

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
**Department of Social Work**

香港中文大學

**社會工作學系**



**Non-local Placement**  
**港外實習**

**2023**

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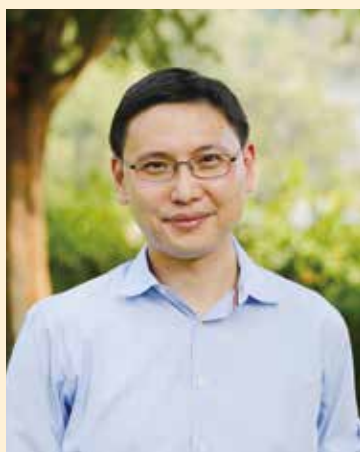
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This collection is dedicated to  
donors of Linkage Award,  
donors of Madam Tan Jen Chiu Fund and  
our teachers of the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

我們衷心把此文集獻給  
《靈機獎學金》捐贈者、  
《譚紉就基金》捐贈者及  
香港中文大學社會工作學系的老師們。



# Message From Department Chairperson

**Prof. To Siu Ming**  
**陶兆銘教授**

Chairperson, Department of Social Work,  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
香港中文大學 社會工作學系系主任

On behalf of the Department of Social Work at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, I would like to express our heartiest gratitude to donors of Linkage Award and Madam Tan Jen Chiu Fund. With their kind consent, we have broadened the use of the funding in setting up the Non-local Field Placement Award for our students from the undergraduate programme and the Master of Social Science Programme in Social Work (part-time and full-time). Their endless support to our Department is beyond description.

The Department of Social Work is committed to promoting high quality social work research, practice and teaching. As a devoted social work training institution, one of our missions is to provide professional training and education for our students, with the aim of training them to become academic and professional leaders in social welfare and related fields - locally, nationally and internationally. To realise this objective, non-local placements offer many types of educational experiences encompassing anecdotal, experiential, academic, observational and cultural learning - all of which can facilitate students' growth, maturity and competence in diverse social work settings, and enhance their understanding of cross-border, cross-cultural and international dimensions of social work practice.

With our growing international connections, we are now able to procure non-local placements from various organizations in different regions and have successfully arranged placements in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Taiwan in 2023. Students taking these placements had to deal with challenges arising from differences in cultural backgrounds and social welfare systems. Nevertheless, with these challenges, our students were able to develop greater independence and problem-solving abilities in cross-cultural social work practice, which are assets to the students in their future practice. All of our students find their non-local placement memories unforgettable. They treasure this invaluable opportunity to learn and are eager to share with our donors their personal, academic and professional growth throughout the placement. No great work can be done without the assistance of many people along the way, such as the great support, encouragement and assistance given by Dr. Au Yeung Kwok-wai Eric, our Director of Field Instruction, and his fieldwork team. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those social welfare agencies and field supervisors for their strong and unfailing support to our students.

## 系主任的話

香港中文大學社會工作學系的「港外實習獎」得以成功設立，實有賴各捐贈者的慷慨資助。在此，我謹代表本系同仁衷心感謝「靈機獎學金」及「譚紉就基金」的捐贈者。十分感激各位允許我們運用捐款為本系本科課程以及社會工作、社會科學碩士課程設立「港外實習獎」。你們對學系的支持，盡在不言中，學系上下必定銘記於心。

社會工作學系一直致力於卓越的社會工作研究、實務及教學。作為社會工作專業培訓機構，我們其中一個目標乃為本地、中國、地及國際的社會福利界培養學術及專業方面的人才。港外實習為學生提供了真實的生活體驗，不但能促進學生成長、完善其人格，還使他們習得在不同專業環境中實踐的能力。此外，同學可藉此機會從跨地域、跨文化及國際的角度，深入了解社會工作的實務工作，對他們學術及文化方面的發展均大有裨益。

本系與世界各地的聯繫越趨緊密，近年來已與不同國家的機構合作，為學生提供包括不同地區的港外實習機會。本系於2023年成功安排同學前往澳洲、加拿大、英國及台灣進行實習。

在港外實習期間，同學須面對文化差異以及與本地有別的社會福利系統所帶來的挑戰。縱然如此，他們並不退卻，而是因應這些挑戰，發展了獨立工作和跨文化社會工作實踐的能力。這對學生的社會工作專業發展之路，無疑有很大助益。同學都很珍惜是次難忘的學習機會，並花了很多時間及心力去準備這些文章，希望與各位捐贈者及所有老師同學分享實習經驗中個人、學術及專業各方面的成長歷程。

是次港外實習能順利進行，實有賴實習課程主任歐陽國緯博士與其團隊的付出，以及他對學生的鼓勵和幫助。最後，我亦希望藉此機會向提供實習機會的服務機構及實習導師致以萬分的謝意。他們對學系的全力支持，為學生的學習及成長作出了莫大的貢獻。





# Message From Director of Field Instruction

**Dr. AU YEUNG Kwok Wai, Eric**

**歐陽國緯博士**

Director of Field Instruction, Department of Social Work,  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
香港中文大學 社會工作學系實習課程主任

In 2023, non-local placements outside Hong Kong were still affected by the epidemic and the imposition of entry restrictions in some overseas regions. With the full support given by our Department and the non-local placement agencies, we successfully arranged placements in London, Melbourne, Vancouver, Toronto and Taipei for 14 students from our undergraduate and postgraduate social work programmes. The nature of services includes hospice care, family counselling, mental health, community development, and services for older people and youth.

Whenever I write about the experiences of non-local placement, I must think of students' learning achievements after their return and the stories they have learned from the service users. At the sharing session held in September 2023, I was deeply impressed by the student who shared the journey of accompanying a terminally ill patient until the last moment. Another student worked hard to design various programmes to support immigrant youths and families adapting to the new environment. Other students talked about their learning experiences from the social welfare systems and social work practices in different places, which is of great reference value. Undeniably, a few students inevitably encountered cultural shock and life

adaptation issues and even had tears and doubts throughout the non-local placement period. This is indeed a challenging part. Despite the difficulties, they upheld their very beginning mind of studying social work and eventually solved the problems with the department's support. I even learned that some could transform their problems into personal and professional growth. This is also the miracle of placements.

So, I encourage you to read the booklet's contents in detail, not only to understand what students encountered, did, felt and thought in the agency for their non-local placements but also put in their places to witness every precious learning moment.

Last, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to our Department, the non-local placement agencies, field supervisors, previous Directors of Field Instruction, the Linkage Award and the Madam Tan Jen Chiu Fund for their financial support. With the robust support from all parties, the development of non-local placement for these 20 years has been consolidated. Because of this valuable learning opportunity, students have gained life-long experience to go further.

