



Annual Report of Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC)

2015-2016

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INTRODUCTION

CLASSIC has been providing services to the community for over nine years. CLASSIC began as a student initiative in 2006, when three College of Law students recognized the massive gap between those individuals who qualify for legal aid, and people who can retain a private lawyer. Since CLASSIC opened in 2006 we have helped over **7000** clients through our Walk-in Advocacy Clinic and Legal Advice Clinic. This number, along with the number of otherwise eligible clients who are turned away due to capacity, led us to believe that the issues faced by our clients cannot be solved solely by individual client service provision. For this reason, we are also committed to our newest area of programming, the Systemic Initiatives Program.

This year we worked with external consultants to explore our internal and organizational health. The following factors led us to seek this help:

- our rapid growth,
- the ever increasing demand for our services without matched revenue stream or staffing levels,
- feelings of fatigue and worry about staff burn-out, and
- the fact that we are nearly 10 years old and needed to evaluate our operations to assess what we need to work on, where we are doing well, and how we can continue to improve our internal functioning.

This work was and is on-going. Thus far it has resulted in many changes and new direction, including our new vision and mission:

Vision:

CLASSIC works toward a just society that is supported by a fair legal system.

Mission Statement:

CLASSIC works toward social justice with low-income, marginalized Saskatchewan residents, with a commitment to Indigenous peoples, through a legal clinic that is guided by the needs of the community. This engages law and inter-disciplinary students through experiential learning, providing insights into the cultural and social reality of law and fosters an ethic of social justice.

CLASSIC understands that true “justice” is not attained merely by access to services, and our new vision and mission acknowledge this. We are humbled by how graciously CLASSIC has been received and trusted by the community and we are confident that our newly adopted vision and mission statement will lead us into the future.

CLASSIC now presents its record of service for the 2015-2016 year.

HIGHLIGHTS

CLASSIC's highlights from 2015-16 include:

- Commitment to **organizational health** which includes: working to identify sustainable funding/revenue sources, staff well-being (which includes capacity management), enhanced IT infrastructure and computers, and strengthening board governance;
- CLASSIC and our community benefitted from the services of **158 volunteers**¹;
- We served **1052 individual clients** through the Walk-in Advocacy Clinic and Legal Advice Clinic; and
- Work on our newest program area, the Systemic Initiatives Program continued through which we provided **information and support with ID applications to 728 community members** under one of the projects, called "Project ID".

Overall Demand

CLASSIC has grown immensely since we opened our doors. CLASSIC's philosophy is to refer clients to the most appropriate services where we assess their needs to be non-legal in nature, or if they need other services besides those services CLASSIC provides. The demand for our services is ever-increasing and demonstrated below with CLASSIC's front-line reception and phone statistics. These statistics do not include in-person walk-ins.

Front-Line Statistics 2015-2016

Month	Messages	Referrals
Apr-15	284	104
May-15	344	83
Jun-15	437	135
Jul-15	363	132
Aug-15	257	83
Sep-15	306	84
Oct-15	296	119
Nov-15	337	100
Dec-15	237	58
Jan-16	392	113
Feb-16	367	105
Mar-16	496	211
TOTAL	3722	1327

These front-line statistics, which **do not include walk-in traffic**, demonstrate the amount of work our one front-line worker is faced with on a daily basis.

