

Services for everyone, justice for all.



The Everyone Legal Clinic is practical, and aims to stimulate innovation and diversity among new legal service providers. It could be replicated throughout Canada, and it has evaluation and knowledge sharing components to inform other access to justice initiatives.

I am delighted that the McLachlin Fund was able to provide support for this project, and I hope others will follow suit."

– The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, 17th Chief Justice of Canada



Everyone
Legal Clinic

Case for Support



Managing her deceased mother's estate was the last thing Tanya wanted to do.

Since moving home to Vancouver Island, Tanya had visited with her mother on the reserve as much as possible. Their visits had been spent gardening and spending time with family, not discussing wills and end-of-life plans. Now, as she sorted through her mother's papers, Tanya discovered that her mother did not have a will or any legal document governing her property and belongings, including the land her family had lived on for generations. Tanya had no idea where to begin to administer her estate.

Tanya realized that she, too, needed a will. She did not want her young daughter to face the same confusion she was facing now. But where to start? Did she need a lawyer? Would a lawyer *really* understand her life and her family? Who could she trust? How much would it cost?

Tanya's worries are all too common.

Most people living on reserve have inadequate access to affordable and timely legal services. According to Indigenous Services Canada, only 9 percent of people living on reserve die with a will. When property on reserve is not passed on from a testator to their intended beneficiaries, it can become the focus of family conflict and administrative backlog, creating turmoil for Indigenous families and communities.

Since 2010, the Access Pro Bono Society of BC (APB) has helped hundreds of thousands of British Columbians like Tanya resolve their legal problems. While helping so many people, we have also seen how geographic, socio-economic and racial disparities in access to qualified legal help prevent too many Indigenous and racialized British Columbians from finding justice.

This needs to change, so we designed our **Everyone Legal Clinic**—a first-of-its-kind, public interest legal teaching clinic and solo/small firm incubator—to be the change that is needed.



When Some of Us Are Left Out

As poet Amanda Gorman says, “What just is, isn’t always justice.” Right now, our justice system doesn’t work for many racialized British Columbians.

Indigenous People, Black People, and People of Colour often endure multiple obstacles to securing legal services that are welcoming, timely and culturally appropriate. Their legal problems frequently intersect with issues related to poverty, gender, sexuality, immigration status and disability. The inadequacies of our justice system are amplified by COVID-19’s disproportionate impacts on racialized communities.

Navigating the justice system can be an intimidating and burdensome process. Individuals from racialized communities may be distrustful of a legal system with a history of institutionalized racism and repeated failures to protect individuals and communities. The concentration of law firms in southern BC’s urban areas fuels the frustration of many people in rural, remote and reserve communities where there are few, if any, locally based, “hometown” lawyers.

And once racialized individuals engage with our justice system, they quickly see there is only a small pool of lawyers and legal service providers who have similar

life experiences and specialized knowledge about their distinct legal needs.

Worsening the problem, law school graduates with the professional skills and life experiences to serve racialized clients well, often struggle with an outdated and cumbersome articling system. Mature students from remote areas, for example, are often forced to move to BC’s big cities to secure an articling position. Many leave their families and home communities for good.

Fortunately, BC’s legal sector understands that the accessibility of legal services is tied to the diversity of the legal profession. Lawyers, law firms and access to justice organizations are acting to foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive justice system, by increasing the diversity of legal professionals, and by serving clients from underserved communities.

We know our justice system needs to serve all British Columbians better—the challenge to increase access and diversity is before us. APB is determined to meet the challenge with your support.

Services for Everyone, Justice for All

The **Everyone Legal Clinic** launched in May 2022 as a world-first virtual public interest law teaching clinic and legal practice incubator, and as one of the first projects approved by the Law Society of BC’s Innovation Sandbox. It aims to increase access to justice for all British Columbians, regardless of their identity, income or location, while also increasing the diversity of BC’s legal profession.

The Clinic:

- Increases access to affordable and high-quality legal services in communities throughout BC
- Provides affordable legal services to local small businesses and non-profit organizations
- Increases professional capacity for public interest legal service, particularly in underserved BC communities
- Promotes new virtual, fixed fee and modular forms of legal practice
- Provides a new generation of BC legal service providers with the substantive knowledge and practical skills (including practice management, cultural competency and human relationship skills) required to thrive in highly adaptive forms of public-minded legal practice
- Improves equity, diversity, working conditions and quality of education in BC’s lawyer and notary training systems, and reduces unmet need for articling positions in BC

Shaping BC's Next Generation of Legal Professionals

In 2022/23, the Clinic's first year of operations, 25 articling students and five new notaries received unprecedented skills training, and provided free and affordable legal services to several thousand British Columbians. Dozens of volunteer lawyer mentors have joined 16 supervising lawyers and several APB staff to remotely train, manage and support the 30 clinicians as they complete their legal training.