## 實習課程主任的話

回顧 2023 年，港外實習的安排仍繼續受著新冠疫情以及海外部份地區的入境限制措施所影響。幸好有學系和港外實習機構的鼎力支持，我們成功安排共 14 名本科及碩士班同學到倫敦、墨爾本、溫哥華、多倫多和台北五地進行實習。服務性質包括善終安寧照顧、家庭輔導、精神健康、社區工作和長者及青少年服務等不同範疇。

每次執筆總結港外實習時，我總會想起同學完成實習歸來的成果分享和那些真摯的「他鄉故事」。在 2023 年九月的分享會中，我聽到同學陪伴病患者同行至最後一刻的感人過程。也有同學費盡心思設計多元活動和小組去協助移民青年和家庭適應新環境。更多同學分享在不同國家、不同地區的社會福利制度和社會工作的手法，極具參考價值。在港外實習，有同學難免碰到文化差異和

生活適應等種種問題，帶著淚水之餘，甚至擔心實習能否順利完成。這是極具挑戰的一環，但同學都能在困難中堅守報讀社工的初心，加上在學系的支持下把問題解決。甚至我了解到有同學能將實習遇到的問題最終轉化成個人成長和獲得專業上的進步。這又是實習可貴之處。

一如既往，在此鼓勵各位友好細閱文集的內容，了解同學在每個港外實習機構所遇、所作、所感和所思。也投入其中，見證他／她們每段寶貴的學習歷程。

除了學系的一貫支持，在此亦衷心感謝港外實習機構、各實習督導、歷年實習課程主任、靈機獎學金和譚紉就研究基金提供資助。在各方友好的協力下，鞏固了學系在港外實習這 20 多年來的發展，也讓同學獲得畢生受用的經歷。

## **Chinese Cancer & Chronic Illness Society of Victoria**

Chinese Cancer and Chronic Illness Society of Victoria (CCCIS), formerly Chinese Cancer Society of Victoria (CCSV), was founded in 1996 as one of the Cancer Council Victoria's support groups. The Society was founded by social worker, Dorothy Yiu OAM JP (current Chairperson), in response to a request from the Cancer Council Victoria to address an urgent need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for Chinese people who have been touched by cancer. Over the years, more cancer survivors and volunteers joined the Society to offer support to others, and to bring back their strength, confidence and hope.

(Extracted from the website of Chinese Cancer & Chronic Illness Society of Victoria)



**CHAN Choi Kiu,**  
Undergraduate Year 3



*a five-week dementia program for dementia sufferers and their carers*

I am grateful that I could work in the Chinese Cancer and Chronic Illness Society of Victoria in Australia in the summer of 2023. During these three months, I have learned to work with cancer patients and accompanied their family members. It was an unforgettable journey to work in Australia. I want to summarise my trip in four keywords which are “dignity”, “accompany”, “life and death” and “work-life balance”.

**Dignity**

Australia has a different culture and welfare system from Hong Kong. It was my first time working in a welfare context and learning the pros and cons of a new system. Australian government adopted a holistic approach which emphasised the dignity of humans. People with chronic illness or cancer could receive quality care. For instance, the government supports organisations to provide quality end-of-life care and education to patients, families, caregivers and healthcare professionals. Furthermore, interprofessional collaborative practice is common in Australia to keep the whole family instead of solely the patients. Health care provision cures the patients physically and provides emotional support. All these measures are supported by a belief that people should live and die with dignity.

**Accompany**

In my placement, I served people who have had cancer or chronic illness. As a social worker, I cannot alleviate their suffering or extend their longevity, yet I can accompany them to walk through those difficult times. When the patient or family members are suddenly informed of the diagnosis of cancer, the news might catch them unprepared. Some might not want to acknowledge the information, while others might not know what to prepare. Allowing them to express their emotions without judging is vital for coping with the pain. In the meantime, we could provide practical support, such as giving funeral-related information to them. We might not soothe their physical pain, but we could still listen and accompany them to walk through the journey.



*Celebration of Dragon Boat Festival with the members*

**Life and death**

In traditional Chinese culture, the discussion of death and dying is taboo. During my placement, death commonly happened. However, death is an inevitable part of life. When working with chronically or terminally ill clients, we still have to believe they can accomplish their meaning in life. One of my clients was diagnosed with oral cancer, in which three-quarters of his tongue was cut, and all the lower teeth were removed. But still, he could sustain his living optimistically. Nobody can tell whether an accident or tomorrow will come first. After all, cherishing the presence is essential for all of us, especially chronic disease patients.



*Members are using yoga ball as instruments to play rhythms*



*sharing session during the Cantonese cancer support group*

**Work-life balance**

Apart from the placement experience, I widened my horizons in Australia. Life is not only about work but also living. In Australia, it is pretty astonishing that overtime work is not typical among most. Australians tend to reserve more time for family and leisure. They would finish their work within working hours, and many shops close comparatively earlier than in Hong Kong. They would enjoy spending their leisure time together with nature. Some of them would spend the whole day near the beach. Peace is a blessing when we treasure our loved ones and are grateful for our life.



*Staff meeting after the "Dying To Know Day 8Aug2023"*



**GUAN Leyong,**  
**Undergraduate Year 3**



*Collaborative art session bringing people together!*

My placement experience in Australia allowed me to understand better the theories I learned. It prompted me to reflect on my professional and personal development in social work. Being immersed in a different country gave me insights into various governance and resource allocation systems, enabling me to adapt my practices in different environments and enhance my professional skills and abilities. Being exposed to the local work culture also allowed me to understand the needs and values of diverse cultures and communities. This broadened my perspective, increased my cultural sensitivity, and nurtured a greater sense of inclusivity, undoubtedly contributing to my ability to connect and engage with diverse populations.



*Joyful chair dancing session igniting smiles and laughter among the group!*

*Nurturing our community through a vibrant and flourishing garden space*



One of the most profound aspects of my placement was confronting the delicate and complex issues surrounding life and death. As a social work student, I had the opportunity to work with individuals and families facing end-of-life challenges, which required a great deal of emotional resilience and empathy. These encounters prompted me to reflect deeply on the fragility of life and the importance of providing holistic support to those in need. I learned to navigate conversations about death with sensitivity, offering a safe space for individuals to express their fears, hopes and desires. Witnessing the resilience and strength of individuals in the face of adversity taught me the power of human connection and the significance of walking alongside clients on their journey. These experiences served as a reminder of the profound impact social workers can have in promoting dignity, compassion and comfort during life's most vulnerable moments. I am grateful for the opportunity to have engaged with these profound life experiences and am committed to carrying forward the lessons learned in my future practice.



*Thriving in an incredible workplace alongside our exceptional placement partner!*

*Unconventional Dragon Boat Festival celebration on land, filled with laughter and friendly competition!*



Reflecting on the suddenness of confronting death, I have come to realise the unpredictability of life. It is often in those moments when we are faced with the impermanence of life that we feel a sense of regret and unresolved matters. We may question ourselves, wishing we had done more or said more, realising the importance of cherishing the people in our lives. As social workers, we assist individuals in processing their emotions, examining their perspectives and navigating their final moments. Throughout this process, I have discovered that the most significant lesson I learned was not merely about applying different counselling techniques but the realisation of the significance of being present for someone in need. Realising that life is fleeting has further reinforced the importance of cherishing the present moment and valuing our relationships. It has taught me to approach my work with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose, ensuring I am fully present and engaged with those I serve. I have learned that it is not just about the tasks we accomplish or the skills we possess but about the genuine connection we establish with individuals, offering them our natural care and support.

Amid grief and uncertainty, being there for someone and offering genuine support can make an indelible impact. I understand the importance of "being present", even when we feel inadequate or incapable of doing much. The sincerity and authenticity we convey can provide solace and comfort. It is not always about having all the answers or perfectly resolving every issue, but about creating a space of trust and empathy. In these vulnerable moments, the presence of a compassionate companion can be a source of strength and reassurance. Reflecting on my placement experience, I am grateful for the invaluable lessons learned and the personal and professional growth achieved. The challenges I faced and overcame during this journey have equipped me with resilience and adaptability, crucial qualities in the field of social work. I am confident that the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained during this placement will significantly impact my future career, enabling me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities.



