

Placement Organization: Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)

The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing accessible legal information to the public. Its primary mandate is to educate Nova Scotians about the law, helping individuals understand their legal rights and responsibilities. LISNS offers a range of services including public legal education programs, workshops, webinars, printed materials, and online resources. The organization also works closely with community partners, libraries, and legal aid services to ensure that legal information is delivered in a practical and accessible manner. By focusing on accessibility, LISNS helps reduce barriers that often prevent individuals from engaging with the legal system, particularly those who may feel intimidated or excluded due to cost, complexity or lack of knowledge. Through its initiatives, LISNS aims to empower individuals to make informed decisions and navigate legal processes effectively.

During the initial weeks of my practicum, my partner and I attended a meeting with our supervisors to outline our responsibilities and understand LISNS's current projects. This introduction was helpful to set expectations and it gave me a clearer sense of how a nonprofit legal organization structures its work and priorities. We were assigned research tasks aimed at improving the functionality and accessibility of the LISNS app. This involved reviewing existing resources, identifying gaps, and gathering information that could enhance user experience for app users.

By the fourth week, we focused on facilitating notary clinics. This required contacting local partners, including the Dalhousie University Library and the Dalhousie Legal Aid Clinic, to explore collaboration opportunities. Our goal was to recruit volunteers who could become certified to assist clients with completing wills and other legal documents. This project allowed

us to engage directly with community partners and understand the logistical aspects of organizing legal assistance programs.

Towards the end of February, I participated in hosting a webinar to highlight the various resources available on the LISNS website. This session aimed to educate attendees on how to navigate and utilize the website effectively. Additionally, my partner created a brochure for this meeting, providing a visual and informational tool to complement the webinar presentation. This task gave us practical experience in public legal education and communication, as well as exposure to outreach strategies used by LISNS. Being involved in the webinar also helped me build confidence in presenting information clearly and engaging with an audience in a professional work setting.

In March, we spent more time researching and submitting information. This period of the practice was more independent, requiring strong time management and attention to detail in order to complete the tasks at hand. Overall, my experience with the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS) has been both interesting and informative. I found the organization itself to be highly valuable, particularly in its mission to make legal information accessible to the public. Access to legal knowledge is a significant issue, especially for individuals who may not have the resources to seek professional legal advice. LISNS plays an important role in bridging this gap, and I appreciated learning about how public legal education operates in practice.

However, while I found the organization's goals meaningful, I sometimes felt that the work assignment during my practicum did not fully reflect the potential impact I had hoped to experience. Many tasks such as researching app improvements or compiling information, felt somewhat removed from direct engagement with the public or from any hands-on legal work. While the tasks were helpful, and my supervisors were appreciative of it, I felt like I was not

completing much of relevance. This really created a disconnect between my expectations of working in a legal environment and the reality of the tasks I was assigned, which were often more behind-the-scenes.

As an example, the research conducted for the LISNS app was valuable in theory, for improving user experience. However, I could not see any tangible effects of any research I conducted. The works I did, if implemented, would only be shown over a longer period of time if it worked. Another example of this was when I could participate in a webinar. I felt that there could have been more opportunities to take on active roles or responsibilities that involved direct interactions with clients or legal professionals. It almost felt as if it was more work for the supervisors to provide work for us than to actually do it themselves.

Despite these challenges, the practicum was still beneficial in developing transferable skills. I improved my research abilities, and got to practice public speaking. I also gained insight into a subject I knew very limited about. I learnt about the nature of a nonprofit legal organization and the importance of partnerships in delivering services to the community. My placement at LISNS provided a meaningful introduction to a field of legal work and opened my eyes to that sort of work place.