



# Annual Report of Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC) 2009-10

602 20<sup>th</sup> Street West, Saskatoon, SK, S7M 0X7, Tel. 657-6100, Fax. 384-0520

## OBJECTIVE

The purpose of CLASSIC is to provide free legal assistance to low-income members of the community, with particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal people, through a legal clinic that meets their needs. CLASSIC also provides law students with clinical experience, new insights into the social reality of the law, and fosters ethics of social justice and cultural understanding.

## PROGRAMMING

CLASSIC fulfills its mandate primarily through the **Walk-In Advocacy Clinic (WAC)**. Under the supervision of a staff lawyer, students from the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan assist low-income clients with legal matters that affect them, such as landlord-tenant, income support, criminal, immigration and refugee, Small Claims Court, Indian Residential School matters, and more. Since the WAC opened in February 2007, its services have assisted **1,078 low-income clients** and their families.

During 2009-10, the WAC served **487 low-income clients**. This is a 40% increase from the previous year.

*I was very pleased with your help. People with nowhere else to turn need a service like yours.* -

The demand for CLASSIC's services continues to grow. At April 1 2009, the WAC was serving 134 clients at a time; by March 31, 2010, the WAC was serving 200 clients at a time.

During 2009-10 WAC student advocates and legal staff made **111 appearances in courts** (Provincial Court civil and criminal divisions, traffic and bylaw court, as well as appeals in the Court of Queen's Bench) and **59 appearances in tribunals** (e.g. Office of the Residential Tenancies, Board of Referees, Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals, Workers Compensation Board, and more).

WAC clients are diverse in age, gender and ethnicity. The WAC project is meeting its goal of prioritizing the legal needs of Aboriginal people (47% of the WAC's clientele are of Aboriginal ancestry). Below is statistical information about the WAC's clientele for 2009-10:



CLASSIC students and staff with WBYL staff and kids, Summer 2009.

Ethnic Background		Age Range	
First Nations	34%	Under 20	4%
Métis	13%	20 – 29	24%
Immigrant/ Refugee	12%	30 – 39	20%
Non-native Canadian	39%	40 – 49	23%
Unknown	2%	50 – 59	17%
		60 – 69	8%
		70 & Over	4%
		Gender	
		Female	53%
		Male	47%

WAC advocacy has **improved clients' lives in very tangible ways**. In 2009-10, WAC student advocates saved tenancies, obtained compensation for poor living conditions, drafted wills and healthcare directives, obtained rehabilitative sentences, and much more. In civil claims and income support matters, WAC advocacy helped clients obtain \$61,273.08 in compensation and income support. Further, WAC clients *retained* \$25,008.24 in compensation they would have had to pay or income support they would lose, but for the WAC's advocacy. This is a total of **\$86,281.32** into the pockets of low-income community members.

CLASSIC enjoys tremendous support from the **legal community**. This year, **19 lawyers** volunteered to **mentor law students** placed in the WAC. CLASSIC receives particular support from McKercher LLP which is not only well-represented among our mentor lawyers, but also placed its three articling students, Trevor Oleniuk, Michelle Delorme, and Justice Mescall, with the WAC during 2009-10 exam periods.

CLASSIC also facilitates 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 is a needed program ... there are many people who do not know their "rights" and maybe [that is] the reason they do not use them.*  
- CLASSIC client

The LAC is the only free legal clinic in Saskatoon; CLASSIC works in partnership with Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs) to provide this program. Since its inception, the LAC has assisted over 1,000 low-income community members. During 2009-10, the LAC assisted **251 clients**: 43% of the clients received family law advice, 38% received civil law advice and 19% received criminal law advice. The LAC provides vital support to low-income individuals who are self-represented through justice systems.

The LAC is coordinated and supported by volunteer students from the College of Law. In 2009-10, **Stephanie Hodgson** and **Kevin Miller** served as coordinators and **15 law students** facilitated the clinic. **17 lawyers** provided free legal advice at LAC clinics. CLASSIC congratulates one of the LAC's most dedicated and longest serving lawyers, **Terry Zakreski**, who received the 2009 Pro Bono Service Award from the Law Society of Saskatchewan and PBLs in part for his service at the LAC.

