**Global Field Agency**

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. SNAICC works for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being.

SNAICC represents a membership body of over 1400 Indigenous-led and controlled child care centers and advocacy groups across Australia.

**Indigenous Youth are over-represented in the child-protection system across Australia**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprise 5.5% of all children aged 0-17 years in Australia, yet they constitute nearly 35% of all children placed in out-of-home care.
- The national rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care is almost 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.
- The number of Indigenous children in foster care and receiving child protection services is steadily rising— from 12,358 in 2011 to 15,455 in 2015.

Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne is the capital and the most populous city of the southeastern Australian state of Victoria. It has been rated the “world’s most liveable city” for 6 years in a row and is referred to as Australia’s cultural capital.

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**Placement Focus**

As a Social Policy and Program Evaluation student, I had the opportunity to research the Australian federal and the Victorian state government’s policies concerning the placement of Indigenous children in the child protection system and how culturally-appropriate Indigenous early education services are funded.

**My project accomplishments include:**

- Authored an independent research project on Social Impact Bonds, a funding mechanism that could potentially provide additional funding for under-resourced yet vital early childhood education centers serving Indigenous children.
- Conducted independent research on the impact new legislation in the Australian Parliament will have on placing Indigenous children in out-of-home care and their access to culturally appropriate early education services.
- Work-shopped a trauma-informed cultural competency training seminar for child care providers working with Indigenous children in the child protection system.
- Created a Student Peer-Learning group to further develop the structure of SNAICC’s internship program.

**Skills Utilized:**

- I developed my ability to identify and engage stakeholders involved in our issue area; how to be a culturally sensitive advocate for a community that I do not share a heritage with; how to manage an independent research project.

**Classroom Connections:**

**SW 647 Policies and Services for Social Participation and Community Well-Being** helped me to understand the policies and services that promote a social work role.

**SW 504 Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work** helped me to apply a PODS framework and engage with diversity and differences when practicing international social work.

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**Lessons Learned:**

To effectively advocate for and craft inclusive social policy, one must prioritize relationship building and be patient when working alongside and learning from the served community.

**Career Connections:**

My global experience enhanced my ability to build cross-cultural relationships and appreciate the differences between how social policy is implemented in the United States compared with other nations. This knowledge will improve my ability to act as a policy analyst in a foreign setting.

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**Advice:**

- Build your knowledge base before departure by studying the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.
- Read the Australian news to stay informed on the current political climate.
- If possible, connect with people in your agency or involved in Indigenous rights advocacy to get a sense of the culture you are entering.

**Acknowledgements:**

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**Advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Melbourne, Australia**

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