

## **Global Environmental & Resources Law Externship Program (GERLEP)**

### **University of British Columbia Faculty of Law**

The Global Environmental and Resources Law Externship Program (GERLEP) is a new clinical program at UBC Law, which is planned for January - April 2014. It is designed for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year JD students interested in careers in environmental and natural resources law, as well as related subject areas such as corporate social responsibility and Aboriginal legal issues. The GERLEP combines two weeks of classroom experience with eight weeks of work experience in external organizations, such as environmental and community groups, government agencies or business corporations.

#### **Course Instructor and Program Director**

The GERLEP will be taught and administered by Professor Benjamin J. Richardson. He is the Director of the UBC Centre for Law and the Environment and holds the Canada Research Chair in Environmental Law and Sustainability. Professor Richardson was formerly the co-director of the award-winning Intensive Program in Aboriginal Law, at Osgoode Hall Law School, a program on which GERLEP's structure is loosely based.

#### **GERLEP's Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

The GERLEP is envisioned as an advanced clinical law program to foster a collaborative approach to educate future lawyers working in the area of environmental and natural resources law. The program, which builds on prior assumed knowledge and skills acquired in earlier courses, provides students with an opportunity to understand better the links between what they learn at university and the practical application of the law through the development of skills and reflection on a work experience placement.

The GERLEP is not a discrete course but rather, as with existing clinical programs at UBC Law, comprises a one semester program worth 15 academic credits based on two inter-related "courses": (i) the externship placement (9 credits); and (ii) major research paper, short memo, class seminar paper and class participation (6 credits).

The GERLEP places special emphasis on collaborative learning, with sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences. Students will learn as much from each other as from the course director. Unlike a traditional law school course, with its emphasis on passive learning based on lectures and final examinations controlled by the instructor, the

GERLEP encourages students to appreciate the diversity of experiences and values they bring to an analysis of the course subject-matter. Thus, the classroom sessions are a vital adjunct to the externships, for it is here that students can draw parallels and lessons from the experiences of others in order to deepen their appreciation of their own experiences.

In addition, the GERLEP externships provide an opportunity for students to make a meaningful contribution to the work of an organization, including provision of information, advice to clients, and to law reform projects and strategies. Successful externships are ones that are mutually beneficial to both student and the host organization.

### Program Structure

The GERLEP will be offered in the spring term over 12 weeks. This course structure is divided between classroom time or preparation, and the period when students are on their externships.

#### Week 1:

- No classes are held, as students complete background readings pertaining to their individual externships, as well as readings relating to community lawyering, and prepare a memorandum to develop their skills in providing legal advice.

#### Week 2:

- Daily classes are held Monday - Friday, from approximately 10.00 - 3.30 with a lunch break. These classes focus on strengthening the students' knowledge of environmental and natural resources law relating to the issues to be covered in their placements. Class discussions and lectures serve to link foundational concepts to the specific issues students will encounter in their externships.

#### Weeks 3 - 11:

- Nine weeks devoted to each externship, where students work on a daily basis in their host organization, while also using this experience as a basis to prepare a detailed research paper for UBC academic purposes.

#### Week 12:

- This is designated a research / reading week for students, in which they would work on their final research papers and concomitantly prepare for their class presentations.

#### Week 13:

- Students return to UBC for one week of daily classes (10.00 - 3.30). These classes are primarily devoted to the students' presentations, each of about 2 hours,

about their externship and research work. Two presentations would be given per day, plus intervening class exercises and discussions coordinated by the instructor to integrate the students' presentations into coherent sessions.

### Externship Placements

The placements, arranged by the course instructor, will be offered in external organizations in both the public and private sectors. Placements may be local, in Vancouver or other parts of Canada or even in other countries. The placements may be within community-based environmental NGOs, government agencies, corporations (eg, mining or forestry companies), international organizations, First Nations groups and law firms.