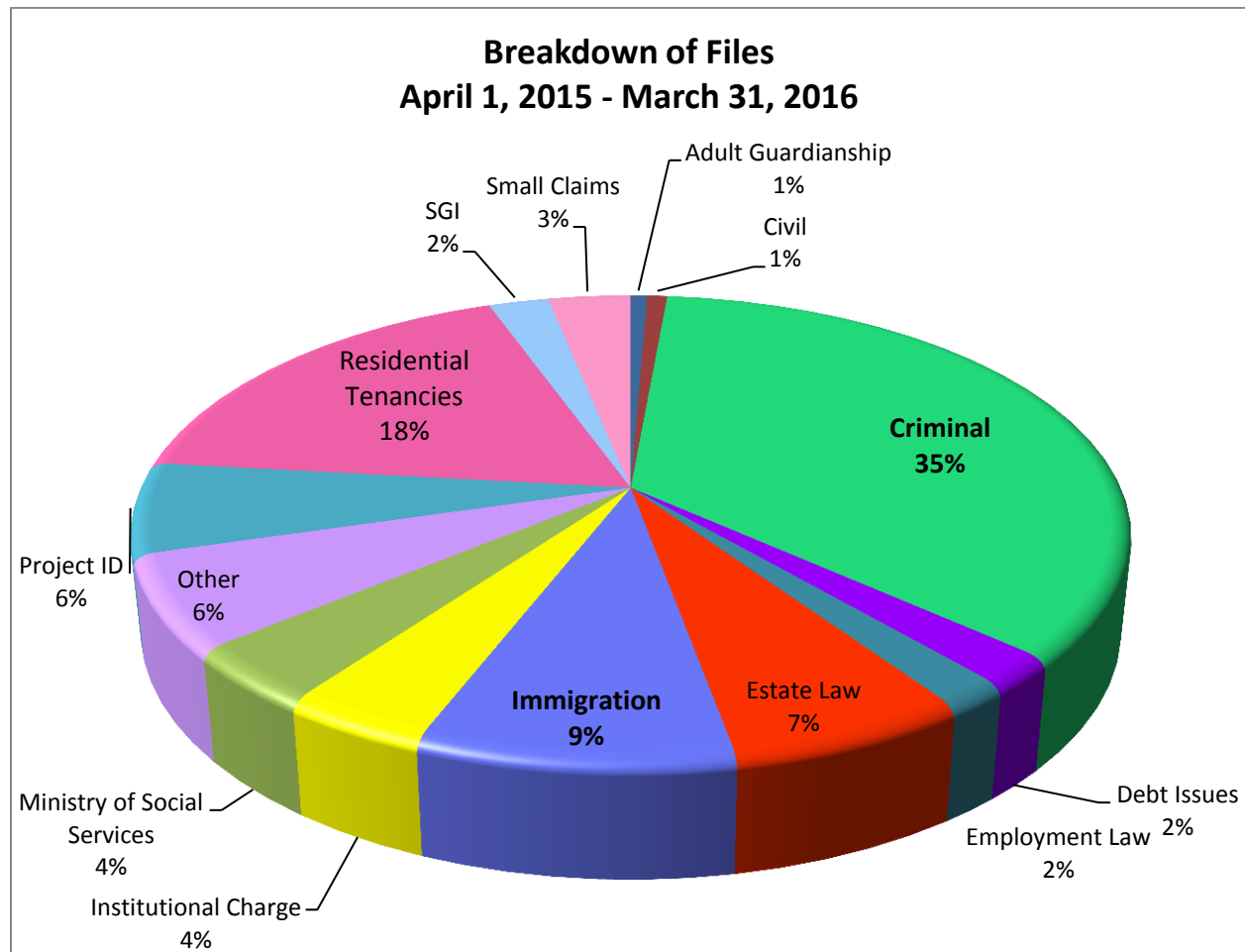
¹ This number includes students who took the intensive for course credit, volunteer students, volunteer lawyers, and non-student, non-lawyer volunteers.

PROGRAMMING

1. Walk-in Advocacy Clinic (WAC)

The **Walk-In Advocacy Clinic (WAC)** is CLASSIC's largest program area, and one of the ways we work toward fulfilling our mission statement. Under the supervision of staff lawyers, students from the University of Saskatchewan's College of Law assist low-income clients with legal matters that affect them, such as landlord-tenant, income support, summary criminal, immigration and refugee, social services, wills and estates, and more. Since the WAC opened in February 2007, its services have assisted **over 5,000 low-income clients** and their families. During 2015-2016, the WAC served **779 low-income clients**, an increase over the previous fiscal year, in which we served 754 clients. It is noteworthy that these two years demark a major increase in clients served, from the 600-650 range in the years prior. This increase is because CLASSIC allocated 30% of another supervising lawyer position towards addressing capacity in the WAC, along with the fact that we have long-term staff and volunteers who are able to handle higher file loads based on their experience.

