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Placement at Legal Information Society Nova Scotia (LISNS)

I did my placement at Legal Information Society Nova Scotia (LISNS). LISNS is a charitable non-profit organization that has been providing the public of Nova Scotia with free legal information, services and resources since 1982. The organization attempts to combat the issue of lack of access to legal information and aid, as this is an issue for a lot of people dealing with the legal system. They believe that people have the right and responsibility to know what the laws exist, what they mean, and how they impact us. This aid is delivered through easy to access information on their website, a question forum which can be accessed through telephone, email, or live chat, and they can help you access a low-cost lawyer. Additionally, they have also developed apps that help guide you through the production of important personal documents; for example, how to create a will, how to create a personal directive, and how to start or defend a claim.

My practicum placement at LISNS this semester was completely virtual. I was led by Heather at LISNS, and was accompanied by Caitie, another student in my program at Dal. My placement this semester focused on kickstarting a new project called “Legal Life Stories from Older Adults”. This project would feature the personal stories from adults in Nova Scotia who faced legal problems telling us about their experience, how they handled it and what they wish they had known going into the process of dealing with the legal system. We planned to carry this out through the development of some sort of discussion forum, ideally a podcast series. Over the past 11 weeks I have been working with Caitie to facilitate this project on our own, with some guidance from our supervisor Heather. Throughout my placement I wrote a short journal entry

for each week in order to record my experience and keep track of everything I did. I will attempt to summarize this below!

We first met with Heather over the Christmas break. Here we got introduced to the organization and learned a bit about what we would be working on come January. Once January rolled around Caitie and I were in regular contact. Our first step was to do research on similar broad-based legacy projects and initiatives in order to learn the best way to undertake our own. This research is crucial in figuring out what the best approach is in terms of collecting and sharing these stories. Caitie and I kept a shared google doc where we could regularly record research we had taken and keep each other in the know. Heather had sent us some examples of similar initiatives that we could analyze and continued to do so over the course of the term when she came across them; this was super helpful.

I honestly thought that this research process was only going to take a few weeks and that we would be working on contacting potential project hosts relatively quickly, but that was definitely not the case. We continued to research for many weeks. We had our second meeting with Heather where we boiled down the analysis we had taken thus far and identified our unofficial plan of the best approach to this project. I also narrowed down some potential contacts that we could reach out to and then looked for contact information for these contacts; tracking people and organizations down actually proved to be relatively difficult. Once I was able to track down some contact information, I organized all the information in an excel spreadsheet and worked back and forth with Heather to draft an email template that I could send off. I will include this below!!

Email Template

Hello,

My name is Julia. I am contacting you from the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS). We are the public's trusted source for quality legal information and have been helping Nova Scotians since 1982. We are a charitable not for profit and provide all services and information free of charge to the public.

We are working on a new project called *Legal Life Lessons from Older Adults*. This project will feature older adults who have faced legal problems in their lives, sharing their stories. These stories will highlight knowledge and experience about how they managed these problems, what information they wish they knew at the time, and what advice they would give a young person in preventing these issues from arising. We envision this project being executed through the development of a podcast series.

We have seen and researched other broad based legacy projects like this one and are contacting you as we are aware that you have (or had) a project underway that did _____ (insert specific and personalized information about contact) and are interested in learning about how you went about undertaking your initiative. Did you partner with another organization? If so, have you found this helpful and why? What lessons learned or suggestions could you provide to help us on how to best undertake our project.

We would be pleased to speak to someone if that is easiest; please let us know if there is a preferred contact.

We appreciate any information that you can provide.

Best regards,
Julia

**** Some examples of our contacts were the Nova Scotia Archives, the Nova Scotia Library Association, The Cumberland Museum, an initiative undertaken in Quebec, and more! ****

After sending out our email to our contacts, I waited to hear back. Unfortunately, I did not hear back from any of them via email. The next step was to dig deeper for more contact information and attempt to contact them directly via telephone. This was also a slow process in terms of finding the right information, leaving messages, and waiting to hear back. Between all of this I continued to research other projects. Seeing how this project progressed over time, it

was safe to assume that by the time my placement ended, this project would not be completed, so an analysis of other initiatives will prove to be helpful for whoever is to continue this project once I depart from my placement. The last few weeks of my placement just entailed continuing to do this research and compiling it into a report for Heather.

I really enjoyed my time with LISNS and in my own experience it was extremely interesting. This is something I would have never gotten to do if it had not been for the opportunity through this class, so I am very grateful to have gotten the opportunity. This experience gave me the chance to execute an actual research process in the pursuit of an end goal; something I have done a lot of reading and writing about in school but have never executed in a more official or professional outlet. It was also nice to have this on the side of my other classes as it was completely different from anything I have done or have been learning about and it was a good change of scenery for me. My leader Heather was so sweet and supportive, but I do wish that I had a bit more of a hands-on experience in terms of the organization's day to day operations, and some more rigid guidelines for the project. As with many things in the past year and a half, I think COVID and the fact that this placement was turned virtual impacted the experience for sure. I think this organization has the potential to deliver a student with a really interesting experience, especially if it could be in person!!