



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2025 –
MARCH 31, 2026



Land Acknowledgement



We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory, the territory of many First Nations, and the Homeland of the Métis. Land acknowledgments are part of CLASSIC's intentional, mandated work, which is:

With a commitment to social justice, decolonization, and the dignity of all people, CLASSIC provides:

- Free legal services, programming and supports for people who experience poverty and injustice, and
- Internationally recognized clinical legal education to law and interdisciplinary students.

CLASSIC teaches new students about Canada's colonial history, reconciliation, and decolonization each semester. This work includes explanation around land acknowledgments.

CLASSIC has a vision for a better future where people are supported by fair and equitable laws and systems, which allow them to thrive. As part of our education and work to promote growth, CLASSIC acknowledges that we all enter spaces, places, and gatherings with different experiences, knowledge, understanding, and confidence. We will take time to honour our work and will reflect, share, and openly discuss our work, on our ongoing journey of learning. We are all lifelong learners.

CLASSIC knows this statement applies to all our work, and not only our work as teachers. We are all learners. 2

A message from the executive director and board chair



This year underscored the growing pressures facing people who experience poverty and injustice and turn to CLASSIC for help. Across our community, rising costs of living, housing instability, income insecurity, and barriers to accessing public services have left more people struggling to meet their basic needs. At the same time, the legal problems our clients face are becoming increasingly complex, often involving multiple interconnected issues that require intensive advocacy and support. Further, the systems people are forced to interact with often do not follow their own laws, which require further advocacy and either appeals or judicial review work by CLASSIC, on behalf of the community members we work with.

Amid this growing demand, CLASSIC experienced a significant change in operations. Following the expiration of our agreement with the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan, and the absence of a renewed contract, our clinic did not host the Intensive Clinical Law Program. The Intensive Clinical Law Program has been a valued part of our clinic and has contributed meaningfully to the education of future lawyers committed to social justice and poverty law.

At the same time, the absence of students also changed how our staff were able to allocate their time and resources. Clinical supervision, mentoring, and training require a substantial investment from lawyers and staff. Without those responsibilities this year, our team was able to focus more directly on front-line service delivery and increase our capacity to assist clients. In a year marked by escalating need and increasingly complex files, that additional capacity proved important and we were able to serve more clients than ever before. We also hosted our first ever Social Justice Community Fair during Access to Justice Week. It was a huge success.

While this shift allowed CLASSIC to serve more clients, it also highlighted the ongoing challenges facing community legal clinics of balancing immediate service demands with the important work of mentoring the next generation of advocates. CLASSIC remains committed to both goals and hopeful for opportunities to rebuild partnerships with the College of Law and other partners in community.

This annual report reflects not only the growing needs within our community, but also the resilience and dedication of CLASSIC's staff as they pivoted our program delivery model and continued to provide, high-quality, client centred legal services for those who need them most, during a period of crisis in our community.

Meet the team

The people committed to promoting Social Justice



Student Managers and Volunteer Lawyers

Frank Chou

Pat Tondevold (PTE Volunteer)



Program and Legal Support

Nicole Daniels

Laura Marshall (PTE)

Susan Saville (until February 2026)

Lierin Mulder (PTE)

Kim Turner (as of September 2025)



Community Support

Alexa Van Volkenburg

(on leave starting February 2026)



Articling Students

Jana Enns

Taylor Hemsing

(partnership with Legal Aid Saskatchewan)



Legal

Farrah Linklater

Madison Christensen (as of June 2025)

Michelle MacDonald

Catriona Kaiser-Derrick

Nicholas Blenkinsop (on leave since August 2025)



Leadership

Marshall Henley (PTE)

