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South Asian Legal Clinic Society of British Columbia

Report of the Board of Directors 2019 - 2020

We respectfully acknowledge our privilege as settlers and that our work is being done on the unceded Indigenous lands belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the x^wməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

1. Mission and Values

The South Asian Legal Clinic of British Columbia (SALCBC) is committed to improving access to justice for South Asians in British Columbia. We recognize the importance of delivering culturally sensitive and appropriate legal advice and legal information to those who face barriers in accessing legal services and navigating the justice system. We strive to use an equity-based approach, rooted in intersectional feminism and anti-oppressive values – which means that we are dedicated to:

- a. Respecting and learning from similarities and differences in social identity and lived experiences;
- b. Addressing individual and systemic legal issues;
- c. Analyzing power dynamics and challenging the socio-economic hierarchies and inequalities causing harm;
- d. Focusing on process and outcome; and
- e. Engaging in continuous reflection and relational work.

We aim to increase access to justice for low income South Asians in BC through:

- a. Free legal advice and information related to Family law, Employment law, Human rights, Refugee and immigration law, child protection law, mental

health law, poverty law, and wills and estates.

- b. Increasing legal support of organizations and organizing focused on the South Asian community
- c. Providing a stronger voice to the South Asian community through strategic litigation, interventions and legal submissions

2. First Year Highlights

- a. May 2019 - Registered as a non-profit under *Societies Act*
- b. September 2019 - Commenced operations of its legal clinics
- c. Established a board consisting of 9 members with backgrounds in law and bookkeeping

3. Launch and Activities

- a. Needs Assessment

In early 2017, conducted needs assessment by sending surveys to community stakeholders and resources, thereby gathering information on the types of legal issues for which low income South Asian people require assistance. This informed the goals and direction of SALCBC.

- b. Pro-Bono Legal Clinic

With the assistance of 14 non-board lawyer volunteers and the SALCBC board members, SALCBC was able to oversee 26 summary legal advice clinics from September 2019 - April 2020. The clinics were originally held at the Surrey City Centre library until March 2020 when the clinic moved to remote services due to COVID-19. Clinics are held each Wednesday for 2 hours.

Additionally, SALCBC is fortunate to have the support of:

- **Access Pro Bono** in providing intake for our summary advice clinic, connecting with roster lawyers and scheduling appointments
- **Amicus Curaie** in partnering with us and promoting the clinics
- **South Asian Bar Association of BC (SABABC)** in promoting the clinics and SALCBC generally, encouraging lawyers to be listed on the SALCBC roster and providing ongoing encouragement
- **Surrey Libraries** in providing us with the space to hold our summary advice clinics

- c. Funding

SALCBC was the recipient of the Hitesh S. Barot Community Access to Justice grant from **the North American South Asian Bar Association (NASABA)**. This grant was created in honor of Hitesh S. Barot, an activist for social justice who sadly passed away in 2014. SALCBC was

honored to be presented this \$10,000 grant last year in Atlanta, Georgia, by the late Mr. Barot's family. SALCBC was also awarded the Hari Sharma Foundation Social/Community grant of \$1000. The **Hari Sharma Foundation for South Asian Advancement** promotes and supports education, the development of cultural activities, and facilitates socially beneficial activities within the South Asian community in Canada and regarding South Asia at large. We acknowledge that the Founding President Dr Chinmoy Banerjee sadly passed away in July 2020.

d. Development of Info Sessions

4 SALCBC board members supervised 6 law students from the 3 law schools in BC, through **Pro Bono Students Canada**. The students created presentations which we hope to deliver in the near future regarding family law, child protection, employment law, refugee law, and residential tenancies. One student also created social media posts and supported the drafting of legal briefs

e. Social Media, Radio Appearances and Website

The past year, SALCBC has engaged in a radio show partnership with **RedFM 93.1**. We discuss topics on air related to family law, reproductive rights, child protection, grandparents' rights and immigration. We also lead a presentation at the **2019 CLEBC Human Rights Law Conference** regarding SALCBC and race-related human rights complaints, and a presentation at the **SABABC 2019 Fall Conference**. Finally, we have provided support to **One Voice Canada** and the **Punjabi Market Regeneration Collective**.

4. Future Goals and Plans

- a. Outreach: Reach low income and equity seeking members of our community
- b. Clinic Operations: Deliver quality services, meet the needs of our target demographic and evaluate and record our impact on the community
- c. Staffing: Build resources and capacity to hire and support staff to oversee, coordinate and expand our work
- d. Onboard new board members, development of committees and Advisory Board. Departing board members consist of Guida Heir (Founder and Co-Chair), Kamaljit Lehal (Member at Large), Ruby Dhand (Member at Large), and Gurpreet Kang (Secretary). They will move into positions on committees and/or the Advisory Board in the near future.
- e. Acquire charitable status, increase funding and hiring of a Coordinator or an Executive Director

5. Conclusion

We look towards the new fiscal year and our second year of operation with excitement and a view to continue improving access to justice for low income and vulnerable local South Asian populations.

6. Acknowledgements

We wish to thank our funders, partner organizations, and volunteers for their commitment to the success of the clinic.