

Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.

2023-2024 Annual Report



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www.classiclaw.ca

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 services, programming and supports for people who experience 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 honour 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.

Message from

Chantelle Johnson and Blaine Beaven

CLASSIC's vision is "a better future where people are supported by fair and equitable laws and systems, which allow them to thrive." The 2023-24 fiscal year magnified the importance of CLASSIC's role in Saskatchewan, as the only community legal clinic and clinical legal education site. The communities we serve are frequently up against unfair and unequitable laws and systems. Many laws are not being followed and many systems are not operating in accordance with the rules of procedural fairness. CLASSIC assists our community members to address these issues and our intensive clinical law program exposes students to the reality that laws and systems often do not operate as they are meant to. Students often comment that law school teaches them how the law is meant to work, and CLASSIC teaches them how it works (or does not work) in reality.

This year CLASSIC experienced an increase and shifts in demand for our services. We continued to explore ways to plan for CLASSIC's future through multi-year service contracts and revenue streams. We experienced some disappointing shifts and losses in funding and acquired some exciting new service contracts and partnerships. Through these demands, CLASSIC's board, staff, students, and volunteers worked hard to serve people who experience poverty and injustice. Below are some highlights and trends from the 2023-24 fiscal year:

- The Board of Directors had a retreat to develop a workplan to guide its work moving forward (see picture below).
- CLASSIC helped 2020 people through our programs and projects.
- CLASSIC assisted 1113 clients through our full legal representation clinic, the Walk-in Advocacy Clinic.
- For the first time ever, immigration and refugee law surpassed housing law as our top area of practice.
- Many systems moved from in-person to a digitized or phone platform. This increased the barriers many of our community members experience and offloaded work onto CLASSIC to ensure people can access systems. CLASSIC upgraded and enhanced our technology to address these new realities as best we can. We increased our internet bandwidth, got more devices, added conference lines, and created more spaces to place people throughout our building.
- CLASSIC continued our work on our strategic priorities and objectives to move CLASSIC forward in the best way possible.



2023-2024 Board of Directors:

Back row L to R:

Jan King, Tyson Acoose, Ben Ralston, Stephen Yee, Mark Galambos, Trish St. Onge, Blaine Beaven, Jared Lindgren

Front row L to R:

Natasha Steinback, Chantelle Johnson (Executive Director)

Meet the Team

Staff:

*Student Managers (.3FTEs) – **Kailey Macknak, Fatima Ahmed, Estefan Cortés Vargas***

*Initial Client Services Worker – **Amy Starr** (until January 2, 2024),*

*Initial Client Services Worker – **Nicole Daniels** (Joined February 12, 2024)*

*Administrative Assistant (.5 FTE) – **Laura Marshall***

*Administrative and Initial Client Service Assistant (.5 FTE) – **Lierin Mulder** (Joined November 2023)*

*Community Support Worker – **Alexa Van Volkenburg***

*Legal and Client Services Coordinator – **Susan Saville***

*Volunteer Lawyer – **Janice Gingell** (Walk-In Advocacy Clinic, .5 FTE)*

*Volunteer Lawyer – **Pat Tondevoid** (Walk-In Advocacy Clinic, .5 FTE)*

*Supervising Lawyer – **Catriona Kaiser-Derrick***

*Supervising Lawyer – **Tom Baldry***

*Senior Supervising Lawyer – **Nicholas Blenkinsop***

*Director of Finance – **Marshall Henley** (.5 FTE)*

*Director of Programs and Operations – **Tobi Graham***

*Executive Director – **Chantelle Johnson***

Individuals who aided in CLASSIC's success

Consultants

Leif Jensen
Julie Shugarman
Kimberly Schmitke
Erin Beckwell

Contractors

Hanetsa Tesfai
Kim Pidskalny
Beverly Fullerton
Jordan Trotchie

Volunteer

Renee Gavigon
*more
volunteers
recognized
under specific
program or
project areas



Board Members

Executive:

Chair: Blaine Beaven

Vice Chair: Trish St. Onge

Treasurer: Jared Lindgren

Secretary: Ben Ralston

Directors:

Natasha Steinback

Tyson Acoose

Jan King

Stephen Yee

Mark Galambos *filling Angela

Daigneault vacancy

Angel Daigneault *stepped down
during the year

Dustin Ross Fiddler *stepped down
during the year



Articling and Secondment Students:

Holly Strohschein (June 2022 - June 2023)

Farrah Linklater (June 2023 - May 2024)

Morgan Blythe (Secondment January 2024)

Cameron Walters (Secondment February 2024)

Summer Students:

Kathrine Faryna

Shane Lafontaine

STEP: Student Training and Education Program

CLASSIC welcomed Intensive Clinical Law Students for the 2023 Fall term and the 2024 Winter term. We continued to pilot a redesigned student model developed two years ago. Our goal through the pilot project is 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 will continue to test the redesigned student model next academic year. We have renewed our contract with the College of Law University of Saskatchewan, for one more year.

A special acknowledgement to **Professor Sarah Buhler**, who teaches the seminar associated with the Intensive Clinical Law program. Professor Buhler works with CLASSIC and community in many ways that go above and beyond her role as a professor.

Fall 2023 Term

L to R: Fatima Ahmed, Katherine Faryna, Ashleigh Arcand, Ryan Cupid, Estefan Cortés-Vargas, Jordan Calladine



Winter 2024 Term

L to R: Erin Hawrelak, Tayler Hemsing, Trisha Esmeralda, Jana Enns, Payton Eckert

Thank you to the following people who made the students' experience better either through participation in their orientation or a session during their term:

Student Orientation & Training Sessions

Elder Joesph Naytowhow
Professor Gemma Smyth
Judge Brad Mitchell
Judge Lisa Watson
Pamela Kovacs (Law Society SK)
Alan Kilpatrick (Law Society SK)
Valerie Payne (Law Society SK)
Tyler Young (Office of Residential Tenancies)



**Social Work
Practicum Student**
Brooklyn Denton

Pro Bono Students Canada Volunteers Community Legal Education, Project ID & LACs

Project Lead: Hannah Jorgenson
Gavin Devonald, Amber Adams,
Iryna Kutska, Frank Chou,
Geena Holding, and Kendall Kleisinger

CLASSIC Values

PROFESSIONAL

We are committed to the highest standards of competence and ethical practice.

This requires us to be good listeners and engage in self-reflective practice and evaluation. It also means that we live in tension – acknowledging that as a legal clinic we are part of a system that causes suffering and inequity. Our approach to professionalism informs how we educate our students as well as our commitment to take care of ourselves and each other as we work towards a more just community.

RESILIENT

CLASSIC makes a difference in our clients' lives.

The courage and resilience of our clients inspires us – and underscores our commitment to ensuring that CLASSIC's model, and its ability to meet our clients' needs, is viable, even as it grows and evolves.

TRANSFORMATIVE

Everything about how we approach the law challenges the system.

We teach, research and engage in social-justice, anti-racist and trauma-informed lawyering. By definition, this requires that we acknowledge and challenge the role that we, along with certain laws, policies and legal institutions, have played in reinforcing colonialism and other forms of inequality and oppression.

CLIENT-CENTRED

We recognize that our clients, from a diversity of backgrounds and communities, are experts in their own lived experiences.

We work with and in community to ensure that our clients' voices are heard, and to approach the challenges faced by our clients holistically, and in context. We are committed to learning from our clients and stakeholders, through reciprocity and respect.

CLASSIC's spectrum of services



Full Legal Representation
Walk-In Advocacy Clinic



Summary Advice
Legal Advice Clinic



Community Supports



Clinical Legal Education



Systemic Justice & Special Projects

Walk-In Advocacy Clinic

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 clinical law students working on assigned client files under the direct supervision of staff lawyers. Of the 1113 client files CLASSIC assisted with in 2023 - 2024, 865 files were in our top 5 areas of law.

