

Law Society  
*of British Columbia*



# Annual Report 2023







# Table of contents

Message from the CEO/Executive Director	4
About us	6
Progress on our priorities	11
What we do and how we do it	17
LSBC Tribunal	28
Lawyers Indemnity Fund	30
Impact and support	35



# Message from Don Avison, KC

CEO / Executive Director

Reflecting on the Law Society's accomplishments in 2023, I am filled with pride and gratitude for our staff and board, whose dedication to our mandate brings integrity to everything we do.

In addition to advancing strategic priorities and fulfilling core functions, we responded to challenges that strengthened our commitment to the defining principles of our legal community and justice system.

Prior to Bill 21 — the *Legal Professions Act* — receiving Royal Assent in May 2024, our leadership team continued to liaise with the government on its contents. From our perspective, the Act contained flaws that would seriously compromise the independence of the legal profession and its regulator.

We continually urged the government to consult with stakeholders, including the profession, the public and Indigenous peoples, on the actual content of Bill 21 in order to get the legislation right. Unfortunately, those calls were not met. As a result, after the bill received Royal Assent, the Law Society initiated litigation to challenge the constitutionality of the Act. While the Law Society was not successful in securing an injunction to suspend the transitional provisions of the Act, the litigation on the broader issues will continue.

Recognizing the challenges that lie ahead, I felt it was crucial to provide the profession and the public with a more detailed view of the Law Society's work. Your understanding and support are pivotal to our success, and we want you to feel valued and included in our activities.

I very much want to thank staff for their continuing commitment to excellence and Benchers for their exceptional leadership in the face of unprecedented challenges.



**Don Avison, KC**  
CEO, Executive Director

In this report, you'll learn about our key priorities, such as advancing meaningful Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenous cultural safety, addressing gaps in mental health support and advocating for long-standing and emerging issues affecting the legal profession, including access to justice. You'll also read about how we are innovating through our core functions of licensing and regulating lawyers to uphold the ethical and competent practice of law.

One of our most significant accomplishments in 2023 was our work to address Truth and Reconciliation, which included completing and approving the *Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Task Force Report* and recommendations. We hired a Senior Advisor, Indigenous Engagement to lead and guide the implementation of the recommendations and an Indigenous Navigator to assist Indigenous complainants and witnesses with navigating our complaints process. This will continue to be a core focus of our work.

Along with other members of our leadership team, I was pleased to meet with groups and stakeholders, including Indigenous leaders, international colleagues and provincial government officials, to strengthen relationships and further collaborate on critical areas of our mandate.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without our team members, who bring our mission and vision to life daily. Their commitment to our mandate of protecting the public, hard work and passion for excellence shows that our strength lies in our people. I very much want to thank staff for their continuing commitment to excellence and Benchers for their exceptional leadership in the face of unprecedented challenges.



# About us

## Our mandate is to protect the public

The Law Society of British Columbia is the licensing and regulatory body for the legal profession in BC. We protect the public by setting and enforcing standards for professional and ethical conduct for lawyers. We provide information and resources for lawyers and the public on the standards of conduct, the complaints and discipline process and hearings, which are conducted by the Law Society Tribunal.

The Law Society also brings a voice to issues affecting the justice system and the delivery of legal services in BC, including lawyer independence, the rule of law, Truth and Reconciliation, access to justice and mental health in the profession.

### **TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Law Society offices are located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the territories of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) and x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) First Nations.

## Our Mission

To serve the public interest by regulating the competence and integrity of legal service providers, promoting the rule of law and lawyer independence, and improving access to justice.

## Our Values

**INTEGRITY** — We act honestly and ethically.

**TRANSPARENCY** — We are open in our processes and communications, and we report publicly on our decisions in a timely manner.

**INCLUSIVITY** — We embrace and promote equity, diversity, inclusion and cultural respect among our leadership and staff, the legal profession, the justice sector and the public.

**OBJECTIVITY** — We apply data-driven solutions, make evidence-based decisions and measure our results.

**INNOVATION** — We are adaptive in our approach to regulation to achieve efficient, fair and appropriate outcomes.

**RESPONSIVENESS** — We are aware of the changing needs of the public and profession and respond to such change.

**FAIRNESS** — We treat the public and the profession respectfully and consistently in applying our policies, procedures and practices.

## Our Vision

To be a leading regulator that promotes a culture of innovation and inclusivity in responding to the challenges and opportunities in the delivery and regulation of legal services.

## Our Goals



Lead as an innovative regulator of legal service providers.



Work toward reconciliation.



Take action to improve access to justice.



Promote a profession that reflects the diversity of the public it serves.



Increase confidence in the Law Society, the administration of justice and the rule of law.



### WE ARE PROUD TO BE ONE OF BC'S TOP EMPLOYERS

For the second year in a row, the Law Society of BC was named one of BC's Top Employers. This recognition highlights the dedication, commitment and hard work of our accomplished staff who, every day, contribute to the organization's mandate to protect the public interest by regulating the legal profession. The Law Society is proud to have built a strong culture based on our core values and collective goals.

## Message from Christopher A. McPherson, KC

**PRESIDENT FOR 2023**



I'm truly honoured to have served as the Law Society's President for 2023. It was an eventful year at the Benchers table where we considered timely and meaningful matters of significance to legal regulation in BC, including the government's single legal regulator legislation, Truth and Reconciliation and improving mental health in the profession.

As I reflect on my eight years as a Benchers and time as president, I am exceptionally proud of the progress that was made. We made diversity and inclusion a priority, implemented the Indigenous Intercultural Course and made key policy changes that have had a positive impact on the profession.

Thank you to my fellow Benchers for the collaboration, healthy debate, innovative ideas and strong decision-making that arose from conversations around the table. I also want to thank the dedicated staff at the Law Society for their time, contributions and commitment to the Law Society's mandate of protecting the public.

