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South Asian Legal Clinic Society of British Columbia

BOARD REPORT

June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023

SALCBC respectfully acknowledges our privilege as settlers and occupiers on these lands. We want to acknowledge the Indigenous nations and people who have protected and continue to protect these stolen lands. We are grateful for the generosity of our respected Indigenous allies, elders, aunties and uncles for sharing this land with us and allowing us to do our work on the unceded and unsurrendered lands belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen First Nations, xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

I. Mission and Values

This past year the board and staff engaged in strategic planning for the organization with Level Up Consulting. An outcome of our strategic planning process is that we have new vision and mission statements and have outlined SALCBC's approach, which we are please to share with you:

Vision

To be a first point of contact for those in the South Asian community facing access to justice issues.

Mission

We serve the South Asian community by offering low-barrier, multilingual and culturally sensitive legal information, education, advice and advocacy.

Our Approach

We approach our work through the lenses of:

- Equity
- Service to others
- Intersectionality
- Anti-oppression
- Anti-racism
- Collaboration
- Integrity

2. Highlights of 2022-2023

This past year, our fourth year in operation, has been one of growth and new horizons for SALCBC. We are excited to share the following notable highlights:

- a. We successfully obtained a Racial Justice Grant from the Law Foundation of BC. This grant has helped turn our dream into reality of having a physical space for our clinic, hiring a full-time Executive Director and hiring a full-time Staff Lawyer. We look forward to expanding our pro bono services to clients in the coming year.
- b. We hired our inaugural Executive Director, Lali Pawa, and she started with us on May 1, 2023. Lali brings a great depth of leadership and access to justice experience to SALCBC. Lali is busy working to secure a physical space and getting to know SALCBC.
- c. Our virtual Pro-bono Summary Legal Advice Clinic continued offering weekly legal clinics for its fourth year. We had 35 clinics, 6 roster volunteers and 99 people were served. We unfortunately had a challenge recruiting roster lawyers this past year and we saw 50% reduction in the number of lawyers volunteering for our clinic. Most of our clinics were run by our staff lawyers, Jasmine Gill and Raman Kandola. Our clinic continues to operate in partnership with Access Pro Bono, a supporter of SALCBC.
- d. We are closing out our project, *Engaging Multicultural Youth and Families for Just Outcomes*, a two-year project funded by Heritage Canada's Anti-Racism Action Program. With this project SALCBC

has been able to provide multiple legal education workshops and support to the community on employment law, human rights law and youth justice. We hope to continue offering the above noted workshops in the coming year.

- e. We operated this past year with five contracted staff: Jasmine Gill (staff lawyer), Annie Besla (part-time clinic coordinator), Jaskamal Singh (Media Coordinator), Akash Mehe (Bookkeeper), Raman Kandola (staff lawyer). We thank our staff for their hard work and dedication to making SALCBC successful.
- f. Our committees continue to work towards strengthening the SALCBC foundations. Committee highlights are as follows:
 - i. *Governance and Finance Committee*: This committee worked to put together several policies, oversaw the strategic planning process and continued to bring forward grant opportunities to the attention of the board.
 - ii. *Outreach, Marketing and Events Committee*: This committee was instrumental in the development of our days of acknowledgement policy. OMEC also arranged to attend the SABA BC Conference in November 2023 and also have a table available with resources and sign up sheet to recruit roster lawyers.
 - iii. *Clinics and Operations Committee*: This committee focused on clinic operations and operations. The committee is currently considering different ways of providing legal information to many people that do not have the time or means to attend our legal education workshops.
 - iv. *ED Search and Hiring Committee*: This committee was composed of four Board members and enacted this past year to guide and orchestrate the search and hiring of SALCBC's inaugural Executive Director.

