

From Workshops to COP27: My Leadership-In-Action Summer

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This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work as an intern with Development and Peace - Caritas Canada (D&P) - an NGO and an official international development organisation of the Catholic Church in Canada.

The organisation's mission is twofold - they aim to partner with other organisations in the Global South to promote a supportive and democratic movement towards International solidarity, and to educate Canadians on a variety of social and ecological justice initiatives, in order to empower and prepare them to take action against injustice through various endeavours and activities in their roles as custodians of the planet, and citizens of their country.

In order to deliver these values to the Canadian public and fundraise for those in need, Development and Peace provides ongoing support through three key avenues: the Development and Peace Schools Programme, Fundraising and Advocacy, and International Partnership Endeavours. While I had the opportunity to receive updates regarding all three avenues, my primary involvement was with the Development and Peace Schools programme.

The Development and Peace Schools programme is a branch of the organisation that involves delivering workshops to member schools part of the Catholic District School Boards - a network of over 100 schools! These workshops are based on a wide range of topics, from Social and Ecological Justice, to the value of water and natural resources - all supported by Catholic Social Teachings. The Schools programme also involves an Activities roster, which contains various campaigns and projects for students to undertake. Upon completion of each of these activities, students are awarded a corresponding 'Badge', which they can then continue to collect. Due to the rising success and popularity of this programme, many schools

have established their own 'Development & Peace Student Clubs' at their institutions, where a group of students convene weekly to complete tasks, organise campaigns for their schools, and earn badges in the process.

The existing set of badges have been used since the creation of the Development and Peace Schools programme. This includes Badges such as the 'Dress Down, Speak Up!' badge - participation in which helps raise awareness regarding the impacts of sweatshops and fast fashion. As an example, activities under this badge involve wearing t-shirts inside out to publicly display the 'Made in' tag and encourage conversation about the fast fashion industry and how individuals can make an impact by participating in endeavours such as the Clean Clothes Campaign. Other badges include the 'Ban the Bottle' badge, which involves students collaborating and uniting to run a large-scale campaign that advocates becoming a bottle-free community at their schools, while simultaneously educating their peers about the importance and value of water.

Therefore, as Phase I of my project, I was appointed as a member of the 'Badge Committee'. This involved working with the rest of the Development & Peace Schools Programme team to create a set of new, upgraded and topical Badges that aim to fill the gaps that were present on the existing Badge roster. This was a three week long process, and, eventually, we created three new badges. This included one that was designed for students to think critically about Canada's colonial history, learn more about the land on which they live, work and play, and gain a multifaceted understanding of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures. Another Badge that was created by the team will serve to help students understand the value of protests and campaigns, and their right to Free Speech, by providing a detailed breakdown of how to conduct and organise their own productive and peaceful protests and

rallies at their schools. The third and final Badge was created with the aim of educating students about the issues of exploitation in the Global South, especially ones that are present in the supply chains that surround us. This Badge includes an activity where students are encouraged to take inspiration from a template and write a letter to their local MPs and Steven Guilbeault, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change of Canada, to urge them to take action against this injustice. Thus, the outcome of this phase of my project was to foster enthusiasm in high-school students, provide avenues for them to stay updated on the ecological crises, and ensure that they are well-educated on political matters - so that we, as an organisation, can help create a generation of educated, ecologically responsible and conscientious voters for the future.

Phase II of my project was to build upon and diversify Development and Peace's programming services. This included implementing more salient and effective Mental Health programming across certain areas, such as the school workshops, and ensuring my implemented parameters continue to foster a spirit of Equity, Inclusivity and Diversity. Furthermore, I was also involved in the development of the content and subject matter of the Development and Peace Schools Programme workshops, both of which were highly interconnected and involved a thorough development and creation process. For instance, I was tasked to adapt and modify existing workshop material (initially made and developed with Middle-to-High School Students in mind) to suit the needs of Primary school students. This posed a significant challenge that required creativity and the ability to put yourself in a Primary school child's shoes! I did this by ensuring I pared the activities down, and then I modified the instructions so that they were simplified and thus easier for children to follow. I focused a great deal on ensuring the changes in language still maintained the same core message, and tried to make sure that it was delivered just as strongly and effectively. In terms

of the Mental Health Programming I implemented, I made sure that there was always a dimension of social and ecological justice teachings that touched upon how those issues can impact people on a personal level and their mental health. This included further developing aspects such as discussion circles after particularly emotionally-charged activities or topics, so as to ensure topics such as mental health were embedded into the curriculums and brought up and discussed with tact, sensitivity and grace. I would hope that this, in turn, also teaches the students to become leaders and approach their day-to-day involvement with mental health initiatives respectfully too. I am delighted to know that these programming measures that I have implemented will continue to be utilised by Development & Peace well into the future.

Phase III of my project involved me actually implementing theory into practice, and delivering some workshops to students over Zoom. This was a great opportunity to test out the new programming measures I had put in place, and was a very enjoyable experience. I learned so much about topics that I already knew a lot about, and topics that I did not know much about. The students were lovely, engaged, respectful and very committed to topics of social and ecological justice, and asked many insightful questions. I had the best time during this particular Phase of my project, as it really allowed me to engage with a wide range of individuals - both from my team at Development and Peace, but also with the wider community of the Catholic District School Board and its students.

Phase IIII of my project involved adding a fresh perspective to and developing the Development and Peace social media and website. I created content using Canva and other graphic design software to develop their social media presence, particularly on Instagram. This included an 'Intro post', that introduced our new badges! Additionally, the Development and Peace Youth website and their schools programme website are both currently housed on

the same webpage, which has made matters confusing for the general public. Therefore, I created a mockup website for a separate Development and Peace Schools website to organise information in a more efficient manner, and to ensure the Development and Peace Schools programme continues to be established as a distinct part of Development and Peace, and one that holds an integral role in the organisation, rather than just as an activity that is just housed under the Youth Division.

Phase V of my project, unexpected but brilliant, arrived to me in the form of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I was selected to join a Canadian delegation (co-sponsored by KAIROS Canada and For The Love of Creation, both NGOs based in Canada) to the 27th iteration of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP27)! As a Youth delegate, I will be broadening my horizons by engaging in a wide variety of tasks such as taking an active part in the negotiations, advocating for and partnering with Indigenous voices and perspectives, and creating social media content such as vlogs, Instagram stories, podcasts and blog posts! My pre-COP27 activities include attending Climate action month events over Zoom, numerous speaking engagements, meetings with Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as other Green-zone events. Post-COP27 activities will include disseminating the fruits of the delegation. This was the perfect culmination of an end to my summer project, and I am extremely excited to embark on this journey, and cannot wait to get started!

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have provided me with avenues to inform the public of COP27 updates, and help educate them on the Climate Injustices faced by the world today.