The chart below outlines the numerous areas of practice at CLASSIC and the proportion of files practiced in each area over the 2015-2016 year.



In 2012 CLASSIC launched the “**Intensive Clinical Law**” course where students obtain a full term’s worth of course credits for working at the WAC. They are at the office Monday-Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. throughout the course of the term. Fridays they take a seminar course related to their clinical experience. In the first term of 2015-2016, we had **9 Intensive Students**, and in the second term, we had **15 Intensive Students**. These numbers, combined with our other WAC volunteers, total **66 students and student volunteers** through the WAC this year. We note that the second term where we had 15 intensive students was a pilot project, and flowed from our strategic plan, where we have a goal of taking on 15 intensive clinical students. However, we learned that this goal is not viable with our current staffing levels – this number of students is too high to adequately supervise.



Left to Right: Heath Smith, Kate Wilson, Herman Jhangri, Steven Wang, Jordan Bolt, Omer Khayyam, Jonathan Adams, Embury Blashill, and Kellie Wuttunee

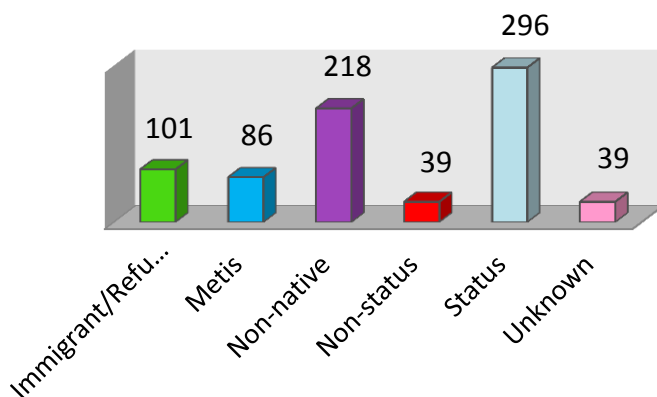


Back Row: Peng Zhang, Mandeep Minhas, Tyler Evans, Eduard Matei, Matthew Kerr, Matthew Wiens, Francine Merasty, Leon Thompson
Front Row: Dominic Sikora, Jessica Belisle, Bojana Prekic, Michelle Korpan, Laura Barath, Noah Wernikowski
Absent: Cameron Brightman

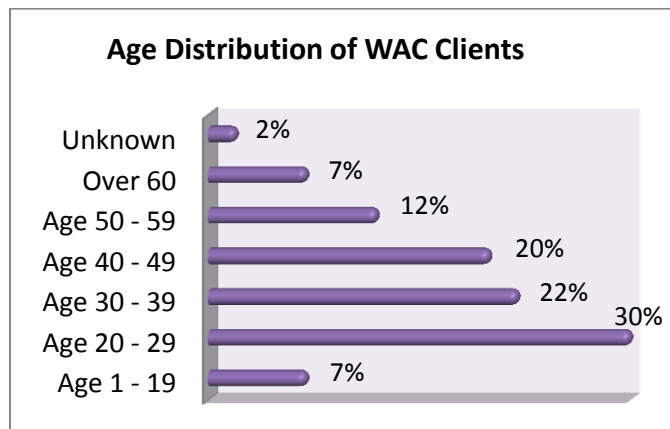
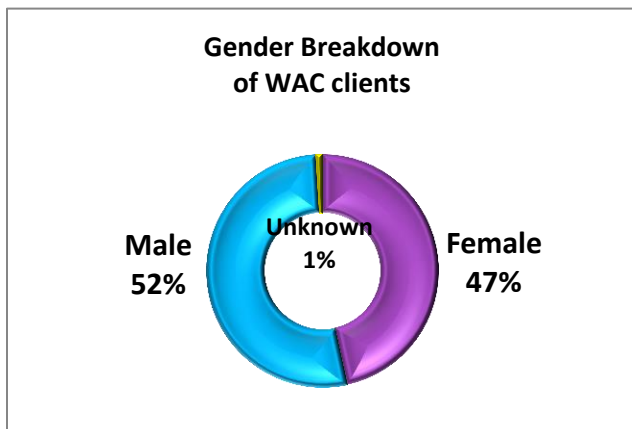
During this fiscal year, WAC student advocates and supervising lawyers made **771 appearances in the Provincial Court**, **80 appearances before administrative tribunals** (e.g. the Office of the Residential Tenancies), **10 appearances before the Immigration and Refugee Board**, and **11 appearances before the Court of Queen’s Bench**. These