# SWK

## **Chinese Christian Mission Canada**

Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) is founded in 1961 by Rev. Thomas Wang. He received a vision from the Lord to proclaim the Gospel among the Chinese all over the world. CCM started out with literature work and developed into different ministries such as audio/ visual, discipleship training, counseling, and broadcasting. Rev. Mark Cheng joined CCM in 1975 and expanded the ministry to overseas missions. CCM currently has offices in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia.

(Extracted from the website of Chinese Christian Mission Canada)

**CHEUNG Hoi Ting,**  
**Undergraduate Year 3**

*a difficult hike at the Strawamus Chief*



In the summer of 2023, I embarked on an unforgettable journey to Vancouver as part of my social work placement. The placement occurred at the Chinese Christian Mission Canada, a non-government organisation dedicated to serving the local Chinese community near Burnaby. This experience provided plenty of opportunities to deliver social work practice to local Chinese service users.

During my time at Chinese Christian Mission Canada, I had the chance to deliver casework practice to individuals in need of emotional support, including clients with depression and anxiety. This experience allowed me to apply the theoretical knowledge I had acquired in my social work studies to real-life situations. I practised my social skills by engaging directly with the users and developed a deeper understanding of their challenges. Additionally, I had the chance to organise group activities for children, where I explored the unique needs of children with special needs and their parents, as well as the service gap in the social system.

One of the most significant outcomes of my placement was the remarkable improvement in my oral English skills. Through intensive interaction with the users, I was constantly challenged to communicate effectively and confidently in English. Engaging in conversations and providing emotional support enhanced my language proficiency, enabling me to connect with individuals on a deeper level. This improved fluency will undoubtedly be valuable as I continue to pursue a career in social work in a foreign country.

However, my growth during this internship extended beyond language skills. The opportunity to deliver counselling sessions to five clients with emotional disturbances each week proved to be a pivotal learning experience. Under the guidance of my supervisor, I acquired invaluable counselling skills that will shape my professional journey. I learned the importance of being present and familiarising myself with various counselling approaches, including the person-centred approach, focusing system and art therapy, which ultimately developed my unique counselling style. Witnessing the positive impact of counselling on the lives of my clients confirmed my passion for helping others navigate through their emotional challenges.



*support group for parents of Special needs children*

While work constituted a significant portion of my time in Vancouver, I was fortunate enough to experience the city's natural beauty and vibrant culture. Vancouver treated me to the best of its summer season, boasting favourable weather conditions that encouraged exploration. With the company of my colleagues and friends, I embarked on exhilarating adventures such as hiking, camping, and kayaking. Among these experiences, the three-day camping trip at the breath-taking backcountry campsite, Cheakamus Lake remains etched in my memory. Despite the physical demands, the awe-inspiring views and the sense of accomplishment made every moment worthwhile.

Moreover, my time in Vancouver allowed me to forge connections with local social workers and counsellors, who provided valuable insights on potential career pathways in Canada. These interactions further solidified my aspirations to work as a social worker and pursue a Master Degree in Social Work in Canada.

In conclusion, my placement in Vancouver as a social work student intern was a transformative experience that enriched my personal and professional growth. Through delivering casework and organising group activities, I have gained invaluable practical knowledge that will shape my future career. Additionally, the breath-taking scenery and adventures I experienced in Vancouver provided a much-needed balance to my work life. The connections I developed with professionals in the field have solidified my determination to build a successful career in social work in Canada. As I reflect on my time in Vancouver, I am grateful for the opportunities I had, the lessons I learned and the memories I made.



*short trip to the Vancouver Island with friends*



*Back country camping at the Cheakamus Lake*



*Night talk with colleagues at the Teens Wild camp*





# SWKK

## **Community Family Services of Ontario**

Community Family Services of Ontario (CFSO) was incorporated in 1988 and is a non-profit, accredited professional counselling, family services and settlement agency with a focus on Chinese Canadians, which aims to offer both linguistically and culturally sensitive services to individuals and families in need of counselling and settlement services.

(Extracted from the website of Community Family Services of Ontario)

**HUI Wai Ying,  
MSSc Part-time Year 2**

During my non-local placement, I learned about all the different cultures in Toronto. I met and talked to people from all walks of life because I lived there. This helped me see things from a different point of view and learn more about foreign cultures. I got into the spirit of cultural exchange by participating in community events, volunteering, and joining local groups. Because of these experiences, I now have a better idea of how important it is to include and respect others.

During my placement in the Community Family Services of Ontario (CFSO), I researched and learned new things in a setting with diverse cultures. My trip would not have been possible without the thorough preparation I got at CFSO's one-week orientation. In this orientation, I was introduced to all the services CFSO offers. This helped me understand the organisation's goals and service approaches and enabled me to face future challenges and opportunities.



*Amazing sharing and drawings from the group members*

*My fieldmate May and I. CU again!*



Working in a brand-new country is challenging. I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and doubt. Fortunately, I'm lucky to have received help and advice from my co-workers and supervisors throughout the placement. Their advice was essential in helping me deal with the complex tasks and responsibilities, ultimately leading to my success. Their faith in me made me want to do my best in everything, and I will always be grateful to them for trusting me.

The advice and support I got from my group members also helped me grow as a person and in my career. One of the things I learned that changed my life was how important it is to keep an open mind and welcome different points of view. This realisation has changed how I think about many things in life. By being completely open to new ideas and views, I was able to find a lot of ways to improve myself and my career. When I actively seek different points of view instead of passively accepting a single point of view, my horizons are widened and my understanding of how complicated the world is.

My life in Hong Kong differed significantly from my life in Toronto. This was the start of a long journey of self-discovery and independence that had nothing to do with missing home. Being away from my usual group of friends forced me to face my problems on my own and figure out how to solve them without asking for help from anyone else. But in the end, it was a life-changing experience that led to significant growth in all areas. I learned to rely on myself to solve problems. I was also lucky enough to make some great friends in Toronto. These friends helped me when I was stressed, they cheered me up and gave me some much-needed laughter. We also created many priceless memories together. Being alone forced me to learn new things and get used to new situations.

This has been a life-changing experience for me. Even though I have faced some problems initially, this journey has made me stronger, more independent and more aware of other cultures. I am grateful to have received support from my supervisor, co-workers, friends and fieldmates. I will continue my journey of learning new things, making positive changes and challenging myself.



*volunteering at a food bank*



*Wonderful and fruitful journey in CFSO*



*Happy Canada Day*



**TONG Kit Mei,**  
**MSSc Part-time Year 2**

I profoundly appreciate the unique non-local placement opportunity bestowed upon me in the vibrant Toronto, which is truly an experience I want to fully cherish. In the Community Family Services of Ontario (CFSO), I have encountered different opportunities which granted me the invaluable flexibility to immerse myself in ongoing projects. These projects span a broad spectrum, encompassing roles such as working with children with special needs, offering counselling services and actively participating in community involvement initiatives. A notable feature distinguishing my time here is the liberty I've been afforded to craft and tailor my programme that align with my vision. It's been incredibly fulfilling to initiate a volunteer programme in a foodbank that CFSO has never ventured into. I'm delighted to learn that the organisation plans to continue this initiative.