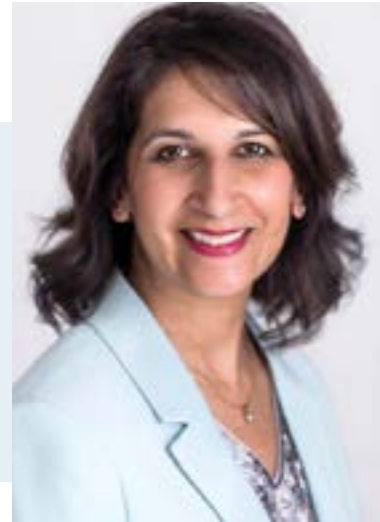
Part of this mandate is recognizing that lawyers and their regulator play a critical role in the administration of justice. It is our collective duty to uphold the rights and freedoms of all persons and the rule of law, principles that define a well-functioning, democratic society. The independence of the Bar and its regulator are not only intertwined with but at the core of these principles, and I am proud to have been part of many meaningful initiatives over the years that have strengthened this independence in BC. There are, to be sure, many challenges going forward. The independence of the Bar and its regulator faces challenges from every quarter. I am, however, confident that with the continued dedication of the profession we can maintain this vital independence.

On a personal level, I am proud to have been the first President of the Law Society who is openly a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and hope it will inspire others to feel safe and empowered to be true to themselves as members of the legal profession and to see themselves in positions of leadership.



## Message from Jeevyn Dhaliwal, KC

**FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT FOR 2023**



I am proud of the efforts the legal profession has made to increase diversity as I begin my term as the first South Asian President of the Law Society in 2024. And yet, I remain cognizant of the gaps that still exist. Diverse voices in the profession, its leadership and on the Bench are critical to ensure that the legal system reflects and responds to the needs of all members of society.

Access to justice is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach to address. The Law Society has been diligent in its work, both internally and with external stakeholders, to support access initiatives for many years, and it will continue to do so. Without broad and meaningful engagement, the BC government's proposed intervention in the legal profession's governance will not solve the problem — it will only create new ones.

While many challenges lie ahead of us in 2024, I am confident that the Law Society is in a strong position to defend the independence of the legal profession and its regulator against government interference. I pledge to continue our work to fulfill our mandate of protecting the public and to ensure that we continue to work toward meaningful Truth and Reconciliation and to remove colonial barriers for Indigenous people. While we have made progress in this area, much remains to be done.

I thank you for this opportunity and for the confidence you have placed in me to serve in this role.

## About the Benchers

The Law Society's governing board of Benchers are responsible for the Law Society Rules, the *Code of Professional Conduct for British Columbia* and governance policies for the administration of the Law Society. Twenty-five Benchers are elected by members of the legal profession and up to six are members of the public who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The president of the Law Society is a Bencher and serves a one-year term.

### President

Christopher A. McPherson, KC

### First Vice-President

Jeevyn Dhaliwal, KC

### Second Vice-President

Brook Greenberg, KC

## Benchers

- Christopher A. McPherson, KC
- Jeevyn Dhaliwal, KC
- Brook Greenberg, KC
- Paul Barnett
- Kim Carter
- Tanya Chamberlain
- Jennifer Chow, KC
- Christina J. Cook
- Cheryl D'Sa, KC
- Tim Delaney
- Lisa Dumbrell
- Brian Dybwad
- Katrina Harry, KC
- Sasha Hobbs
- Lindsay R. LeBlanc, KC
- Dr. Jan Lindsay
- Geoffrey McDonald
- Steven McKoen, KC
- Jacqueline McQueen, KC
- Paul Pearson
- Georges Rivard
- Michèle Ross
- Kelly H. Russ
- Gurminder Sandhu, KC
- Thomas L. Spraggs
- Barbara Stanley, KC
- Natasha Tony
- Michael Welsh, KC
- Kevin B. Westell
- Sarah Westwood, KC
- Guangbin Yan
- Gaynor C. Yeung

## Committees

- Complainants' Review Committees
- Credentials Committee
- Discipline Committee
- Executive Committee
- Finance and Audit Committee
- Practice Standards Committee
- Access to Justice Advisory Committee
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
- Ethics and Lawyer Independence Advisory Committee
- Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee
- Innovation Sandbox Advisory Group

## Task Forces

- Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Task Force
- Lawyer Development Task Force
- Mental Health Task Force
- Trust Review Task Force



Benchers wear orange shirts at their meeting ahead of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

# Progress on our priorities

## Advancing Truth and Reconciliation and cultural safety

This year, we took tangible steps to ensure legal regulation is accessible and culturally safe for all Indigenous people throughout BC.

In July 2023, the Law Society Benchers approved the *Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Report* and recommendations. The report, created by the Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Task Force, identified systemic barriers experienced by Indigenous complainants and parties and proposed solutions to establish culturally safe and trauma-informed processes. The recommendations are also expected to benefit other complainants and witnesses who may be experiencing marginalization and vulnerability.

The recommendations included building relationships, reviewing policies, procedures and practices, gaining trust and becoming more proactive in preventing harm to Indigenous people and communities. Implementation of the recommendations is underway.



*Implementing the recommendations from the report is an important step toward meaningful reconciliation and ensuring our regulatory processes are accessible and culturally safe.*

— **Christopher A. McPherson, KC**, *Law Society President*

As part of our initiative to reconcile processes with Indigenous legal principles, we introduced two new roles at the Law Society to support Indigenous members of the legal profession and the public and to advance cultural competency development.



#### **Senior Advisor, Indigenous Engagement**

The Senior Advisor, Indigenous Engagement reports to the CEO/Executive Director, and works with the Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee and all Law Society departments to implement reconciliation initiatives, advance projects, ensure effective oversight and enhance our understanding of justice issues affecting Indigenous people in BC.



#### **Indigenous Navigator**

The Indigenous Navigator works collaboratively with the professional conduct team to ensure that complaints, investigations and hearing processes are culturally safe for Indigenous people. The role provides support and guidance for Indigenous complainants and parties through our complaints and regulatory process, incorporating Indigenous protocols, supporting culturally safe and trauma-informed practices and facilitating connection to community services.

Both roles reflect our commitment to removing barriers and creating a safe space for Indigenous people and communities throughout BC.



## Implementation of the Indigenous Intercultural Course

In 2022, we introduced the Indigenous Intercultural Course. The course provides knowledge on the history of Indigenous-Crown relations, the history and legacy of residential schools and how legislation regarding Indigenous Peoples created the issues that reconciliation seeks to address. The course ensures a baseline of information for all lawyers in BC.

Most practising lawyers were required to complete the course by January 2024, and more than 99 per cent of the profession met this deadline. Lawyers who began or returned to practice since January 2022 have two years to complete the course.

