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South Asian Legal Clinic Society of British Columbia

BOARD REPORT May 1, 2021 - April 30, 2022

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 Səl̓ilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-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:

- 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 both process and outcome; and
- e. Engaging in continuous reflection and relational work.

We aim to increase access to justice for low income South Asians and other equity seeking groups 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 other non-profit organizations and organizing focused on the South Asian community.
- c. Providing a stronger voice to the South Asian community through communicating needs to local representatives and decision-making bodies, strategic litigation, interventions and legal submissions.

2. Third Year Highlights

We have moved forward on our mission in a number of ways this year, the most notable of which are:

- a. Our new website launched in October 2021, check it out at: www.salcbc.org
- b. Our virtual Pro-bono Summary Legal Advice Clinic continued offering weekly legal clinics for its third year. We had 30 clinics, 12 roster volunteers and 52 people were served.
- c. We have been rolling out *Engaging Multicultural Youth and Families for Just Outcomes* – a two-year project funded by Heritage Canada’s Anti-Racism Action Program.
- d. We hired five part-time staff.
- e. On September 11, 2021, we hosted a “*Know Your Rights*” virtual panel discussion in collaboration with the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association.
- f. On January 22, 2022, we hosted a roundtable discussion and

engagement session entitled “*Shaping Identity and Data Collection*”, supported with funding from the Anti-Racism Data Legislation Community Engagement Grant provided by the Parliamentary Secretary and Minister of Multiculturalism, Hon. Rachna Singh.

- g. On May 2, 2022, two SALCBC founders and board members participated in the events for the Introduction of the Anti-Racism Data Legislation at the BC Legislature.
- h. *Governance and Finance Committee*: This committee did tremendous work this year as we grow and continue to develop our governance structure and policies, including developing a pro bono partnership with Osler’s South Asian Lawyers network to develop our personal information and privacy policy. This committee also leads our budget development and keeps the board apprised of upcoming grants.
- i. *Outreach, Marketing and Events Committee*: This committee was instrumental in the planning legal information webinars and community roundtable discussions, setting up local radio appearances, and ongoing marketing of our services to the community. As a highlight, this committee introduced our inaugural *South Asian Women’s Day* campaign. In the coming year this committee plans to focus on fostering a stronger relationship with legal partners, continue with outreach campaigns, and arrange further public legal education events and appearances.
- j. *Clinics and Operations Committee*: This committee organized and scheduled webinars and supported our Summary Legal Advice Clinic. The committee is in transition, as our staff lawyers have now started to take the lead on our virtual and in-person presentations. In the upcoming fiscal year, this committee will focus on preparing for the opening of our anticipated brick and mortar legal clinic space.
- k. *Engagement and Partnerships*: We are grateful for our partnerships and engagements with: Access Pro Bono, Capilano University, CBC Radio One, Darpan Magazine, ITD Canada, Mosaic, Options Community Services, One Voice Canada, Pro-bono Students Canada, Red FM, SHER Vancouver, Sher-e-Punjab, Simon Fraser University (Surrey Campus), Sources Community Resources, University of British Columbia, and University of the Fraser Valley.

3. Activities

a. Pro-Bono Legal Clinic

- i. With the assistance of 12 lawyer volunteers and the SALCBC board members, SALCBC was able to oversee 30 virtual summary legal advice clinics from May 2021-April 2022. We hold clinics each Wednesday evening for 2 hours and occasionally also hold a clinic on Thursday.
- ii. Additionally, SALCBC is fortunate to have the support of:
 1. **Access Pro Bono** in providing intake for our summary advice clinic, connecting with roster lawyers and scheduling appointments
 2. **Amicus Curaie Friendship Society** in partnering with us and promoting the clinics.
 3. **Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (FACL)** in promoting our clinics and SALCBC generally.
 4. **Options Community Services** in partnering with us to provide legal information webinars to the newcomers to Canada.
 5. **Pro Bono Students Canada** volunteer law students being matched with board member mentors that will help us complete workshop materials and website resources.
 6. **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.

b. Engaged Multicultural Youth and Families for Just Outcomes Project

- i. This two year project is focused on building understanding of the legal system and human rights among the South Asian diaspora in BC, as well as reducing barriers to employment, justice and social participation for South Asian community members.
- ii. This funding enabled us to hire our clinic coordinator, Navjot Sandhu, our employment law lawyer, Jasmine Gill, our criminal law, Raman Kandola and our marketing coordinator, Jaskamal

Singh.

