

Photos from Ladakh

Michael Healey '16 and Sanuja Bose '16 shared these photos showing the people and places encountered by undergraduate researchers who conducted fieldwork for Assoc. Prof. Nancy Chin in the Ladakh region of India during the summer of 2015.



“We had just arrived at the monastery in Matho village,” Healey wrote. “It was on a hill that overlooked the rest of the town and offered great views of the mountain valleys.” Left to right: Lisle Coleman '16; Shakti Rambarran '16; Puntsok Namgyl, local project coordinator; Assoc. Prof. Nancy Chin; Bose; Nirupama Laroia, Professor of Pediatrics; and Megan Suter '15 (currently a master's student at the University of Washington).



When Chin's students first arrive at a field site, "their job is to immerse themselves in the community and do participant observation. This gives the community an opportunity to check them out as well," she explained.

Here, students visit the prayer room of the Phyang Monastery, a Buddhist gumpa established in 1515 just west of the city of Leh in the Ladakh region. From left to right: Suter, Sophia Mlawer '17, Bre Taylor '17, Bose, Coleman, Michelle Eglovitch '13 and Healey.



“We are leaving the house we were staying at in Matho village to distribute surveys with the nuns,” Healey wrote. “There were many footpaths like this throughout the village, although we also traveled by taxi.” Suter is at right.

Note the storm clouds. The region was struck by severe overnight lightning storms and torrential rains that terrified the nuns and other Ladakh residents. The reaction was duly noted by the researchers. “In disaster research we make a distinction between coping and adapting,” Chin explained. “Coping involves the things you do in the short term to ensure your immediate survival; adapting involves things you do to make more sustainable adjustments to conditions. Some people theorize that too much coping erodes the ability to adapt.” Chin plans to explore whether that may be happening in Ladakh as residents still come to terms with the catastrophic flooding that occurred there in 2010.



As a key part of their fieldwork in Ladakh last summer, Chin's team members taught Buddhist nuns the basics of public health fieldwork and community engagement, and the impact of addiction to tobacco and alcohol on community health. The nuns, in return, explained some of the nuances of local culture that affect what they can and cannot do while conducting research. The nuns then worked hand in hand with Chin's students to distribute surveys and conduct interviews with residents of Matho village.

This group photo, taken at the end of a day of handing out surveys, includes, left to right, Healey, Bose, Kara Rubio '17, Eglovitch, Suter and Coleman.



Healey and Taylor at the Leh Palace, which overlooks the city.