The Clinic prioritizes the admission of law graduates who self-identify as members of one or more of the following groups:

- Indigenous People
- People of Colour and racialized individuals
- People with disabilities
- LGBTQ2S+ people

The Clinic also prioritizes law graduates who seek to practice in an underserved BC community, and who have previous clinical experience serving vulnerable people. It provides a supportive and engaging educational experience for law graduates with foreign credentials. And with its virtual, modular and experiential format, it is well-suited for law graduates who embrace emerging legal technologies, and who seek to practice in their home communities.

Our efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming program for law graduates are already meeting their objectives: the Clinic's first cohort of 25 articling students is a diverse and accomplished group that is 75% BIPOC and 25% Indigenous.



BC's articling system isn't working for everyone. It excludes a disproportionate number of mature law grads, Indigenous law grads, and People of Colour. It can also give rise to unfair working conditions. The Everyone Legal Clinic is an important first step to prevent systemic barriers to entry from interfering with the dream of becoming a lawyer in BC."

– Jamie MacLaren, KC, APB Executive Director

Serving Those Left Out

The Clinic provides culturally informed, affordable and high-quality legal services to vulnerable and at-risk people across BC, including single mothers, low-income individuals, the disabled, immigrants, refugees and seniors. The Clinic uses APB's armoury of secure virtual client service technologies to provide legal advice and representation services to clients regardless of their location, language or mobility restrictions. And, in important recognition of the digital divide for many in our province, APB offers telephone and in-person service options for everyone.

Strengthening BC's Rural and Remote Communities

In developing a new generation of community legal service providers, the Clinic functions as a solo and small firm incubator, which builds capacity within BC's rural and remote communities for much-needed local and permanent legal services. The Clinic's first cohort of articling students is articling in 16 different BC communities, as far east as Golden, as far north as Burns Lake, and as far west as Tofino.

With a curriculum centred on the practical, modern-day aspects of running a socially responsible law practice, the Clinic provides invaluable learnings, tools and connections for the next wave of solo practitioners and small firms. Our students are gaining the knowledge and confidence needed to work and thrive as community practitioners in underserved cities, towns and reserves across BC.



Access Pro Bono

Formed as a non-profit organization and registered as a charity in 2010, APB helps British Columbians to resolve their legal problems. Our mission is to promote access to justice in BC by providing and fostering free and high-quality legal services for people and non-profit organizations of limited means.

We are proud to be BC's primary point of contact for low and modest-income individuals seeking free legal help, and for lawyers seeking to provide pro bono legal services. Our work is human-centred and adapts to the full diversity of our clients' needs, allowing us to effectively serve people with multiple intersecting identities.

Each year, we engage over 2,500 volunteer lawyers and law students in providing free legal information, advice and representation services to over 25,000 British Columbians. We operate 115 legal advice clinics in cities and towns across BC. Our clinics are hosted by partner community service providers and social service agencies in culturally safe settings to offset the psychological, cultural or linguistic barriers faced by many of our clients. Our services address a wide range of legal issues, pertaining to summary advice, court and tribunal representation, family law, wills and estates, residential tenancy, employment, and mental health.



- 5% of British Columbians identify as Indigenous, while only 2.71 % of BC lawyers identify as Indigenous.

- 30% of British Columbians identify as belonging to a "visible minority", while only 16% of BC lawyers identify as belonging to a "visible minority".



Join Us

We believe that increasing access to justice in BC is a job for everyone. It will take an effort from everyone to ensure that every person in every part of BC has access to the legal services they need. This is why we want you to be part of the Everyone Legal Clinic as well.

We invite you to become a sustaining supporter of our new way to train and support community legal practitioners across BC. Please help us to reach our goal of raising \$1 million in operational funds and bursary funds for our students.

Your tax-deductible donation will not only ensure that our initial student cohorts succeed, but that a solid foundation exists for our future students and their clients. With your support, the Clinic will make meaningful progress toward a more equitable, diverse and inclusive legal system, a better way to generate a diverse workforce, and a better way to serve the legal needs of all British Columbians.

To learn more about the Clinic, and/or to join us in our journey, please contact Erin Monahan, APB's Project Manager, at 604-424-8274 or emonahan@accessprobono.ca.

Heeding the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The Clinic advances the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #27: "We call upon Canadian law societies to ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."



"For those with a disability, access to justice can be a monumental gauntlet. Levelling that playing field has been long-needed, and I am excited to see the work APB will accomplish on this initiative."

– Nicky Dunlop,
PovNet Executive Director

"Our ongoing involvement with APB reflects our long-term commitment to improving access to justice. We are excited about this latest initiative that will improve the equity, diversity and accessibility of BC's articling system, and will also provide affordable legal services to underserved communities across BC. We are grateful to APB for their ongoing efforts to pioneer such vital programs, and we welcome the opportunity to partner with them to help develop BC's new generation of community lawyers."

– Jonathan Meadows, Managing
Partner, Harper Grey LLP

"CBABC is excited to support a new path to becoming a lawyer in BC. The Everyone Legal Clinic is trying something innovative to meet the previously unmet needs of law students seeking articles and clients needing legal services. We wholeheartedly support the articling students in this program and look forward to what is learned from this new venture."

– Kerry Simmons KC, Canadian
Bar Association, BC Branch,
Executive Director

Everyone Legal Clinic

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