



NAME: Annelise

YEAR: 3rd Year Biology Major, Global Development Minor

LOCATION: Fort Providence, NWT

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A PEER EDUCATOR

DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR: After PEs are hired in the Fall, we begin to take on a variety of tasks to help better prepare ourselves for Initiative. As a part of the Northern Initiative, we work together as a group to prepare for initiative in very diverse communities in Northern Canada. At our weekly initiative meetings, we focus on topics such as cultural sensitivity, Indigenous issues in Canada, the experiences of past PEs, how to be effective teachers, and educate ourselves on the topics we will be teaching on initiative throughout the year! We also attend weekly education sessions with the other QHO initiatives, in which we further delve into topics pertinent to teaching in diverse communities. In addition to these weekly commitments, we often are planning and attending various fundraisers that are either QHO-wide or our own Initiative-specific fundraisers. Something unique about the Northern Initiative is that we have great opportunities on campus to get involved and further educate ourselves on the Indigenous culture and history in Canada; examples of this include attending Cultural Sensitivity Training at Four Directions or going as a group to attend sessions held by relevant guest speakers. You can expect a time commitment of anywhere from 4-15 hours per week during the school year.



ON INITIATIVE: For the Northern Initiative, unlike other initiatives, we work in pairs in one of four communities in Northern Canada. Myself, along with my wonderful teaching partner Emily, had the pleasure of spending six weeks in Fort Providence, NWT. Fort Providence is a drive-in Deh Cho Dene community about 2 hours away from Yellowknife. During initiative, we lived in a house in the community. During a typical week we spent three full days teaching various health topics. After assessing needs and speaking with many different community members, we focused on teaching topics such as mental health, sexual health, self esteem, and substance use and abuse to all grade levels from kindergarten to high school! The other two days a week we attended Spring Camp. This was one of the highlights of our Initiative, as it was a great way to develop a peer-to-peer relationship with our students, and learn about the Dene way of life which we could in turn apply to our lessons, making them more culturally relevant. After school, we often prepared for the next day, and usually attended programming at the community Youth Centre. Our weekends were generally spent planning, catching up on paperwork, spending time at the playground with our students, and we often were invited to various gatherings by teachers, social workers, and other figures in the community.

WHAT WE TEACH:

As part of the Northern Initiative, what we teach varies based on the community we are in! As PE pairs, each location has various needs assessments that they exchange with students, teachers, and other community members where appropriate (for example, nurses and the RCMP). As PEs, we are then able to utilize the skills and lessons we have worked towards developing throughout the year at Queen's and adapt them to our specific community and the different grade levels that we teach! Some topics we touched on in Fort Providence included sexual health (puberty, consent, contraceptives, STIs), mental health (self esteem, self care), nutrition, and substance use and abuse. Throughout initiative we often spoke with community members about their thoughts on each topic and important points that should be included based on the community!



AN IDEAL PE:

Some key qualities that would make a PE well suited for the Northern Canada Initiative include being easy going, as plans often change quickly in the North, adaptive, able to work well with many different types of people, enthusiastic, and open to learning from those around you; whether it be your students, Elders in the community, or your teaching partner!

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN QHO:

QHO is an excellent opportunity, and I would encourage anyone who has a passion for health, youth, and DEVS topics to apply! I feel so grateful for my time in Fort Providence, and the community and it's members will always hold a very special place in my heart. Something that really stuck out for me during my time on Initiative was the mutual learning opportunities that were fostered. While were able to facilitate many fun, engaging, and at times challenging health discussions within the community, we also gained a deep perspective on the Deh Cho Dene culture, Northern Canada itself, and how we, while acknowledging our positionality, can play a positive role in the ongoing and complex reconciliation between white settlers and Indigenous Canadians.