### Course Readings

There is no assigned textbook or fixed syllabus for the GERLEP. Rather, most topics and course readings will change annually, depending on the nature of students' externships. During the first week of term, students will be assigned readings relating directly to their individual externships. For example, if a student is to be placed in a mining company to work on extractives law issues, the personal readings for that student will focus on relevant literature about his or her work placement. Some core, common readings for all students will also be prescribed that deal with generic dimensions of working in a legal practice externship (eg, advising clients, writing memos, and other core skills).

### Evaluation and Grading

The evaluation methods for GERLEP are meant to complement the experiential element of the course through the following:

- requiring reflection on the workplace experience (completing a daily journal);
- synthesizing and articulating that experience (class presentation and accompanying seminar paper); and
- facilitating legal analysis and the formulation of legal advice in the context of practice in this area of law (initial memoranda and final research paper)

Because GERLEP comprises two inter-related components worth 15 academic credits:

- Course 1: externship placement and daily journal (**9 credits**, graded pass / fail)
- Course 2: memo, class seminar paper (5000 words) and class presentation, and final research paper (10,000 words) (**6 credits**).

### Application Requirements and Process

- The program is open to students entering the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their JD.

- Students commencing GERLEP must have completed either of the core UBC courses in this subject-area - Environmental Law (387C) or Natural Resources Law (392B) - or, in exceptional circumstances, have in the opinion of the GERLEP director completed other studies in environmental and natural resources law that provide adequate preparation for the program.
- The application deadline is Friday, **March 15, 2013**.
- The application process will involve completion of a short application form (to be available by late February), submission of university grades and, in some cases, an interview with the GERLEP director.
- Final admission decisions will be made by the end of March.

### Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers)

**1. Can I apply for GERLEP if I haven't completed any environmental or natural resources law courses?**

Yes, all JD students are welcome to apply. If offered admission without completion of prior relevant courses, admission would be conditional on passing stipulated prerequisites during the fall term of 2013-14. Environmental Law (387C) is offered each fall term.

**2. Can I apply after the deadline?**

Applications submitted after March 15 may be considered on a case-by-case, non-priority basis, depending on available spaces in GERLEP.

**3. How many students will be enrolled in GERLEP?**

A maximum of ten students will be in GERLEP, though the final numbers will likely be eight students. The small class size is designed to maximize the intensive learning environment for participants.

**4. What funding is offered by GERLEP for placements outside of Vancouver?**

The program makes every attempt to ensure that participation in GERLEP incurs no major costs beyond what would be expected if the student were to remain for their term at UBC. It is envisioned that UBC Law will fund the majority of costs that students incur for travel and accommodation when placed in an externship outside of Vancouver. Accommodation would likely involve home-stays, lodging and boarding arrangements, rather than hotels. The program asks that students do all they can to keep costs low, and to assist substantially in arranging reasonable transportation and finding accommodations.

**5. How are the externship placements arranged?**

The director of the program works with each student to make every effort to facilitate placement in a setting that matches the interests and skills of the student. The detailed arrangement of the placement itself is carried out by the director. Some students may come into the program with very definite ideas about what they would like to be exposed to in their placement, while others only have very general notions about what might be educational and worthwhile. The availability of the placements outside of Vancouver may be constrained by the funding available. The director makes the final decisions on placements.

**6. How can GERLEP help students in their future careers, beyond environmental and natural resources law?**

The program promises to improve JD students' preparation for a law career, including in areas of legal practice beyond natural resources or environmental law, though its focus on the development of basic lawyering and educational skills. For example, GERLEP aims to:

- Enhance students' abilities to work collaboratively and creatively with other people.
- Strengthen students' skills in legal research and report and memo writing.
- Further their oral communication abilities, including presenting, advocating, negotiating and listening.
- Introduce students to basic lawyering skills, including communication, negotiation, time management, and teamwork.
- Foster a deeper understanding of the ethical and professional responsibilities of lawyers.