

Report on placement for AP/SOSC 4046 6.0 Social economy practicum (2014-15)

Name: Eric Tran

Partner organization: Community Empowering Enterprises (Toronto)

Course director: Caroline Hossein

My time in the Social Economy Practicum has been an enriching experience both professionally and personally. This is one of the few courses at York University that I learned a lot from because I was able to discover myself and gain useful job experience. My placement organization Community Empowering Enterprises (CEE) located in Toronto's Jane and Finch community. CEE is a non-profit organization working on economic development to assist racially marginalized young people (ages 18-29) who are no longer attending a post-secondary institution. CEE has business and training programs to give unemployed black youth access job opportunities and to participate in entrepreneurship programs.

The people at CEE are committed to creating social change in society and they do this with a 'human touch' and strongly believe that markets and business can reach excluded groups. The managing director is a black leader in the community, instrumental for defining the vision at CEE. Our direct supervisor, Ms. Shereen Ashman, in charge of programming, was inspiring because she has first-hand knowledge of the difficulties people of colour experience in business and society. Our placement gave me a one-on-one connection to community leaders and they have inspired me greatly about the work in the social economy. I was able to delve right into programming work as needed. I am also aware of the budget constraints of social economy organizations. The work is highly important and can be incredibly taxing for the people who choose to do it as a career.

If I could take this course over again, I would do so in a heart-beat because of the experiential learning. My professor, Dr. Caroline Hossein, does a great job at teaching the course because she has extensive working experience in the social economy. The social economy is a fuzzy concept but we learned it is the third sector and the sector that is focused on people. Dr. Hossein was able to reinforce our practical learning in the field with greater in-depth theoretical knowledge, and she explained the social economy in a way that I could understand it.

Taking a course where I could work in the social economy sector has boosted my career goals. I now have relevant experience in a field I am interested in. I grew up near the Jane and Finch community but I have not been able to assist in community development until now. My story is very different from the people who I met at CEE, but I have learned first-hand what marginalized groups suffer and how this often results in low self-esteem, depression, internal struggles, violence and family issues. This course has made me reflect on my own privilege and how to own up to it and to find ways to contribute to society. This course on the social economy been an important influence on me and will be an example for me to look back to in the future.