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CEPAL Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange



CANADIAN - PALESTINIAN EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

The Arch

A Successful 2009 Summer Program!

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, CEPAL was able to run a 2009 summer program. Here is what our dynamic and motivated summer staff told us about themselves prior to departure.

Wendy Chan (Lebanon Field Coordinator)

As part of my undergraduate degree in archaeology, I had the opportunity to work on excavations in Jordan. My interest in the Middle East grew from that experience, as did my interest in international development. I eventually returned to school to complete a post-graduate diploma in International Project Management, after which I spent several years in international development work both in Canada and overseas. I am currently pursuing graduate studies and my research specialization relates to children's rights and participation in refugee communities.

Elizabeth Cooper

My father is a member of the Canadian Armed Forces and as such, I have lived in various locations across Canada and the United States, including both coasts. This led me to have a keen interest in the world around me and I have since travelled extensively. I have a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts from Ryerson University with a major in Photography. My true passion is documentary photography and I would one day like to pursue a career in journalism. After graduating, I taught English as a second Language in Busan, South Korea to Kindergarten students. This summer's program in Lebanon will be my first overseas volunteer experience and I am incredibly excited to be part of positive change. I look forward to this summer being productive, educational and fun. Upon my return to Canada, I hope to use my photographic work in various awareness raising events, such as photographic exhibits, slide shows and publications.

I'm thrilled to be beginning my relationship with CEPAL as this year's Lebanon Field Coordinator.

Erin Lynch

Throughout my life I have been focused on two main things: connecting with a wide range of people, and teaching. The former started with studying in international schools in Pakistan and Wales and combined with the latter as I taught in Lebanon and Korea. At the moment I am teaching ESL mainly to Korean and Japanese students in Toronto, but have long been interested in the Palestinian struggle. I am very excited for the opportunity to get some concrete experience working with and advocating for Palestinians in Lebanon.

Julie Davidson

I graduated from Queens University doing a double degree in Physical and Health

Education and Biology in 2006. Since then I have spent most of my time working, volunteering and traveling overseas. Some of my experiences included climbing the highest mountain in South East Asia and playing with monkeys in the jungles of Ecuador. I had the most amazing two years of my life and it reinforced my desire to continue working overseas in a development and relief capacity. I am currently studying International Project Management at Humber College in hopes of realizing this dream. I am really looking forward to meeting the Palestinian community, because I have heard that their hospitality is unparalleled, and I would be a liar if I didn't say that I am looking forward to the food!



Summer 2009 CEPAL Program Staff (from Left to Right) Erin Lynch, Wendy Chan, Liz Cooper Julie Davidson

Thoughts From Lebanon—By Wendy Chan

Our Lebanon Field Coordinator, Wendy Chan, arrived in Lebanon in early June. Wendy had a busy first few weeks as she familiarized herself with her new home for the summer, introduced herself to CEPAL partners and prepared for the arrival of the CEPAL volunteers. She took time out to send us this report of her early experiences.

I had been living in Bourj el-Barajneh for nearly a month when an acquaintance made a point of telling me that people in the community are very grateful that I've chosen to volunteer here. He went on to explain that many people have experienced a great deal of hardship and as a result might have trouble expressing such sentiments in words. The main reason he told me this was because he seemed concerned that I may not have felt this gratitude. Obviously this was nice to hear, but I had been feeling anything but unappreciated and neglected. In large part this was due to the number of people who had invited me to share food and drink with them. As someone who enjoys cooking and eating immensely, I try to pay attention to different food-related rituals. Even

during my everyday life in Canada, I spend a large amount of time thinking about food, but in any new culture I'm constantly on the lookout for the unspoken manifestations of culture woven into buying, preparing and eating food. In Bourj this amounts to everything from how food is served in a home to how to buy manaesh or a kilo of apricots. Things that are natural to others are mysterious to me. Each successful purchase is a new triumph, while a mistake can have unintended (although often pleasant) consequences.

