

## WORKING WITH BC CEDAW: REFLECTIONS OF A RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Carly Stanhope  
Law II, Allard School of Law, UBC

Working with the BC CEDAW Group was challenging, invigorating and inspiring. I came to law school with hopes of challenging gender inequality one day – so working closely with experts on women’s rights in BC was very surreal. As the group’s Research Assistant, I engaged with a wide range of women’s rights issues while compiling sections for the group report. Each organization provided a unique, in-depth account of their area of expertise – be it access to justice, violence against women, poverty and welfare, employment equality, childcare, housing and food security, women’s health, or environmental concerns. Engaging with all of these issues at once highlighted how they all intersect and compound inequality for women. To effectively address violence, we need to address poverty, and so on.

Having such a broad perspective was hugely useful when working with Canada’s other NGOs in Geneva. Our first days of work were quite intense, working in concert to ensure that all voices were heard, and that our presentation to the UN Committee went seamlessly. I was energized by each of the 20 passionate Canadian women’s rights advocates. I felt at home amongst people with such big hearts, who really care about making a difference.

It was with these advocates that I had the pleasure of walking through the United Nations’ gates for the first time. I felt a profound sense of purpose that I will never forget. I carried that feeling through the next three days as I worked with the advocates to draft press releases, rehearse oral submissions, and produce materials for on-the-fly lobbying. During Canada’s review, I was in awe as the UN Committee asked the Government delegates questions stemming directly from the Group report. Feeling heard and trusted as a source on the status of women in Canada was incredible. Now, after receiving the Committee’s recommendations for ensuring provincial compliance with the CEDAW, we look forward to implementation.