

IHRP/Asper Centre

Internship Final Report

To: Cheryl Milne

From: Roxanne De Souza

Internship Organization: LEAF National Office

Supervisor: Dr. Kim Stanton

Over the summer, I completed my internship at the National Office of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) in Toronto, Ontario. LEAF is a non-profit organization that has advocated for the constitutional equality rights for Canadian women since 1985. LEAF's primary mandate is to "advance the substantive equality rights of women and girls in Canada through litigation, law reform, and public education using the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." Over the years, LEAF has intervened in dozens of cases at provincial and federal courts on behalf of traditionally marginalized groups in Canada.

Working with LEAF for the summer of my 1L year allowed me to gain critical exposure to the practical application of the law in the public interest sector. I had the opportunity to work on a number of LEAF's legal and advocacy initiatives, including conducting research to support various stages of upcoming litigation. I assisted with a number of projects, including research to support LEAF's role on the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women, LGBTQ rights, reproductive justice, and religious freedom. I also contributed to a report on Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) regarding the interplay of religion and politics with respect to women.

My work at LEAF also provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with other LEAF summer students from law schools around Ontario, as well as with lawyers and advocates that have partnered with LEAF on various projects. I was extremely fortunate to have a supervisor at LEAF that was and continues to be supportive of my professional growth. I thoroughly enjoyed my internship, and am looking forward to continuing to stay involved with LEAF's work in the future. Ultimately, this placement reaffirmed my intention to pursue a legal profession serving the public interest, and I am grateful to have been afforded this opportunity through the IHRP and the Asper Centre Fellowship.