specialization in International and Community Development, I will better understand the systematic racism that Canada's marginalized populations face (University of Calgary, 2012a). With this knowledge, I aspire to take on a leadership role in a non-profit or government

organization that focuses on education and prevention programs, similar to one that I am currently involved with at Children of the Street Society.

A Masters in Social Work would also provide a foundational understanding of social policy. One course that I am particularly interested in is Social Work 632: Social Policy and Social Justice (University of Calgary, 2012b). I am driven to expand my knowledge of social policy after witnessing how the decisions from one funder, board, or individuals can impact the lives others. For example, in my former role as an Education Coordinator I experienced how the school struggled for funding, and the lack of support that was given to parents with children with exceptionalities. I witnessed how the children's quality of life was drastically reduced during the school closure and without adequate planning the school will be susceptible to be in the same predicament next year.

By comparison, the government heavily funds Children of the Street Society. This is largely in part due to the organization's hard work to maintain its funding. For instance, it has dedicated personnel whose primary job is grant writing. With the money received by the government, our organization is working to prevent instances of sexual exploitation within the province of BC. We have received numerous disclosures from youth that are followed up by our superiors, who are able to intervene and offer support to the victimized youth. This program could not exist without the help and funding of our partners.

By applying to the Masters of Social Work program, I am asking for opportunity to be educated about social policy and social justice. With this accreditation and experience, I aspire to achieve a leadership role in the public

sector. Through my hard work, I am confident that I can create positive changes that will affect the individual, community, and greater society. I know that this is achievable based on my consistent work ethic and previous successes, which includes the achievement of over an eighty average in my last school year and the appraising smiles of each and every one of my students.

### Bibliography

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