numbers are consistent with the previous year.

Background of Clients Served Through WAC



WAC clients are diverse in age, and reported ancestry. One goal of the WAC is to prioritize the legal needs of Indigenous people. In 2015-2016, **54% of the WAC’s clientele were of Indigenous ancestry**. This year we had a 5% client base in which the background was not determined, which can be explained by the client refusing to answer the question.



With respect to age, the highest percentage age group we helped through the WAC in 2015-2016 were **between the ages of 20-39 at 52% of our overall client base**. Younger people tend to be disproportionately impacted by issues related to low-income. This seems to be particularly true in Saskatoon as the cost of living increases and employment is more difficult to obtain for younger people. Issues related to these realities bring clients to CLASSIC and the WAC for a myriad of reasons.

CLASSIC also tracks the gender of our clients. In the 2015/2016 year, the difference between male and female clients was about 5%, which has not changed from our last fiscal year. This is attributable to the amount of criminal law we do and the fact that the vast majority of clients on those files are male.

The WAC has **improved clients' lives in very tangible ways**. In 2015-2016, WAC student advocates saved tenancies, obtained compensation for poor living conditions, assisted in successful refugee claims, increased and defended public benefits, obtained acquittals and rehabilitative sentences, helped clients advance immigration matters, settled and litigated civil claims, drafted wills, and much more. WAC advocacy helped clients **obtain \$133,219.53** in compensation and income support. Further, WAC clients **retained \$124,260.01** they would have had to pay or income support they would lose, if not for the WAC's advocacy. This is a total of **\$257,479.54 in the pockets of low-income community members**. These numbers must be considered in the context of many of CLASSIC's clients' lived realities – where \$20 extra in a month makes a huge difference. In addition, many of the WAC file successes include non-monetary outcomes, such as stays of criminal charges, permanent residency status, and continuation of residence in rental accommodation, to name a few examples.

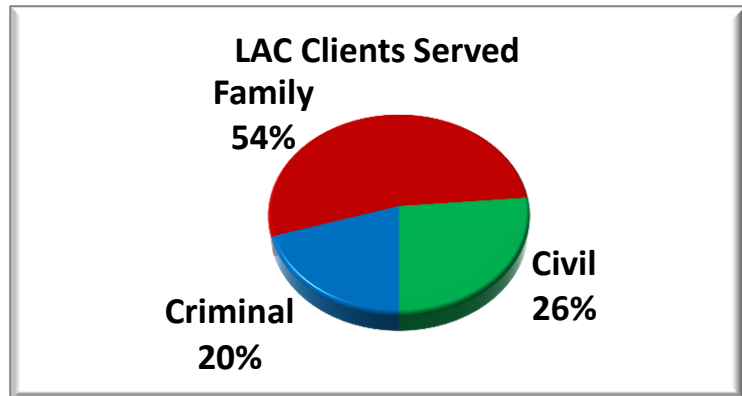
The demand for the WAC's services continues to outweigh our ability to serve that demand. In the 2015-16 year, **45% of all denials were based on capacity**. This continued increase in demand has led us to believe even more strongly in our need to focus on systemic solutions that cause people to need legal services in the first place.