Top 5 areas of Law

Practiced at CLASSIC 2023-2024

Immigration/Refugee



24.2%

269 clients

Residential Tenancies



20.3%

226 clients

Estate Law



12.8%

143 clients

Criminal



12.0%

134 clients

Institutional Charges



8.4%

93 clients

Remaining areas of Law

The remaining 248 files CLASSIC assisted through the WAC was comprised of the areas listed below

- Human Rights
- Administrative
- Adult Guardianship

- Other (Health card, ID, etc.)
- Social Services
- Civil
- Institutional Complaint

- SGI
- Small Claims
- Traffic
- Workers' Compensation Board

- Indigenous Claims
- Employment
- Income Support

- CLASSIC retained = \$20,139
- CLASSIC Obtained = \$615,521.93

- retained = saved clients from paying
- obtained = how much CLASSIC got for clients

- 659 applications were processed

- 96 applications were denied due to capacity

- files carried over from 2022/23 = 559

- new files opened in 2023/24 = 554

Thank you

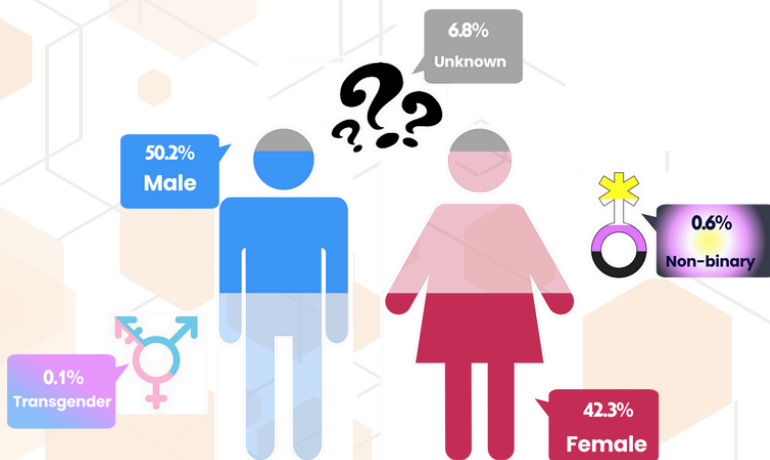
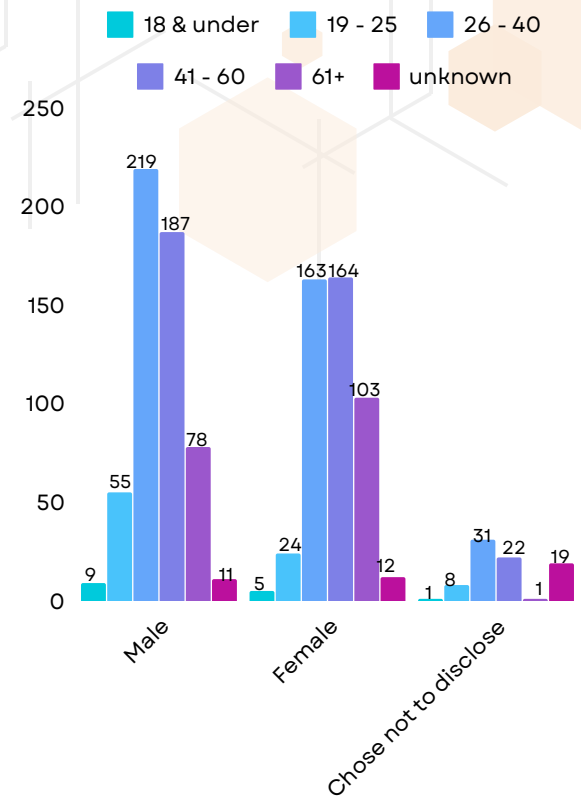
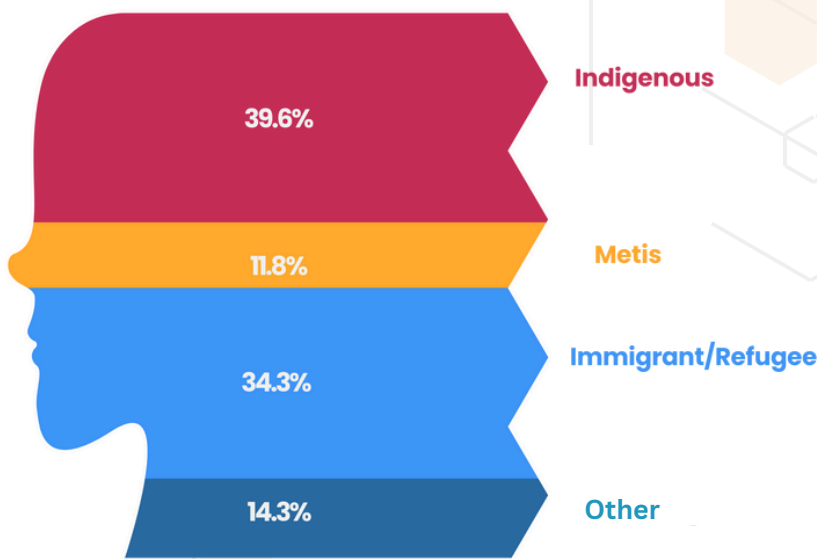
Thank you to our WAC volunteer lawyers, Pat Tondevold and Janice Gingell, for stepping up yet again this year.

