

How can you get involved?

As a Bishop's or Champlain student, you can get involved in this project in a number of ways:

➔ Become a volunteer with the project in Mae Sot, Thailand. This involves a commitment to prepare, help raise funds and to go to Thailand for three or six months.

➔ Help raise funds for the schools in Mae Sot. See the box below for information on who to contact to get involved in fundraising.

➔ Learn about the situation in Myanmar [Burma] and advocate for the human rights of all the diverse peoples of Myanmar: Read Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports and join in campaigns on their behalf.

Go to: www.hrw.org, www.amnesty.org or www.amnesty.ca.

NOTE: Bishop's students who volunteer with the project have the possibility of earning 6 credits by enrolling in a special experiential learning course related to the project. For more information, contact Prof. David Webster (dwebster@ubishops.ca).

For more information

If you are a student at or a recent graduate of Champlain or Bishop's, YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO VOLUNTEER WITH THIS PROJECT.

For more information about how to participate, see Angie Petittlerc in the Bishop's Writing Centre, Murray Johnston in Champlain 334 or contact Mary Purkey (mpurkey@crc-lennox.qc.ca or marypurkey@gmail.com)...or go to:

<https://maesot.ubishops.ca>



The Mae Sot Education Project



<https://maesot.ubishops.ca>

A campus-based Volunteer Project to assist refugee and migrant children from Myanmar living in Mae Sot, Thailand

Who are we? Why this project?

The *Mae Sot Education Project* is a small project, based on the Bishop's University/Champlain College campus. Its goal is to support the people of Myanmar [Burma] in their struggle to create a free, democratic and inclusive society by contributing to the education of migrant and refugee children from Myanmar in Thailand through volunteer and funding assistance. It also tries to promote friendship and solidarity between youth of different countries and to deepen the global understanding of youth volunteers and others in Canada.

What do we do?

- For the first time this year, we will recruit volunteers for three-month as well as six-month volunteering internships in Mae Sot, Thailand.
- We send small teams of student volunteers from Bishop's and Champlain to Mae Sot, Thailand (1) to help in the teaching of English in schools for refugee and migrant children by animating learning activities and (2) to provide administration assistance to schools and to Burmese educational organizations.
- We provide financial assistance and classroom materials to six partner schools and assist Burmese community-based organisations in Mae Sot.
- We develop the understanding, leadership, and skills of the volunteers.
- We encourage commitment to international cooperation and human rights in our community in Québec, Canada.
- Strengthen the ties of friendship and understanding between youth from Myanmar, Thailand and Canada.



A typical classroom setting

What are we looking for in volunteers?

Project volunteers are selected from among students at [or recent graduates of] Champlain - Lennoxville or Bishop's. Volunteers must:

- be aged 18 to 26;
- have good spoken and written English [Because we are based in Québec, some of our volunteers will be native French speakers, but they too must have good English skills.];
- be independent, self-reliant and resourceful, show maturity and good judgment;
- work well in a team;
- be adaptable and sensitive to different cultures;
- care about social justice issues and world affairs;
- be effective and energetic in working with children;
- have a desire to learn about the situation in Burma and the problems of displaced people.

Applications for the project are accepted during the fall term. Selection of volunteers takes place in December. Preparation begins in January.

What do volunteers have to do?

During the winter, before going to Mae Sot, volunteers:

- take bi-weekly classes in how to animate activities and lessons for English teaching;
- raise funds to help pay for their stay in Thailand and to help partner schools; meet bi-weekly to learn about political, economic and cultural conditions in Myanmar and on the Thai-Myanmar border;
- learn about Thai, Burmese and Karen cultures;
- learn some elementary Thai.



MSEP Volunteers organize games at a school.

While in Mae Sot, volunteers:

- help children and teachers with English and lead activities in schools for refugee and migrant children; assist community-based organizations;
- provide some materials and financial help to partner schools;
- learn about the cultures in the Mae Sot community and share some of their Canadian culture;
- write articles for Canadian media and the project newsletter.

On return to Canada, volunteers:

- give talks about their experience to community organizations and school groups, write articles and do other forms of outreach.

How much does it cost?

Beginning in 2021, each volunteer will be asked to contribute \$2500 to the project. The cost per volunteer is about \$4500. The total cost of sending four volunteers, supporting their work in Thailand for six months and contributing classroom materials and financial resources to partner schools is about \$35,000 CAD. Except for the volunteer contribution, funds for sending the volunteers and assisting the schools are raised through collective fundraising by the Project Committee and volunteers.

Some Background

The project began in 2003. As of Winter 2020, it has sent 16 teams of volunteers (including a total of 64 students from Bishop's and Champlain) to Mae Sot.



MSEP Volunteer working with a group of students

Normally, volunteers commit to spending six months (from June to December) in Thailand, living together and assisting in migrant schools. **This year, for the first time, a three-month internship in Thailand will be possible.**



Volunteers assist the migrant schools by providing teaching materials and English learning activity leadership, by animating sports and music activities, by sharing culture and organizing outings, gardening, etc. Some volunteers provide office assistance to migrant education organizations

The project works in partnership with six migrant schools and each year donates money to them for a variety of needs. It has also developed partnerships with education organizations

Volunteers receive support and guidance from the Project Committee while in Mae Sot.