Tobi Graham

Chantelle Johnson



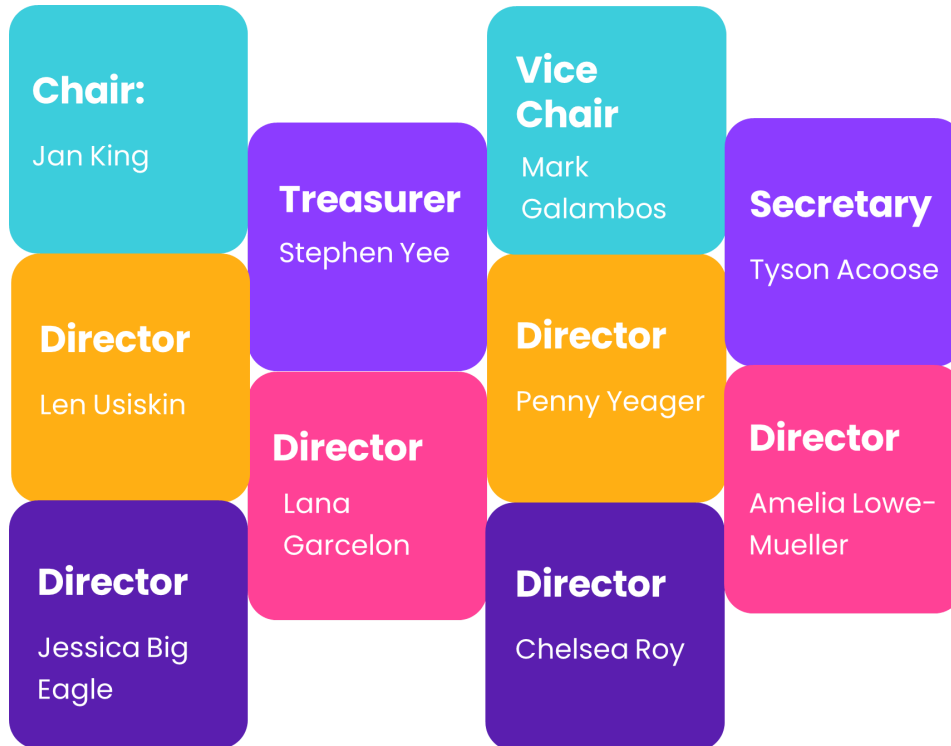
In memory of Susan Saville

This year, we mourned the loss of our colleague, Susan Saville, whose dedication to service left an impact on CLASSIC and the broader community.

Over the course of her distinguished career, Susan contributed to numerous community initiatives and helped improve many peoples' lives. CLASSIC is fortunate Susan chose to conclude her professional journey at our clinic.

Rest in peace and power Susan.

Meet the Board



Volunteers and Consultants

Pro Bono students register with Pro Bono Students Canada through the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan. Through their placement with CLASSIC, students support the Legal Advice Clinics (LACs) by attending sessions in person and acting as note-takers and observers. They also assist with ID Clinics, research, and community legal education.



Volunteers
Renee Gavigan
Michelle Rajput
Pat Tondevoid
Vanessa LaRocque

PBSC Students for 2025 – 2026

Project Lead: Frank Chou

Thomas Ramsay
Tadjana Dela Cruz
Jared Graham
Emma Olfert

Consultants
Beverly Fullerton
Hanetsa Tesfai
Leif Jensen
Erin Beckwell
Rachel Loewen-Walker

**Thank
you!**

Volunteer Legal Advice Clinic Lawyers

Jonathan Adams
Gillian Gough
Kimbal MacMillan
Michael MacDonald
Curtis Clavelle
Don McIvor, K.C.
Mark Galambos
Siera Paterson

Michelle MacDonald
Tayler-Anne Yee
Terry Zakreski, K.C.
Chris Gratton
Davida Bentham
Melissa Nicolls
Nicole Bree
Deb Hopkins

CLASSIC Service Areas



CLASSIC'S VALUES

PROFESSIONAL We are committed to the highest standards of competence and ethical practice. This requires us to be good listeners and engage in self reflective practice and evaluation. It also means that we live in tension – acknowledging that as a legal clinic we are part of a system that causes suffering and inequity. Our approach to professionalism informs how we educate our students as well as our commitment to take care of ourselves and each other as we work towards a more just community.

TRANSFORMATIVE Everything about how we approach the law challenges the system. We teach, research and engage in social-justice, antiracist and trauma-informed lawyering. By definition, this requires that we acknowledge and challenge the role that we, along with certain laws, policies and legal institutions, have played in reinforcing colonialism and other forms of inequality and oppression.

RESILIENT CLASSIC makes a difference in our clients' lives. The courage and resilience of our clients inspires us – and underscores our commitment to ensuring that CLASSIC's model, and its ability to meet our clients' needs, is viable, even as it grows and evolves.