Additionally, we've had the opportunity to embark on a series of agency visits, exploring institutions like Child Protection Services, Scott Mission (dedicated to providing both food assistance and shelter) and Tsz Chi Foundation North Toronto (offering a range of community services encompassing food support, academic programs, and indigenous services). Through these visits, I've gained invaluable insights into the operational landscape of various organisations in Toronto.



Agency Visit - Peel CAS



Agency Visit - Tsz Chi Foundation

What has been particularly striking during these experiences is the volunteers' prominent role in supporting Toronto's NGOs. The dedication and commitment of volunteers drive a significant portion of the city's non-profit sector. This speaks volumes about the strong sense of community engagement and altruism within Toronto's diverse and vibrant society. These agencies, relying on the goodwill of volunteers, manage to provide essential services to those in need, reinforcing the city's ethos of compassion and support.

Adding to the vibrancy of my experience, this summer has seen university students from Hong Kong arriving for placements at CFSO, along with several summer job students. The work environment is infused with youthful energy and a fresh perspective. We not only collaborate diligently but also provide unwavering support to each other. Most importantly, we find moments to enjoy our work together. The synergy among us as we rally behind each other's projects is genuinely captivating, making this journey exciting and exceptionally meaningful.

Moreover, this phase marks my return to providing face-to-face services after the challenging period of the pandemic. The prospect of connecting with people in person rather than through virtual interfaces brings me immense satisfaction. It is heart-warming to witness the unwavering support from my colleagues, who not only exude pleasantness but also extend their full support whenever required. Their camaraderie enriches the overall experience, making me feel genuinely valued and an integral part of a supportive team.

Toronto's most striking feature, in my opinion, is its astounding cultural diversity. The city embraces and respects individuals from various corners of the globe, and it goes the extra mile to celebrate this diversity. In particular, inclusive events, such as Pride Month celebrations and various other social activities, are instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging for everyone.



Agency Visit - Scott Mission



Celebrating event for Canada Day



CFSO Booth Day

SWKK

## **Hong Fook Mental Health Association**

Hong Fook means “Health and Felicity” in Chinese. Established in 1982, Hong Fook Mental Health Association is the leading ethno-cultural community mental health agency with a consolidated culturally competent team serving Asian and other communities in the Greater Toronto Area. Hong Fook provides a continuum of mental health services covering the spectrum from “promoting wellness” to “managing illness” in Cambodian, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Korean, Vietnamese and English.

(Extracted from the website of Hong Fook Mental Health Association)



**HO So Yan Serena,  
MSSc Full-time Year 1**

During my non-local placement at the Youth and Family Services team of Hong Fook Mental Health Association in Toronto, I had the opportunity to engage in various learning experiences and develop my social work knowledge and skills. This reflection aims to highlight my positive experiences during this placement, focusing on the learning opportunities, social work professional knowledge and skills acquired, and the valuable lessons learned.

One of the key learning opportunities during my placement was direct client work. I had the chance to engage in two short-term counselling casework, each consisting of 4-8 sessions. This allowed me to apply different therapeutic modalities and interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, to address each client's unique needs. Additionally, I was responsible for conducting a youth program centered around nature appreciation, which spanned over four sessions. This experience allowed me to develop group facilitation skills and foster a supportive and engaging environment for the participants. Furthermore, I had the privilege of delivering a talk to parents about self-care, which required effective communication and presentation skills. These experiences provided me with hands-on practice and helped me gain confidence in my abilities as a social worker.



*community recovery program*



*HFMHA downtown office*

Apart from direct client work, I also benefited from the professional training provided by the organisation. The staff professional training sessions were an invaluable opportunity to enhance my knowledge and skills. I had the chance to learn about the strength-based perspective, which emphasised focusing on clients' strengths and resources rather than solely on their challenges. Additionally, I participated in a Mental Health First Aid course, which equipped me with the skills to identify and respond to mental health crises effectively. This training broadened my perspective and provided me with a solid foundation to approach my work from a holistic and client-centred perspective.



*pride parade*

Working as a team was another significant aspect of my placement experience. The Community of Practice for clinicians allowed me to discuss with psychiatrists and seek advice from experienced clinicians regularly. This collaborative environment provided a platform for sharing knowledge, insights, and diverse perspectives on complex cases. It enhanced my critical thinking abilities and enabled me to apply theoretical concepts to real-life situations. Being part of such a supportive team allowed me to learn from others' experiences, receive feedback on my practice, and grow personally and professionally.

Throughout my placement, I also honed essential social work skills. One of these skills was clinical note writing, which is crucial for maintaining accurate and comprehensive records of client sessions. I learned to document information and interventions and progress concisely and professionally. Additionally, I gained a deeper understanding of the theory of change and motivational interviewing. These skills helped me engage with clients in a collaborative and empowering manner, facilitating their self-reflection and motivation for positive change.



*sign of toronto*

*youth program\_nature appreciation*



Undoubtedly, one of the most significant lessons I learned during my placement was navigating and thriving in situations of ambiguity. The field of social work often presents complex and unpredictable challenges. Through my experiences, I developed problem-solving skills and learned to adapt to unexpected circumstances. This required effective communication and negotiation with clients, colleagues, and other stakeholders involved in the service delivery process. Furthermore, I realised the importance of aligning expectations to ensure clarity and cohesiveness in my work. This lesson taught me the importance of open and transparent communication in fostering a productive and supportive professional relationship.

In conclusion, my non-local placement at the Youth and Family Services team of Hong Fook Mental Health Association in Toronto provided me with numerous positive experiences and valuable learning opportunities. Through direct client work, professional training and teamwork, I gained practical knowledge and skills in social work. I learned valuable lessons about navigating ambiguity, problem-solving and effective communication. I am grateful for the supportive and enriching environment that allowed me to grow personally and professionally. This placement has significantly contributed to my development as a social worker, and I am excited to apply the knowledge and skills I acquired to future practice.





# SWK

## **Islington Chinese Association**

With over 30 years experience of working with the community, Islington Chinese Association (ICA) is a leading London based Chinese charity promoting social cohesion within the Borough of Islington, across the UK, and beyond. It is committed to providing a variety of outstanding services for the benefit of the community, in particular being mindful of the needs of the very old, young, disabled, and disadvantaged in society. ICA's activities are open to all races and age groups, showcasing both ancient and contemporary Chinese arts and culture by way of contributing to a truly diverse society.

(Extracted from the website of Islington Chinese Association)





I was excited when I decided to undertake a social work placement in the United Kingdom. This decision stemmed from my profound passion for social work and a desire for cross-cultural experiences. The placement organisation's work environment and community context significantly changed my personal growth and professional development.

First and foremost, this placement experience has brought about profound changes at a personal level. I transitioned from a well-structured, familiar environment to an entirely new country, which broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of different cultures. Working within the community in the UK provided me with opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, making me more open and accepting. I learned to respect and appreciate diversity and applied this newfound respect to my social work practice. This transformation not only made me a social worker with a more multicultural perspective but also expanded my social awareness.

Meanwhile, there were numerous challenges in my daily life, including dealing with accommodation issues. This was particularly significant in London, known for its high cost of living and frequent relocations. Together with my placement partner, we overcame the complexities of finding housing, and this process deepened my understanding of the difficulties service users face when seeking stable housing solutions. I learned to be more flexible in financial and daily life aspects and experienced the unique opportunity of living and working with my placement partner. This experience provided valuable teamwork and conflict resolution skills and offered profound insights into my strengths and areas that needed improvement. Living together was like a mirror reflecting critical aspects of my personal growth and professional development and providing crucial feedback and insights for my future.

