

IAFL STUDENTSHIP REPORT 2018

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For the past two years, International Academy of Family Lawyers has held a competition in Campus Law Centre through which the winning student is awarded a fully funded studentship to a family law firm anywhere in the world hosted by a fellow of the academy. As a part of the selection criteria, an essay had to be submitted on the basis of which candidates were shortlisted for the final interview and so I wrote an essay on the topic, "*Whether 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption facilitates Intercountry Adoption by LGBT?*". To my absolute delight I was selected and awarded the studentship and was hosted by Ms. Joy Feinberg from Boyle Feinberg Sharma, PC for a period of 4 weeks. The firm's practice areas mainly involved high net worth divorce, issues involving children, alternative dispute resolution and property division.

In the first week I got familiar with the firm, read case files, accompanied Ms Feinberg to court and client meetings and met various other legal professionals. I visited Juvenile Court and Criminal Court to observe the court proceeding and learned about the nuances of the working of legal system in U.S.A. Ms. Feinberg made sure my exposure is not just limited to the office so during the weekend I witnessed a live baseball game and wandered around the beautiful city of Chicago with my favourite being the Oak Street beach and also attended a music concert of Christine Ebersole.

Subsequently as I got familiar with the functioning of the firm I assisted Ms. Feinberg in drafting letters, orders, motions, marital settlement agreements, legal research and learned to gather evidence from discovery to support motions. Going through the discovery I observed more acceptance of electronic evidence in U.S.A unlike India. I was asked to read case files then we used to discuss the case which broadened my perspective. Reading the case files itself gave me a lot of cultural exposure regarding interpersonal relationships as are existing in U.S.A. I also attended pre-trial sessions during my tenure which made me appreciate how judges actively participate in finding best possible solutions for the parties.

Due to separate state laws within the country mainly procedural laws, working on the cases helped me understand the intricacies involved in family law practice with divorce taxation as a totally new field to me, In divorce cases usually the attorneys were seen to be confronted

with various demands from clients and the art of negotiation the lawyer exercises to come out with amicable solutions for the parties. One of the main consideration in each divorce case was the welfare of the child and strong child support system to protect the children in the due process of divorce.

Besides internship, Ms. Feinberg gave me a cultural outlook of the beautiful city of Chicago. I visited the Art Institute of Chicago, witnessed the Chicago Air Water show, attended many food festivals, tried different food cuisines and witnessed critically acclaimed Broadway play "Hamilton" which was supposedly the best musical I had ever seen in my life. During the weekend we used to spend a beautiful time in a relaxing and rejuvenating way by watching movies, going out for our regular Saturday early morning shopping to farmers market and trying different varieties of Indian food which to my surprise was liked by everyone. During one weekend, I also visited with one of the associates from the office Ms. Jessica Nelson to a shelter house for poor women and participated in the activity of creating inspirational vision boards to aid with setting goals for the future. Ms Feinberg also arranged for me a visit to Chinatown with another partner of the firm Ms. Molshree Sharma. Though I spent a brief time with her but my interaction with her was knowledgeable and inspiring.

Getting the opportunity to work with Ms. Feinberg, other people in the firm, chat with a number of judges and other professionals gave me a deep insight into the complexity of family where each case has different dynamics and no fixed solution to any. I am very thankful to IAFL for this once in a lifetime opportunity and wish uninterrupted continuance of this program for upcoming law students.

I would like to thank Ms. Pinky Anand, Prof. Usha Tandon and Ms. Donna Goddard for organising this studentship and being such a big support throughout the process. Most of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Ms. Joy Feinberg and Mr. Gregory Brown for hosting me and making my experience so wonderful.

