

COMMUNITY LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES FOR  
SASKATOON INNER CITY INC. (CLASSIC)



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-  
2022



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## 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 service, programming and supports for people who experience and 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.

As part of our education and work to promote ongoing growth, CLASSIC acknowledges that we all enter spaces, places and gatherings with different experiences, knowledge, understanding and confidence. We will take time to honor 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, as we are all learners.

## TRC Calls to Action



CLASSIC recognizes that the TRC Calls to Action are to be read together. CLASSIC is committed to responding to the Calls to Action linked to our work. We can and are currently addressing the following calls:

**# 27 Justice #27**

**# 28 Justice #28**

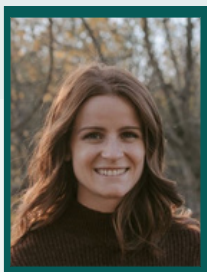
**# 30 Justice #30**

**#'s 50, 51, 52 Equity for Aboriginal People in the Legal System #51, 52, 53**

## MMIWG2S+ Calls to Justice

CLASSIC partnered with Dr. Rachel Lowen-Walker's Sallows Seminar in Human Rights on a project where students researched if Calls to Justice are being responded to overall by society. The students also made recommendations specific to CLASSIC that we are currently reviewing.





Board Chair  
Natasha Steinback

### Reflecting on this Year

- \* Reflective practice is part of CLASSIC's culture. As such, we continue to reflect on how the pandemic continues to shape how CLASSIC meets the needs of our community.
- \* COVID-19 has continued to magnify the complex realities of the communities we work with. The nature in which services are rendered in the community remains in flux, which continues to pose challenges for community members who have intermittent access to phones, electronic devices, and the internet. Ultimately, people who experience the most difficulty in non-pandemic times continue to experience even greater difficulties in pandemic and ongoing pandemic times.
- \* As many know, the new Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program has presented a number of significant challenges to the community. Many individuals and families have fallen through the cracks and have experienced increased hardship due to inadequate access to income support. Coupled with the lack of affordable, quality housing, this has created extreme distress in the community CLASSIC serves. And as CLASSIC races to keep up with community needs, access to much-needed funding continues to be out of reach.
- \* Despite some of these challenges, CLASSIC has worked to meet the needs of our clients and community.



Executive Director  
Chantelle Johnson

### A SNAPSHOT of 2021-22

- \* CLASSIC continued to advocate with and for our clients and the community. Our advocacy occurs through the courts and legal systems, partnerships with other nonprofits supporting our community, and meaningful community dialogue to better understand where we are and where we need to go. CLASSIC has further developed its interdisciplinary practice with the addition of our Community Support Worker, helping to provide wraparound supports for clients' needs that often result in or contribute to their need for legal services.
- \* Clinics like CLASSIC are part of a healthy democracy and play an increasingly important check within increasingly complex legal systems that disproportionately impact communities experiencing poverty. As Saskatchewan's only community legal clinic, CLASSIC remained committed to identifying and advocating against systemic issues faced by people who experience poverty. Over the last year, CLASSIC undertook more upper-level court proceedings, such as appeals and judicial reviews. These efforts have the potential to shift understandings and practices within the legal system that can lead to systems change.
- \* CLASSIC continued to rise up to meet the increasing demand for legal services. On average, our front-line received 1500 phone calls per month and spent over 27,000 minutes on the phone with clients and community members each month. This demonstrates the continued need for CLASSIC's Initial Client Services Worker and Legal Client Services Coordinator, which we added to our organization over the last couple of years. These positions help to assess whether the people who attend at our office or call in can be assisted through any of our clinics and the over 20 areas of law we practice in, provide summary advice in, or have special projects for.
- \* CLASSIC and the College of Law finalized a Memorandum of Agreement to guide our next two years of work together. CLASSIC welcomed Intensive Clinical Law Students back in the Winter 2022 term after two years of operating as a staff-only model. CLASSIC piloted a redesigned student model that we prepared over the last year. Our goal through the pilot project was to provide a program to better lend to our vision, mission, values, and priorities. We used lessons learned from the pandemic and our staff-only operations to create a new clinical experience with articling students. We found that the impacts of the pandemic did not let us fairly assess the pilot project. CLASSIC will continue to test the redesigned student model in the 2022 Fall and 2023 Winter semesters.