CLASSIC enjoys tremendous support from the **legal community**. This year, **13 lawyers** volunteered to **mentor law students** placed in the WAC. Some acted as Supervising Lawyers while others acted solely as mentors. Seven of the lawyers were from private law firms, two were from Legal Aid, and four were faculty from the College of Law. Their names are listed below.

- Elke Churchman
- Norma Sim
- Tim Quigley (supervised files)
- Chris Veeman
- Lea Lapointe
- Ron Cuming (supervised files)
- Norman Zlotkin (supervised files)
- Allen Hjelte
- Deb Hopkins
- Alma Wiebe
- David Zeglar
- Sarah Buhler (supervised files)
- Keir Vallance (supervised files)

2. Legal Advice Clinic (LAC)

CLASSIC’s secondary program is the **Legal Advice Clinic (LAC)** through which low-income clients receive free legal advice and guidance from practicing lawyers in the areas of criminal, family, and civil law. CLASSIC works in partnership with Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs) to provide this program – PBLs oversees all similar programming throughout the rest of Saskatchewan. The LAC provides vital support to low-income individuals who are self-represented in their legal matters. This clinic is seen as complementary to CLASSIC’s WAC program, where if we cannot assist a person in their matter we do have an option available for them. The volunteer lawyer meets with the self-represented client for half an hour. If the lawyer feels that the client can benefit from another appointment, then a subsequent appointment is offered. The wait list for the appointments varies, but the longest wait is generally four-weeks.



Since its inception, the LAC has assisted **over 2,000 low-income community members**. During 2015-2016, the LAC assisted **273 clients**: 54% of the clients received family law advice, 26% received civil law advice, and 20% received criminal law advice. The number of LAC clients served decreased this fiscal year from 357 clients in the previous 2014-2015 fiscal year.



The LAC is coordinated and supported by volunteer students from the College of Law. In 2015-2016, **Michael MacDonald and Julia Kindrachuk** (pictured to the left) served as coordinators. **Fourteen students** matched with CLASSIC through Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) facilitated the clinics, and a parallel **15 lawyers** matched with CLASSIC through Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs) provided free legal advice at the clinics. CLASSIC deeply appreciates the work of the PBLs volunteer lawyers and PBSC students; without their *pro bono* ethic this program would not be possible!

Thank you to the LAC volunteer lawyers listed below, for their dedication over the past year.

VOLUNTEER LAWYER for LAC	VOLUNTEER LAWYER'S FIRM
Brad Mitchell	McDougall Gauley LLP
Connie den Hollander	Knott den Hollander Quennell
Beau Atkins	Edge Law
Kate Crisp	Scharfstein Gibbings Walen & Fisher
Mark Galambos	WMCZ
Terry Zakreski	Stevenson Hood Thornton Beaubier
Mark Vanstone	WMCZ
Kimberly Visram	Stevenson Hood Thornton Beaubier
Elke Churchman	Elke Churchman Law Office
Blaine Beaven	Scott & Beaven Law Office
Don McIver	Hnatyshyn Gough
Karina Jackson	Mokuruk & Woods Law Office
Leif Jensen	
Calen Nixon	
Lea Lapointe	Mokuruk & Woods Law Office
Tom Baldry	MacPherson Leslie Tyerman
Brooke Sittler	Department of Justice
Kiera Neufeld-Heinrichs	Edge Immigration

3. Systemic Initiatives Program (SIP)



The Systemic Initiatives Program works with the community in support of their social justice goals to address systemic issues and seek policy change. The SIP is committed to responding to community-identified objectives; this year we continued our community consultations, the highlight being a **consultation with over three dozen Indigenous women** over lunch at the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre on December 7, 2015.

This year, for the first time, a Systemic Justice seminar was offered at the College of Law, serving as an academic complement to the SIP, as it examines the root causes of injustice and the role of law in systemic change. The students in the seminar worked on SIP projects. We also welcomed a full-time social work practicum student whose time was in large part dedicated to SIP work. Both developments increased the capacity of the program.