As time goes by, I'm learning new ways to carry out old habits. Making coffee, for example, which I practice at a friend's home coached by several members. How to eat has also been a continuous learning experience. At another friend's house during my first week in Bourj, my technique for picking up fuul with pita was deemed laughable and the entire family got involved in teaching me the proper way. This technique must then be adapted to eat molokhiye, which has a different consistency. The roles were reversed a few days later when, at my friend's

request, I showed her how to use chopsticks.

Several different people regularly quiz me on what I've eaten in a given day. Part of this might be to test my Arabic, but I think the main motives are to make sure I'm eating properly, to find out what I enjoy, and to assess how they might supplement this. I've been overwhelmed by people's offers to prepare new and different dishes, and by the continual effort to improve them. A friend asks me whether I have tried two different versions of my favourite dish of mujaddara. "Which do you think is more delicious?", she asks. I don't know how to choose, but when I ask for instructions on how to prepare a dish she tells me with obvious pride. In this way I had been sharing personal experiences and feeling welcomed and taken care of, and it wouldn't have occurred to me to think of any of my hosts as ungrateful. Instead I had been feeling privileged that people had been opening up to me using an unspoken language of nourishment that makes me feel at home.

CEPAL's Summer Program Overview

Thanks to the hard work and help of many volunteers and donors, CEPAL is delighted to announce that we successfully ran our 11th summer program in Lebanon!

Last summer's Needs Assessment has helped us to reaffirm that yes, our summer program in the camps is as important as ever and that yes, CEPAL's summer program plays a significant role in the camps.

This year we were fortunate enough to hire volunteers who had the specific skills that our partner NGO's were looking for. This included photography, drama and science.

Three volunteers and one coordinator

completed a three-day series of teaching workshops with UNRWA and Najdeh in Wavel camp, and then moved on to Bourj el-Barajneh camp in South Beirut to begin their regular classes.

Elizabeth Cooper used photography to connect to children of various ages at the Children and Youth Centre of Shatila, as well as a class of younger children at the Women's Humanitarian Organization in Bourj.

Erin Lynch taught a group of grade 8 students at the UNRWA Haifa school, as well as a group of young teens at Najdeh school in Shatila.

Julie Davidson taught at UNRWA

Haifa, with the younger group of grade 7 students. After spending the early morning there, she made her way to Najdeh in Bourj, where she taught science and English.

Wendy Chan, the Lebanon Field Coordinator, worked very hard to continue to build our relationships with all of our partners and with the community as a whole.

We're very grateful to our volunteers, who have enabled CEPAL to continue lending an empathetic ear, helping hands, and a voice of solidarity to our friends in Lebanon.

Here are a few pictures from Summer Program 2009!



CEPAL is a charitable organization, founded in 1996 by individuals who share a deep commitment to the respect of human dignity and the rights of all people. CEPAL's objective is to assist the Palestinian refugees in the pursuit of their basic human rights by increasing their access to education, and by raising public awareness in Canada about their struggle. CEPAL is the only Canadian organization that works directly with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.



Join the CEPAL Schoolhouse!

As your donation grows, so too the benefits!

- ◆ **\$25 - \$99 – Friend**
 - ✦ Are issued a tax receipt
 - ✦ Receive the CEPAL Digest via email; a bi-weekly synopsis of news items and links of relevant issues surrounding Palestinian refugees
 - ✦ Receive CEPAL's bi-annual newsletters
 - ✦ Are entitled to recognition in CEPAL's newsletters
- ◆ **\$100 - \$249 – Prefect** *Includes all the benefits of a Friend membership, plus:*
 - ✦ Receive a copy of CEPAL's Voices DVD; a film produced by 2005 Summer Program volunteer Marie-Eve Fiset
- ◆ **\$250 - \$499 – Teacher** *Includes all the benefits of a Prefect membership, plus:*
 - ✦ Receive a CEPAL mug
- ◆ **\$500 - \$999 – Professor** *Includes all the benefits of a Teacher membership, plus:*
 - ✦ Receive a CEPAL t-shirt
 - ✦ Are entitled to call a meeting with the board
- ◆ **\$1000 - \$2499 – Dean** *Includes all the benefits of a Professor membership, plus:*
 - ✦ Receive 2 Invitations to CEPAL's Donor Appreciation Reception
- ◆ **\$2500+ – Principal** *Includes all the benefits of a Dean membership, plus:*
 - ✦ Receive a special gift from the Summer Program
 - ✦ Receive 4 Invitations to CEPAL's Donor Appreciation Reception

Events

Right of Return Conference

June 20th marked this year's World Refugee Day. CEPAL participated in this event by holding a conference to spread awareness on the Palestinian Right of Return. The conference was co-hosted with SPHR-Ottawa (Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights). CEPAL and SPHR's goal was to generate a better understanding within the Ottawa community of the challenges facing Palestinian refugees barred from re-entering Palestine.

