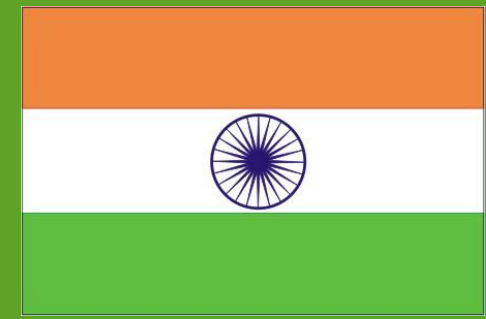


Journey Tibet: Engaging with Tibetan Refugees in Northern India



Sarah McEwan
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Skills Utilized

- Course Design/ Tailoring Interventions to Individuals
 - I planned lessons suited to my students' specific needs, assembled all necessary materials, taught the lessons, and followed up with student critiques
- Engagement with International Political Organizations
 - I engaged in political dialogue with local offices, many of whom were headquarters for international Tibetan efforts. I raised questions regarding methods of protest and the use of self-immolation (setting oneself on fire)
- Volunteer Coordination
 - I translated and typed emails from the Tibetan Volunteer Coordinator, set up hospitality functions for incoming volunteers, and maintained Lha's evaluative database



Partners along the way... Community Agency



LHA CHARITABLE TRUST
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL WORK & EDUCATION

Lha Charitable Trust is the largest social work NGO in McLeod Ganj and focuses on improving the lives of Tibetans through education and support. 'Lha' is a Tibetan word meaning 'loving-kindness'. The agency utilizes the high volume of tourists desiring to "help the Tibetan cause" as tutors and teachers.

Lha also settled me with a Tibetan host family, who made the experience incredible. The family made traditional Tibetan foods, traditional Indian foods, and delicious new creations! They also welcomed me to experience many of the daily rituals, such as circumambulating (walking around the outside of) the temple before dawn and public addresses by the Dalai Lama.

The Experience Placement Information

I tutored two Tibetan women in English during my three-week placement with Lha. They wanted to learn enough to teach a cooking class, so I developed lesson plans around food preparation terms related to traditional Tibetan foods, like making momos (a delicious dumpling). In addition to tutoring, I also helped out the volunteer coordinator, Rabsul, to arrange future volunteer placements as they contacted the agency.

Souvenirs! Outcomes from Special Studies Project

I had anticipated tutoring taking up the majority of my time. Instead, I found myself having dynamic conversations with my host family about Indian culture. I took lessons from a local on the Nepalese Flute and Shaman Wood Flute. I read Buddhist texts with a cup of Masala Chai tea and sat in on conversational English classes with people from around the globe.

The Journey Continues... Career Connections

I anticipate using some of the meditation techniques that I learned to reduce stress within me, which will in turn yield a more balanced co-worker and compassionate case worker.



Preparation for the Journey: Classroom Connections

My SSW 628 class emphasized stress reduction techniques, including meditation, which I explored more while in India

If I'd only known... Lessons Learned and Advice

Himachal Pradesh, the region where McLeod Ganj is located, banned plastic bags- I wish I had not used plastic bags to protect my travel gear when I left the US!

Take advantage of all the yoga, reiki, meditation, cooking, and Tibetan language classes offered!

Mail a package home- it's a trip!

The Destination... McLeod Ganj, India



Home of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile, McLeod Ganj is located in the foothills of the Himalayas of Northern India.

Tibetan people originate from the Tibetan plateau in the Himalayas, currently part of China. Oppressive pressures on Tibetan culture caused Tibetans within Tibet to seek refuge in other nearby countries, like India and Nepal. Recently, Tibetans have started to self-immolate (set themselves on fire) to protest Chinese involvement in the Tibetan Region.



Why go? Choice of Placement

- My desire to explore this part of the world:
- Opportunity to valuably contribute to the Tibetan Cause
 - Immersion in Tibetan family life through home-stay program
 - Fascination with Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, and Meditative practices



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