Project Highlights:

Project Access addresses the hardships inmates face due to telephone and visitor access policies and practices in provincial correctional centres; namely, that costs and other restrictions hamper their release planning, and access to their families, and other supports. CLASSIC's SIP works with a coalition

of community organizations – the Elizabeth Fry Society, AIDS Saskatoon, STR8 UP, and the Mennonite Central Committee – and in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan on this project. This year we **consulted with dozens of recently released inmates** regarding their experience of telephone access policies and practices. We presented on our work at the Sallows Human Rights Conference at the University of Saskatchewan. We **researched the legal, sociological and economic aspects** of the issue. In March we **filed a submission** with the Ministry of Corrections and Policing focussed on the cost barriers and recommending change.

The **Gladue Project** is concerned with the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system. It made considerable headway this year. We developed: a **resource handbook** on community-based and government resources province-wide that provide alternatives to incarceration; an **education module** to deepen judges’ understanding of the inter-generational impact of trauma and Indigenous peoples’ conflict with the law; and an **informative primer** on Gladue for Indigenous offenders. The material is tailored to have a province-wide impact. We thank the Dakota Dunes

Community Development Corporation for funding this project.



Project ID responds to widespread need of identification for marginalized people to access housing, employment, basic services, as well as, to vote, and to open bank accounts. Project ID is supported by the Community Initiatives Fund. During 2015-16, the SIP held **16 information sessions and clinics** at which we provided **information and support with ID applications to 728 community members.**

Among them, we were able to cover application fees for 351 community members thanks to funding received

from the Affinity Credit Union.

The SIP’s **Discrimination in Rental Housing** project is concerned about frequent discrimination against prospective tenants on grounds of receipt of social assistance. Through collaboration with community agencies SHIP, the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, and community leaders, we successfully appealed to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) which decided to champion the issue as their systemic advocacy campaign. They issued a **public statement denouncing this discriminatory practice** in December 2015. We assisted the SHRC with **data collection**, where several community members shared their experience of discrimination with the SHRC. We plan to continue working together in a consultative capacity and are contemplating strategies such as public awareness, education and seeking enhanced accountability for landlord discrimination.

With respect to **Legislative Advocacy**, CLASSIC was successful in advocating for changes to the proposed *Fee Waiver Regulations*, and informing the development of *The Residential Tenancies Regulations* (Sask. Gazette, Dec. 2015). We were also part of a successful appeal to the provincial government to develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy (announced February 2016). We laid some groundwork for seeking law

reform by researching legislative frameworks in the areas of predatory lending and the Sask. Rental Housing Supplement.

The SIP continued to support the **Renters of Saskatoon and Area (ROSA)**, a grassroots renters' rights group. At monthly meetings we provide legal education on renters' rights and responsibilities, as well as advocacy strategies. This year saw the development of ROSA's mission statement and a series of special educational presentations on housing and public health.



This year we developed the curriculum for a **Tenants' Advocacy Training Workshop**, which responds to needs of lay advocates for tenants. Our goal is to equip lay advocates in a way that will create better outcomes for tenants. We developed the curriculum relying on legal and advocacy expertise of CLASSIC's supervising lawyers.

The SIP continued to facilitate the **community-based justice course** titled "Reclaiming History, Justice and Social Change in Community Context". This year we welcomed 10 participants – who ranged from community activists, businesspeople, professionals from the non-profit sector, law students and lawyers – and had biweekly discussions framed with an Indigenous lens on key themes such as community, diversity, justice and social change. Highlights from evaluations of participants' learning experiences included: "The path to reconciliation requires both small steps and great leaps for change" and "self-empowerment is key to community empowerment".

The SIP provided **educational presentations** to marginalized community members at community agencies, on the topics of social assistance, tenants' rights, and rights vis-à-vis police. We gave **3 presentations to 49 community members**. A student researched and gave recommendations on how to promote empowerment through community legal education. Regarding the impact of "payday loan" companies and creditor demands upon low-income people, we prepared and distributed an educational flyer regarding enforcement protection for debtors.