All new Law Society staff are required to complete the course, and approximately 90 per cent of existing staff have also completed the program. We welcome feedback about the course, which will be updated on an ongoing basis.

*I want to express my gratitude for the content of the course and the organized and thoughtful way it was presented. I initially approached this required professional development as a chore, but I quickly became involved and appreciative of the opportunity to learn more. I was emotionally moved by parts of the presentations, especially some of the video material about residential schools. I can only imagine the trauma faced by Indigenous peoples, and I am amazed by the resilience of those who suffered so much and continue to suffer.*

— **William H. Pope**, barrister and solicitor

## Preventing money laundering

The Law Society recognizes that lawyers, when providing legal services to their clients, are vulnerable to being targeted by criminals, including by those who seek to launder the proceeds of crime.

The Law Society has dedicated significant resources, likely more than any other jurisdiction in Canada, to prevent the legal profession from being used as a vehicle for money laundering. These measures include having robust rules in place and providing ongoing guidance and education to the profession to mitigate the risk. The Trust Review Task Force, established in 2022, continues to consider recommendations made by the Cullen Commission regarding the handling of trust funds and management of trust accounts by lawyers, as well as the client identification and verification rules.

**Our proactive educational measures include:**



**A website hub** with resources, videos and webinars to help reduce the risk of unknowingly facilitating money laundering.



**Knowledgeable practice advisors** to provide advice and guidance to lawyers.



**Resources** developed with the Federation of Law Societies, including online learning programs, case studies, risk advisories and discipline advisories.

In addition, we have practical tools for proactively detecting and addressing conduct issues. These tools include a robust Trust Assurance Program, with compliance audits conducted on law firms on a four- or six-year cycle at a minimum. Our compliance audits have been instrumental in identifying serious conduct issues that are referred to investigations. We also encourage other regulators and law enforcement to refer conduct concerns to us. Our significant investigation powers enable us to conduct successful investigations into anti-money laundering-related obligations. They also allow us to effectively police failure to meet Law Society requirements that ensure lawyers do not assist with money laundering, as demonstrated in the hearing decisions published on the LSBC Tribunal's website.



*In Canada, the Law Society of BC is a leader in addressing money laundering risks in the legal profession and has taken a number of steps to prevent and combat the issue in BC. The Law Society has dedicated significant resources to develop educational tools and has robust rules in place to help address professional misconduct in this area. The Law Society's Trust Assurance Program and its adoption of a program of administrative penalties for breaches of anti-money laundering rules are both innovative and effective and have set examples for other law societies in Canada to follow.*

*— Erin Kleisinger, KC, President, Federation of Law Societies Canada for 2023-24*

## New mental health resources

Improving legal professionals' mental health has been a key priority for the Law Society this last year. We recognize lawyers who prioritize their mental and physical well-being are more likely to deliver effective legal services and maintain a positive public perception and trust in the legal profession.

In 2023, we joined forces with the Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia to present a two-part virtual mental health forum. This unique platform was designed to bring legal professionals together and foster an environment where we can collectively advance the conversation on mental health.

In June, more than 300 participants attended the forum to discuss the results and recommendations from the *National Study on Health and Wellness Determinants of Legal Professionals in Canada*. The participants also heard a panel led by BC lawyers discuss personal and professional challenges and provide advice for others experiencing similar issues.

The second session, which took place in February 2024, focused on strategies for improving mental health within the profession and legal organizations.



To further support and improve mental health and well-being in the legal profession, we expanded resources available to legal professionals through our new Lawyer Well-Being Hub on our website. The hub provides an access point for information and support available to lawyers and their families, including easy-to-access resources, videos, tools and information.

The Well-Being Hub also provides lawyers with access to LifeSpeak, a digital wellness platform that offers anonymous 24/7 access to resources and content. The platform is an excellent option for legal professionals who want to invest in their mental health without scheduling an appointment with a counsellor.

The Law Society also continues to provide operational resources to the Lawyers Assistance Program of BC, which offers confidential counselling, peer support and referral services to help people deal with personal problems — including alcohol and drug dependence, stress and anxiety, depression and other issues.





# What we do and how we do it

## Professional Conduct

### A RECORD YEAR OF PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

The core functions of the Professional Conduct and Discipline department are the intake of complaints, complaint investigations, complaint resolutions, addressing competency issues in the practice standards program, and discipline processes, including hearings, Rule 4-29 resolutions and consent agreements.

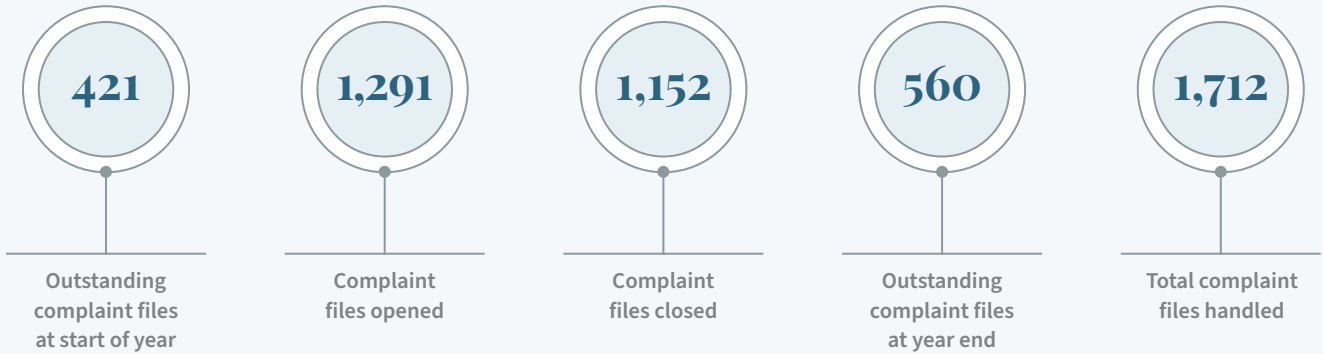
2023 was a record year for disciplinary outcomes, with seven disbarments and 18 suspensions. Additionally, four lawyers resigned in the face of discipline and gave undertakings not to reapply for a minimum of eight years or more. Conditions of such resignations include additional steps and approvals to become reinstated, including a credentials hearing, which further protects the public. Fifty-five per cent of serious matters that would ordinarily go to hearing were resolved through alternative, more efficient and cost-effective avenues while maintaining appropriate disciplinary actions and public transparency.

