

Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan

Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee

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Prepared by: Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee

BACKGROUND

On October 30, 2015, the Benchers unanimously acknowledged the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and committed to addressing all of the TRC calls to action that are within the purview of the Law Society's mandate. The Law Society appreciates its moral and ethical obligation to advance truth and reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan will guide the Law Society's strategic and meaningful response to the TRC calls to action.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

COMMITMENTS

In accordance with the TRC's calls to action, the Law Society of British Columbia commits to:

1. Improving the legal profession's understanding of the detrimental impacts of the imposition of colonial laws and policies on Indigenous peoples;
2. Fostering the legal profession's respect for Indigenous individuals, institutions, and laws;
3. Increasing the legal profession's appreciation of the applicability of Indigenous laws within the Canadian legal system;
4. Engaging with Indigenous communities and organizations to better understand the unique needs of Indigenous people in relation to the legal system in British Columbia;
5. Undertaking strategic collaborations to:
 - a. Advance intercultural competence training for lawyers;
 - b. Enhance the availability of culturally competent legal services for Indigenous people in British Columbia; and
 - c. Improve access to justice for Indigenous people in British Columbia;
6. Addressing the unique needs of Indigenous people within the Law Society's regulatory processes;
7. Supporting Indigenous lawyers, articled students, and law students in British Columbia;
8. Implementing all of the TRC calls to action that are within the purview of the Law Society's mandate; and

9. Continually reviewing, evaluating, and renewing the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan to ensure that it remains relevant and effective in advancing the Law Society's efforts towards truth and reconciliation.

ACTIONS

1. The Law Society of British Columbia will be more inclusive of Indigenous people by:

- i. Seeking guidance from the Law Society of BC's Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee;
- ii. Publicly stating its commitment to implementing the TRC calls to action that are within the purview of the Law Society's mandate;
- iii. Ensuring that Law Society events are more inclusive of Indigenous people, by:
 - a. Acknowledging Indigenous territories at the beginning of Law Society functions;
 - b. Observing Indigenous protocols to open Law Society events;
 - c. Inviting Indigenous dignitaries to attend Law Society meetings and events;
 - d. Increasing the use of Indigenous businesses, suppliers, venues, and service providers; and
 - e. Applying the "alternate attire procedure" to process applications for the use of Indigenous regalia at call ceremonies.
- iv. Making the Law Society premises more welcoming for Indigenous individuals (e.g. by ensuring that symbols in the Law Society building are respectful of Indigenous people).
- v. Improving the accessibility of Law Society processes by Indigenous people by:
 - a. Requesting that the government of British Columbia appoint an Indigenous bencher;¹
 - b. Ensuring Indigenous representation on Law Society Committees;
 - c. Reviewing the Law Society's *Act, Rules, Code*, policies, and procedures to identify and remove any systemic barriers for Indigenous people;

¹ Claire Marshall became the province's appointed Indigenous representative to the Bencher table on May 4, 2018.

- d. Recruiting Indigenous Benchers,² committee members, and staff;
 - e. Connecting with Indigenous communities; and
 - f. Developing information sheets and online resources aimed at Indigenous audiences.
- 2. The Law Society of British Columbia will foster its support for Indigenous law students, articulated students, and lawyers by:**
- i. Tracking progress on the Law Society’s 2000 Report regarding Aboriginal Lawyers, with the goal of addressing any outstanding recommendations within the purview of the Law Society;
 - ii. Expanding the eligibility criteria for the Indigenous graduate scholarship to include Indigenous Juris Doctor students;
 - iii. Making concerted efforts to:
 - a. Hire Indigenous law students (e.g. summer and articulated students) and lawyers; and
 - b. Appoint Indigenous lawyers to Law Society Committees;
 - iv. Continuing to administer the Law Society’s Indigenous Lawyers Mentorship Program;
 - v. Strategically collaborating with law schools, legal organizations, and law firms to develop and enhance initiatives to recruit, retain, and advance Indigenous lawyers; and
 - vi. Continuing to monitor demographics regarding Indigenous lawyers in BC.
- 3. The Law Society of British Columbia will increase the involvement of Indigenous people in Law Society governance by:**
- i. Integrating the TRC’s calls to action into the Law Society’s strategic plan;
 - ii. Seeking guidance from the Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee;
 - iii. Requesting that the government of British Columbia appoint an Indigenous benchner;
 - iv. Assigning Indigenous individuals to Law Society committees;
 - v. Improving coordination and cooperation among Law Society committees;

² Karen Snowshoe became the first Indigenous woman elected as a Law Society of BC Bencher on June 2, 2018.

- vi. Enhancing collaborative efforts with other legal organizations;
- vii. Fostering engagement with Indigenous communities; and
- viii. Enriching relations with Indigenous lawyers.

4. The Law Society of British Columbia will improve the intercultural competence of Law Society Benchers, staff, and committee members, and all lawyers and Admission Program candidates in British Columbia by:

- i. Mandating Indigenous intercultural competence education for all Law Society Benchers, staff, and committee members, and all lawyers and Admission Program candidates in British Columbia;
- ii. Clarifying criteria, standards, and best practices for intercultural competence education;
- iii. Cataloguing Indigenous legal course offerings that are available to lawyers in BC;
- iv. Collaborating with appropriate legal and Indigenous organizations and law firms to:
 - a. Develop and distribute appropriate intercultural competence educational resources (e.g. online tools and best practice guides) in light of the TRC calls to action; and
 - b. Support the training of intercultural competence educators (e.g. “train the trainers” session for Indigenous lawyers who are interested in learning how to facilitate a “Blanket Exercise”).
- v. Facilitating the dissemination of existing educational resources (e.g. the Truth and Reconciliation Symposium proceedings and “But I was Wearing a Suit” videos); and
- vi. Reviewing the “continuing professional development” requirements in light of the TRC calls to action.

5. The Law Society of British Columbia will regularly review, evaluate, and report on its progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan, by:

- i. Clarifying timelines for accomplishing action items;
- ii. Establishing mechanisms for interested parties (including Indigenous communities, legal organizations, law firms, lawyers, articulated students, and law students) to provide feedback on the Law Society’s efforts toward truth and reconciliation;
- iii. Identifying rational indicators of progress; and

iv. Providing regular progress reports that are publicly available (e.g. mid-year and year-end progress reports at Benchers' meetings).

6. In recognition that truth and reconciliation are ongoing and long term endeavors, the Law Society will ensure the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan maintains relevance by:

i. Adapting the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan in response to regular reviews, progress evaluations, and emerging Indigenous legal issues.