Lastly, with respect to the **Self-Advocacy workshop**, this year we finalized the curriculum and ran a successful pilot workshop.

The SIP projects were supported by 8 law students in the Systemic Justice seminar, 10 PBSC law students, 4 social work students, and 7 summer student volunteers, for a total of **29 student volunteers**. In addition, the SIP projects were also supported by **15 non-student volunteers and mentors**. This SIP has worked with 20 different community organizations on its projects.

COMMUNITY

CLASSIC receives incredible support from the community. CLASSIC works in partnership with, and

receives support from the College of Law. CLASSIC continues to seek and foster relationships with other **community organizations and the legal community**, regularly meeting with representatives from other community organizations and attending community events. CLASSIC regularly presents to organizations including: Saskatchewan Polytechnic, AIDS Saskatoon, Global Gathering Place, Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, the Saskatoon Prosecution Office, Ombudsman Saskatchewan, the Provincial Court Managers (provincial meeting), and the Saskatoon Provincial Court Judges. CLASSIC has received very **positive feedback** from our community partners about our services and how they benefit community members. In fact, an external program evaluation conducted by Vadis Consulting in 2013, CLASSIC was found to be an **essential service** in Saskatoon.

Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) continues to be an important partner to CLASSIC, recruiting and placing 87 law student volunteers in CLASSIC’s WAC and LAC programs, as well as special projects. Thank you to the 2015-2016 PBSC coordinators, **Sarah Nordin, and Lara Bonokoski**.

Last but certainly not least, CLASSIC places **inter-disciplinary students** who support and strengthen our programs in many ways. During 2015-2016, CLASSIC had four social work practicum students, **Chalaine Senger, Alexis Holowatuk, Marissa Bialowas, and Sarah Wilk**.

CLASSIC students report very positive experiences from their placements at CLASSIC. The students describe how their experiences teach them about the impact poverty has on our clients’ lives in general, and with respect to their legal matters. They also report on positive feedback about using their legal education and experiential learning in a positive way, to help people who cannot otherwise obtain legal services.

BOARD

CLASSIC’s Board of Directors is a diverse group, made up of representatives of the College of Law, our partner organizations, the legal community, and the community at large. Below is a list of all individuals who sat on the Board over the course of this fiscal year.

EXECUTIVE BOARD	Position	Committee
Lynn Latta	Chair and Community Rep.	All
Gus Michalik	Vice-Chair and Community Rep.	Fundraising
Rachel Kong	Treasurer and Community Rep.	Finance Chair
Bonnie Reddekopp	Secretary and Private Bar Rep.	Legal Advisory, Governance
BOARD of DIRECTORS	Position	Committee
Cathy Bohachik	Legal Aid Saskatchewan Rep.	Fundraising Chair
Jonathan Adams	College of Law Student Rep.	Finance and Governance
Lori Johnstone-Clarke	Saskatoon Tribal Council Rep.	Finance and Legal Advisory
Rachelle Tanton	CUMFI Rep.	Human Resources
Glen Luther	College of Law Faculty Rep. and Aboriginal Lawyer Rep.	Governance Chair, Legal Advisory
Allan Prosper	Community Rep.	Fundraising
Ron Cuming	College of Law Faculty Rep.	Legal Advisory Chair and Human Resources
Dusty Ernewein	Aboriginal College of Law Student Rep.	Governance, Fundraising

Heidi Gravelle	White Buffalo Youth Lodge Rep.	Human Resources
Maria Campbell	Community Rep.	Fundraising
Michael Maurice	Advising Elder (non-voting)	Advisor

Flowing from our strategic plan, one goal is to strengthen our Board governance. As a result of our work with external consultants (Vadis Consulting) about our internal health, the Board recognized the need to review our board composition and our bylaws in order to strengthen our governance. As a result of the work conducted over the year, the Board is recommending a change to our Board composition and bylaws at the Annual General Meeting. The goal is to provide a stronger foundation for the organization as a whole.