On a professional level, this placement has also led to profound changes. I worked in a supportive and trusting environment where my supervisor and the organisation encouraged me to explore and experiment. This freedom allowed my placement partner and me to participate in facilitating a large-scale UK family fun day project, including mobilising over 30 volunteers. This experience enhanced my leadership and organisational skills and strengthened my decision-making abilities. I also had the opportunity to lead a 50-member one-day tour programme, further enhancing my ability to work under pressure and solve unexpected issues. Such practical experiences will greatly benefit my future career in social work, allowing me to approach various challenges confidently. The placement also provided me with cross-cultural collaboration opportunities. I had the chance to collaborate on youth board game activities with participants from different countries, such as the UK and Malaysia. Building and maintaining relationships with colleagues and partners from different cultures and backgrounds exposed me to diverse perspectives and ideas within the team.



Furthermore, I gained valuable experience in individual casework. My supervisor provided guidance and encouragement, enabling me to address better the challenges presented by service users. I learned to approach the needs of service users with a caring and non-judgmental attitude. Home visits further deepened my understanding of the UK's public housing system beyond government documents. The experiences with service users provided the most valuable lessons, and it is an honour to have had the opportunity to interact with them, increasing my passion for social work.

In conclusion, this placement experience has profoundly changed my personal growth and professional development. I have become more open, confident, and multicultural in my perspectives and have gained more practical experience in social work. My expertise in foreign social welfare policies and practices has led me to think about how to apply successful methods or strategies to my work in Hong Kong, tending to enhance the quality of services.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues and fellow members at the placement organisation in the UK. Their care and concern have made me feel the warmth of unconditional love and regard. I am incredibly fortunate to have had this placement opportunity and met all of them.



**MOK Man Lung Edmond,  
Undergraduate Year 3**

London is a city of great diversity, as eloquently expressed in Samuel Johnson's renowned quote: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life." This adage underscores the richness of life in London; my summer placement experience here is a testament to that. I feel fortunate to spend my summer in this vibrant city, as the insights gained during this placement will undoubtedly enrich my future career in social work.

During this placement, I have been working with the Islington Chinese Association (ICA). True to its name, the organisation caters to the needs of the Chinese community in the UK, particularly those residing in London. Established in the 1980s, it is noteworthy that many other Chinese organisations in various cities across the UK also originated during the same decade. Although official records may not extensively document the history of the Chinese migration wave, these traces indicate that Chinese communities began establishing a solid foothold in the UK in the 1980s. Observing the growing needs of these communities, individuals initiated Chinese-centric community organisations.



ICA, reminiscent of community organisations in the 70's of Hong Kong, starkly contrasts the social service institutions we typically encounter today. The most striking feature, in my opinion, is the sense of camaraderie and the egalitarian relationship between staff and members. Here, the dynamic between staff and members isn't hierarchical but based on mutual assistance. This equality isn't superficial but deeply ingrained in the organisation's day-to-day operations. Volunteers assist the organisation in numerous aspects, including front desk duties and managing the ping pong and karaoke room order. Some even hold the responsibility of locking up the premises at the end of the day. This level of trust in members managing the organisation's keys and participating actively in its operations is quite remarkable, and it has reshaped my perception of the relationship between social workers and service users.



I have noticed that members have a strong sense of belonging to the organisation, which stems from the trust and active involvement between the organisation and its members. Members are not passive recipients of the organisation's services; they actively participate in its day-to-day functioning. Sometimes, they provide suggestions regarding the services offered, and some even transition from being members to becoming volunteers, assisting fellow members. This sense of contributing to the organisation's growth allows them to recognise their irreplaceable contributions. From a strengths-based perspective, the organisation serves as a platform for members to harness their skills and resources. In this process, members discover their capabilities and acquire new knowledge and skills through interactions with different individuals. They can find their roles and positions within the community. This leads me to ponder whether Hong Kong could provide a similar space for service users to unleash their talents.

This European journey has imparted a profound understanding of errors and failures. Since childhood, I have been a perfectionist, prone to self-blame whenever I make mistakes. When I arrived in the UK and met with my supervisor, I distinctly remember her telling me that making mistakes is acceptable here. Throughout my placement, I have truly experienced the meaning of this statement. As a student, encountering errors is a common occurrence, and in the past, I would quickly spiral into self-blame. However, my supervisor and colleagues have shown remarkable tolerance for mistakes. They discuss the underlying beliefs and potential improvements associated with these mistakes. These experiences have taught me to accept my imperfections and to understand that making mistakes is not something to fear. It is an inevitable part of life; what truly matters is how we perceive and learn from these errors.





SWKK

## **Mackay Memorial Hospital** **馬偕紀念醫院**

MacKay Memorial Hospital, under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, was established in memory of Dr. George Leslie MacKay who followed in the footsteps of his Master by coming to Taiwan with the message of salvation for all men. Even in those early days, Dr. MacKay was concerned for the whole person and ministered to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of each patient.

(Extracted from the website of Mackay Memorial Hospital)



到病房派發養生茶給照顧者和病人，可養氣補身和舒緩疲勞呢！

在馬偕紀念醫院中的安寧療護部門實習是一個很獨特和很難忘的體驗，過程中少不免經歷個案一夜之間與世辭別，看著生命的殞落除了有不少感觸外，更改變了我對生命的覺悟和看待生命的態度。

與同事或友人分享經歷時，她們常常問到：「面對個案突然離世，你有感到遺憾嗎？」對我來說，遺憾與否，是取決於整段相處時間中是否「全心全意」和「盡己所能」。在這部門工作與其他實習單位不同的是，時間對於職員、晚期的臨終病人和家屬而言，是需要分秒必爭的。在多變和無法預計的情況下，唯有好好把握和運用時間，才能使彼此無悔。只要每一次的會面都已盡力把握當下，作所能作的，便問心無愧了。即使個案的實際存活期的確比醫生預估的短很多，當突然知悉離世消息時，少不免感到錯愕、失落和傷感，但這段經歷也教會我相信在治療關係裏，個案是可以感受到自己的真誠和付出，亦要肯定這種短暫卻笑中有淚、有溫度的關係確實陪伴過彼此走了一段路。



因病患體力不支，只可坐於病房窗邊看花，所以工作員到醫院的空中花園收集花朵，贈予病患。

最後一節小組中，工作員邀請組員完成作品後挑選兩張鼓勵小卡，一張送給自己，一張贈予組員。



除此以外，面對生命的無常更能體現到不同生命的互相牽絆。例如照顧患有失智症長達十年的伴侶如何面對反覆病情、正值事業高峰的人患上末期癌症，同時不忍長輩多次經歷親人相繼因癌離世、一日內面對相伴多年的伴侶放棄癌症治療並轉入安寧病房，卻同日辭世等情況。這些例子中可以看到不同關係之間，因「愛」所產生的情感、內心拉扯和角力。雖然聞者難免感到哀傷，但我也從中學會欣賞當事人們的生命韌力。其實在某些時候，當事人面對逆境的態度比我們所能想像的更為堅強。即使她／他們前進的步伐也許有別於工作員所預期的，但這正是考驗工作員能否適時自省，並調整自己的步伐，達至「真正同行」的步速。

有了這次的體驗後，使我更確信自己的能量適合於哪一種服務範疇，我想日後大概也會循著這類特別服務的方向發展。同時，因體會到馬偕醫院的人本服務有多重視服務使用者的心靈發展（除了社工師外，也有心理師和關懷師一同為服務使用者的心靈發展共同努力呢！），這種體會也促使我去了解更多靈性方面的知識，以便日後可以多角度地提升服務使用者的生活質素。



與關懷師一同製作領帶送給爸爸們，與病患一同慶祝爸爸節！



謝謝台灣安寧之父 - 賴允亮醫師在實習期間的照顧。





While at the MacKay Hospice and Palliative Care Centre in Taiwan, I embarked on a profound journey of self-discovery and professional growth. It has been an extraordinary experience that has challenged my preconceptions, expanded my perspective and deepened my understanding of the human experience in the face of mortality.