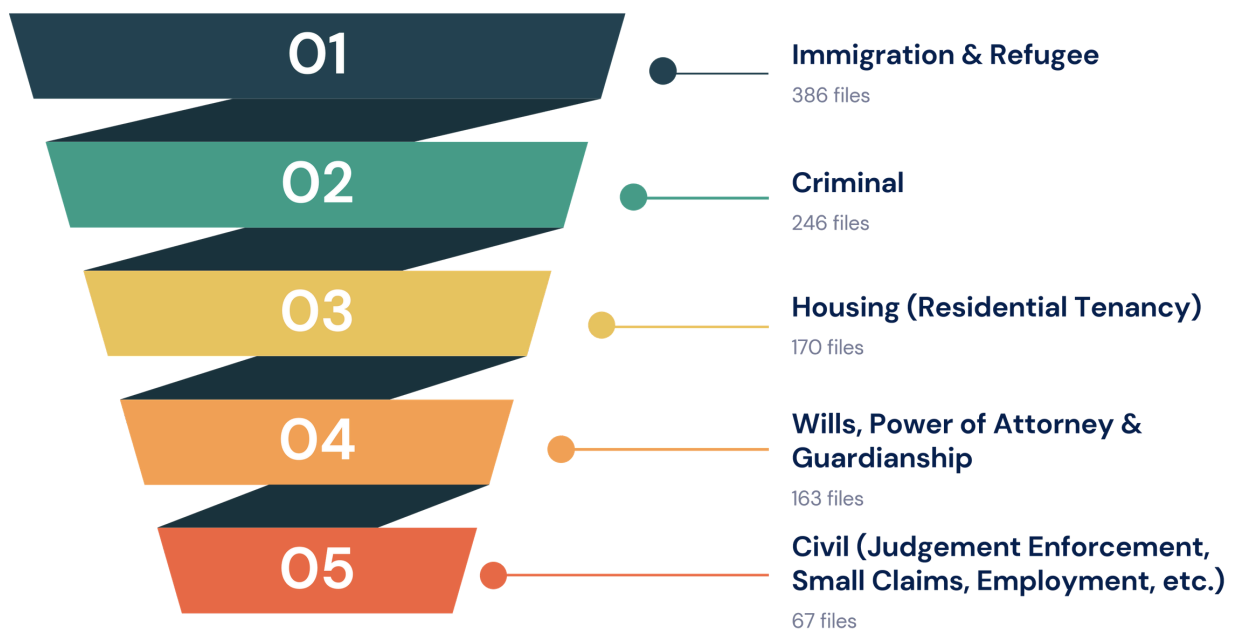
CLIENT-CENTRED We recognize that our clients, from a diversity of backgrounds and communities, are experts in their own lived experiences. We work with and in community to ensure that our clients' voices are heard, and to approach the challenges faced by our clients holistically, and in context. We are committed to learning from our clients and stakeholders, through reciprocity and respect.

Walk In Advocacy Clinic

CLASSIC's Walk-in Advocacy Clinic (WAC) provides full legal representation in approximately 20 areas of law to people who experience poverty and injustice. This year the Intensive Clinical Law Program did not operate in tandem with the WAC because our contract with the College of Law expired and was not renewed on time. Of the **1175** client files CLASSIC assisted with in 2025-26, **1032** were in our top 5 areas of law, as demonstrated below.

Top 5 Areas of Law

Practiced at CLASSIC April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026



CLASSIC continues to see an upward trend of **judicial reviews and appeals** generated through our file work. In 2025-26, CLASSIC did over 200 appeals and judicial reviews.

CLASSIC retained = \$7,875

*retained = saved clients from paying

CLASSIC obtained = \$145,628.53

*obtained = money and damages awarded to clients

- CLASSIC opened **573 new files** (the most we have ever opened in one year)
- CLASSIC carried over **602 files**
- CLASSIC closed **380 files**

860 applications were made to CLASSIC requesting full legal representation.

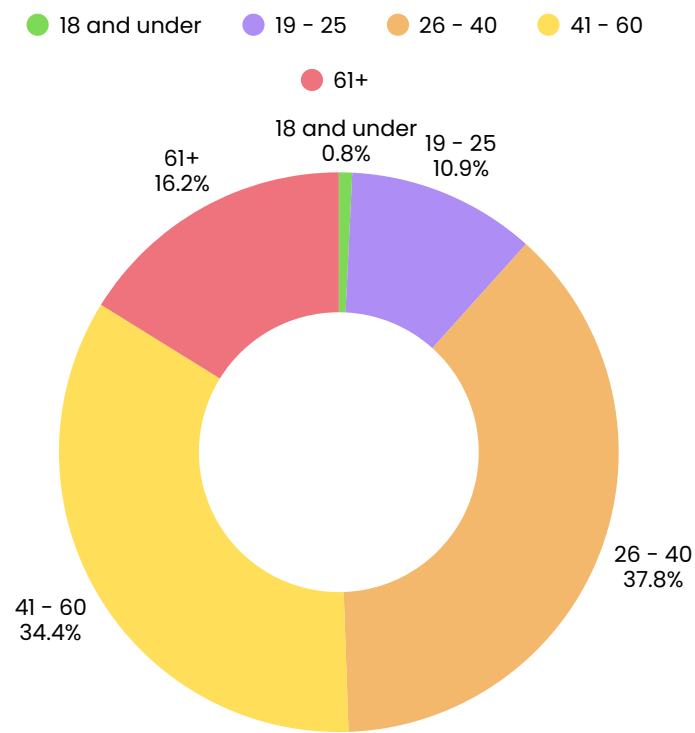
179 applications were denied due to capacity.

108 applications were denied for reasons other than capacity, such as income eligibility, matter outside CLASSICs guidelines or service area, merit, etc.