## BOARD MEMBERS

### Executive:

- Chair - Natasha Steinback
- Vice Chair - Blaine Beaven
- Treasurer - Jared Lindgren
- Secretary - Michael MacDonald

### Directors:

- Benjamin Ralston
- Trish St.Onge
- Christine Goodwin-Sagassige  
\*stepped down during the year
- Louise Oelke  
\*stepped down during the year

## ARTICLING STUDENTS & SUMMER STUDENT

- Shane Varjassy
- Connor StandingReady
- Rory Erickson

## VOLUNTEER LAWYERS

**These lawyers volunteered in CLASSIC's full-representation clinic and the Legal Advice Clinic during 2021-2022:**

### Legal Advice Clinic: (Summary Advice)

- Lorne Fagnan
- Rochelle Wempe
- Daniel Katzman
- Mark Vanstone
- Brad Mitchell
- Davida Bentham
- Terry Zakreski
- Jonathon Adams
- Ammy Murray
- Karina Jackson
- Don McIvor
- Mark Galambos
- Jordan Graham

### Walk-In Advocacy Clinic: (Full-Representation)

- Pat Tondevoid
- Janice Gingell



## STAFF



- Executive Director - Chantelle Johnson
- Supervising Lawyer - Nicholas Blenkinsop
- Supervising Lawyer - Cara Merasty
- Supervising Lawyer - Tom Baldry
- Director of Finance - Marshall Henley
- Director of Programs and Operations - Tobi Graham (Started September 2021)
- Community Support Worker - Robin Schmidt - (Until December 2021)
- Community Support Worker - Alexa Van Volkenburg (Started January 2022)
- Legal and Client Services Coordinator - Susan Saville
- Community Justice Liaison/Frontline Worker - Beverly Fullerton - (Until March 2022)
- Administrative & Initial Client Services Assistant - Laura Marshall

**CLASSIC also recognizes the following individuals and contractors who aided in our success this year:**

- Elder Ralph Paul
- Hanetsa Tesfai
- Jordan Trotchie
- Julie Shugarman
- Kimberly Schmitke
- Leif Jensen
- Erin Beckwell
- Kim Pidskalny
- Leah the Plumber and team

# STEP: STUDENT TRAINING & EDUCATION PROGRAM



In 2021-22 the University of Saskatchewan, College of Law and CLASSIC formalized a Memorandum of Agreement to guide our relationship for the next two years. This was a major accomplishment and was the culmination of a negotiation process that commenced years ago. CLASSIC would like to pay special thanks to the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan for their contribution toward an external facilitator to assist us to move this work forward.

CLASSIC welcomed Intensive Clinical Law Students back in the Winter 2022 term after two years of operating as a staff only model. We piloted a redesigned student model that we developed over the last year. Our goal through the pilot project was to provide a program to better lend to our vision, mission, values and priorities. We used lessons learned from the pandemic and our staff-only operations, to create a new clinical experience coupled with articling students. We found that the impacts of the pandemic did not let us fairly assess the pilot project and we will continue to test the redesigned student model in the 2022 Fall and 2023 Winter semesters.

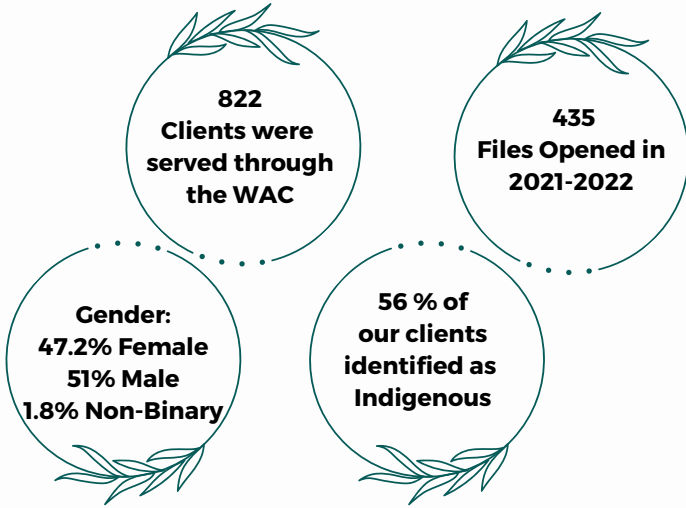
## The students who participated in the Intensive Clinical Law course at CLASSIC are:

- **Christopher Cheong**
- **Tyler Gervais**
- **Alexis Kardas**
- **Sophia Lagimodiere**
- **Sonia Lee**
- **Kaylen Merasty**

