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As a third-year student pursuing a double major in Sociology and Gender Studies at the University of Victoria, I have dedicated my academic journey to understanding how systems of power shape access to mental health care, community support, and the overall well-being of marginalized communities. However, while my studies have provided me with a strong foundation in social justice, decolonial thought, and systemic analysis, I am passionate about transitioning from research to direct, community-based support through social work. A Master of Social Work (MSW) program is the next step in my journey, offering me the opportunity to further develop clinical, policy, and advocacy skills.

What draws me to a MSW program is its emphasis on anti-oppressive and decolonial frameworks, which are central to my approach to mental health advocacy. I am particularly interested in coursework that explores trauma-informed care, intersectional social work practice, and community-led mental health interventions. Additionally, I look forward to engaging in collaborative research, placements, and training opportunities that will equip me with the necessary skills to work with communities. As a transgender, queer, first-generation university student, I have experienced firsthand the gaps in affirming healthcare and the impact of systemic discrimination. These experiences have reinforced my belief in the importance of community-based mental health interventions. These lived experiences drive my commitment to expanding accessible, identity-affirming, and culturally competent mental health care for marginalized groups. My academic background, combined with my professional and community work, reinforces this passion.

Beyond my academic background, my professional and community work has reinforced my passion for advocacy and support work. As a Program Assistant at Big Brothers Big Sisters, I designed and facilitated youth programming that prioritized identity exploration, community belonging, and mental health resilience. This experience strengthened my ability to create safer spaces for youth navigating complex social and emotional challenges. Additionally, my leadership roles of coordinating musician programming, mentoring staff, and facilitating workshops I have enhanced my skills in communication, conflict resolution, and people-centered care. In my work at the Canadian Musicians Co-operative, I supported artists in navigating career development while also addressing mental health and accessibility barriers within the music industry.

My long-term goal is to engage in community-based social work for LGBTQIA+ services. I am particularly invested in decolonial approaches to healing and wellness, integrating holistic and community-led mental health frameworks into my practice. Through obtaining a MSW, I aim to develop the clinical and applied skills necessary to provide direct mental health support while also advocating for systemic change in healthcare, housing, and social services. With my academic foundation, lived experience, and hands-on work in the community, I am eager to contribute my passion and perspective to the field of social work. I look forward to the opportunity to grow as a practitioner and collaborate with faculty, peers, and community organizations committed to social justice and transformative care.