They served 198 clients this year!

Who did CLASSIC Provide full legal Representation to?

CLASSIC works with a diverse community of individuals and families. Our Philosophy of Practice recognizes that our clients come from many different communities and cultures and that we must learn from these communities and cultures in order to be good advocates (Article 1). We also recognize that our clients are experts in their own lived experiences. We work collaboratively with our clients towards desired outcomes (Article 2). In addition, 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 (Article 3).

Below are some demographic statistics for the 2023-2024 WAC fiscal year.



CLASSIC's Philosophy of practice states that we are aware that legal institutions have too often reinforced inequality and oppression. We may need to challenge these institutions in order to address injustice in our community (Article 5). As well we will work towards relationships with clients that are founded on mutuality, reciprocity, and respect. We work with our clients, not "for" our clients (Article 4).

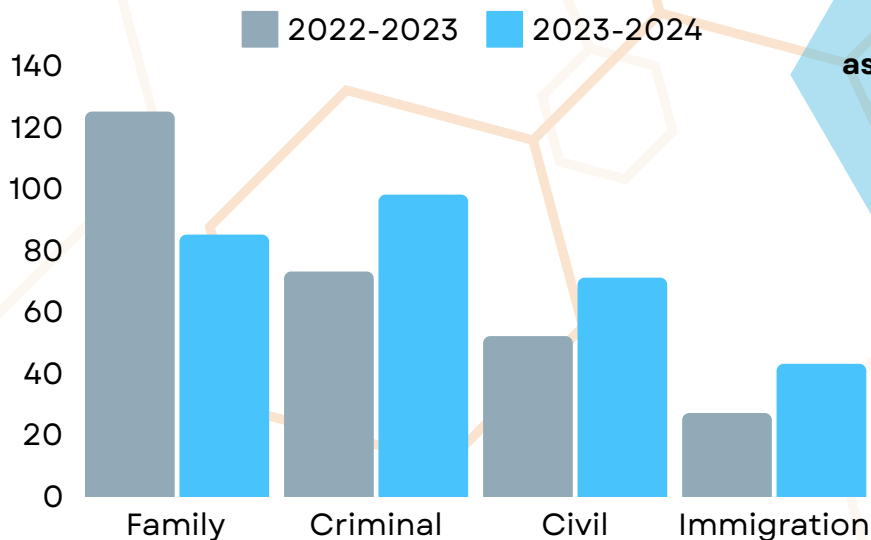
Legal Advice Clinic

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.

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.