Individuals We Represented

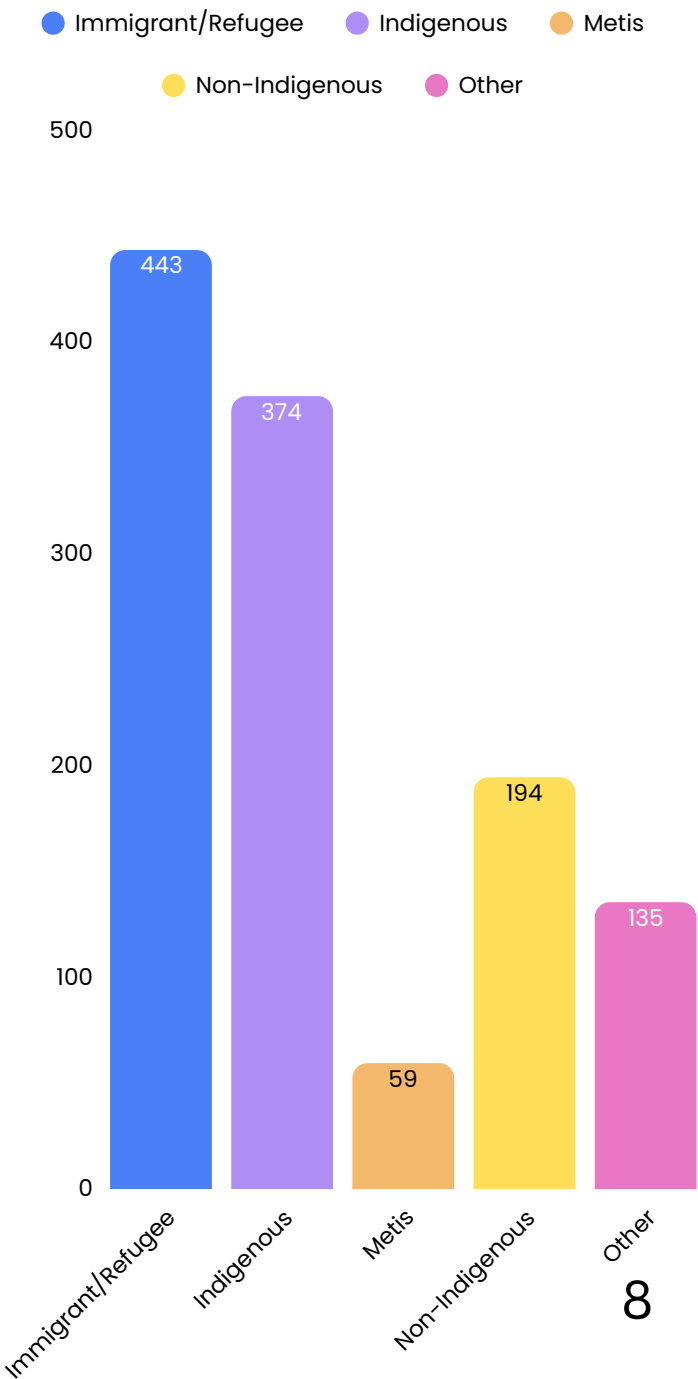
CLASSIC works with a diverse community of individuals and families. Our Philosophy of Practice recognizes that our clients come from many different communities and cultures and that we must learn from these communities and cultures in order to be good advocates. We also recognize that our clients are experts in their own lived experiences. Below are some demographic statistics for the 2025-2026 WAC fiscal year.

Age Range

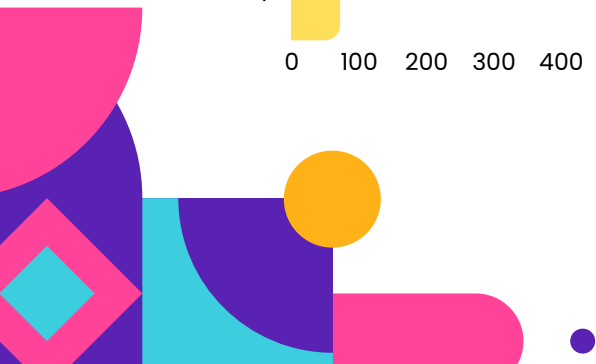
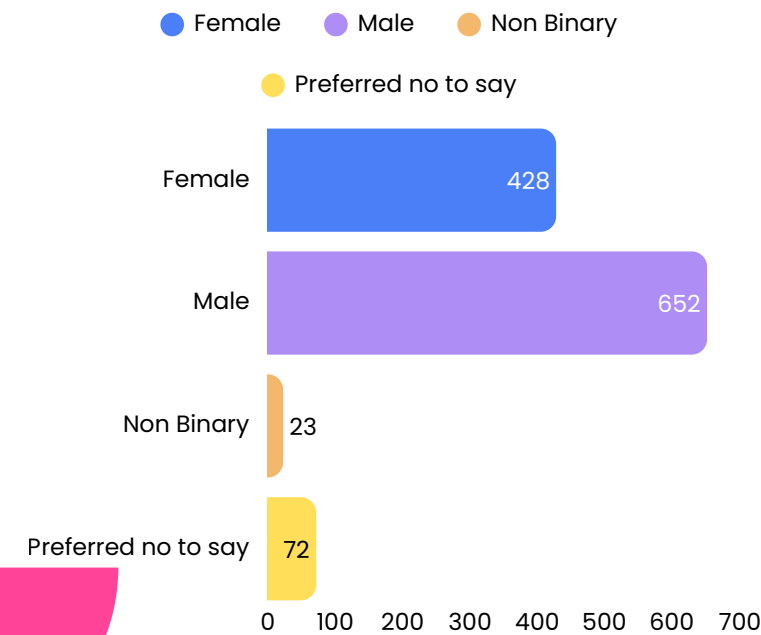