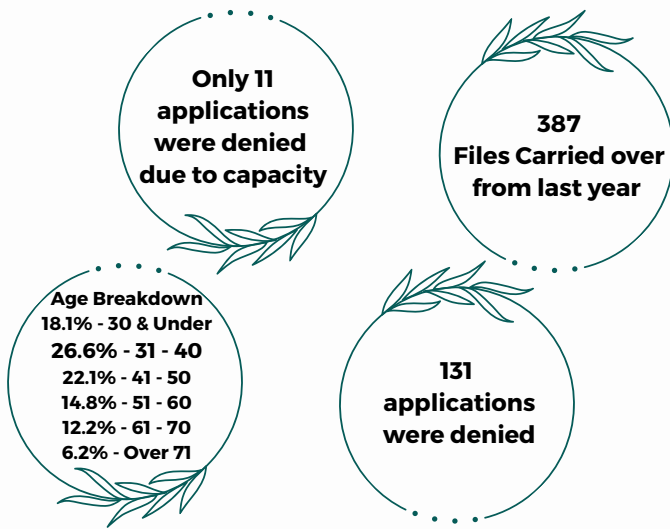
\*Professor Sarah Buhler and CLASSIC'S Social Work Consultant, Erin Beckwell are also pictured here.



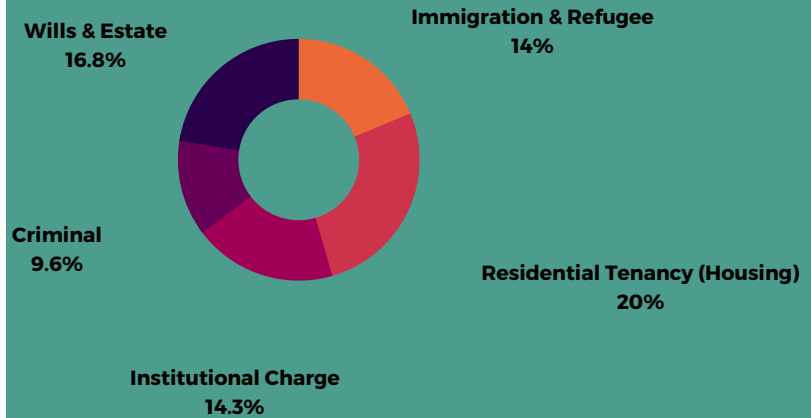
# WALK-IN ADVICE CLINIC (WAC)



CLASSIC’s Walk-in Advocacy Clinic (WAC) provides full legal representation to people who experience poverty and injustice in approximately 20 areas of law. This program works in tandem with the Student Training and Education Program (STEP) with students working on assigned client files under the direct supervision of staff lawyers, as evidenced above.



## TOP 5 AREAS OF LAW IN DEMAND IN 2021-2022



## OTHER AREAS OF LAW:

The remaining legal work conducted through the WAC was comprised of the areas listed below, with work associated with the Ministry of Social Services being the next highest at just under 6% of CLASSIC’s overall files.

- Adult Guardianship
- Civil
- Human rights
- Ministry of Social Services
- Small Claims
- Day School / 60's Scoop
- Debt Issues
- Administrative
- Employment Law



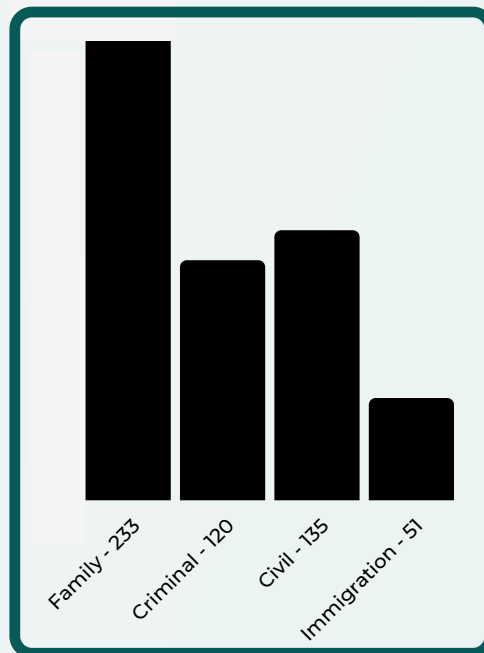
# LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC (LAC)

CLASSIC's Legal Advice Clinic (LAC) works in partnership with Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs) to provide unrepresented or self-represented individuals with free summary legal advice from practicing lawyers in the areas of criminal, family, immigration and civil law.

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
- Cannot afford to retain a private lawyer.

539  
people were  
served through  
the LAC  
2021-2022



541 LAC  
appointments  
were booked  
in 2021-2022

CLASSIC's LACs were conducted by phone because of COVID-19. This resulted in increased attendance and appointments. We will keep phone and in-person LACs moving forward, depending on volunteer preferences.