407 LAC appointments were booked

297 people were assisted through the LAC 2023 - 2024

Gender
42.8% were male
48.5% were female
8.7% chose not to disclose

THANK YOU

Volunteer Legal Advice Lawyers:

Jonathan Adams
Gillian Gough
Michael MacDonald.
Don McIvor, K.C.
Brenda Freriks
Chris Gratton
Mark Vanstone

Kojo Anaman
Kimbal MacMillan
Rochelle Wempe
Mark Galambos
Terry Zakreski, K.C.
Davida Bentham
Leif Jensen



LAC Volunteer Kimbal MacMillan (left) and board member Tyson Acoose.

Community Support Program

CLASSIC understands our clients' legal issues are not always the central challenges that they face. CLASSIC's Community Support Worker (CSW) assists community members with their non-legal needs. Having a holistic and inter-disciplinary team makes us more client-centred and effective. We will seek to understand and approach the challenges faced by our clients holistically, and in context." CLASSIC's Philosophy of Practice – Article 3

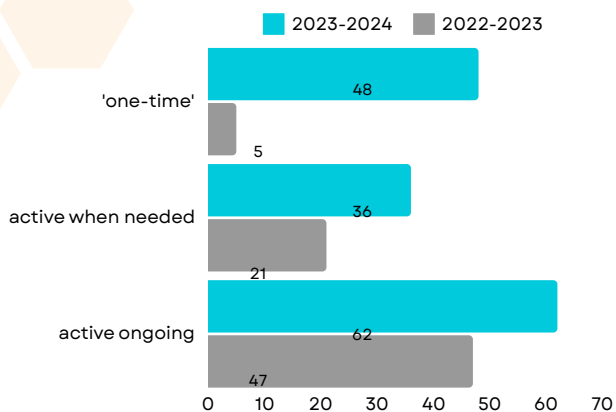
One-Time

"One-time" crisis supports increased significantly this year. On average, the CSW has 3 one-time interactions per week. These include urgent needs such as houselessness or income assistance matters.

On-going

Just over half the people the CSW works with are on an intensive to semi-intensive basis. Interactions range from high crisis to general check-ins. The CSW walks with people as they navigate complex systems and emotions in their daily life. Many people are treated negatively for showing emotions in the systems they interact with. We let them emote at CLASSIC

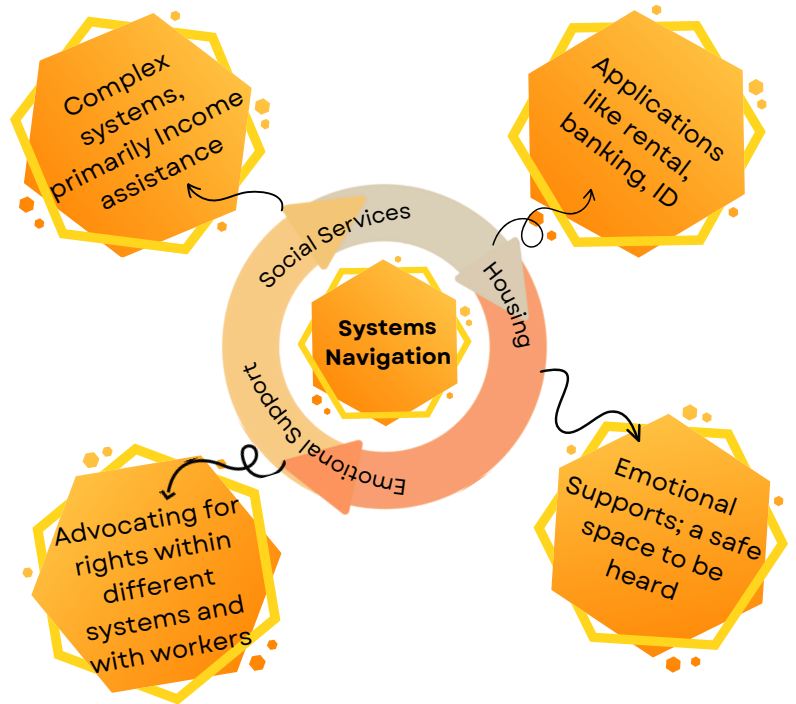
Community Support Clients



This year the CSW worked with 146 clients, 98 clients who remain active and carried into the next year. As noted in the graph above, there was a significant increase in one-time clients, which speaks volumes to the increased level of crisis Saskatoon is currently in.