3. Activities

- a. SALCBC engaged with the following community service organizations this past year: Options BC, SHER Vancouver, 5xFest, One Voice Canada, Khalsa Aid, Laadliyan, Amici Curiae Friendship Society, Back in Motion, CBC Radio One, KidsPlay Foundation, Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS), Mosaic Family Services, Moving Forward Family Services, Multicultural Family Services, SAFE Schools, Surrey School District Superintendent's Office, Service Employees Union International, Surrey Libraries, Sources BC, UBC Law Disability Alliance, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Surrey Women's Centre, Vancouver Asian Film Festival and the South Asian Anti-Oppression Project.
- b. SALCBC collaborated with the following media partners: CBC Radio One, Sanjha TV, Sher-e-Punjab Radio and Red FM.
- c. SALCBC engaged with the following legal organizations: Access Pro Bono BC, UBC SALSA, TRU SALSA, Uvic SALSA, Pro Bono Students Canada TRU, South Asian Bar Association of British Columbia (SABABC), Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (FACL), South Asian Bar Association North America, South Asian Legal Clinic Ontario (SALCO) and the South Asian Bar Association of Alberta.
- d. In July 2022, SALCBC Board Members met with then the Attorney General, now Premier of British Columbia, the Honourable David Eby, K.C., to discuss SALCBC's initiatives. SALCBC was pleased to receive the support of the Attorney General's office.
- e. In September 2022, SALCBC Board Members met with Simmi K. Sandhu, chair of the BC Civil Resolution Tribunal, to discuss access to justice issues with the tribunal from a South Asian perspective.
- f. In November 2022, the Board Vice-Chair, Staff Lawyers Jasmine Gill and Raman Kandola, and other volunteers attended and shared about SALCBC to the attendees of the South Asian Bar Association of BC Fall Conference and connected with the current Attorney General, the Honourable Nikki Sharma, K.C.
- g. In December 2022, the Board Chair and Staff Lawyers met with a

representative from the Surrey School District Superintendent's office to discuss various barriers SALCBC has been facing to provide youth justice education to South Asian and other BIPOC students in the school districts. These barriers remain and SALCBC continues to advocate for the Surrey School District to enact an anti-racism plan and work towards offering equitable and inclusive education opportunities for the student population.

- h. SALCBC joined as a supporter of the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network and Surrey Together Against Racism proposal to mandate anti-racism education in BC K-12 curriculum.
- i. In January 2023, SALCBC supported an event hosted by 5Xfest, Khalsa Aid and One Voice Canada “The struggles of international students is an open secret”. Jasmine Gill, attended the event and employment law and human rights resources with attendees. SALCBC also provided 10 free tickets for participants to attend this event.
- j. In March 2023 the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner released the report “From hate to hope: Inquiry into hate in the Covid-19 pandemic” and SALCBC was noted as a contributor to the commissioner's inquiry.
- k. In May 2023, the Chair attended the National Roundtable: Building Anti-Racist Feminist Futures. Over 50 people from across Canada came together to discuss the intersections of anti-racism, gender equity and migrant justice.
- l. In May 2023, the Vice-Chair attended the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat’s Asian Heritage Month Gala, highlighting ‘Stories of Determination’ from the Asian community.
- m. Partnership Projects with Pro Bono Students Canada

The SALCBC Chair supervised 2 law students from Thompson Rivers University, through Pro Bono Students Canada. The students created a legal research paper and supporting pamphlet on the *Tort of Family Violence* from a perspective of supporting South Asian families. These resources will be added to our website soon.

- n. Legal Information - Webinar Series and Roundtable Discussions

SALCBC offered several legal education webinars (in person and virtually) and participated in several round-table discussion. A total of 37 workshops were offered by SALCBC Staff Lawyers during this fiscal. In total, over 550 participants attended these workshops. Our webinars provided legal information in the areas of: Criminal Justice, Employment Law, Human Rights, Immigration, Employment Law for International Students and Micro Aggressions/Anti-Racism.

o. Social Media, Radio Appearances and Website

Our Marketing Coordinator, Jaskamal Singh, worked to expand our outreach and marketing with the overall goal of reaching more South Asians in need of support in accessing justice. We have expanded our reach on all SALCBC social platforms and we have seen an increase in traffic to our website.

This past year most of our radio and tv appearances were done by our staff lawyer, Jasmine Gil. Jasmine participated in radio segments with CBC One Radio, Sher-e-Punjab, Sangha TV and Red Fm.

In September 2022, Jasmine Gill and Meena Dhillon (chair) participated in a live-tv event hosted by Moving Forward Family Services to talk about legal issues that rise when people are faced with addiction and/or mental.

4. Funding and Sustainability

a. Grants

- SALCBC is in the final year of a multi-year grant we received from the anti-racism action program funding from **Heritage Canada** to fund our legal education programs discussed above.
- We were the recipients of a grant from **Canadian Race Relations Foundation** to provide four anti-racism workshops. These workshops will be provided in the coming months.
- SALCBC is the recipient of a multi-year grant from the **Law Foundation of BC**. We look forward to the opportunities this grant will create for the organization.
- We have also just been notified that we have been successful in our application to the **Community Services Recovery**

Fund.

