

Ontario's Community Legal Clinics

Together Making the Equal Rights Dream a Reality

2018 Annual Report



Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario

www.aclco.org

A Client's Story

About 15 years ago when I first settled in Toronto, I tried to find work in my professional field as an engineer. But like many newcomers, I did different “survival jobs”-- often dangerous and precarious work -- at temp agencies, construction sites and manufacturing companies. I ended up working for a small roofing contractor where I had my work injury. Without proper safety training and harnesses, I fell from the roof and shattered my right foot. My life was turned upside down; my future was uncertain and bleak.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) decided that three months was sufficient for me to recover. Against my treating doctor's medical report and without a proper return to work plan, WSIB cut my benefits and forced me back to work. My situation was desperate, and my body was not ready for hard labour. I spent months trying to appeal their decision, but was completely ignored. I felt powerless, confused and depressed. I looked for legal advice and found this community legal clinic, IAVGO. My whole world changed! During the intake meeting, I was told that I had a good case. Within weeks, I received a letter from WSIB reversing its decision and reinstating my benefits to give me time to recover and rebuild my life.

My experience inspired me to want to help other injured workers. I volunteered for the clinic's Board of Directors for a number of years after which I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to work as a community organizer at IAVGO. I now work at the clinic with a dedicated team of amazing people who are in the business of saving lives (They certainly saved mine!). Our injured workers' group is called Injured Workers Action for Justice (IWA4J), and we advocate for fair compensation and respect.

Who knows where I'd be now if I had not found IAVGO. It's important that people understand that it's not an individual problem, but a systemic one. The current system fails so many people, especially vulnerable workers in precarious workplaces. That's why I joined IAVGO. Because we have to stand and work together to create a system that serves all workers in Ontario.

“The most advanced justice system in the world is a failure if it does not provide justice to the people it is meant to serve. Access to justice is therefore critical. Unfortunately, many Canadian men and women find themselves unable, mainly for financial reasons, to access the Canadian justice system.”

Former Chief Justice,
Beverley McLachlin



The Clinics' Champion:

“Legal Aid, and, in particular community law, is perhaps the single most important mechanism we have to make the equal rights dream a reality.”

Roy McMurtry

Ontario's Community Legal Clinics

It is widely acknowledged that community legal clinics are best suited to deliver "poverty law" services. This conclusion has been confirmed by numerous independent studies on this subject...

– Report of the Ontario Legal Aid Review, 1997 (The McCamus Report)

Who We Are

Ontario's community legal clinics serve individuals and families in communities across Ontario. Funded by Legal Aid Ontario, through modest capped budgets, we offer a broad range of legal services to address the basic legal needs of low-income Ontarians.

Community clinics serve the most vulnerable Ontarians on issues that are most critical to them, including housing, income security, education, health care, disability programs, employment rights, victim's assistance, and environmental issues. The vital work that clinics do is aimed at ensuring that people with low incomes are able to meet their most basic needs, giving them the ability to live healthy lives, in

dignity, as active members of society. Most neighbourhood clinics serve geographic communities, while specialty clinics serve specific groups including people with disabilities, injured workers, racialized communities, the elderly, children and youth.



Parkdale Community Legal Services assisting caregivers

Clinics are rooted in the communities we serve, using limited resources to provide often life-saving services that are most needed by that community, while working closely with other local agencies to ensure that clients are well-served.



The Benefits of Community Clinics

- International research shows that investing in community legal clinics reduces costs to the legal system and across multiple government programs by keeping people housed and able to live independently and participate in their communities. Studies in the United States have shown that modest government investment in legal clinics provides government with a gain of approximately \$5. for every dollar invested.
- Community clinics operate on capped budgets, providing cost certainty to government;
- Clinics are small offices located in the community they serve, with minimal administration and no bureaucracy, enabling them to be flexible and client-oriented;
- Clinics work to understand and respond to individual and community needs;
- Clinics use lawyers, community legal workers, paralegals, public education initiatives and other delivery systems in order to provide services cost-effectively;
- Clinic work is client-centered, with some clients receiving full representation, while others may receive summary advice or self-help assistance, depending on the most appropriate response in their circumstances;
- Clinics prioritize client and community needs and attempt to meet them strategically, making efficient use of scarce resources;
- Clinics develop linkages to non-legal service providers such as health care, housing help and employment supports, sometimes co-locating in service hubs, ensuring that their clients receive “wrap-around” services;
- Clinics are accountable to their funder, Legal Aid Ontario; they submit annual funding applications, quarterly statistical and financial reports, and undergo periodic quality service reviews/audits;
- Client surveys indicate tremendously high satisfaction with the work done by clinics;
- Clinics provide access to justice to hundreds of thousands of low income Ontarians every year, in a cost-effective manner;
- Clinics are identified by numerous independent reviews as the best way to provide community law services to low-income communities/individuals.