The LAC does not provide full representation. LAC clients represent themselves in their legal matters. They receive advice through this clinic. Without the LAC, these individuals are completely on their own through their legal matter. This is particularly important with respect to family law, which represents a major portion of our LAC appointments, as evidenced above.

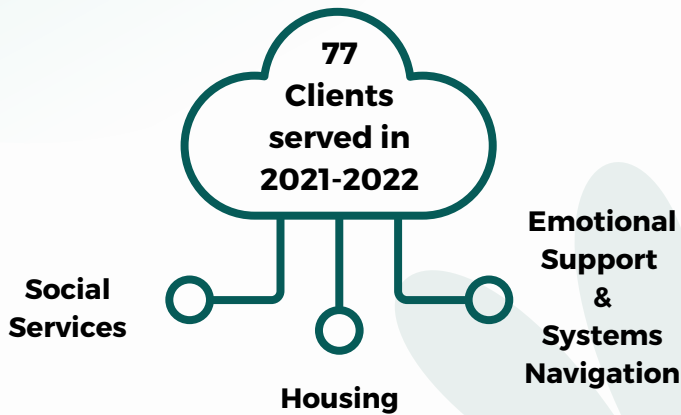
## Thank you to the lawyers who volunteered with the LAC in 2021-2022

- Jonathon Adams
- Ammy Murray
- Karina Jackson
- Don McIvor
- Mark Galambos
- Jordan Graham
- Brad Mitchell
- Lorne Fagnan
- Rochelle Wempe
- Daniel Katzman
- Mark Van Stone
- Davida Bentham
- Terry Zakreski

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORK

“We understand our clients’ legal issues are not always the central challenges that they face. We will seek to understand and approach the challenges faced by our clients holistically, and in context.” CLASSIC’s Philosophy of Practice – Article 3

To best fulfill Article 3 of CLASSIC’s Philosophy of Practice, we identified the need for a Community Support Work Unit (social work) at CLASSIC. We have had a Community Support Worker on staff for the last year and a half. During the 2021-22 fiscal year CLASSIC increased the position from part-time to full-time. An inter-disciplinary and holistic approach to CLASSIC’s work helps us be more client-centered and makes the clinic a more effective and efficient place.



## Community Involvement

CLASSIC’s Community Support Worker is involved in community and joins Reconciliation Saskatoon committees, Anti-Racism Network – Justice League, and some inter-agency work. Community is large part of the work CLASSIC does. A quote from Alexa, CLASSIC’s Community Support Worker “as a society I feel we need to move away from the western philosophies of individualism and move towards community-based care and collaboration. Working as a team to address the root causes of systemic issues as well as helps provide more holistic care to the folks accessing services.”

## Systems Navigation

Income Assistance is the root of approximately 80% of the work/advocacy conducted by the Community Support Worker. The Community Support Worker role involves advocating for:

- more respectful conversations (flowing both ways, mostly after communication breakdown),
- provision of adequate basic needs,
- clear delineation of client rights/responsibilities and worker responsibilities.

Most folks accessing services are currently receiving income assistance. Income assistance is a large, complicated system to navigate and understand. Oftentimes folks are not provided information on their rights and available supports through income assistance. Within income assistance, the workers often have conflicting information and give different answers to the same questions/concerns. Folks are often pushed to their wits end and want or need someone in their corner as they try to move forward. Every aspect of an individual’s life is impacted while they await or maneuver these systems.

## Emotional Support

Many folks do not have support networks. Many have been discriminated against or treated in a punitive matter through the varied systems they access services through. Often the problems being experienced do not have clear cut answers nor do they often have solutions. For CLASSIC to provide a safer place for an individual to break down and be allowed to express their emotions goes a long way. A lot of the time people need someone to listen to them and validate their feelings.



# Addressing Systemic Barriers



**CLASSIC arose from a systemic realization that people who experience poverty and injustice did not have many supports in Saskatchewan. CLASSIC's mere existence addresses systemic barriers. CLASSIC addresses systemic barriers in many ways. Some examples are: √**

Intentionally reflecting on the impacts of colonialism on 'justice' and recognizing the tension we are in, working within settler legal systems,	Identifying decolonization as part of our mandate, while recognizing that we participate in the colonial legal system and that that creates a tension	Training law and interdisciplinary students and partnering with professors for community projects and research (examples: Intensive Clinical Law Program, Social Innovation Lab in Gender & Sexuality at the University of Saskatchewan)	* See more information on next page
Our "Rehabilitative Alternatives to Incarceration Handbook" (next update delayed/pending funding)	CLASSIC shared over 325 posts to our social media this year. We currently have almost 3200 social media followers & have reached 74,000 people this year		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership with Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation &amp;</li> <li>Level Justice Partnership</li> </ul>	* Cases, Appeals and Judicial Reviews of client matters with systemic impacts	* Special projects - Community Legal Education and Project ID	* Community Engagement and participation

