

To: Graham Pike, Dean
From: Leanne Rose, CYC
Date: April 7, 2014

RE: Travel and Study Abroad Grant Report

Trip Destination: Belize
Date of Trip: February 20, 2014 – March 8, 2014

I would first like to thank the committee for the financial support (2,500 Travel grant) awarded for this exploratory trip to Belize. In addition, it is important to acknowledge Dr. Larry Wolf and Dr. Victoria MacFarlane for their assistance in identifying and developing initial connections in Belize for my pending visit. Their commitment and hospitality was key to the success of this trip.

The purpose of the trip was identified as;

1. To establish relationships in the Human Services field in Belize in order to facilitate possible future field schools
2. To visit Human Services Placements to assess their ability and willingness to provide learning opportunities for VIU Human Services students.
3. To obtain an understanding of the country of Belize and assess its viability for student field school or practica.

During the time in Belize, I was able to meet with various service providers and discuss a myriad of ideas that would see our future CYC students becoming involved in some of the service agencies working with children, youth and families in various parts of Belize. These included Liberty Orphanage, 4H Youth Development Center, Youth Cadets, Marla's House of Hope, Baptist Secondary School and the Ministry of Education, Youth Employment program.

In addition, meetings with the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Nursing, Allied Health, and Social Work and the Provost and Interim President of the University of Belize were completed with the goal of understanding their current post-secondary education capacity and offerings in Human Services. Various professional issues related to practice and education was explored in these meetings.

The Belize system for delivery of services to Children, youth and families is structured very differently; with the majority of care being managed by NGO's and churches. This poses some challenges for being able to assess the level of care being provided and for the Belize government to keep a larger eye on the map of human services. Given this, it was important to have an open mind and supportive stance when visiting agencies that might not operate with the same level of rigor as those in Canada. All agencies visited were open to having Canadian students being involved and could identify many opportunities and projects that would support student learning. These included areas

such as developing transition programs for youth aging out of care, offering after school activity based programs; developing service ideas for single parents, and simply reading with children in the orphanages. There is, of course, a great need for training and development and almost every agency expressed an interest in faculty doing some kind of staff training; most specifically on behaviour management techniques.

Belize is an amazingly friendly country that works within community to navigate poverty, illiteracy, gang violence, drugs, health issues, etc. The 60% of the population of Belize is 30 years or younger, which allows for a very youthful view and energy on addressing Human Service issues. The country has a *National Youth Development Policy* which identifies systemic issues related to the challenges youth face and offers a comprehensive perspective and benchmarks to be met to address these. This policy is currently the focus of the Ministry for Youth and the Ministry of Education, and the motivation to have it “come alive” was expressed throughout the meetings attended.

The Child and Youth Care department is in the process of reviewing the information gathered and deciding on the parameters of a future field school in Belize that would occur in 2015. This exploratory trip has been extremely beneficial in informing that process and framing our future discussions.

Thank you once again for the financial support on this project.

Respectfully,

Leanne Rose, Chair
Child and Youth Care Programs
Vancouver Island University