Community Support Worker Alexa Van Volkenburg with Carm Desantos of the Saskatoon Community Foundation



Housing Crisis

One of the largest crisis-based needs is housing. The Income Assistance rates are significantly below the rental market prices. This makes it almost impossible for the majority of individuals who access SIS/SAID to rent a place to live.

For the small population of individuals who secure housing, it is usually precarious. Most individuals do not wish to stay in a shelter for reasons such as violence, anti-drug policies, restrictive rules, etc. This leads to individuals being forced to succumb to high risk, dangerous, or degrading agreements so they are not houseless. During the warmer months many individuals would rather be outside, living in a tent or at a friend's. However, during the colder months, this is much more difficult and the cycle of precarious housing starts all over again.

Addressing Systemic Barriers

As the only community legal clinic in Saskatchewan, CLASSIC sees trends impacting people who experience poverty and injustice. We try to address systemic issues through our work. Some examples include:

Appeals and Judicial Reviews

The work CLASSIC does regarding appeals and judicial reviews skyrocketed this year. CLASSIC did over 50 this year.

Obstruction Charges

Clients being charged with obstruction for failing to provide their name at a street check. That is a systemic practice that CLASSIC is working to address, on a case-by-case basis and by circulating “Know Your Rights” information.

Immigration and Refugee Rights

CLASSIC continues to advocate for equal treatment of immigration and refugee people as compared to Canadian Citizens (ie) processing times for income assistance

Unfair Application of Law to people who have income assistance

Clients’ inability to pay Certificates of Payment of Rent when judicially reviewing matters where income assistance continues to pay rent to the landlord is an issue we continue to flag.

Use of force

Use of force by police during the execution of mental health warrants continues to concern us.

Illegal Evictions

Landlords trying to evict tenants illegally (either knowingly or unknowingly) without proper notices to vacate (ie) working to evict tenants using fixed tenancy rules for tenants that are on month-month tenancies who cannot be evict in that manner. We are working to continue to assist clients in hearings with cases like this.



CLASSIC is part of many meeting groups, committees and frequently gets invited to present on panels, bring voice to issues we see at the clinic to consultations, conferences, and more.

This year CLASSIC attended over 130 such invitations constituting almost 1000 hours of service outside our main program and project areas. We often feel torn between bringing voice to our community members and flagging the trends we see at CLASSIC versus staying at the clinic to do our mandated work.

As part of our strategic plan we are working to identify ways to assess on a cost-benefit analysis which invitations and events are best uses of our resources.