One of the most significant realisations I have had during this placement is the immense value of genuine companionship for terminally ill patients. In a field where the boundaries between life and death are blurred and where patients grapple with physical pain, emotional turmoil and existential questions, the presence of a compassionate and empathetic social worker can make a big difference. Being there, listening attentively and engaging in meaningful conversations can uplift spirits, provide solace and instil comfort and support. I appreciate that even when our ability to alleviate suffering directly may be limited, our capacity to offer companionship and emotional support is immeasurable.

Witnessing the multidisciplinary collaboration within the palliative care team has been eye-opening. By interacting with doctors, nurses, social workers, clinical psychologists and chaplains, I have witnessed the power of a holistic approach to patient care. Each professional brings their unique expertise and perspective, working together seamlessly to address the complex needs of patients and their families. This collaborative model has reinforced my belief in the importance of interdisciplinary teamwork, as it enables us to provide comprehensive care that encompasses not only physical well-being but also psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of patients' lives. The centre exemplifies the "whole-person care" approach by recognising that patients have unique backgrounds, values and aspirations, not merely a collection of symptoms and diagnoses. It has reinforced my belief in tailoring interventions and support to meet each individual's specific needs and preferences, ensuring their dignity, autonomy, and quality of life are upheld throughout their journey.



Undoubtedly, working in a palliative care setting has exposed me to the inherent fragility of life and the inevitability of mortality. Engaging with patients and witnessing their struggles, hopes, and resilience has prompted profound reflections on the value and meaning of life. It has reminded me of the importance of cherishing every moment, cultivating meaningful connections, and aligning our actions with our deepest values and aspirations. This experience has taught me that life's brevity should not be a source of despair but rather a catalyst for embracing the present, nurturing relationships and pursuing what truly matters to us.



Challenges have been an integral part of this placement experience. Initially, I faced language barriers and had to adapt to a different cultural context. However, through open communication, humility and a willingness to learn, I have overcome these obstacles and developed meaningful connections with colleagues and patients. This placement has reinforced the importance of cultural competence and sensitivity in providing effective and respectful care, regardless of our geographical location or background.





# SWKK

## **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**

Founded in 1973 by a passionate group of immigrant volunteers who wanted to contribute back to Canada, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has evolved into one of the largest social service agencies in Canada, which aims to promote the well-being of all Canadians and newcomers through services and advocacy that support their integration into an inclusive society.

(Extracted from the website of S.U.C.C.E.S.S.)



**S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Austin Harris Residence**

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Austin Harris Residence is one of the assisted living facilities of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Multi-Level Care Society. It is situated on the former Austin Harris Elementary School site at 5411 Moncton Street in Richmond. The facility was opened in April 2007.

**LAI Ka Yi,  
MSSc Part-time Year 2**



*Banff, the national park in Canada*

Over the past 12 weeks, I embarked on an incredible personal and professional growth journey during my non-local placement in Vancouver. The experience has been marked by meaningful contributions, challenges, and valuable insights into the healthcare system. I want to share some of the most pivotal moments and lessons from my overseas placement at the Austin Harris Residence.

**Compassionate Care**

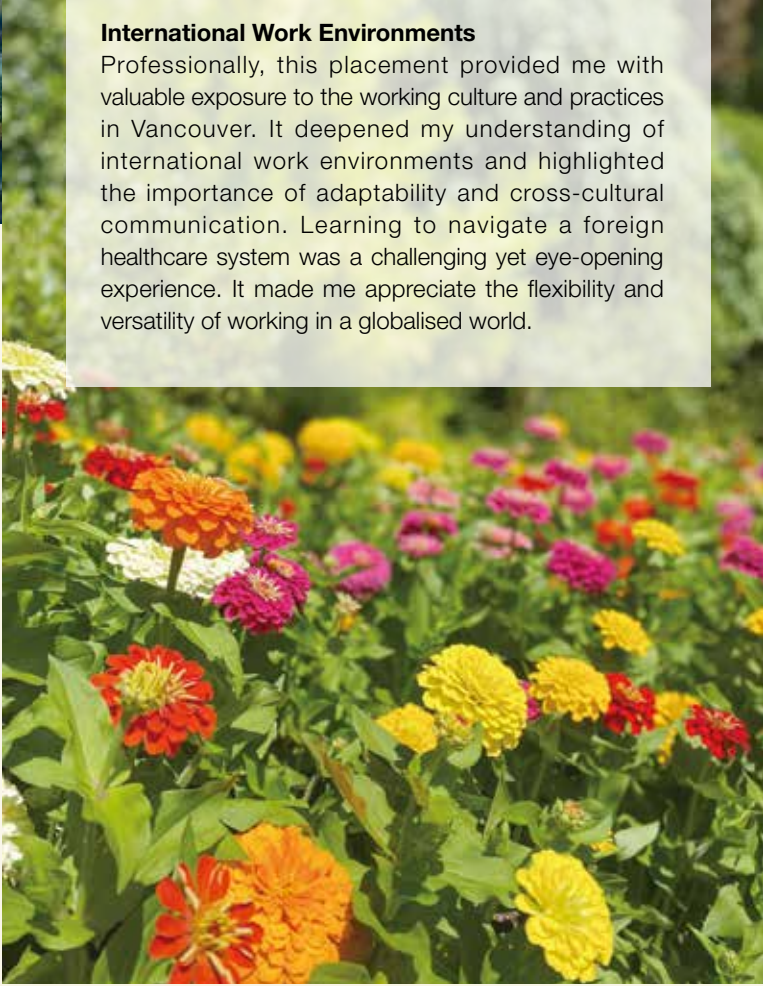
One of the most heart-warming experiences during my time at Austin Harris Residence was an individual case interview with a senior named Austin Harris herself. She was grappling with mobility issues and anxiety. It was a challenge to support her transition to a long-term care home, but offering a compassionate ear and understanding her needs made a significant impact. Witnessing her gradual relief underscored the power of compassionate care in improving someone's life. This experience taught me that empathy and active listening are as essential in healthcare as any medical procedure.

**Community Engagement**

I had the opportunity to contribute to integrated community services for seniors by conducting evaluation surveys over phone calls. This task gave me deep insights into Chinese seniors' unique challenges in Richmond. Their struggles and needs became clearer, prompting me to advocate for their well-being. It taught me the importance of community engagement and the role it plays in addressing the diverse needs of our elderly population.

**International Work Environments**

Professionally, this placement provided me with valuable exposure to the working culture and practices in Vancouver. It deepened my understanding of international work environments and highlighted the importance of adaptability and cross-cultural communication. Learning to navigate a foreign healthcare system was a challenging yet eye-opening experience. It made me appreciate the flexibility and versatility of working in a globalised world.