We recognize that the categories currently used in the background statistics could be clearer. As part of our upcoming strategic planning process, we will review and revise them to provide a more accurate and respectful reflection of the backgrounds of the community members we work with.

Background



Gender



Beyond Individual Cases: Systemic Work

Highlight:

CLASSIC continued to contribute to the development of the law in access to justice issues. In December 2025, CLASSIC acted as intervener at the Supreme Court of Canada. This was CLASSIC's first time intervening in a Supreme Court of Canada case. CLASSIC's intervention in *Cope* related to sentencing circles, on the issues of preserving accessibility to sentencing circles and advocating for circles to be used more widely even in cases where a penitentiary sentence may be imposed.

Housing Law – Procedural Fairness

CLASSIC continued to successfully appeal eviction decisions based on procedural fairness, including:

1. Cases where tenants missed their hearing despite taking all reasonable steps to attend and through no fault of their own, did not get through on the phone to the hearing officer. Several appeals found the process was unfair, resulting in a new hearing where the tenancy was preserved.
2. A case where a tenant missed the hearing call by only 60 seconds. The appeal was successful, the matter was returned to a new hearing, and the tenancy was preserved.

Housing Law – Publishing Tenant Names

CLASSIC continued to advocate for the anonymization of tenant names in decisions published by the Office of Residential Tenancies. The publication of tenant names can have serious consequences, as reported decisions on CanLII are often used by landlords to screen prospective tenants.

We have seen clients struggle to secure housing because their names appeared in a reported decision, even when they brought legitimate claims against a former landlord. We have also seen individuals negatively affected simply because they share a name with someone identified in a published decision.

In addition, many decisions contain sensitive personal information that is publicly accessible and often unnecessary to the public record. CLASSIC continues to advocate for greater privacy protections while maintaining transparency in decision-making.

Immigration and Domestic Violence Interplay with Income Assistance

This year, CLASSIC identified a growing number of cases involving women fleeing domestic violence who faced significant immigration barriers after leaving their abusers. Securing immigration status, housing, and income assistance often requires judicial reviews and multiple social services appeals due to systemic obstacles and initial denials of support.

In each of these cases, the women received negative immigration decisions and were instructed to leave Canada, despite having children in Canada who depended on them. Without legal representation and judicial review of those decisions, they would have faced deportation.

These are exceptionally high-stakes files. For survivors of abuse, obtaining secure immigration status is often a critical step toward rebuilding their lives and achieving long-term safety and stability. However, this work is also highly resource-intensive, requiring filing fees, extensive preparation, and many hours of legal advocacy. Clinics such as CLASSIC play a vital role in ensuring these women have meaningful access to justice and the opportunity to remain safely in Canada.

Beyond Individual Cases: Systemic Work (continued)



Estates

This year CLASSIC experienced an increase in requests for assistance with estate matters. A significant factor was the distribution of compensation payments, including Day School Settlement and Cows and Ploughs payments to individuals who have since passed away. In these situations, family members must obtain Letters of Administration before they can deposit the cheque and access the funds on behalf of the estate.

A recurring issue is that these payments can be substantial, often exceeding \$30,000, which results in significant court fees and levies associated with obtaining Letters of Administration. Unlike in many other estate matters, the estate's primary asset is the compensation payment itself. As a result, applicants cannot access the funds until they receive Letters of Administration, but they cannot obtain Letters of Administration without first paying the required fees.

Many people do not have the financial means to cover these costs upfront. This creates a significant barrier to accessing compensation that was intended to benefit the deceased individual's family and estate. At present, there appears to be no practical mechanism to bridge this gap, leaving some clients unable to access funds to which they are otherwise entitled.

