



info@salcbc.org

www.salcbc.org

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South Asian Legal Clinic Society of British Columbia

Report of the Board of Directors November 2020 - June 2021

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^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

I. 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:

- Respecting and learning from similarities and differences in social identity and lived experiences;
- Addressing individual and systemic legal issues;
- Analyzing power dynamics and challenging the socio-economic hierarchies and inequalities causing harm;
- Focusing on both process and outcome; and
- 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 community-based organizing focused on the South Asian community.
- c. Providing a stronger voice to the South Asian community through strategic litigation, interventions and legal submissions.

II. Second Year Highlights

These are some of the key highlights from SALCBC's second year of operations as a non-profit:

- November 2020 – We continued to offer virtual summary advice legal clinics, one to two times a week, which provide pro bono advice to clients throughout BC. During this time period, we offered 25 clinics with a total of 88 pro bono sessions and approximately 50% of our participants self-identified as South Asians. We thank our 24 lawyer volunteers!
- Our Board established a committee structure that incorporated our board members and numerous volunteers' skills and expertise towards collaborative work on specific tasks. We thank our non-board volunteers that have participated in our committees!
- March 2021 – We launched a Legal Information Webinar Series in partnership with Options Community Services. We have prepared and presented three separate webinars and are now preparing additional webinars for Fall 2021.
- SALCBC supported and showed solidarity with the Farmers Protest in India and sent a letter advocating for our Federal Government to intervene to ensure basic human rights were protected.
- We have secured a social media and website coordinator, Savy Basi of SaVibes, to help us with our online promotion and outreach activities.
- We have partnered with GrantCrafty to assist us in finding relevant grant opportunities and drafting grant applications on a timely basis, to increase our overall funding.

- As a result of receipt of a Vancouver Foundation grant, we are actively seeking a part-time Clinic Coordinator, who will increase our outreach within the South Asian Community about our services. The Clinic Coordinator will be our first staff person.

III. Activities

In terms of our activities, 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;
- **Options Community Services** in partnering with us to provide legal information webinars to the newcomers to Canada;
- **Amicus Curaie Frienship Society** 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; and,
- **Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC)** in matching us with volunteer law students, who help us with workshop materials and website resources.

SALCBC conducted the following activities in the 2020-2021 year:

Pro-Bono Summary Advice Legal Clinic

With the assistance of 24 lawyer volunteers and the SALCBC board members, SALCBC was able to oversee 25 virtual summary legal advice clinics from November 2020 to April 2021. We hold clinics each Wednesday evening for two hours and occasionally also hold a clinic on Thursday.

Partnership Projects with PBSC

Three SALCBC board members supervised 5 law students from the 3 law schools in BC, through **Pro Bono Students Canada**. The students created presentations and an online resources index that will be posted to our website soon. Two students helped develop and present a virtual webinar in March 2021, "Introduction to the Canadian Legal System". One student also created social media posts and supported the drafting of legal briefs.

Legal Information - Webinar Series

SALCBC launched its webinar series in partnership with **Options Community Services**. A total of three virtual webinars were delivered from March 2021

to May 2021. The first webinar provided an introduction to the Canadian legal system, the second described various employment-related frameworks and workers' rights under each, and the third provided an overview of immigration law and the steps involved in some of the key streams. In total, over 120 participants attended the workshops. We note that Options Community Services provided live Spanish and Punjabi translation during these workshops.

Social Media, Radio Appearances and Website

As noted in our highlights, Savi Basi of SaVibes has been regularly supporting our posts to social media channels, with positive results to date. In the coming period, we also hope to generate quarterly e-newsletters to our membership. SALCBC is in the process of re-modelling the website. Stay tuned for a more user-friendly website that offers resources to help increase access to justice.

Over the past year, SALCBC has also engaged in a radio show partnership with **Sher-e-Punjab AM 600**. SALCBC guest lawyers discuss topics on air related to human rights, child protection, family law, right to protest and freedom of speech. They also answer listeners' questions.

IV. Funding and Sustainability

Grants

SALCBC was the recipient of the Level BIPOC Grant from the **Vancouver Foundation**. In 2020, the Vancouver Foundation decided to award Level BIPOC Grants to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) organizations to advance racial equity and justice. SALCBC was honored to be receive this \$50,000 grant in March 2021. We are in communication with other grantors and also intend to apply to some upcoming local, provincial and federal government grant opportunities, with support from GrantCrafty.

Individual donations and sponsorships

This is an area we would like to develop once in-person events can be safely resumed and we have secured charitable status. We are planning for our new website to have the capacity to receive online donations.

Governance

In November 2020, we brought on three new board members and conducted an interactive orientation. All of our current Board members will continue on

into 2021-2022. We have developed a committee structure that has led to a more streamlined and focused approach to our work. We currently have a Governance and Finance Committee, Legal Clinic and Operations Committee and a Marketing, Outreach and Events Committee. We continue to populate these committees with volunteers who have various skills and expertise. We have a SALCBC Bullying and Harassment Policy in place and a SALCBC Personal Information and Privacy Policy is upcoming.

V. Future Goals and Plans

These are some of SALCBC's key goals and plans for the upcoming year:

- a. Outreach: Improve access to our services by reaching low-income and equity seeking members of our community through both in-person outreach and multilingual virtual information and information sessions.
- b. Clinic Operations: Deliver high quality services through paid staff, pro bono lawyers, law students and others that meet the needs of our target demographic and improve recording and evaluation of our activities' impact to that end.
- c. Staffing: Build resources and capacity to hire additional staff, including an Outreach Worker to ensure we are reaching those community members who face multiple barriers to access to justice.
- d. Volunteers: Onboard new board members, continue building out our committee structure and develop an Advisory Board.
- e. Fund development: Acquire charitable status, obtain multi-year funding and develop capacity to hire a Staff Lawyer and/or Executive Director.

VI. Conclusion and Acknowledgements

SALCBC looks towards the upcoming third year of operation with excitement and with a view to continuing to improve and enhance access to justice for low income and vulnerable local South Asian populations.

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