



## Changemaker Paula Rasmussen studies Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders - the first program of its kind in the world

### ALUMNI INTERVIEW

By Sierra Maidlow



In June, Paula Rasmussen's family hosted a ten-year Waldorf reunion for Mr. Carter's 2013 graduating class. Paula began her time at Calgary Waldorf in kindergarten and continued in Mr. Carter's class from grade one through grade nine. I had the pleasure of speaking with Paula who currently resides in Victoria, BC to discover where her continued education and her zest for travel has taken her.

After high school Paula moved out west to do her undergrad degree in political science at the University of Victoria. Partway through her undergrad, she started working with Beecher Bay First Nation in East Sooke, doing community support and child and youth work. Noticing many injustices and gaps within the current system in child welfare and indigenous rights, Paula then applied for law school. She was accepted to both Toronto and Victoria, and Paula chose to remain at the University of Victoria because they offer a unique joint degree program in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders. It is the first program of its kind in the world. Heading into her third year she is looking forward to field school in First Nations' communities, likely in the Northwest Territories where students will learn from the Elders and knowledge holders about their traditional laws, working with them to revitalize their laws and help facilitate the legal work. She expresses that it is important to state that she is non-indigenous, that she is a settler.

This summer Paula is working for four months with SIIA (South Island Indigenous Authority) which represents the eight Nations on the south of Vancouver Island, who are trying to assert jurisdiction over children and family services in accordance with bill C-92. She will participate in the facilitation, planning and development of that legislation, fully led by the Nations, helping them to understand some of the legal hurdles they may face and the things that will need to be included in their laws to receive funding from the Federal government.

The Rasmussen family began their Calgary Waldorf journey when they discovered our original school in Marda Loop and with the new school nearing completion they moved to Cougar Ridge so they could be close by. Building community has always been very important to them all.

*“The sense of community that Calgary Waldorf gives a child, and their family is something you don’t always receive at other schools. The teachers really get to know the students, their unique learning styles, what they struggle with, and help them to succeed.”*



Paula recognizes that Waldorf fosters creativity, thinking outside of the box and doing things differently than the status quo. It is central to the work she does and the need to think outside of the current system.

*“In learning indigenous law you do some analyzing of stories and oral histories and pull out the legal principles that are embedded in those stories. I remember learning some of the creation stories from Waldorf, they were familiar, and this way of learning was not new to me.”*

Paula makes it a priority to travel, both through her studies and during her free time. She studied abroad in high school in Southeast Asia, and in her undergrad she went to field school and lived with local Masai people in Tanzania learning about environmental sustainability and local development.

When asked by others about Waldorf education, Paula often starts by saying it is a liberal arts school, created by Rudolf Steiner and his philosophies about education. Letting kids play for longer and not forcing them to learn complex ideas at a young age is important, and that band, handwork, woodwork, German, and French aren’t optional – they are a part of the program.

Some of the fond memories she and her Waldorf classmates reminisce about are the many field trips they participated in and when Mr. Carter would dress up and come into class as different characters based on what they were learning.



*Paula’s younger brother Ben attended CWS, her mother Carol Hawkwood has worked with CWS as a kindergarten assistant and with aftercare, and her father Jan Rasmussen sat on the CWSS Board of Directors from 2017-2019.*

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