Non-Adherence to the Rules of Procedural Fairness by Government Decision Makers

As in previous years, failures to follow principles of procedural fairness by government decision-makers continue to create significant barriers for our community members. Staff turnover, efforts to reduce backlogs, and increasing pressure to improve efficiency can result in decisions being made without adequate process or consideration of individual circumstances.

For the people affected, the consequences can be severe, particularly when decisions involve access to essential supports. This year, CLASSIC observed a notable impact in matters involving provincial income assistance programs, where procedural fairness concerns continued to arise.

Prison Law

This year, CLASSIC observed trends in provincial correctional centres following a court decision that found the disciplinary process used in provincial facilities violated *Charter* rights. After the court ruled that the "balance of probabilities" standard for disciplinary charges was unconstitutional, correctional authorities advised that they would no longer proceed with major disciplinary charges. Instead, CLASSIC observed an increased reliance on street charges or lesser institutional charges where the status quo is to not involve lawyers.

Police Brutality

CLASSIC continues to act for clients in police brutality cases at criminal, civil, and complaints levels. This year we represented more than one client who experienced broken bones during arrest for charges that were never substantiated. These cases are incredibly difficult to bring because of immunity protection the police get for "good faith", and because it is expensive to retain experts for use of force. The cost of expert witnesses is a major access to justice barrier for the community members CLASSIC works with.

Sentencing Circles and difficulty accessing them

CLASSIC had a client for whom a sentencing circle was a perfect fit, but when we tried to organize one, we quickly realized there was little information about how to organize one for adults, especially if they could not pay for it themselves. To make it happen, CLASSIC had to have an agreeable Crown, a Judge willing to do a "quasi" sentencing circle, find and pay an honorarium to an Elder, ensure community supports and family were invited, and explain the process to everyone so it could be run without the assistance of a facilitator. Despite the hurdles, the circle was extremely successful and impactful, and it allowed the client and her family member (complainant) to talk through the issues surrounded by family and supports and to continue their healing together. This is a systemic issue in a province infamous for overincarcerating Indigenous people.

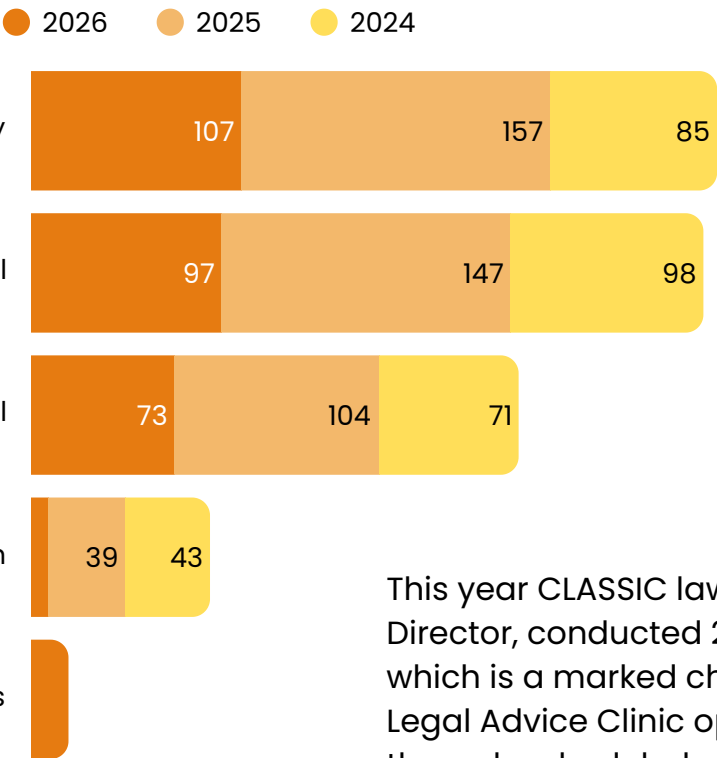


Legal Advice Clinic

This clinic is for people:

- who experience poverty,
- do not qualify for full representation legal services through CLASSIC’s Walk-in Advocacy Clinic,
- do not qualify for Legal Aid services, and
- are self-represented or unrepresented.

LAC Stats



298 people were assisted through the LAC in 2025-2026

359 LAC appointments were booked

43.5% were male
56.5% were female

This year CLASSIC lawyers and the Executive Director, conducted 24 of the LAC appointments, which is a marked change in programming. The Legal Advice Clinic operates predominantly through scheduled volunteer lawyers.

The LAC numbers were down this year because:

- CLASSIC served more people through our full legal representation clinic, the Walk-In Advocacy Clinic,
- many volunteers reduced their hours for various reasons, and
- We lost an Immigration and Refugee law volunteer lawyer, which is difficult to replace and accounted for 39 to 43 clinics in previous years.