In addition to the team's core functions, we have successfully implemented new programs that have yielded positive outcomes:

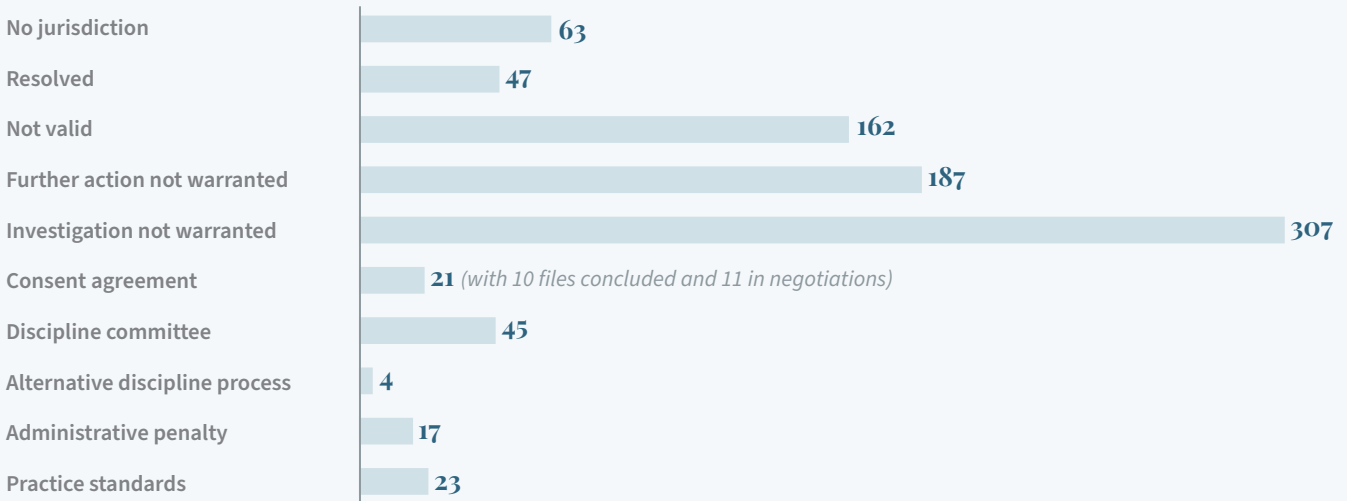
- The **Alternative Discipline Process** is a pilot program where, if deemed appropriate, lawyers under investigation are diverted from the regular disciplinary process to one focused on supporting and managing underlying health issues. While still in the early stages, the program has exceeded our expectations, and we are exploring options both to make the program permanent and expand the scope of the initiative.
- The **Administrative Penalties Program** is a regulatory tool that allows the Law Society to address certain breaches of its rules with appropriate and proportionate sanctions.

## COMPLAINTS

Numbers include unsubstantiated complaints



## COMPLAINT RESULTS



## PRIOR REGULATORY INVOLVEMENT

Lawyers cited who had no prior regulatory involvement

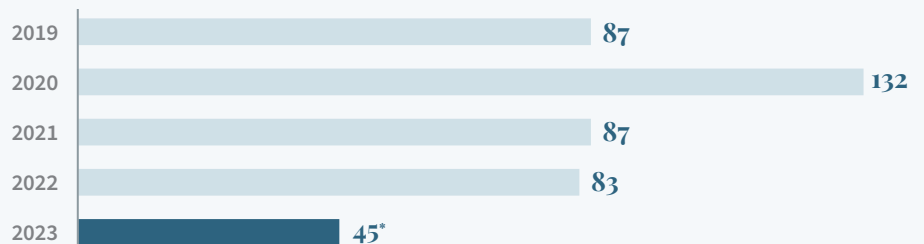
2

Lawyers cited who had previously been involved with regulatory proceedings

10

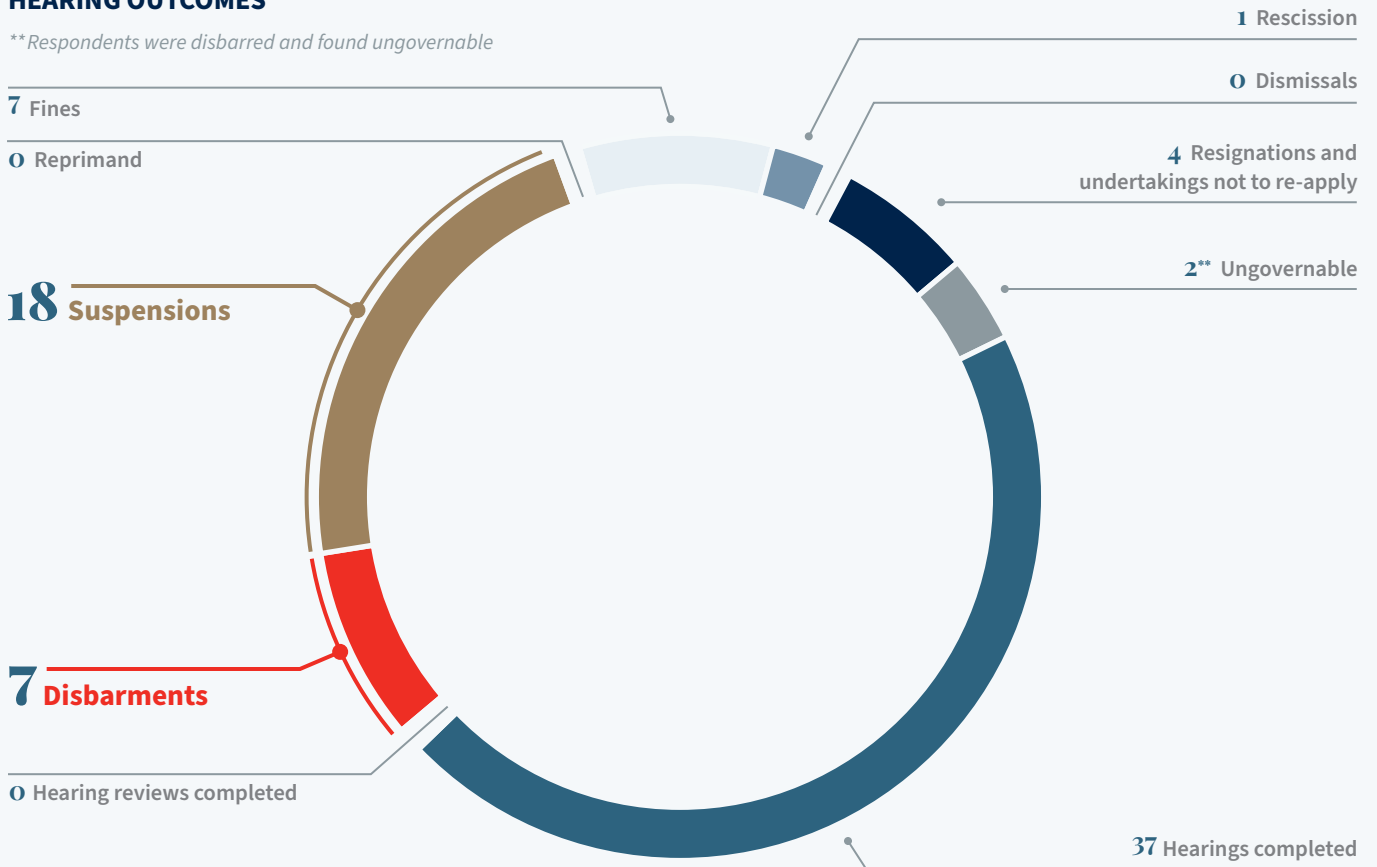
## REFERRALS TO DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