The Palestinian Right of Return refers to the legal and moral right for Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland. This is an often overlooked issue in the

on-going Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and one that is of utmost importance.

The conference began with a "Right of Return 101" workshop presented by Samah Sabawi. Ms. Sabawi's workshop gave an in-depth overview of the history of the Palestinian conflict. The presentation focused on the legal and moral issues surrounding Palestinian refugees' right to return to Palestine. Ms. Sabawi also screened a documentary outlining the issues of forming a government for Palestinians within the occupied territories.

There were two guest speakers featured in the conference, including CEPAL's Shauna Trainor. Ms. Trainor presented her experiences as a volunteer within

the Bourj al-Barajneh camp in Lebanon in 2006. She explained many of the hardships faced by the inhabitants of the camp and offered an interesting insight into the experiences of international volunteers. The other speaker was Mr. Monzer Zimmo, a Palestinian refugee and respected member of the Ottawa Palestinian community. He focused his lecture on the realities of Palestinian community within and outside of the occupied territories, as well as shared some of his personal experiences as a refugee. His passion and knowledge pertaining to Palestine and the Palestinian Right of Return was inspirational. It was a sincere pleasure to listen and learn from Monzer Zimmo.



Remi Kanazi in "Beats for Palestine"

Beats for Palestine

On June 4th, CEPAL launched the first of what we hope to make an annual benefit and Palestinian solidarity concert in Montreal, *Beats for Palestine*, in partnership with Project Hope. Spoken-word artist Remi Kanazi, reggae master Mark Mahoney (aka Jah Faith), and hip-hop up-and-comers KinZ joined forces at *Le Petit Campus* to make the evening a promising success. Project Hope offers a similar educational exchange to CEPAL's in Nablus, in the West Bank. For more information about Project Hope, visit www.projecthope.ps. Samples of the artists' work can be found on MySpace and YouTube.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On that day, in 1947, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine. In December 2005, the Assembly requested the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights, as part of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, to continue to organize an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN. It also encouraged Member States to continue to give the widest support and publicity to the observance of the Day of Solidarity.

On November 28 at 7 pm, CEPAL will be joining with Palestine House as they host a lecture in the Medical Science Auditorium at the University of Toronto. CEPAL will be making our summer program calendars available as well as baked treats.



“Khalil” — By Elizabeth Cooper

This past summer, I worked for the Women’s Humanitarian Organization (WHO) in Bourj and the Children and Youth Centre (CYC) in Shatila. These organizations promote fun, informal activities for large groups of children. The result is rather chaotic, energy filled sessions of running, screaming, and having fun. Always interesting and productive, my time at these centres taught me many things. I learned the importance of creativity when working with young minds and allowing opportunities for independent play. The large groups of children and the full schedule left little time for calm, quiet moments at either centre. Undoubtedly this is one reason why the experience remains so vivid to me. Towards the end of my stay, a group of Italian volunteers came to WHO to run activities for the students. With a little free time on my hands, I took the opportunity to photograph the children and help out other volunteers. It was wonderful to watch the children play and interact with each other and the volunteers. At one point I was watching the children play a drama game with the Italians, when I heard a small voice exclaim something, but I couldn’t understand what was said (not unusual for me in Lebanon!). The noise came from an empty classroom, so I went in to investigate.

A small boy was sitting in a high window, arms dangling through the bars, fingers grasping some small piece of garbage picked up from the street, yelling things at the children he could see in the front room. I went over to him to say hello, and he very calmly looked at me. I asked him his name, he said “Khalil”.