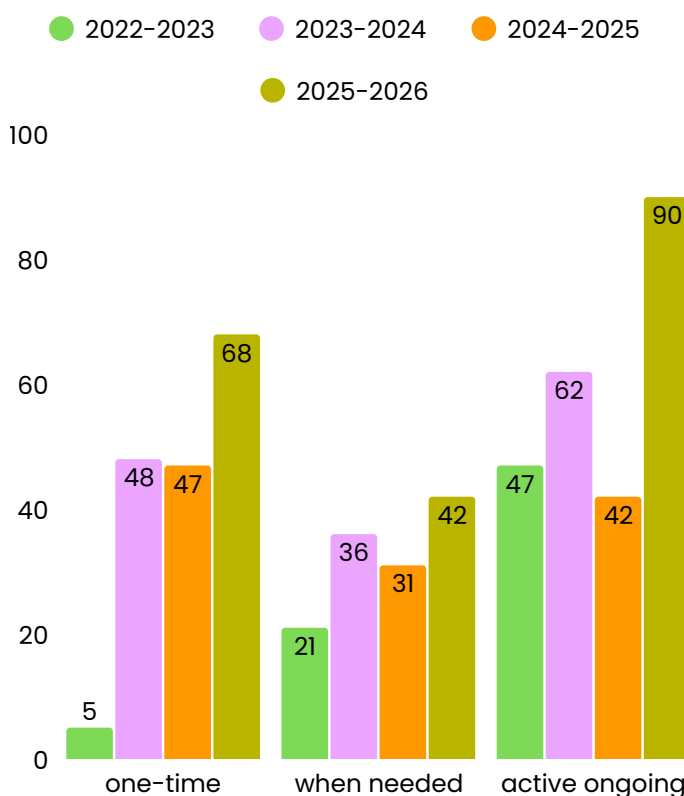
CLASSIC continued its partnership with Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs) by providing space for PBLs to host Free Legal Clinics on Fridays in Saskatoon. To date, CLASSIC has hosted 10 in person clinics and 10 over the phone clinics in partnership with PBLs.

Community Support Program

CLASSIC understands our clients' legal issues are not always the central challenges they face. CLASSIC's Community Support Worker (CSW) assists community members with their nonlegal needs primarily through systems navigation. Having a holistic and interdisciplinary team makes us more client-centred, effective and meets more of the needs for the community members.

The CSW continued attending Station 20 West one morning a week, to reduce barriers for people to access help with housing and income assistance system navigation. The CSW connected with **54 people** through this initiative.

As the overdose crisis continued in Saskatoon, the CSW maintained regular walkabouts around CLASSIC to check in with people who appeared to be houseless. During these walkabouts, she connected with **over 165 people**, distributed snacks, water, and Narcan kits, and offered support as needed. These interactions also helped ensure that people felt seen, cared for, and aware that assistance is available at CLASSIC.



Volunteer Vanessa LaRocque and CSW Alexa Van Volkenburg

This year the CSW worked directly with **202 community members**, 57 remained active and carried into the next year.

Systems navigation is the highest area of demand. The CSW assisted community members:

- to navigate Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID),
- with housing system navigation including locating, viewing and filling out rental applications, and
- through community street outreach.

STEP: Student Training and Education Program

2025-2026 marked the first year that CLASSIC did not host a clinical law program. The agreement between the University of Saskatchewan, College of Law, and CLASSIC expired and a new one was not reached for the 2025-2026 year.

Despite not hosting the Intensive Clinical Law Program at CLASSIC this year, CLASSIC provided the following opportunities and services to the College of Law and students:

- hosted one Housing Law seminar at CLASSIC and provided a guest lecture from our staff. We also provided project ideas for the course.
- CLASSIC continued to host Pro Bono Students Canada students and projects.
- We participated in Dispute Resolution Week, at the mock sentencing circle. The lawyer who participated had recently run a “quasi” sentencing circle, which is currently highly unusual in Saskatchewan – it is good for students to hear about the realities of practice.
- We participated as consultees for the Dean’s Forum on Access to Justice and attended the forum.
- We employed students both during the summer and academic year.
- A CLASSIC lawyer attended the Women in Law Conference in March.
- We continue to work with Prof. Buhler on our partnered research projects, as outlined on page 14.

