

## **Final Report** – Keith Crawford, IHRP intern at Egale Canada

August 27, 2013

I was fortunate to spend 14 weeks working with Egale Canada this summer, thanks to receiving an IHRP internship. Egale is Canada's only national lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) human rights organization advancing equality, diversity, education and justice. Founded in 1986, Egale Canada was incorporated as a federal not-for-profit organization in 1995, with a focus on education, advocacy, litigation and expert consultation. Egale Canada's successful track record of representing LGBT Canadians includes intervening before Canadian courts and tribunals in 24 cases, including 11 before the Supreme Court of Canada. It was inspiring to work with an organization that had had major successes (ex. *Reference re Same-sex Marriage* [2004] (SCC), *Egan v Canada* [1995] (SCC)) in advancing such an important cause. Egale Canada also contributes significantly to LGBT rights internationally, through consultive status with the United Nations as a member of ILGA, as a registered civil society organization with the Organization of the American States, and through participation in Canada's Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations Human Rights Committee. More information about Egale Canada, and Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, can be found on their website at [www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)

During my summer, I was assigned a wide variety of legal research and communications projects. In addition to being given specific summer projects to complete, Egale allowed me to participate in its workplace community as a member of the team. As a result, I was able to contribute to documents and consultations that Egale Canada made with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the Organization of the American States, and in Canada's Universal Periodic Review. I was able to monitor ongoing events and look for opportunities to contribute to LGBT rights internationally. In addition, I also compiled a database of LGBT rights developments made by international law bodies, particularly those that make up the UN and OAS. My summer provided me with the opportunity to follow developments more closely, and co-ordinate efforts with other civil society organizations represented internationally, particularly the IACHR, ILGA, and foreign domestic LGBT rights organizations.

As part of a small, effective team, I also took on several tasks more directly related to domestic Canadian law. I completed several FAQs on Canadian legal topics, which were added to Egale's website after they had been reviewed by the organization's senior staff. I wrote background and issue papers on legislative developments and upcoming cases pertaining to LGBT rights for use by the organization internally. In addition, I was able to research answers to specific questions on LGBT rights issues for team members as they arose.

One aspect of this placement that I found particularly engaging was that I was able to contribute to the organization's responses to events that happened while I was at my placement. For instance, it was during my placement that Russia passed legislation banning "homosexual propaganda," and controversy arose surrounding the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. This legislation is a major violation of the human rights of LGBT people because of its vague wording and broad applicability, and because of its aim and effect of violating LGBT people and their allies', freedom of expression. It was unclear how the legislation might be applied, both during the Olympic Games and more generally. I was able to contribute to research on the language and

implication of the legislation, and participate in meetings discussing the organization's stance and policy on the issue.

I had the opportunity to meet and work with incredible people during my internship. Egale is supported by a small, dedicated team, and I had the opportunity to learn from several staff while working closely with them on projects. I gained particular insight into effective advocacy from my supervisors, Ryan Dyck, the director of research and policy, and Helen Kennedy, the executive director. Through the connections I have made at Egale, I am continuing to learn about human rights in Canada and internationally.

I am very grateful to the International Human Rights Program for making this experience possible. This rare opportunity allowed me to develop my legal research and writing skills while working on important human rights issues, and to work proactively to deal with ongoing developments. It allowed me to be fully integrated as a member of an organization that excels in advocating human rights both domestically and internationally. I am confident that this experience will be a highlight of my time in law school, and a significant influence on my future career.

Sincerely,

Keith Crawford  
JD Candidate, 2015