He was about 6 years old and spoke no English. Via some rather silly pantomime, I asked him if he wanted to come inside and join. He said nothing. I tried again; he just levelled his steady gaze at me and said nothing. He was content to sit there and watch the students and me as well. I asked to take his picture, he said no, with an ever so slight raise of the eyebrows. Again I asked him to come inside, and again he refused. His eyes were tired and experienced and they betrayed an age much older than that of his body. It was difficult for me to get any sort of reaction out of him, regardless of what I did. So I left him on his own, staring into the centre, and I returned to the ongoing activities. The incident left me feeling strange, because here I was, working within a centre that was supposed to be a place for children to come, to socialize and to learn, and here was a child being excluded. Perhaps not intentionally, but he was left out, that was clear for anyone to see. Who knows for what reason he was not involved in our program, but he was not involved. We finished for the day and I went home. The next day was similar to the one that came before it and I was milling amongst the children giving help where help was needed. Again the children were involved in a game with the other volunteers and they

were thoroughly enjoying themselves. As I wandered through the crowd of people, I found myself standing at the door of the same classroom I had been in the day before. And again I heard a small voice. Sure enough, there was Khalil. Long and gangly, he hung through the bars of the window, as though he was attempting to pour himself through the bars into the classroom. He seemed utterly fixated on the activities that were happening around me and I was sure this time I could convince him to come in. Over I went to the window, to say hello and work my ‘magic.’ My attempts at getting him into the centre went unnoticed and he stayed, lodged on the stairs, dangling through the window, simply staring. As a last shot, I asked him if it was all right to take his picture. By this point in our relationship, no real words had passed between us. He had continued to gaze at me with the eyes of an elder and I had continued to make my meaning known through various forms of sign language. He said yes. And so, I took his picture. This one exposure is all I have to remind me of this brief encounter, and I am lucky to have it. It is important for me to remember that no matter what anyone feels they have accomplished, there is always so much more to do, so many more people left waiting indefinitely.



“When CEPAL is around there is a gap. When CEPAL is not around, there is a bigger gap.”
(CEPAL partner school in Lebanon)

Join the CEPAL Board of Directors

CEPAL is currently recruiting members for its 2010 Board of Directors. The Board is made up entirely of volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds. Directors are nominated for a position in late 2009, then voted in during CEPAL’s Annual General Meeting held in January. We are looking for enthusiastic individuals with a wide range of skills, including communications, event organizing, fundraising, bookkeeping, translation, web design, and desktop publishing. If you are interested in a rewarding experience running a grassroots Canadian NGO, please consider the opportunities available through CEPAL!

Positions currently available are:

President,
Treasurer,
Communications Director,
Events Director,
Fundraising Director,
Overseas Program Director,
IT Director.

Note: Some of these positions can be "combined", e.g. Secretary and Communications Director; Vice-President and Overseas Program Director.

To apply for a position on the Executive Board of Directors, please submit:

1. Cover letter describing the reasons why you would like to run for CEPAL’s Board of Directors, highlighting the area of responsibility that interests you, and where you think your skills would best be maximized.
2. Resume.
3. Contact information for two referees (i.e., phone number, email address)

You can apply by e-mail to info@cepal.ca, or by post to the following address:

The Canadian-Palestinian Educational Exchange
323 Chapel Street, 3rd Level
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1N 7Z2

For more information, visit our website at www.cepal.ca (under "Get Involved") or contact us at info@cepal.ca. Deadline December 31, 2009.

CEPAL Plans for the Future

We need an audit!

In order to apply for larger grants, CEPAL needs to have its books audited. We are reaching out to our supporters—do you know someone who might consider auditing our books? The audit should be a fast and straight-forward process. Please contact info@cepal.ca if you think you can help.

PENPAL plans underway!

We are in the early stages of organizing a penpal program that will help raise awareness, express solidarity and provide an opportunity to practice writing skills. If anyone has any ideas/interest/contact please let us know by contacting info@cepal.ca

2010 Calendars on Sale!

To help raise funds CEPAL has created a 2010 calendar available for sale. The calendar includes touching photos from the 2009 summer program and is on sale now for \$15. All proceeds will go directly to the 2010 Summer Program. Please email info@cepal.ca for more information or to place your order.