CLASSIC hosted paid summer students in 2025-2025. The Summer Students at CLASSIC:

- assist with applications,
- work on client files,
- conduct research,
- attend hearings, and
- represent CLASSIC at different community events



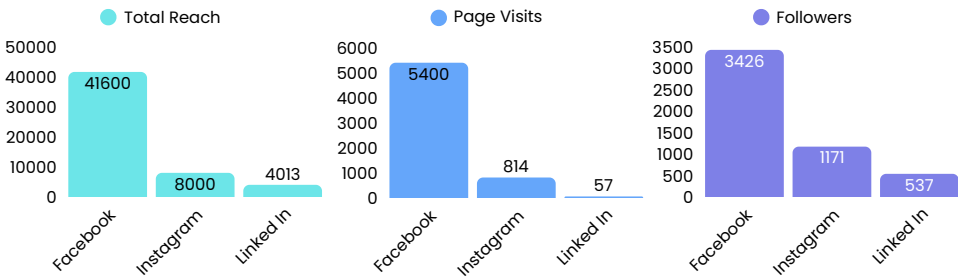
Special Projects and Research

Special Project- Project ID

During the 2025–2026 year we were unable to host formal ID clinics due to capacity. However, we continued to support this work where possible by processing birth certificates that were associated with legal files through the Walk-In Advocacy Clinic.



CLASSIC’s social media continued to reach many people. Our most popular posts are our “Know Your Rights” posts.



Research

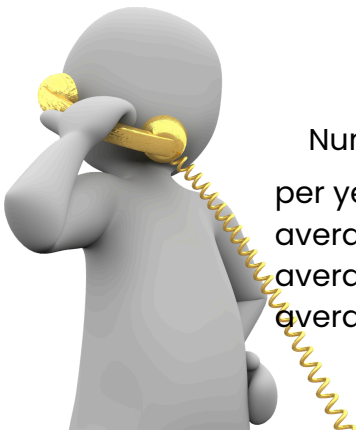
CLASSIC is a natural research hub. This year we partnered on multiple projects:

- “A Safe and Affordable Place to Call Home: A Multidisciplinary Longitudinal Outcomes Analysis of the National Housing Strategy” - led by a team at Carleton University, (funded by CMHC and SSHRC),
- “People, Places, Policies, Prospects: Affordable Rental Housing for those in Greatest Need” CLASSIC’s part is led by a team at CUISR, (funded by SSHRC),
- “Access to Justice for Renters in Saskatoon” – led by Professor Sarah Buhler, in partnership with CLASSIC. (funded by Pathways to Equity),
- “Housing Law from the Ground Up” – Principal Investigator is Professor Anna Lund and Professor Sarah Buhler is a Co-PI.(funded by SSHRC),
- “Clinical Law Training Materials for Lawyers, Supervisors and Mentors” – in partnership with Professor Gemma Smyth, University of Windsor and Professor Sarah Buhler, University of Saskatchewan. (funded by the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan), and
- “Measuring the Individual and Systemic Impact of CLASSIC’s services: Access to Justice Data in a Clinical Environment” – in partnership with Professor Sarah Buhler (funded by the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan).

PHONE CALLS

Time spent on the phone

Minutes = **3,362,093**
Hours = **56,035**
days = **2,335**
weeks = **334**
Months = **77**
Years = **6**



PHONE CALLS

Number of total calls

per year **36,689**
average per month **3,057**
average per week **705**
average per day **141**

Community Connections

On October 27, 2025, CLASSIC, hosted our first Social Justice Community Fair, bringing together community members and service providers from Saskatoon and some provincial agencies. Fifteen agencies gathered at Station 20 West to provide information, resources, and support to community members.

Attendees were welcomed with giveaway bags and enjoyed chili and bannock while exploring information booths, connecting with service providers, and having fun at the photobooth. The event was a tremendous success attracting more than 300 community members and creating valuable opportunities for connection, learning, and community engagement.



CLASSIC Highlights

La Ronge Wills Clinic

This year CLASSIC offered its first Wills Clinic in partnership with the Legal Aid Saskatchewan office in La Ronge. This was a huge success as we drafted 16 wills and conducted 1 summary advice session. This is something we hope to provide again in the coming year.



Things we do in community

CLASSIC is often contacted to do presentations, be a research partner, present at conferences, and participate in community consultations. We try to attend where capacity permits. This year, CLASSIC participated in over **2000 hours** of events and community meetings. Some highlights include:



- The National Criminal Law Program July 2025
- 2025 Law Fair Event hosted by The Law Society of Saskatchewan
- 2025 Law Firm Showcase Canadian Bar Association, Saskatchewan Branch
- College of Law Career Forum hosted by the University of Saskatchewan
- Access the Justice week events - The Law Society of Saskatchewan Information Forum

Who else we are connected to in community

CLASSIC was also a member or participant of:

- Reconciliation Saskatoon
- Rock your Roots
- Interagency ED meeting
- Community Veterinary Outreach Clinics
- Dean's Forum on Access to Justice
- ACCLE (Association of Canadian Clinical Legal Education)
- College of Law CLASSIC Committee
- Access to Justice Network
- Community Consultations
- Prison Law Working Group
- Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership

Service Contracts, Grant Partners, other Partners



United Way
Saskatoon & Area



Thank You!



Sisters of St. Joseph of Chalmers



Donors / Sponsors \$750-\$2000

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Janice Gingell
Tim Quigley
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