*Butchart gardens, the most beautiful garden in B.C.*

*Having group work session*



**Support and Growth**

I am immensely grateful for the support from my work-site supervisor and fieldwork supervisor. Their unwavering guidance and encouragement helped me transition to a new city smoothly. While I was initially apprehensive about managing work and living independently in a foreign country, their support provided me with a solid safety net. Their advice and shared experiences nurtured my growth.

*Travel in Whistler village*



*Holding a workshop for the seniors*

**Resilience and Time Management**

Of course, the journey was not without its challenges. Balancing work, study and personal life was demanding at times. However, these hurdles fostered resilience and honed my time management skills. Embracing these challenges gave me a more comprehensive view of my personal and professional growth during this placement. I've learned that resilience is not just about bouncing back from difficulties but also about developing the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity. This skill is indispensable in a rapidly changing world where unexpected challenges are a part of daily life.

This journey has highlighted the transformative power of stepping out of one's comfort zone and embracing new experiences. It has shown me that personal and professional growth often occurs in tandem and that challenges are opportunities in disguise. I am reminded of the quote by John F. Kennedy, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future". I wholeheartedly encourage you to embark on non-local placements, for they offer an invaluable opportunity to expand your horizons, gain fresh perspectives and discover your hidden potential.



## S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Immigrant Settlement and Integration Programme

Newcomers and their families learn about life in Canada, develop English language skills, find employment, and get involved in the community by accessing our wide range of services that are offered across Metro Vancouver and in Fort St. John.

**HO Cheuk Fai,**  
**MSSc MSSc Full-time Year 1**



*Facilitating Learn-to-Camp Workshop*

I have had the pleasure of being involved in a wide range of tasks during my non-local placement. Performing counter duties, co-hosting webinars on different settlement topics, facilitating clients' activity registration and the activities themselves, curating a peer support group and conducting individual support sessions for the group members, these experiences allowed me to be involved in every aspect of a settlement practitioner.

The most memorable task was to organise and implement my support group, which targeted Chinese newcomers who had recently arrived in Vancouver. This opportunity allowed me to put my social work knowledge and skills into practice by designing a group experience that could cater to the needs of those newcomers. For example, a newcomer may find it difficult to enter the local job market due to the lack of Canadian work experience and social networks. Having a peer support group could foster information exchange among the group members about employment opportunities, with resources provided and referrals made by the worker to enhance members' job-searching ability. Equally challenging is the sense of loneliness and estrangement faced by the newcomers. It is common for immigrants to feel disconnected from the local community where

the culture, language, and work style practised are different from their territory of origin. It is thus significant for those immigrants to connect to others with similar backgrounds or experiences, which is the primary goal of the peer support group. To bring this idea to life, I arranged games that could help the group members interact and bond with one another light-heartedly. For example, we played "Party Guess" in the first session. The group members were divided into the answer team and the hint team. A series of words were displayed on the screen, which was only visible to the hint team, so the hint team had to help the answer team guess the correct answer without saying any of the words directly. The members came up with many enjoyable methods to play the game. The answer team would ask for the number of characters in a word and make as many guesses as possible, while the hint team would use synonyms, songs and restaurant foods to imply the answer. This process demonstrated their teamwork and communication skills, which fostered the members' bonding.



*Having Fun on Italian Day*

*The Last Session of Peer Support Group*



As I progressed, the support group became not merely for the fulfilment of my placement requirement but for the well-being of the members, who were all friendly to one another and cared for a fresh worker like me despite all the hardships in their new life here in Vancouver. It was my sincere wish to build a mutual aid network for them so that they could continue supporting each other in the many years to come, even without the worker's intervention.

Another work task that left a great impression on me was the VanDusen Garden tour. I have been implementing this tour since the beginning of my placement. As the tour received over 100 registrations and involved liaison with the VanDusen Garden representatives, countless follow-up work was conducted to make the tour a success. There was one incident that happened. Initially, the Garden agreed to distribute 100 free tickets to us, which led to our plan to enrol 100 participants. Yet after the tour sign-up form went public and registrations flooded our record list, we were informed by the Garden that there was a change of plan—the number of tickets available dropped to 60. Therefore, a strict selection had to be made with Canadian permanent residents being prioritised and all the other status holders eliminated. It was a saddening experience as I made dozens of phone calls to inform the registrants of the selection results. This process also taught me the importance of contingency plans and flexibility on smoothly implementing an activity.



*The Long-awaited VanDusen Garden Tour*

*Working at the front desk*



Switching the narrative from a personal angle, I find my stay in Vancouver stimulating and rewarding. Outside of work, I have participated in many community events such as French Day, Hats-off Day, and Italian Day to enrich my local experience and brush up on my cultural sensitivity. Even daily matters as small as taking a stroll in a park meant differently to me, as the view, the people, and the air were all new. There was no pressure on me to venture into the unknown as a unique experience followed everywhere I went. My mind was relaxed enough to see sparkles in mundanities thanks to the slow-paced lifestyle in Vancouver. That being said, I still need to cope with the pressure and anxiety in my work. As my first social work placement, I paid extra effort to ensure the activities I was responsible for went as planned and with flying colours. I often reminded myself what was expected of a social worker and fulfilled those expectations accordingly. I hope my hard work will yield results and help those in need thrive with knowledge, confidence and pride.



## S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Senior Programmes

HUI Lok Yin,  
MSSc Part-time Year 2



Apart from work, you have to enjoy the great nature of Canada! This is the Lake Louise in Banff National Park.

### Introduction

Embarking on a journey to explore the world has always held a special place in my heart. However, I yearned for an experience that transcended the role of a mere tourist. Working in a foreign country allowed me to immerse myself in a new culture, gain a deeper understanding of its people, and witness the intricacies of their daily lives. With its harmonious atmosphere and diverse population, Vancouver became the perfect setting for my journey. People from different cultural backgrounds and beliefs flocked to Canada, driven by various reasons and sharing a common aspiration for a better life. My time living and working in Vancouver has provided me with an intensive and transformative experience, allowing me to uncover the city's vibrant aspects and hidden challenges.

### Brief Background

During my placement with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., I had the privilege of delving into the intricacies of the Canadian welfare system and familiarising myself with the diverse range of services the agency provides. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. offered students like me numerous opportunities to learn and grow, including regular site visits to different branches, engaging with non-governmental organisations, and participating in touch-back sessions where we could reflect on our work and address personal challenges. Within this rich environment, I was explicitly involved in the senior programmes, which focused on wellness initiatives and fostered an active community. These programmes aimed to promote the health and overall well-being of seniors while also alleviating pressure on the healthcare system.

### Placement Exposure

My placement enabled me to work across multiple office sites in three major cities: Vancouver, Richmond and Surrey. Additionally, I collaborated with two community centres, providing services and organising activities for seniors in various locations. This exposure allowed me to explore the cities and their public transport systems, deepening my understanding of the local community and the available social resources. Furthermore, interacting with clients in different geographic areas gave me valuable insights into their unique needs and circumstances.



Pride Parade is one of the cultural event you don't want to miss! Even the fire department is enjoying the parade!



Biweekly touch-back sessions plus site visit to other branches of the agency with PolyU student

Unlike the neighbourhood elderly centres I was accustomed to in Hong Kong, the Chinatown main office of the senior services catered to specific queries and needs, such as tax form filling or inquiries about agency-organized activities. As a result, casework clients were referred by colleagues working on different projects. This collaborative approach enabled me to learn about additional city services and work alongside other professionals, absorbing their insights and best practices.