Social Media & Special Projects

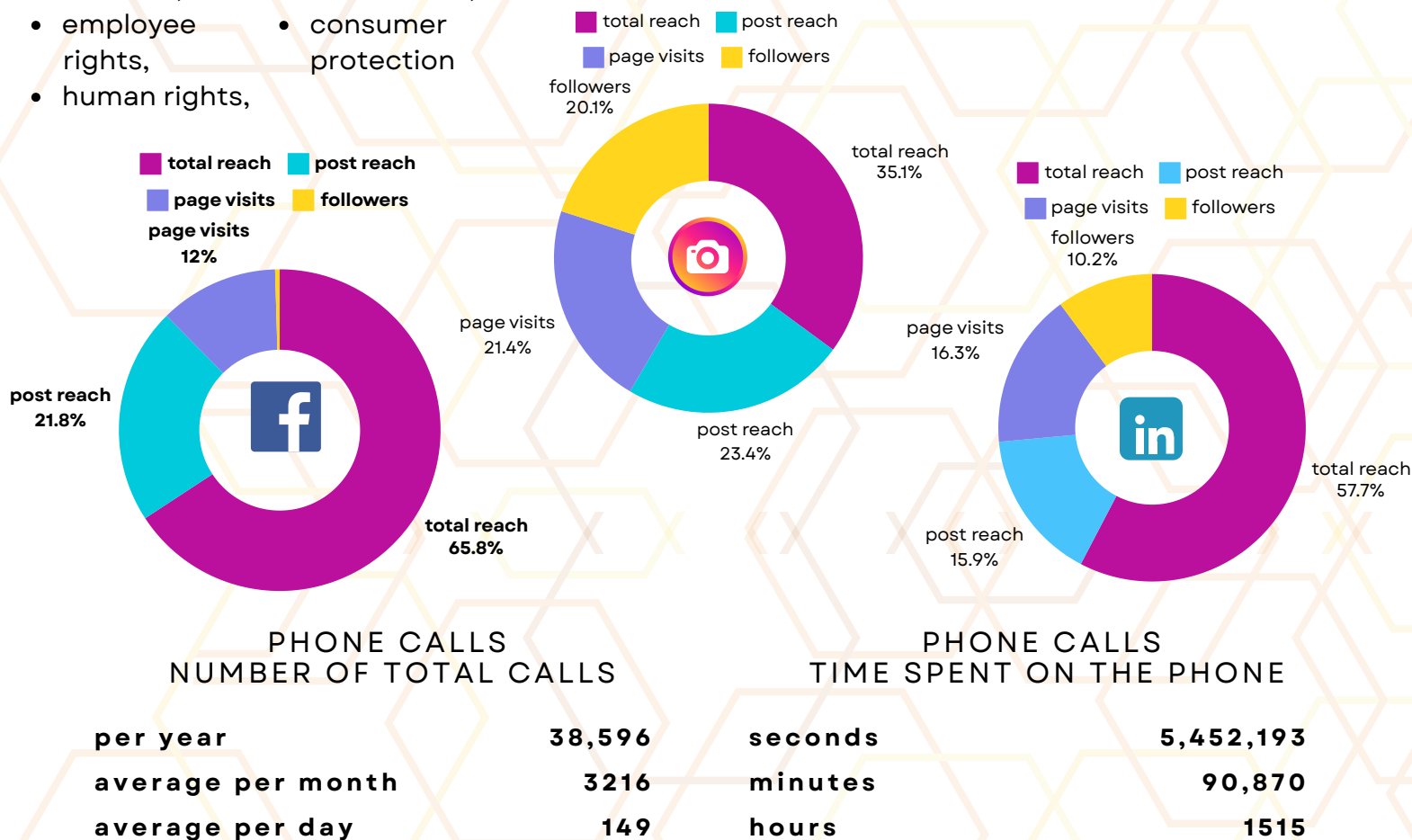
CLASSIC was granted funds by the National Indian Brotherhood Trust for a “Know Your Rights” social media campaign. We created legal information posts in the following areas:

- residential tenancy,
- interpersonal violence,
- employee rights,
- human rights,
- social assistance
- estate planning,
- defamation, and
- consumer protection



CLASSIC also uses our social media to update our community about:

- programs we are currently offering,
- when services are available,
- pressures we are currently facing,
- how to support CLASSIC, and
- share other agency’s posts.



Special Projects

Project ID

Having identification is a basic starter for many aspects of life. Through community consultations, CLASSIC identified the need for many community members to obtain ID and “Project ID” was born. **172** applications were submitted for individuals to obtain their ID through our clinics in 2023-2024.

Community Legal Presentations

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

- 6 - PBSC Student Volunteers
- 1 - Training Session for students
- 12 - Community Legal Education Presentations to **190** participants

Words CLASSIC lives by

rec·i·proc·i·ty

[re-sə-'prä-s(ə-)tē] *noun*

the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, especially privileges granted by one ... organization to another.



re·sil·iency

[ri-'zil-yən(t)-sē] *noun*

the ability of a system or organization to respond to or recover readily from a crisis, disruptive process, etc.