ACLCO Co-Chairs' Message

We are honoured to introduce this year's community legal clinic system annual report on behalf of our colleagues across Ontario. Every day legal clinic board members volunteer their time to support their local clinics, legal clinic staff make presentations to groups in their community, they meet with clients, they appear in front of tribunals and courts. Members of their communities call their local clinic, or walk through their doors, looking for information, for direction, for help.



Trudy McCormick

Clinics across Ontario open their doors to greet these challenges every day, sharing information, collaborating with community partners, and assisting individual clients. One person, one presentation, one client at a time, they are an important part of access to justice for all Ontarians. Legal clinics constantly strive to improve services, embracing ideas, systems and technologies that have the potential for positive change. In this year's report, we share just a few of the stories from our communities that show how clinics are an integral part of the fabric of the lives of all of the residents of Ontario.



Gary Newhouse



ACLCO Executive Director's Message

2018 was a busy year for Ontario's community clinics. As the pages of this Report indicate, the work of clinics reached many more clients across all areas of clinic practice. Community clinics also made efforts to expand and improve their services through a variety of methods, including:

- Leveraging technology to reach more clients
- Providing more French Language Services
- Reaching out to Indigenous communities
- Working more closely with other agencies in our communities
- Educating more Ontarians about their legal rights

Recent investments in legal aid by the provincial government have allowed clinics to offer services in new areas of law. Clinics have expanded their services in many parts of the province to cover areas such as basic employment rights, consumer law and elder law.

Clinics look forward in 2019 to working with the federal and provincial governments, and with Legal Aid Ontario, to continue providing exciting new legal services to Ontarians.



Lenny Abramowicz

A Full Spectrum of Clinic Services

Clinics distinguish themselves among legal aid services providers by offering a broad range of legal services to address the needs of their communities and the inequities confronting low-income Ontarians. Clinics offer legal representation in courts and tribunals, brief services, legal advice, public legal education, and referrals to other sources of assistance. Clinics address a variety of client needs by choosing the right tool in their legal toolkit to address the problem most effectively and efficiently.

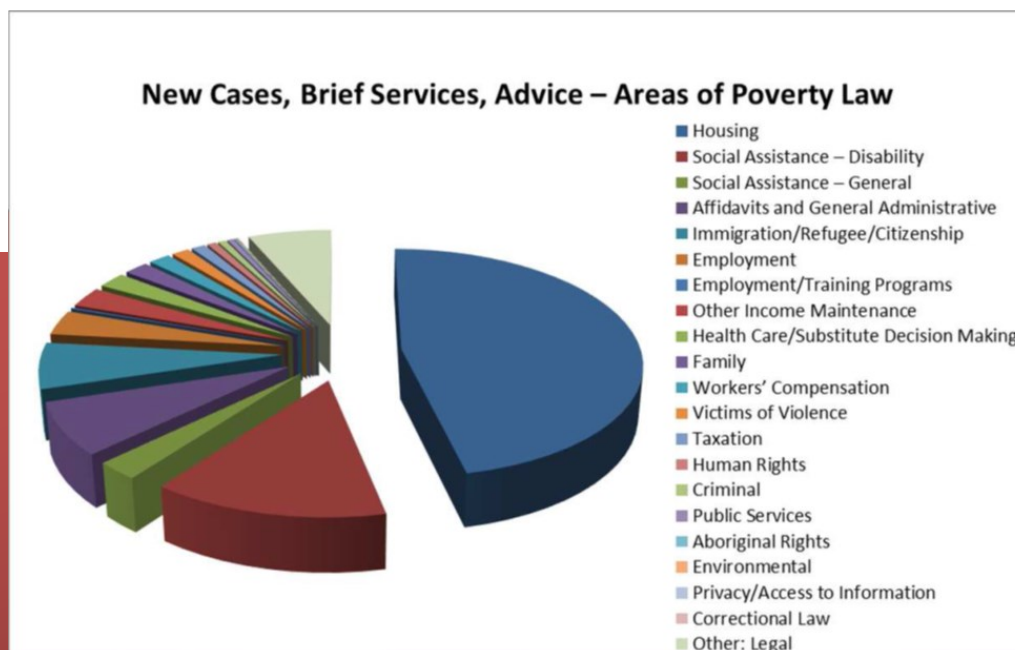
There are 73 community legal clinics in Ontario, operating on a budget of approximately \$80M.