Thanks to the dedication of the LAC's volunteers, the LAC program expanded in 2010. CLASSIC increased its clinic hours and added the specialty clinics of employment law and immigration law.



Summer student Alicia Myroon represents CLASSIC at the Core Communities Shine event, June 2009.

## COMMUNITY

CLASSIC continues to enjoy wonderful support from the community. CLASSIC works in partnership with and receives considerable support from the College of Law and the White Buffalo Youth Lodge (WBYL). In 2009, the WBYL permitted CLASSIC to renovate and expand its office and meeting space.

During 2009-10, CLASSIC staff and students met with representatives from **over 30 community agencies** and represented CLASSIC at about **a dozen community events** to share information about CLASSIC. CLASSIC has received very positive feedback from its community partners about our services.

CLASSIC is grateful for the community agencies that refer clients to us, such as: the Saskatoon Open Door Society, SWITCH, the Friendship Inn, and Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI).

CLASSIC partnered with community organizations on **legal education projects**, including the Elizabeth Fry Society, Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, QUINT Development, AIDS Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, and the Rainbow Community Centre. Students delivered

*It is wonderful to know you folks are there and the very concrete support you offer. It makes a difference. – Integrated Community Ministries*

presentations to community members in the areas of tenants' rights, human rights in the workplace, wills and powers of attorney, custody and access, youth criminal justice, social assistance recipients and appeal rights, and mental health warrants. In addition, CLASSIC worked with Indian Residential School (IRS) survivor support workers at the Saskatoon Tribal Council Urban to reach out to and provide legal support to IRS survivors. In so doing, CLASSIC relies on the Public Legal Education Association (PLEA) which provides accessible legal education materials in all of these topic areas.

CLASSIC's 2009 Summer Students at WBYL's Free Wall.



## STUDENTS

CLASSIC is encouraged to see growing engagement of students at the College of Law. During 2009-10, CLASSIC welcomed its **highest number of law student volunteers ever, 75**. Students come to CLASSIC in two ways: participation in the College's clinical law course and the Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) program.

**Sarah Buhler** continued teaching the clinical and advanced clinical law courses, through which over 20 students examine issues and critical literature related to poverty law and work with clients of the WAC.

PBSC has continued to be an important partner for CLASSIC, recruiting and placing approximately 55 law student volunteers throughout CLASSIC's WAC and LAC programs, as well as manual writing and legal education project work. CLASSIC and PBSC celebrated Pro Bono Week in September 2009 by hosting an *Amazing Race* event for our law student volunteers.

CLASSIC continues to place inter-disciplinary students who support and strengthen our programs in a myriad of ways. During 2009-10, CLASSIC placed two social work practicum students, **Amanda Barton** and **Brittney Lafreniere**, and Political Studies intern **Lane Krainyk**.

CLASSIC students report very positive experiences from their placements at CLASSIC. The students describe how their experiences teach them about the realities of those living in poverty, as well as the value of putting their legal training in action by helping others.

*Working with marginalized clients, I gain insight into life experiences far removed from my own. I am humbled by the strength and wisdom that people can demonstrate in stressful and sometimes horrific circumstances. And in the end I usually find more in common between us than the differences that divide us.*

– CLASSIC student

### Board of Directors

**Mike Tanton**, *Co-Chair and Community Representative*

**Louise Oelke**, *Co-Chair and CUMFI Representative*

**Professor Tim Quigley**, *Treasurer and College of Law Representative*

**Norma Sim Q.C.**, *Secretary and Legal Aid Saskatchewan Representative*

**Haidah Amirzadeh**, *Private Bar Representative*

**Crystal Eninew**, *Aboriginal Student Representative*

**Felix Chen**, *Community Representative*

**Jenna Graham**, *Student Representative*

**Lori Johnstone-Clarke**, *Indigenous Bar Representative*

**Professor Glen Luther Q.C.**, *College of Law Representative*

**Darlene Speidel**, *WBYL Representative*

**Maria Campbell**, *Advising Elder*

**Shirley Greyeyes**, *former WBYL Representative*

### Professional and Community Advisory Board

Patricia Cook

Silas Halyk Q.C.