\*Decrease in referrals due largely to the implementation of new processes, including consent agreements, administrative penalties and the Alternative Discipline Process, which collectively accounted for 42 files in 2023.



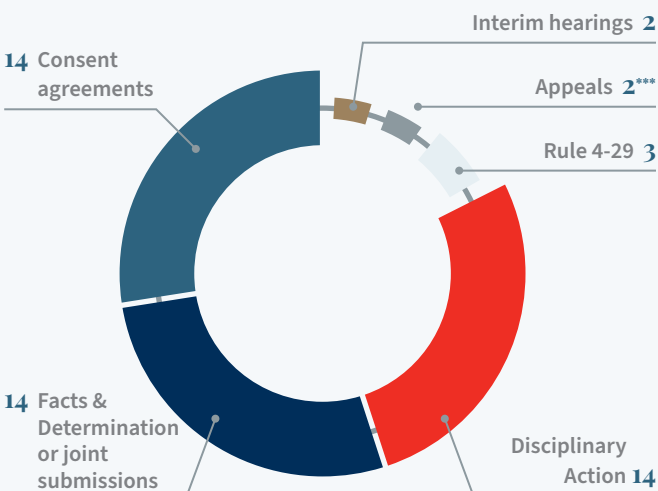
### HEARING OUTCOMES

\*\* Respondents were disbarred and found ungovernable



### TOTAL HEARINGS

\*\*\* Appeals adjourned and reset for 2024



### DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Conduct review	25
Citation	12
Conduct review with practice standards referral	5
Conduct meeting	1
Conduct letter	1
No further action	1

## Practice Support



### RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

The legal landscape is constantly evolving, so the Law Society must ensure that the resources and support it provides BC lawyers are relevant, practical and current. The Practice Advice team advises lawyers with questions about ethics and practice management issues. They also develop practice resources to assist legal professionals with matters of professional responsibility and manage the delivery of well-being support tools for lawyers and their families.

In 2023, the Practice Advice team updated their existing resources and developed new ones to ensure that lawyers are well-equipped to navigate the modern legal landscape. This endeavour included expanding client identification and verification information available through the [Advice and Decision-Making Assistant \(ADMA\)](#), an online tool designed to assist lawyers with ethics and practice management questions. In an effort to modernize the Law Society's professional development interface, they also transitioned all professional development courses from an internal site to Brightspace, an online learning platform.

A notable effort on behalf of Practice Advice and other staff at the Law Society in 2023 was contributing information and expertise to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada's [Anti-Money Laundering Program](#). Practice Advice also developed two timely practice resources: an [inclusive language guide](#) and a [guide to professionally responsible use of artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#).

Supporting the mental health of legal professionals is not just a priority, but a key commitment for the Practice Advice team. In 2023, they provided lawyers access to LifeSpeak, a digital wellness platform with a broad range of multi-media resources. They also developed and launched the new Lawyer Well-Being Hub on the Law Society website, which is a central access point for legal professionals seeking free and confidential mental health support.

In 2023, we also saw the appointment of a crucial new role in the Practice Advice department: Practice and Equity Advisor. This role helps lawyers, articled students, law students and support staff of legal employers in BC with concerns about discrimination and harassment.

## Policy

### **TAKING STEPS TOWARD A MORE EQUITABLE LEGAL PROFESSION**

Legal policy decisions must be data-based, evidence-driven and informed by the views of the public and the profession. The Law Society's Policy team advises Benchers, advisors and the organization when these decisions are made.

Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is a key priority of the Law Society. To further the organization's progress in this area, the Policy team worked with the Senior Advisor, Indigenous Engagement to implement the recommendations laid out in the Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Task Force's report.

The Policy team actively supported many committees and task forces at the Law Society in 2023. They worked with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) and the Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee in expanding section 6.3 of the *BC Code*, which relates to discrimination and harassment in the legal profession.

Additionally, the Policy team supported the EDIAC, Credentials team and Benchers in revising the return to practice rules to lessen the impact on individuals who take time away from practice, such as parents and caregivers. They also assisted the Mental Health Task Force in delivering its final report and recommendations and the Access to Justice Advisory Committee in its decision to support alternative business structures and relax the current requirements in the Rules for multi-discipline practices.

Lastly, following the recommendations of the Cullen Commission, the Policy team has been assisting the Trust Review Task Force in examining rules related to trust and client identification and verification.



# Lawyer Development

## EMPOWERING THE LAWYERS OF TOMORROW: PLTC PROGRAM

The Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC) is a full-time, 10-week course with classes held three times a year at offices throughout BC. The classes are taught primarily online by practising lawyers who volunteer to share their expertise and full-time faculty members with years of teaching experience.