- iii. Jasmine offers a number of free legal education webinars focused at increasing awareness of racism and reducing barriers to employment. Jasmine also provides pro-bono-legal advice through our clinic in the areas of employment law, WCB and tenancy law.
- iv. Raman is offering legal education workshops targeted to South Asian families and youth justice. Raman provides summary advice with our virtual legal clinic in the area of criminal law and youth justice.

c. Partnership Projects with Pro Bono Students Canada

Three SALCBC board members supervised 5 law students from the 3 law schools in BC, through **Pro Bono Students Canada**. The students created presentations, legal information resource sheets and the drafting of a legal review article.

d. Legal Information - Webinar Series and Roundtable Discussions

SALCBC offered several legal education webinars and hosted two round table discussions with legal experts and community activists. A total of 12 virtual webinars/roundtable discussions were delivered from May 2021-April 222. In total, over 245 participants attended these workshops. We note that Options Community Services provided Spanish and Punjabi translation during these workshops. Our webinars provided legal information in the areas of: Criminal Justice, Employment Law, Human Rights, Immigration, Employment Law for International Students, and Data Collection.

e. Social Media, Radio Appearances and Website

This past year we worked with our first social media coordinator, Savvy of SaVibes, to advance our social media presence. Our social media presence has been instrumental in our marketing and outreach. We thank **SaVibes** for their service to SALCBC. We are now excited to work with our marketing coordinator, Jaskamal Singh, to expand our outreach and marketing with the overall goal of reaching more South Asians in need of support in accessing justice.

In the last year, we continued with our radio-show partnership with **Sher-e-Punjab AM 600**. We discuss topics on air related to human rights, immigration, employment law and family law.

SALCBC staff lawyer Jasmine was also recently invited to speak on the **CBC Radio One** morning show about how to handle incidents of racism.

In October 2021, SALCBC completed a redevelopment of its website to provide a more user friendly website with hands-on resource information as well updated information about SALCBC activities. We look forward to launching a newsletter in the upcoming year.

4. Funding and Sustainability

a. Grants

SALCBC was the recipient of anti-racism action program funding from **Heritage Canada** to fund our legal education program discussed above. As well, we were the recipients of the Anti-racism Data Legislation Community Engagement Grant from the **BC Ministry of Multiculturalism**. We have been in meaningful communication with other grantors and have a few grant applications that have been submitted, for which the results are pending. We also intend to apply to some upcoming local, provincial and national grant opportunities. These grants have allowed us to enter our next fiscal with financial stability.

b. Individual donations and sponsorships

This is an area we intend to focus on in the coming year. We plan to apply for charitable tax status in the upcoming fiscal year. As we grow, we also plan to start accepting donations and provide ways for supporters to leave donations to us when estate planning. We would like to acknowledge a generous donation from our supporter and roundtable presenter, Mr. Joven Narwal, of Narwal Litigation LLP.

c. Governance

In this fiscal year we brought on four board members and conducted orientation with the incoming members. Our board remains operational in nature and accordingly all board members are actively

involved in committees, grant writing and other operations related to SALCBC. All practicing lawyer board members also volunteer with the pro bono clinic and/or lead workshops or presentations. This past year we also developed a board commitment matrix which all board members fill out on a regular basis to ensure transparency and accountability of board commitments.

As our year ends, we have three members that are leaving the board, two of which are our founding members, Krisha Dhaliwal and Laila Rana. We are happy to advise that Krisha and Laila will remain involved as volunteers with our committees. We say thank you to our departing member Kiran Dhaliwal for her service to SALCBC this past year. We also thank Anu Kainth and Bhavneet Toor who acted in the role of treasurer but left during their terms in this past fiscal.

As a board, as we grow, we are continuously trying to evolve with the goal of being efficient. In addition to board committees, this past year, the executive and staff began to provide monthly reports to make better use of board meeting time. Our committee structure has worked well and we are continuing with this work and reporting structure in the coming year. Examples of the work that has been completed on our committees include a reserve policy, a conflict of interest policy and an expense policy.

5. Future Goals and Plans

- a. 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.
- b. Clinic Operations: Deliver quality services, meet the needs of our target demographic and evaluate and record our impact in the community. 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. We are working towards our main goal of opening our stand-alone clinic through which we hope to offer more in person and virtual pro bono clinics and legal education.
- c. Staffing: Our goal is to maintain our current staffing but expand and

hire a full-time executive director and also have one full-time lawyer. With the growth in number of staff, we plan for our board to move from being an operational board towards being a governance board.

- d. Volunteers: Onboard new board members and society volunteers as we continue to grow because we remain an operational society. We are actively seeking new volunteers, lawyers and non-lawyers, to get involved with SALCBC.
- e. Fund development: Acquire charitable status, increase funding and have the capacity to hire a full-time Staff Lawyer, Executive Director and Clinic Coordinator.

6. Conclusion

We look towards the upcoming fourth 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, so that those in need, 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.

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.