John Hampton

John Lagimodiere

Gary Merasty

Michelle Ouellette Q.C.

David Stack

Mary Tastad

F. Neil Turcotte

Donald Worme Q.C.



*Staff lawyer Nicholas Blenkinsop with Board member Prof. Glen Luther Q.C., June 2009.*

### STAFF

During 2009-10, CLASSIC's student managers were **Ammy Murray** and **Hiyasmin Matias**. They served on CLASSIC's 2009 summer staff with case workers **Jonathan Bodvarson**, **Shandel Wilson** and **Alicia Myroon**. In June 2009, CLASSIC welcomed new Administrative Assistant **Lierin Mulder**. Lierin is trained as a legal assistant and worked previously with ASK Law and Robertson Stromberg Pedersen LLP. In July 2009, CLASSIC welcomed new Supervising Lawyer, **Nicholas Blenkinsop**, previously with Scharfstein Gibbings Walen Fisher LLP. This year **Amanda Dodge** continued as Executive Director and **Betty Beaton** as Office Manager. **Sarah Buhler** was on educational leave, working toward her Master of Laws (LL.M.).

### FUNDING

CLASSIC is grateful for the generous financial support it received during the 2009-10 fiscal year. Our funders included the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan, the University of Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Justice, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Community Initiatives Fund, the City of Saskatoon, the Student Employment Experience, Canada Summer Jobs, and individual donors.

CLASSIC also received generous in kind donations and support, in particular from our partners the College of Law and the WBYL.



*CLASSIC Board, staff and students with the Minister of Justice, Hon. Don Morgan Q.C., March 2010.*



In January 2010, CLASSIC co-coordinated **Gown to Gown: the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Lawyers' Charity Gala**. This fundraiser for CLASSIC and PBLS was sponsored by the Canadian Bar Association, the Law Society of Saskatchewan and the College of Law. We were delighted to receive tremendous support from the legal community, welcoming over 250 guests and raising over \$50,000 for CLASSIC. Special thanks to the College of Law for its generous matching donation of \$20,000.

The Board and staff are very grateful to the many individuals and organizations have supported CLASSIC and enabled us to meet the needs of our community. Thank you especially to our dedicated and hard working volunteers who are the hands and hearts of our service to the community.

**June 22, 2010**



## **Executive Director's Report 2009-10**

*This past February CLASSIC celebrated its third anniversary. It is simply incredible to see how much CLASSIC has grown in that time. What's exciting about it to me is this: as we increase our resources – our numbers of volunteer students and lawyers, our staff, our funding base, our office space – the more able we are to meet the legal needs of low-income people in our community.*

*The provision of poverty law services is not just about giving to people in need; it's about social justice. It's about facilitating access to justice systems for people living in poverty so they can enforce their legal entitlements. It's about addressing and rectifying imbalances of power, providing David a sling-shot to stand up to Goliath. It's about challenging the inequities and systemic injustices that people with historic disadvantages face. That's what CLASSIC's programs do. That's why I'm so proud to work for an organization with this mandate. That's why I'm so pleased and thankful that CLASSIC been successful and grown so much each year.*

*This summer marks a new chapter for me. I will be transitioning from the Executive Director role into a second Supervising Lawyer position. I'm grateful for all the support I've received and everything I've learned during my two years as Executive Director. I'm very thankful to stay with CLASSIC and excited to return to legal advocacy and work more closely with our students.*

*CLASSIC's success is a result of collaborative effort. Many thanks to our Board of Directors, the White Buffalo Youth Lodge, the College of Law, our generous funders, our dedicated staff, our committed law student and lawyer volunteers, and our supporters in the community; you all make it possible for CLASSIC to facilitate access to justice for low-income members of the community. Thank you!*

*- Amanda Dodge*