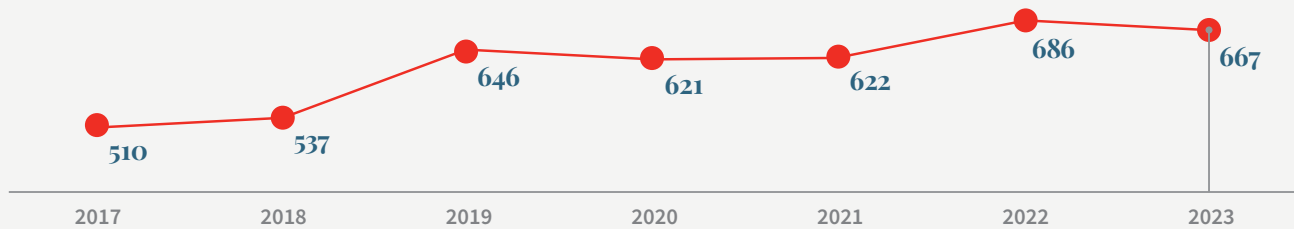
One of the PLTC’s primary focuses in 2023 was rising to the challenge of generative artificial intelligence and its impact on both the education and lawyering fields.

PLTC has updated how it teaches and assesses students for some of the lawyering competencies and is continuing to expand resources and guidelines going into 2024.

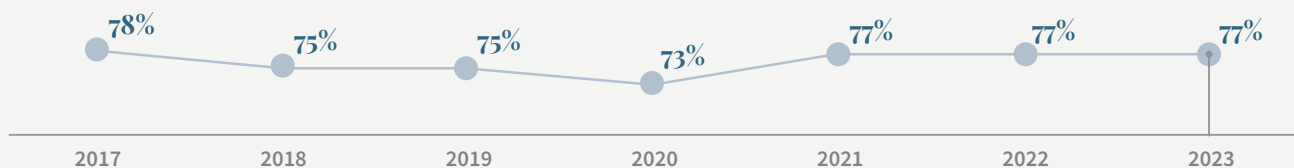
We also expanded coverage of trauma-informed lawyering, added specialized materials for family law resources and created an introduction to Indigenous law. As part of our ongoing priority to continually improve and update student resources and exercises, in 2023 we also ensured that new BC lawyers had up-to-date information on court rules, criminal sentencing, anti-money laundering rules, buying real estate and land title practices.

The PLTC program emphasizes practical skills training, ethics, practice management and practice and procedure to help new lawyers bridge the gap between law school and practice.

### NUMBER OF PLTC STUDENTS



### PLTC FIRST-TIME PASS RATE (%)





## LICENSING AND CREDENTIALS

The Credentials department is responsible for ensuring that Law Society standards are met by applications for admission, and conveying those standards to applicants, licensees, the Credentials Committee, Benchers and staff. It is also responsible for administering the Law Society's unclaimed trust money program and call ceremonies.

In 2023, the Law Society of BC collaborated with the law societies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba on an innovative project to develop the Western Canada Competency Profile (WCCP), a foundational document that will inform lawyer training and education, including Bar admission program development and experiential learning opportunities, in the coming years.

The Credentials team was an instrumental part of this process, providing expertise, data and research to help determine the criteria for lawyer competence.

The WCCP outlines seven competency domains, such as ethics and professional responsibilities, Truth and Reconciliation and professional relationship management. The WCCP incorporates feedback from the profession, including from new lawyers, articulated students and principals who oversee those who are entering the profession.

The Credentials team will continue to work with the three other western Canadian law societies to develop further guidance and resources to implement the WCCP, as well as to ensure that the competency criteria remain up-to-date and relevant in the modern legal landscape.

# The legal profession at a glance

## NEW BC LAWYERS

Year	Male	Female	No gender selected
2023	237	309	298
2022	366	441	113
2021	398	459	—
2020	377	413	—
2019	352	385	—
2018	353	378	—
2017	308	322	—

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PRACTISING BC LAWYERS

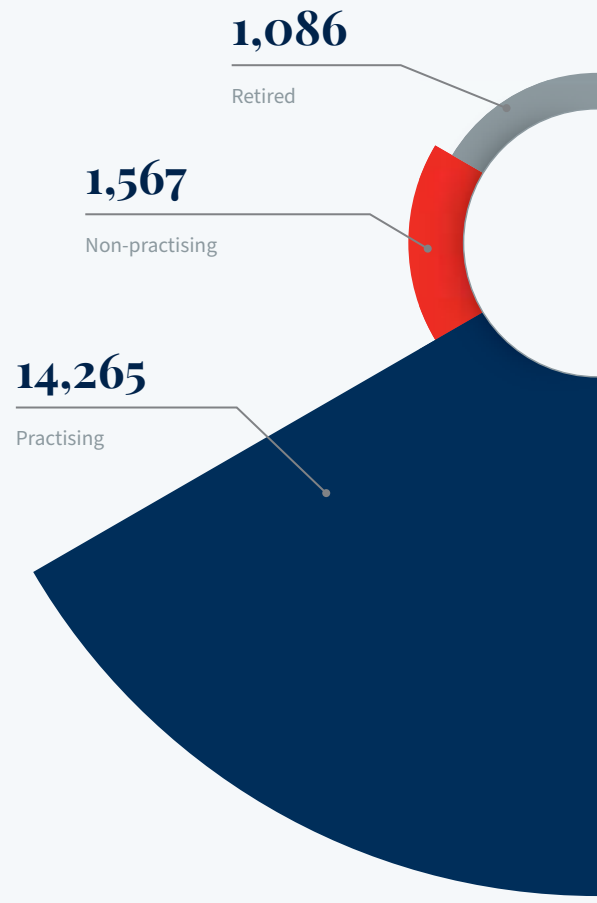
Age	Male	Female	No gender selected
20–39 years	2,430	2,709	262
40–54 years	2,489	2,336	86
55–64 years	1,428	827	14
65+ years	1,349	300	5

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Aboriginal/Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%	3.0%	2.9%	3.12%
Racialized/Person of colour	14.6%	15.3%	16.4%	17.6%	18.75%	19.73%	21.16%
Person with a disability	1.9%	1.9%	2.2%	2.3%	2.6%	3.11%	3.61%
Do not identify with any of these characteristics	55.8%	53.9%	51.7%	52.3%	52.6%	50.33%	47.57%
Choose not to answer this question	21.8%	23.1%	23.5%	21.1%	18.9%	19.27%	19.52%
2SLGBTQI+	3.2%	3.1%	3.5%	3.9%	4.15%	4.66%	5.02%

\*The Law Society does not collect demographics for retired, non-practising lawyers or articulated students.