- We also thank the **Vancouver Foundation** for providing us the Level BIPOC grant in 2019, which helped us with our strategic planning and various other operational expenses. This year, we applied for the Level BIPOC grant once more.

We have been in meaningful communication with the above and other grantors and have a few grant applications submitted, for which the results are pending. We also intend to apply to some upcoming local, provincial and national grant opportunities. Successful grant applications have allowed the SALCBC team to enter our next fiscal year with greater fiscal certainty and stability.

b. Individual donations and sponsorships

This past year the board has been working with retained counsel towards preparing our charitable tax application. After our AGM in June 2023, we anticipate filing our charitable tax application.

c. Governance

This past year, our board remained a working, operational board. We had a total of 9 board members, 6 were returning of which 2 were co-founders and we had 3 new additions. Last year, we also had our first non-lawyer and non-accountant board member which helped diversify the experience around our leadership circle. The board meets once a month for board meetings but also meets outside of this time for committee and project work. SALCBC is only here today because of all of the work that Co-founders and all of the Board Members to date have done.

As our year ends, we have three members that are leaving the board, one of which is a co-founding member, Tina Parbhakar. We thank Tina for her service and work with SALCBC. Tina will remain involved as a volunteer with our governance and finance committee. We say thank you to our departing member Jag Atwal, our treasurer, for her service to SALCBC this past year and her work in helping to develop various efficiencies in our financial systems and reporting methods. We also thank Iqra Azhar, who is leaving the board after a three year term. We wish Iqra the best with future endeavors and

thank her for service to the clinic.

This coming year we intend to engage the services of a professional to assist the board in moving to a full governance board. We are always working to make our board meetings and board commitments more efficient. With the edition of a full-time Executive Director and a full-time lawyer, it is time for the SALCBC board to move away from being a working board (i.e. leave the day to day activities to the staff) and as a board focus on establishing policies/supporting governance structures, make significant and strategic decisions aligned with our strategic plan, provide financial oversight and to oversee at a high level SALCBC's activities.

5. Future Goals and Plans

- a. Location: We hope to secure a physical space for our clinic in the coming months. Stay tuned to our socials for more news about this.
- b. Staffing: We hope to hire a full-time lawyer and a permanent part-time clinic coordinator. We hope to expand our lawyer compliment so that we can offer in house pro bono legal services in the areas of: family law, wills/estate, employment law, human rights, tenancy law and other areas of poverty law.
- c. Outreach: Improve access to our services by reaching low income and equity seeking members of our community through in-person outreach and multilingual virtual information. We also plan to launch a newsletter to keep our clients, supporters and partners informed of activities.
- d. Fund Development: We hope to obtain charitable tax status and also start working on fundraising to expand our staffing and services.
- e. Governance: We hope to hire a professional to assist us in completing a governance manual for SALCBC support the staff and board in establishing a strong foundational working relationship with clear policies and procedures in place. We also plan to review our membership policy and committee structure.
- f. Clinic Operations: Deliver quality services, meet the needs of our

target demographic and evaluate and record our impact in the community. We plan to offer in-person and virtual services to ensure we are accessible. We are actively recruiting more roster lawyers and thinking of different ways we can have more members of the South Asian Community access our services.

- g. Staffing: Our goal is to maintain our current staffing but expand our staffing compliment to include more lawyers, a social worker and a community advocate.
- h. Volunteers: We are actively seeking new volunteers, lawyers and non-lawyers, to get involved with SALCBC.

6. Conclusion

We look towards the upcoming fifth year of SALCBC's operations with excitement and with a view to continuing to improve and enhance access to justice for low income and vulnerable local South Asian populations as well continue with our anti-racism initiatives. Our main goal this coming year is for us to open a physical clinic space in the coming months, hire a full-time lawyer, continue to provide quality legal education and resources, provide ethno-linguistic legal services to clients in specific areas of the law on a pro bono basis, and continue to run our summary advice clinics virtually. We also hope to also run in person clinics. We hope that the South Asian Community, including those who face barriers to accessing us and other services through virtual platforms, are able to attend our office or access our services regularly, five days a week. We hope to see our clinic become a community hub for the South Asian community for all things legal.

As a board, we want to continue to create space for leadership opportunities for South Asians.

7. Acknowledgements

We wish to thank our funders, partner organizations and volunteers for their commitment to the success of the South Asian Legal Clinic of British Columbia. We also want to thank all of the community members that reach out for services and have created a space for SALCBC.