STAFF

CLASSIC staff keep the clinic running smoothly and successfully. During 2015-2016, CLASSIC’s student managers were Nordika Dussion and Lorne Fagnan. Four of our 2015 summer students self-identified as being of Aboriginal ancestry, and two of being from a visible minority.

The picture below shows our 2015 Summer Students, top row is **Taylor-Anne Yee, Jared Brown, and Michael MacDonald**. Bottom row is **Nordika Dussion, Raminder Arora, Lorne Fagnan, and Dusty Ernewein**.



CLASSIC’s Staff, during the 2015-2016 fiscal year are included in the table below:

Name	Position	Notes
Maikim Huynh	Administrative Assistant	2.5 years
Joilene Whitehead	Executive/Legal Assistant	3 years
Nicholas Blenkinsop	Supervising Lawyer	7 years
Amanda Dodge	Supervising Lawyer	8 years
Brenda Yuen	Supervising Lawyer	1.5 years
Chantelle Johnson	Executive Director	4 years
Trevor Oleniuk	Supervising Lawyer	1.5 years – no longer with CLASSIC
Janice Gingell	Volunteer Extraordinaire – Retired Lawyer who donates 20 hours/week	Volunteering since June 2012

*CLASSIC also has a .4 articling student for a one-year period, pursuant to an agreement entered into between Maurice Law and CLASSIC. It has been a pleasure having Frankie Young here on that basis.

FUNDING

CLASSIC is very thankful for the financial support it received during the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

CLASSIC provided services, with thanks, to the following funders over the 2015-16 fiscal year: **Law Foundation of Saskatchewan; University of Saskatchewan, College of Law; Saskatchewan Ministry of**

Justice; Community Initiatives Fund; United Way of Saskatoon and Area; City of Saskatoon; Saskatoon Community Foundation; Potash Corp of Saskatchewan; Affinity Credit Union; Student Summer Works; Canada Summer Jobs; Dakota Dunes Community Development Corporation; and individual donors.



CLASSIC would also like to thank everyone who supported the 6th Annual Gown to Gown Lawyers' Charity Gala, held in January. The night was a great success, and we raised nearly \$40 000 through the event. We would also like to thank everyone who participated in smaller donation drives over the year, as they helped us raise another nearly \$20 000.

(Pictured to the left are Gown to Gown Gala attendees, Andy Chiang, Anna Singer, Gillian Gough and CLASSIC Supervising Lawyer,

Nicholas Blenkinsop)

CLASSIC was very pleased that our volunteer Supervising Lawyer, Janice Gingell was the recipient of the Pro Bono Service Award which was presented at this year's Gown to Gown Lawyers' Charity Gala. Janice is an invaluable member of our team and epitomizes the pro bono spirit. To draw from our nomination:

One of the most notable things everyone (staff, clients, students) appreciates about Janice is her humility – she does not think she is better than anyone else, and treats EVERYONE with respect, dignity and equality. Despite the fact that many people would like to think they do this, Janice demonstrates this in her daily approach at CLASSIC.

Despite Janice's experience, she comes to CLASSIC with an openness to work on anything required and helps us in any way she can. Her great sense of humour and humility are great examples for all who encounter her.

Finally, Janice chips in to help in any way she can, by:

- *Helping with the terrible realities of non-profit life that so many people never think of: shovelling, cleaning, washing tea towels, making coffee, etc.*
- *Making private donations;*
- *Acting as a mentor to the staff and students;*
- *Helping give rides when staff member's cars die – including day-care pick-ups; and*
- *On and on*

The running joke at CLASSIC is "what more could Janice do for us?"



CLOSING

CLASSIC's Board and staff are very thankful for the many individuals and organizations that have supported CLASSIC and enabled us to meet the needs of our community. We especially thank our dedicated and hard-working volunteers who are the hands and hearts of our service to the community.