## STATUS OF LAWYERS REGISTERED WITH THE LAW SOCIETY





## AREAS OF LEGAL PRACTICE IN BC

Type	# of lawyers
Civil litigation – plaintiff (including commercial, other non-motor vehicle)	3,953
Administrative (including labour, immigration, regulatory bodies)	3,571
Family (excluding incidental real estate, wills and estates)	2,917
Civil litigation – defendant (including commercial, other non-motor vehicle)	2,568
Wills and estates	2,025
Commercial – other	1,980
Criminal	1,444
Corporate	1,329
Real estate – residential (including lending)	947
Motor vehicle – plaintiff	808
Creditors’ remedies – defendant (including builders’ liens, foreclosure, insolvency)	457

Type	# of lawyers
Creditors’ remedies – plaintiff (including builders’ liens, foreclosure, insolvency)	455
Real estate – commercial (including development)	376
Mediation/Arbitration	370
Commercial lending transactions – borrower (may include a real estate component)	328
Tax	255
Motor vehicle – defendant	234
Commercial lending transactions – lender (may include a real estate component)	221
Intellectual property	217
Property Management – residential or commercial	165
Securities (reporting companies)	72





# Trust Assurance Program

BC lawyers often handle trust funds on behalf of other people. Our Trust Assurance Program is designed to ensure lawyers handle trust funds appropriately. Compliance audits are randomly selected with the overall goal to audit each firm at least once within a four-year or six-year cycle, depending on the firm’s area of practice.

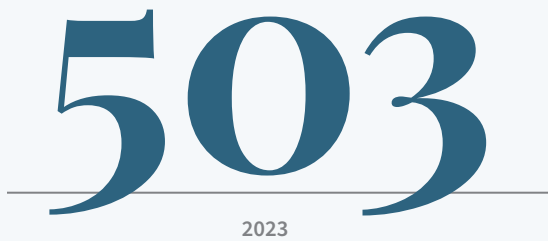
In 2023, the Trust Assurance Program continued to leverage the benefits of data analytics technology developed internally by the Law Society. Our audit team data analysts used analytic technology to find meaningful patterns in data, which helped improve audit processes and efficiencies.

We implemented audit notifications and scheduling changes to encourage firms to submit audit records using the a cloud-based file-sharing system.

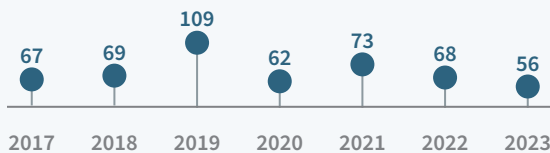
This allows for increased synergies and efficiencies between law firms and Trust Assurance while decreasing disruptions to law firms.

Trust Assurance continues to collaborate with other jurisdictions to improve efficiency and effectiveness in maintaining a robust audit program.

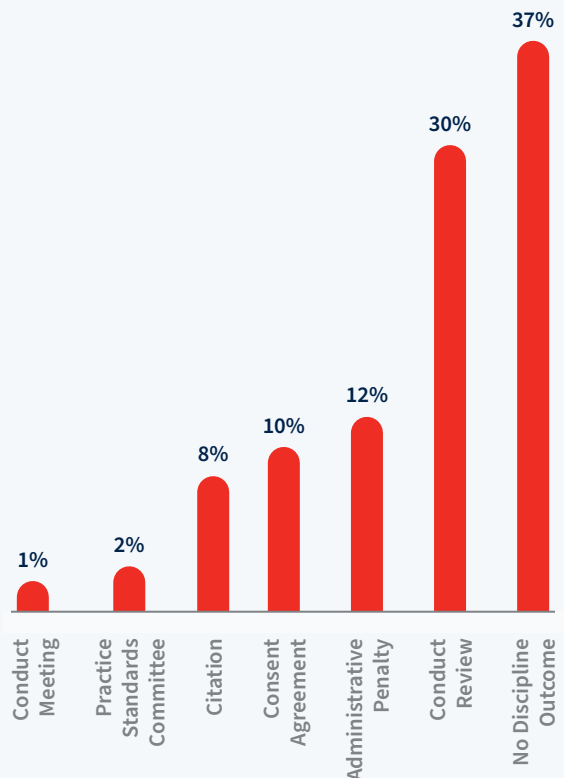
## COMPLIANCE AUDITS CONDUCTED



## TRUST REPORTS & AUDITS REFERRED FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT INVESTIGATION



## OUTCOME OF REFERRALS CLOSED 2021–2023





## LSBC Tribunal

**The LSBC Tribunal is an independent decision-making body.**

The Tribunal manages, considers and decides disciplinary cases involving legal professionals and contentious applications of licensing candidates seeking to practise law in BC. It upholds the public interest in the administration of justice by acting in a manner that is fair, respectful and transparent. In 2023, the Tribunal continued to build on changes made the previous year to establish greater independence in support of its mandate.

## Message from Herman Van Ommen, KC

TRIBUNAL CHAIR



Reflecting on our achievements in 2023, I'm pleased to outline significant changes made by the Tribunal that foster a more inclusive, fair and supportive environment for all stakeholders. Our commitment to cultivating a culturally sensitive space for Indigenous hearing participants led to the development of the *Indigenous Engagement with the LSBC Tribunal* guide. This guide emphasizes the Tribunal's dedication to adopting adaptable hearing processes tailored to accommodate the diverse nuances of Indigenous cultures, laws and specific needs. In 2023, all our adjudicators completed the Indigenous Intercultural Course and we are committed to continuing to enhance our processes for Indigenous participants.

The LSBC Tribunal strongly believes in ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals to participate in our hearing processes. Our updated *Information for Witnesses Including Witness Accommodation* guide reinforces our commitment to fairness and accessibility.

In collaboration with the Law Society's Credentials team, we introduced updated hearing forms to enhance the efficiency and clarity of the licensing hearing process for licensee applicants. Concurrently, we bolstered this effort with an enriched *Overview of the Licensing Hearing Process*.

We revised our Practice Directions after carefully considering feedback from adjudicators, the Chair's Roundtable members and hearing participants. Notably, based on input concerning virtual hearings, we decided to continue this practice for hearings lasting less than five days. However, we will revert to in-person or hybrid hearings for longer and more complex matters. These changes reflect our commitment to ensuring a cost-effective, fair and efficient hearing process.

