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Promotional Copy

Project #4161 History of a Student-Led Organization

Organization Information

The host organization is a campus-based, community-oriented, non-profit organization committed to research, education, and action on local social justice and environmental issues. Each year, its staff and volunteers organize speakers, films, conferences, publications, and campaigns on a wide variety of topics that fit within its mandate. They also offer skills development workshops and have previously partnered with TCCBE for a number of projects.

Project Information

The host organization is approaching its 35th year in operation. Over the past three and a half decades, it is known that it has been at the forefront of local social justice and environmental issue activism within the Peterborough area, and that its working groups have won spectacular victories. However, the development of the organization into its present condition is but a vague memory. The purpose of this project is to detail the historical growth of this Peterborough student-led organization, as well as wider such movements in Ontario and Canada.

The student will be conducting research, primarily within archived files. These files are mostly located within the Peterborough office, though the project may necessitate gaining access to files located in other organizations. The research will likely also rely on documenting oral testimonies from past members, employees, volunteers, etc. This historical study will then be transcribed into a document that is useful for both institutional memory, as well as for public outreach purposes.

The research questions revolve around the host organization's historical presence in Peterborough. For example, what campaigns or services have helped shape the local community and what have been the historical relations between other local organizations? Also of interest, is the organizational story: what are the successes and failures the organization has faced? What are the controversies that have arisen in the past and how were they dealt with? The host is also interested in documenting the historical growth of the student-led organization movement in Ontario and Canada.

Benefit to the Host Organization and the Community

This project will directly benefit the host, as the historical understanding of past operations will assist in its present strategizing. As the old adage goes, you don't know where you are going if you don't know where you are coming from. Given that it is a primarily student-based organization with a full turnover every couple of years, the institutional memory does not extend far enough into the past. This project could rectify that.

Also, understanding what sorts of campaigns succeeded or failed in the past will help to avoid repeating mistakes, thus increasing its effectiveness in their struggles to assist and benefit the local community. Given the host's belief that the organization is beneficial to the Trent and Peterborough communities, it thus follows that a study beneficial to the organization will have a ripple effect into the community.

What Students Might Learn

This project would provide many learning opportunities for the student, including working with primary sources and researching in an area outside the academic realm. The student would have the opportunity to learn how dynamic and contested all history is, even within the local community, and would see how that contestation continues to play out in the present context.

Screening or Training Requirements

A confidentiality agreement may be needed.

Skills or Experience Needed

The ability to work independently is an asset, as is a willingness to conduct interpersonal research.

Resources Required for Project that will be Provided by Host

The only extra anticipated resources that this project will possibly require would be photocopying, and potentially travel costs. The office photocopier would be made available for use. Travel expenses would require pre-authorization, with the understanding that a refusal would negate the responsibility of the student to undertake such travel, where reasonable.