The community legal clinics across Ontario provided services to hundreds of thousands of people by:

- Representing clients in courts or tribunals
- Providing quick interventions, detailed legal advice and assistance
- Carrying out public legal education, community development, policy advocacy, law reform projects and initiatives.

The Cases

Community Legal Clinics serve the most disadvantaged who have been pushed to society's margins—people living with disabilities, single mothers, racialized people, victims of abuse and torture, the elderly, recent immigrants and refugees, among many others – addressing the following issues.



Access to Justice for Clinic Clients

Strengthened by dedicated staff and Board members, and funded by Legal Aid Ontario, Clinics make a significant difference in their communities. Adopting innovative approaches to stretch their resources and address creatively the growing needs of clients, Clinics produce results that enhance and improve the legal welfare of those they serve. Clinics help to build healthy and vibrant communities. The following are only a few examples of the outcomes achieved for Clinic clients in 2018.

Compensation for workplace cancer

A worker with a 20 year history of working in the printing industry, was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL) at an early age. As he continued to work, he became increasingly uncomfortable in the workplace, because he suspected that the cancer was work-related. He filed a claim for workers' compensation in 2006 and stopped work in the printing industry.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board denied entitlement to occupationally related CLL. The worker and the **Roy McMurtry Legal Clinic** worked with the LAMP Community Health Center, and Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, and appealed the case to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal.

The Tribunal Panel determined that the worker's benzene exposure in the workplace significantly contributed to the development of his CLL.

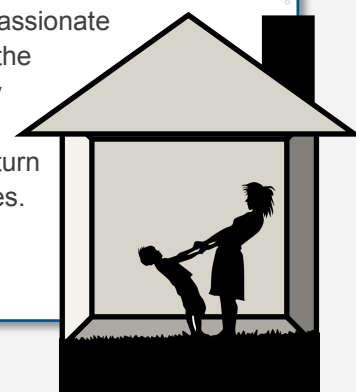
The Panel relied on epidemiological evidence and noted the evolving literature on the relationship between CLL and benzene exposure in the printing industry. The Panel found that the fact that the worker may have been predisposed to cancer did not negate the effect of the workplace exposures. The Panel determined that it may well have been the case that the combination of the two factors resulted in the early development of the CLL. The fact that the workplace exposure was a significant contributing factor entitled the worker to benefits under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*.

Curbing homelessness for a single mother and her child: A letter from a Clinic Client

It was in 2011 that I was in the midst of losing my place at Toronto Community Housing due to non-payment for several months. I was facing lots of life challenges including financial. I was extremely stressed and worried because I had a young child. I needed to keep my home to ensure that the authorities did not take my child away.

Downsview Community Legal Services came to my rescue. They provided me with phenomenal support. They guided me how to go through this housing matter, they helped me face the tribunal and they helped to negotiate a payment plan. The sheriff had locked me and my son out of our home, with the help of the clinic my family got a second chance. We were able to keep our home. Eventually, I'm now on rent geared to income program. DCLS prevented us from becoming homeless. We live in peace now and I have speedy healing (cancer).

Right now, they are helping me with family legal issues. They provided me with several resources including the list of lawyers. Things have been easy and smooth sailing for me because of the wonderful services DCLS has offered. I'm no longer lost or confused. Torontonians need services like DCLS. Vulnerable residents need professional legal and social services from employed staff who are compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the community. I found this many years ago with DCLS and I know I always has a place to turn to when facing legal challenges.



Ensuring pension benefits for people with disabilities

A 60-year-old client of the **Rexdale Community Legal Clinic** was born in Brazil, where she had received the equivalent of a high school education and worked as a salesperson and a real estate agent. She had immigrated to Canada in 2001 and worked cleaning houses. She had recently started a new job as a home support worker when she was involved in a motor vehicle collision that left her with injuries to her neck and back. She was later diagnosed with fibromyalgia.

The client's application for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits was denied because her disability was found to be not "severe and prolonged". The decision makers found her to have capacity to do lighter sedentary work. These decisions were made even though there was evidence that her personal background would impede her ability to retrain or find alternative employment. Her Canadian work history had been confined to domestic labour. She was 59 years old at the time of the hearing and had not learned English until adulthood. The clinic assisted their client in her successful appeal that resulted in a precedent setting decision that will assist many other people with disabilities.