In 2023, we not only recruited new adjudicators but also conducted training sessions in administrative justice and decision writing. These efforts, alongside our annual education course for existing adjudicators, underscore our dedication to continuous learning and growth.

Improving the timeliness of decision-making was a priority in 2023. While progress was made, with 77 per cent of decisions issued within 90 days, the Tribunal will continue efforts to shorten decision writing and citation resolution timelines in 2024.

It was an honour to serve as Tribunal Chair in 2023, and I eagerly anticipate guiding the Tribunal in the upcoming year with the support of the adjudicators and staff.



# Lawyers Indemnity Fund

**The Lawyers Indemnity Fund (LIF) manages the Law Society's indemnification program, which protects BC lawyers and their clients.**

The program provides professional liability (errors and omissions) coverage, trust protection coverage for dishonest appropriation (lawyer theft), trust shortage liability coverage (for specific social engineering frauds) and arranges a privacy/cyber insurance policy for most BC firms. The program is widely recognized as a national and international leader in providing indemnity coverage.

## Message from Su Forbes, KC

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, LAWYERS INDEMNITY FUND**



**2023 was a year of strength and stability. Here is what we accomplished:**

### **WE PROVIDED EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE**

In 2023, we received 1,309 claim reports, 21 per cent more than the prior year, and paid over \$15 million on claims, both more than any year since LIF's inception in 1986. Many factors contributed to the increases in frequency and severity, but what didn't change was our diligence in responding to lawyers' needs and our dedication to providing outstanding service. Feedback surveys received in 2023 demonstrate that 98 per cent of lawyers were "very satisfied" with our service and the results achieved. While we took only two matters to trial and appeal, we were successful in both.

### **WE PROTECTED THE PUBLIC**

Our coverage protects clients from financial losses when a lawyer has been negligent or stolen money. These instances are rare, but in 2023 we received three claims for lawyer theft. Two were resolved with payments to claimants of 100 per cent of their loss plus interest, while the third is being investigated. Feedback surveys from claimants with a trust protection claim demonstrated a high satisfaction rate of 98 per cent.

### **WE REPAIRED MISTAKES**

In 2023, we rectified 21 per cent of all reported claims, which involved succeeding on several motions, trials and appeals. By doing this, we prevented clients' losses and allowed their lawyers to continue to represent them.

### **WE PROVIDED FINANCIAL STABILITY**

LIF continues to be financially strong, which is vital for the program's long-term viability and the protection of the public and the legal profession. As of January 1, 2023, the capital reserve was \$78 million, and for the seventh consecutive year, the indemnity fee remained at \$1,800. LIF's consistently low fee is a product of our highly experienced claims management team and our effective risk management initiatives. And with this comparatively low fee, we provided lawyers with the broadest professional liability coverage in the country.



### **WE GAVE RISK MANAGEMENT ADVICE**

We anticipated risks and notified lawyers about important changes in legislation and legal practice to help them avoid errors. We spoke at conferences and produced monthly risk management videos, providing lawyers with specific and bite-sized risk management advice. We alerted lawyers to real estate identity frauds, funds transfer frauds and cybercrimes, and at lawyers' request, created a practical checklist for avoiding funds transfer frauds, making risk management easy for firms to implement.

In accomplishing all of this, I'm pleased to say we achieved our mandate of delivering excellent service and coverage at a reasonable cost and provided the legal profession with an important intangible —peace of mind.



## 2023 Indigenous Scholarship co-recipients

In 2023, we awarded the Indigenous Scholarship to co-recipients Bailie Copeland and Tara-Lynn Wilson.

The Indigenous Scholarship is open to Canadian Indigenous students enrolled in full-time studies and aims to enhance the representation of Indigenous lawyers in British Columbia by supporting their legal education.



Second Vice-President Brook Greenberg, KC (left) and CEO Don Avison, KC (right) present the Indigenous Scholarship to Bailie Copeland (middle left) and Tara-Lynn Wilson (middle right).



## 2023 Law Society Award recipient: Eloise Spitzer

Eloise Spitzer received the 2023 Law Society Award for more than 40 years of extraordinary impact on the legal profession and the administration of justice, not just in BC but in other parts of Canada as well.

Eloise was a “Founding Mother” of West Coast LEAF and her extensive contributions to Indigenous reconciliation and women’s equality, as well as her continued involvement in and dedication to the mentorship of young lawyers, make her a worthy recipient of this award.

*Eloise was the first law student in the first legal clinic in what is now known as Nunavut. She was the first woman to hold a cabinet secretary position in two jurisdictions and the first woman and person to successfully argue a charter challenge on women’s equality in the Supreme Court of Canada. She is a brilliant candidate for receiving this great honour — she’s contributed so much love, talent and human goodness to the profession.*

— Louise Mandel, KC

## Pulling Together Canoe Journey

We are honoured to participate annually in the Pulling Together Canoe Journey, an event hosted by the Pulling Together Canoe Society and First Nations throughout BC. During the event, public service agencies and Indigenous people are invited to canoe traditional highways of rivers, lakes and coastal waters to foster cultural exchange and promote outdoor activities.



From left to right: Lesley Small, Erin Berger, Jakub Vodsedalek, Mandana Namazi and Serena Lam



*The Pulling Together Canoe Journey is a moving, thought-provoking, challenging and transformative experience. I am grateful to the Squamish Nation for inviting us into their community and for being such gracious and inclusive hosts. I am humbled by the experiences and teachings I received, and I hope to be able to participate again next year.*

— **Mandana Namazi**

*This event is an unforgettable opportunity to “pull together” in large canoes over bodies of water with elders and youth from First Nations communities and members of law enforcement across BC, and for these diverse groups to build relationships and trust. It is important for the legal profession to be represented in this journey and the Law Society’s support of this work has been invaluable.*

— **Serena Lam**

## 2023 Gold Medal Awards Recipients



Each year the Law Society awards gold medals to top graduating students at each of the province’s law faculties.

**Thompson Rivers University**  
Pardeep Birak

**University of Victoria**  
Emmaline English

**University of British Columbia**  
Maddison Mayah Zapach



# Impact and support


THE LAW SOCIETY PROVIDES FUNDING AND SUPPORT TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:



Innovation Sandbox



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