## Partnership with Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation

CLASSIC's Supervising Lawyer Cara Merasty partnered with PBCN over the course of the year to run Indian Day School clinics. Through this partnership we served approximately 70 people by helping them fill out applications or by providing summary legal advice. CLASSIC is grateful for this partnership and good work.



## Level Justice - Indigenous Youth Outreach Program- Grade 8 Wapawikoscikan School, Pelican Narrows, SK. March 24-25, 2022

Cara Merasty, one of CLASSIC's Supervising Lawyers, volunteered with Level Justice to organize the Indigenous Youth Outreach Program in Pelican Narrows, SK. Cara and an articling student visited the grade 8 class on March 24-25, 2022, to host the program. They presented on a variety of topics such as Access to Justice, Systemic Racism, Indigenous Legal Systems, and Criminal Justice. We also facilitated a Mock Trial. The students were shy at first but participated in the program. During the Mock Trial students each had a role as a defence lawyer, crown prosecutor, defendant, victim, witnesses, court clerk, jury, and artist. The legal issue dealt with bullying through text messages and uttering threats. The students asked questions and made sound legal arguments for their case. In the end the jury found the defendant guilty. The students were engaged, and the teacher commented that for some of her students that was the most they talked throughout the year.

# Addressing Systemic Barriers (cont'd)

## Project ID

Having identification is a basic starter for many aspects of life. CLASSIC identified the need for many of our community members to obtain ID about five years ago, through community consultations. From there "Project ID" was born. Over the years we have learned that hosting large, wholesale, one-day clinics is most effective. Like so many things, these clinics were impacted by COVID-19. CLASSIC resumed in-person clinics, by appointment, in November. We partnered with SWITCH.



## Community Legal Education

CLASSIC provides Community Legal Education in areas of law we are experts in, and which are not served through our friends at PLEA. This year CLASSIC hosted:

- 4 - PBSC Student Volunteers
- 1 - Training Session for students
- 4 - Workers Rights Presentations
- 2 - Rights of Resident New Comers
- 2 - General - Tenant Combo
- 1 - Police Infractions

Total of Presentations - 9  
Estimated number of participants - 90-115

## Cases, Appeals and Judicial Reviews

Examples of this work include, but are not limited to:

- Challenging immigration processes that are less fulsome and therefore may not be in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Working with a major landlord to address their illegal lockout of tenants and get the tenants back into their suites
- Representing prisoners in disciplinary hearings and judicially reviewing matters where the rules of procedural fairness are not followed by the institution or their decision makers
- Working to advocate in relation to agender/transgender rights in Saskatchewan
- Challenging Social Services' policies and practices around what is exempted as income versus what is counted as income. For example, we currently have a challenge around loans from friends and family members of people who are in receipt of social assistance.

## Community Engagement and Participation



CLASSIC walks in different communities and we are connected to those communities in many ways. Examples include:



Law Society of Saskatchewan  
TRC Advisory Committee

Reconciliation  
Saskatoon

Anti - Racism Network  
Justice League

Self - Represented Litigants Working Group

College of Law  
CLASSIC Committee

Access to Justice Network

SPACOD  
Saskatoon Police Advisory Committee on Diversity

Dean's Forum on Access to Justice

ACCLE  
Association of Canadian Clinical Legal Education Board

Prison Law Working Group

Community Partner:  
People, Places, Policies & Prospects Partnership

Community Cares

Inter-Agency Alliance

# Thank You

## Service Contract & Grant Partners:

- Law Foundation of Saskatchewan
- University of Saskatchewan, College of Law
- The Social Innovation Lab on Gender and Sexuality at the University of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice
- Community Initiatives Fund
- United Way of Saskatoon and Area
- Merlis Belsher Fund
- Affinity Credit Union
- Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
- Indigenous Solidarity Working Group - Canadian Union of Public Employees - Local 3906

## Donors / Sponsors over \$2500

- SGO Mining Inc.
- Kinsmen Club of Saskatoon
- Nutrien
- Anonymous Donor
- Sisters of St. Joseph

## Individual Donors:

CLASSIC thanks all our individual donors for your continued support.

