

# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES

MODELS, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES FOR HOSTING SOCIAL WORKERS AND  
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES



# **OUTLINE**

## **Social Work in Library**

**Benefits**

**Approaches**

**Areas of practice**

**Hosting Models**

**Lessons from the field**

**Potential learning activities**

# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES. BENEFITS



- Benefit to the community
- Benefit for the library staff
- Benefit to the field of social work
- SW placements present an **innovative, cost effective, low risk solution to Libraries.**

# SHARED ETHICS

**CFLA**

- Diversity
- Social Inclusion
- Service to humanity

**CASW**



# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES. APPROACHES

- Focus on **the person within their environment**
- **Strengths-based perspective**
- **Anti-Oppressive lens**
- **Collection of information**
- Social workers are “**mandated reporters**”.
- **Access to information =**  
interpretation of the content

“ **Librarians** are constantly assessing who is and who is not accessing the library and how to shape current collections and programs to meet those needs. **Social workers** look at the same set of people and ask, instead: Who in our population would benefit from extra effort to set them on equal ground with everyone else? (Zettervall & Nienow, 2019, p. 5) ”



# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES. AREAS OF PRACTICE



## MICRO

Outreach and crisis management

## MEZZO

Community Connections and case referrals

## MACRO

Systemic Change



# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES. HOSTING MODELS

## Library Social Worker Model

Kitchener Public Library  
Edmonton Public Library  
Saskatoon Public Library  
Toronto Public Library  
Halifax Public Library