### Social Worker Experience

As a social worker, I interacted with seniors facing many challenges. Throughout my time in Vancouver, I had the opportunity to handle two comprehensive cases, each involving six to seven meetings. Additionally, I worked on various issues that required tangible services, such as writing appeal letters or assisting seniors in finding culturally appropriate transition homes when facing domestic violence. Establishing genuine rapport with these individuals was paramount, as trust formed the bedrock for accurate information disclosure, comprehensive assessments and effective intervention plans.

One remarkable realisation that unfolded during my time in Vancouver was the language barriers faced by many Chinese seniors who had resided in the city for over three decades. Vancouver, being a welcoming destination for Chinese immigrants, allowed them to navigate their daily lives without the necessity of learning English as long as they remained in good health and did not require access to government services. However, through my interactions with senior clients, I discovered that many experienced social isolation, language barriers and a dearth of avenues to express their emotional needs. I initiated a support group for Cantonese-speaking senior immigrants to address these challenges by utilising innovative therapeutic techniques such as PhotoTherapy and Photo Voice.

Furthermore, my experience in Vancouver shed light on the significance of self-determination within social work. As professional social workers, we strive to provide the best possible options within the given context. However, it is ultimately up to the clients to accept or reject our recommendations. Recognising that our efforts do not solely determine their readiness to make significant changes or confront familial conflicts directly is crucial. Sometimes, clients require additional time to build resilience and face challenges with greater confidence, and we must respect and support their unique journey.

### Fun Experience

Life is more than work, even during a temporary placement in a foreign country. Time is fleeting, and it is essential not to miss opportunities to explore the cities and surrounding provinces. Alongside my fellow field mates and colleagues, I seized the chance to visit remarkable places such as Whistler, White Rock, Deep Cove, Sunshine Coast, Banff National Park and many more. Despite the brevity of my placement, I made it a point to cherish each day and leave no room for regrets. I am incredibly fortunate that my first overseas placement was filled with joy, personal growth and memorable encounters.



Leading senior group to outing with my nice and supportive supervisor



The final session of the group with PhotoTherapy and Photo Voice elements, the seniors chose the pictures that represent their feelings and thankfulness to their fellow members..png



### S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Youth Leadership Millennium

Empowering youth by helping them develop core leadership skills, integrity, and compassion through experiential learning and mentorship.

**HO Hei Lam,**  
**MSSc Full-time Year 1**

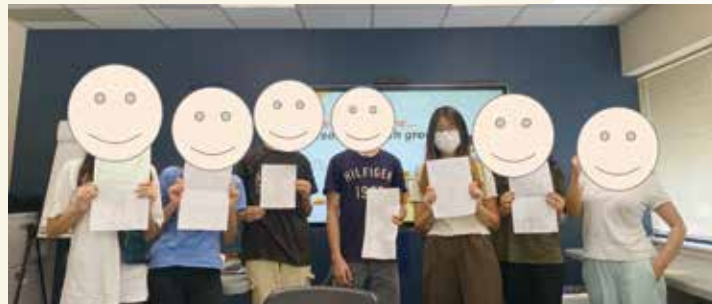


*3-legged race at the beach*

Participating in non-local placement was a meaningful and challenging experience. Before the journey, I expected to explore the social services in Vancouver and the expectations of Vancouverites living there. I am glad that I worked in a diverse environment where I had an in-depth experience exploring Vancouver through conversations and client contacts. Yet, there were different challenges regarding fulfilling placement requirements and performing social work-related tasks.

I worked in a youth program in S.U.C.C.E.S.S. - Youth Leadership Millennium (YLM). It is an 8-month personal growth and leadership program to help youths aged 15-30 with personal and career development and increase their social participation. The program includes weekly educational workshops (setting up SMART goals, CV and cover letter writing, city problems, leadership style, etc.), volunteer activities, one-on-one meetings with workers and outdoor activities. In this programme, I got the opportunities to recruit and interview potential clients, conduct one-on-one meetings with them to discuss their goals and have casual chats with them during events. These were valuable chances for me to understand the thoughts and views of people raised in different cultures. The experience of talking to them was an eye-opener.

I organised two programmes during the 3-month placement: Beach Day and a storytelling personal growth group. Beach Day is a fun day to connect the youths at the beginning stage of the programme with mass games. The programme started in late June, and Beach Day, the second in-person activity, was organised one month after the program began. It is hoped to increase their cohesion, build trust and let them feel YLM is a safe place to seek growth and make connections. Group games stimulated conversations, and created fun and shared experiences. I feel glad to see youths feel more comfortable there, forming small social groups that become their companions in future activities.



*Our tree of life drawing*

“Once upon a Time...” is a one-day programme to enhance self-understanding, boost confidence and create more profound connections with each other. After gathering and analysing their needs, I learned that the youths want to work on their confidence, fellowship and sense of belonging to their community. Especially when living in a very heterogeneous society, it would be harder for people to build cohesion and share a common identity. I organised a group for interested clients in the programme to boost their confidence in expressing themselves and interpersonal relationships through the Tree of Life approach. I was worried about members not being confident enough to share their life stories as they were not familiar with one another. Yet, they were willing to share and genuinely responded and appreciated other people’s life stories. As an observer and worker in the activity, the members being able to link their own life stories together and identify some themes in their lives amazed me. I could also see the change in their relationship – from being quiet and more reserved to showing care and support to their peers. I am lucky to have met these members who were very engaged with the group and willing to participate in the change process.



*Music time at the beach*

Although there were beautiful experiences in my learning and talking to many different people, there was still a discrepancy between expectation and reality.

Social service agencies in Vancouver work differently from those in Hong Kong. Many units do not have registered social workers in their teams. In YLM, as there is no social worker in the group and staff were not familiar with the placement requirements of practicum students. At first, the tasks assigned to me could not be my social work assignments. After expressing my concerns to the Director of Field Instruction, the Department negotiated with the agency to clarify our learning needs further. Eventually, we were able to finish the social work assignments. However, since YLM had a fixed curriculum of the 8-month programme with a selected group of clients, there was not much room for me to organise new groups and programs out of the curriculum. Hence, the learning was limited by the relatively small workload related to social work assignments. Still, I am fortunate that the Department, the programme manager of YLM and my supervisor fought for my best interest. They tried their best to balance different expectations and limitations so that I could complete the two programmes mentioned above. Nevertheless, the challenge for me was to have a shorter preparation time after spending much time on negotiations and getting approvals to organise new programmes out of the curriculum. This experience taught me that open communication with the department, programme manager and supervisor was essential. Expressing my concerns and laying out the expectation differences in the first place could let corresponding parties offer help as soon as possible.

*Paper tower competition in “Once upon a time...”*



*The group photo of beach day*

Throughout the 3-month non-local placement, I had anxiety about insufficient social work exposure. Yet, I always remind myself that in a non-local setting, the roles and requirements of social work are expected to be different. I got the chance to explore and learn from the differences, but there would also be some discrepancies that I need to deal with. Despite having anxiety, I still feel lucky to participate in the non-local placement. I am happy to see the change of clients under our interventions. I treasure the close relationships I developed with my clients and co-workers. I met people from diverse backgrounds and learnt about different cultures and values. I also explored the differences between Hong Kong, the Canadian social service sector and the welfare system. These experiences enriched my life experience and gave me opportunities to understand people and society.



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