## Library-Community Agency Partnership Model

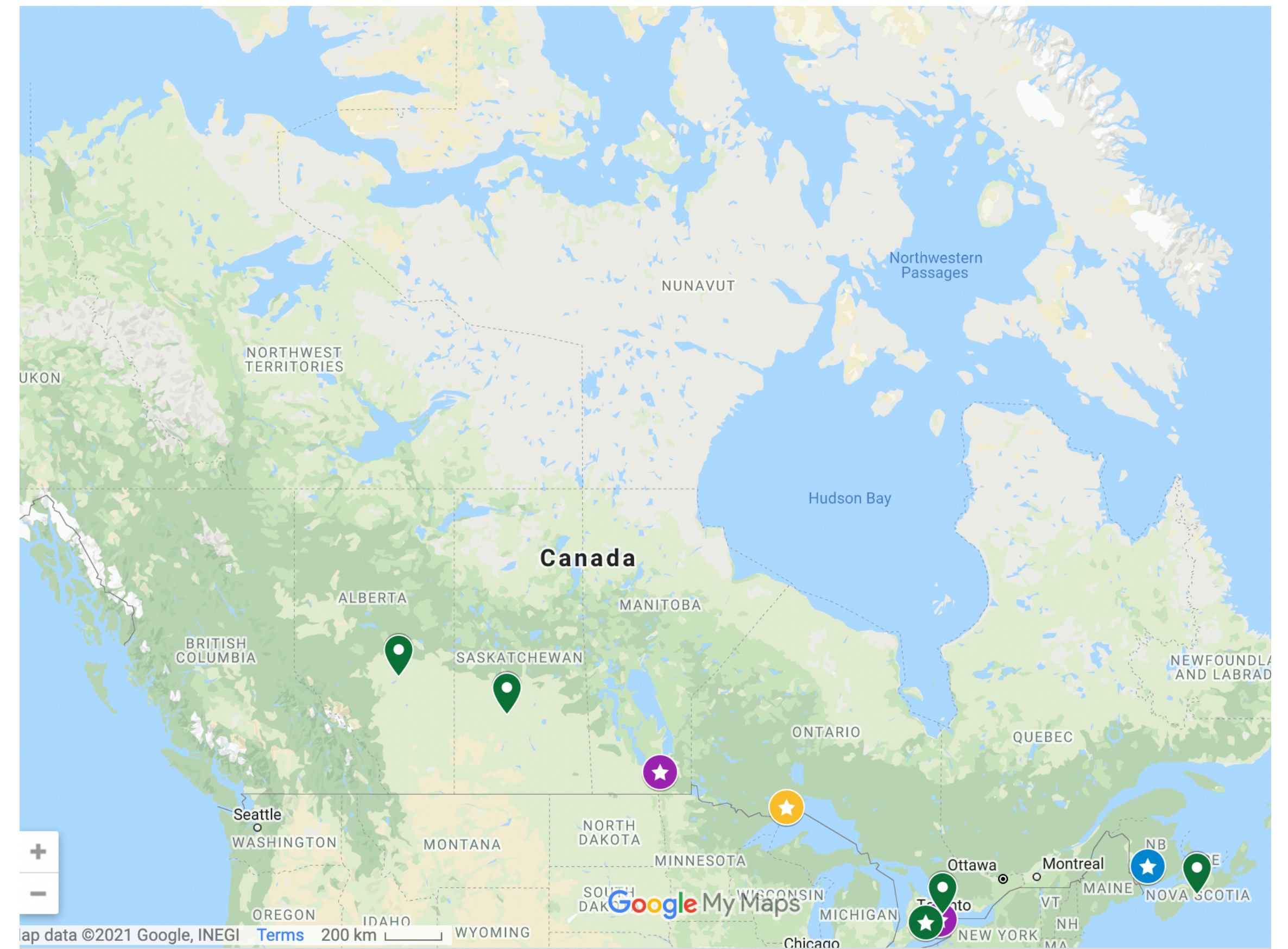
Thunder Bay Public Library

## Library-Municipal Partnership Model

Mississauga Public Library  
Winnipeg Public Library

## Library-University Partnership Model

Kitchener Public Library  
Fredericton Public Library  
Toronto Public Library





## For Halifax's only library social worker, a 'circle of care' extends to all

Sheena Jamieson helps staff and customers build better relationships



By ALEXANDRA SKULTETY

← Tweet



Mississauga Library

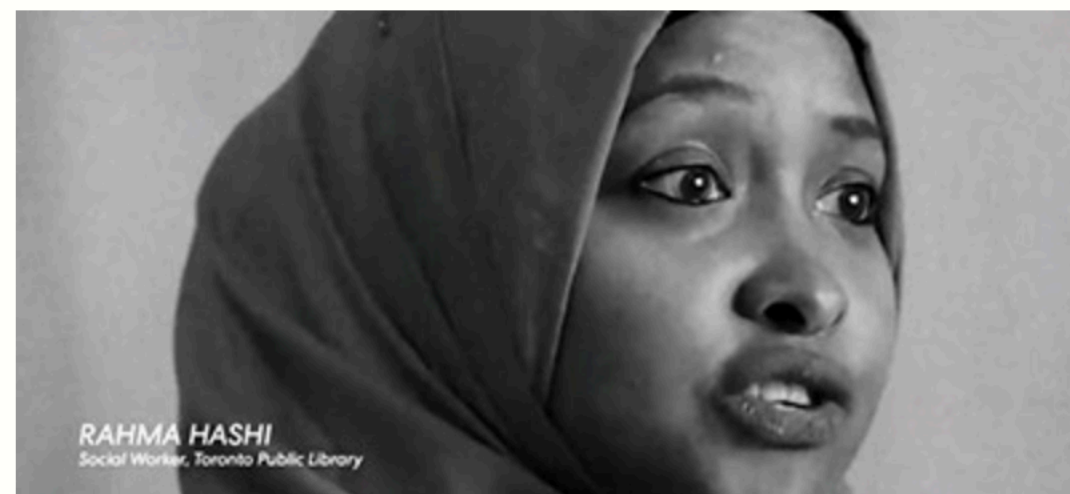
@mississaugalib

The library offers help to at-risk individuals and homeless people in Mississauga who need advice or support from a qualified social worker. The Open Window Hub outreach worker will respond to requests for assistance at all library locations. Learn more at [mississaugalibrary.ca/openwindowhub](https://mississaugalibrary.ca/openwindowhub)





3y



In response to the rise in homeless people using its branches, the **Toronto Public Library** has hired Rahma Hashi, its **first full-time social worker to deal with homelessness**, a move that could be copied by big-city libraries across Canada. The social worker will help **raise awareness** among branch librarians on how to deal respectfully with **vulnerable people** who may suffer from mental health issues and addiction, as well as homelessness. Also, starting this fall, a librarian will serve **two city-run homeless shelters**.



[Toronto Star, Sept. 19](#) ↗

## Edmonton Public Library Adds Homeless Outreach to Five New Branches

by [Lisa Peet](#)  
Dec 04, 2014 | Filed in [Advocacy](#)



One of the many reasons Alberta's Edmonton Public Library (EPL) was chosen as [Gale/LJ Library of the Year](#) for 2014 is its commitment to community services. In particular, EPL's outreach program to support the city's homeless population is a necessary initiative in a rapidly growing urban center—Canada's fifth-largest municipality—where temperatures rarely rise above freezing from November through March. Not only has the program survived the loss of its province-based funding, with the library system itself stepping in to cover costs, but this winter EPL's outreach will expand to five additional branches on a pilot basis. Last year outreach workers at downtown Edmonton's Stanley A. Milner Library, the system's large central branch, had more than 6,000 interactions with at-risk individuals, offering them help with finding medical care, housing referrals, employment counseling, and suicide prevention resources, among other services. The city's homeless population, however, is





# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES. LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

- **Document** the need
- Consider **contracting**
- Plan **sustainability** ASAP
- **Keep in mind the demographics** of the community needing help

JOIN

OUR

TEAM



# POTENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Engage in collaborative **partnerships** with local agencies
- Conduct **needs assessments** at library branches.
- Helping the library with **formulating interventions**
- **Evaluation** of programs / services
- (Re)formulate **library policies** to improve the wellbeing of underserved library patrons.
- Run “**Coffee & Conversation**” events





**Bad libraries build  
collections, good libraries  
build services, great  
libraries build communities.  
– R. David Lankes**







If you have any question or comment, please feel free  
to contact me at [esposa2@mcmaster.ca](mailto:esposa2@mcmaster.ca)