In the appeal, it was decided that the applicant's work history has to be understood. The initial decision makers had made serious mistakes in finding that she had transferable skills, despite there being no evidence that she had ever done anything other than various types of unskilled manual labour since arriving in Canada. Represented by the clinic at a new hearing before the Social Security Tribunal, the client was granted Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits.

The decision in this case will ensure that future decision makers realistically look at the person's prospects for finding alternative work, given the person's impairments and personal background.

Respecting Rights: A Project at ARCH Disability Law Centre Led by Self Advocates Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities

Respecting Rights provides innovative rights education and builds the capacity of self-advocates labelled with intellectual disabilities to advocate for themselves. This project has been leading rights education work and systemic law reform directly with advocates labelled with intellectual disabilities across Ontario since 2014. *Respecting Rights* has been awarded funding from the Special Projects Initiative flowing from the settlement agreement in the institutional abuse class action regarding Huronia Regional Centre. With this funding, *Respecting Rights* is launching a new project addressing major gaps that have been identified in the developmental services sector, including the need for accessible and meaningful complaints mechanisms.



Saving a client's housing

A client of **Community Legal Services of Ottawa** lost her rent subsidy for not providing financial paperwork to the City. She had received a letter requesting information but, due to her learning disability and literacy problems, she didn't know what to do. Ironically, before moving into this unit, our client had been homeless and had qualified for a subsidy under the City's Housing and Poverty Reduction Plan. The client came to the legal clinic when the landlord started proceedings to evict her. She was on the verge of becoming homeless again. The clinic was able to resolve the matter and restore the client's rent subsidy in full. She was able to pay the landlord and keep a roof over her head.

Advancing Inclusive Education in Ontario

In partnership with Brock University, Western University, Community Living Ontario, Inclusive Education Canada, and Brockville and District Association for Community Living, ARCH Disability Law Centre conducted extensive research on the barriers to meaningful and inclusive education from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in Ontario.

The final report, titled 'If Inclusion Means Everyone, Why Not Me?', was released in English and French in May 2018 during a panel presentation hosted by Ryerson University. Some of the barriers identified in the Report include:

- Students with disabilities routinely denied access to school and/or classroom;
- Limited access to appropriate accommodations;
- High levels of conflict between educational staff and families, with limited recourse to dispute resolution mechanisms; and
- Limited data on disability-related barriers in the education system.



ARCH, with their partners, also released a series of comprehensive advocacy tools and modules on human rights and education. It is aimed at parents, advocates, and students with disabilities in primary and secondary school.

www.advocacyforinclusion.com

Building Community Connections

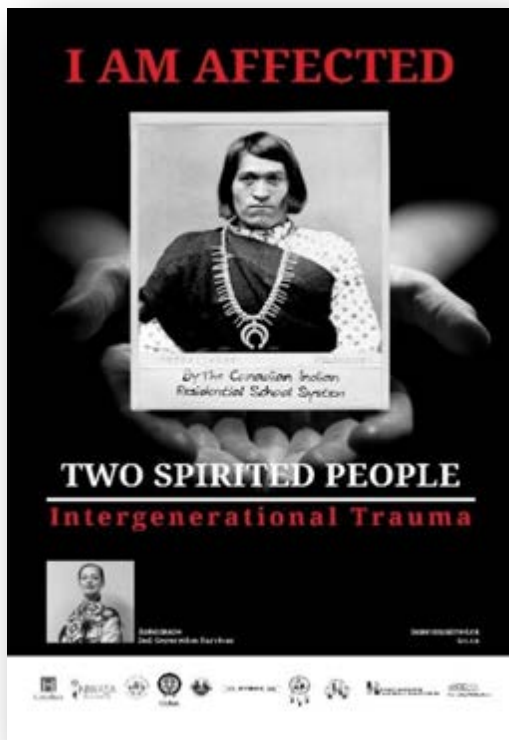
to Better Serve Indigenous People

Collaboration with Partner Agencies:

Community Development, Public Legal Education and Law Reform

An ongoing important goal for **Community Legal Services of Ottawa** is to build partnerships and connections with other organizations serving Ottawa's low-income Indigenous populations. The Clinic has established a regular connection with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre's Drop-in Centre. Clinic workers are on-site one morning per month to assist the Centre's clients.

The Ottawa Clinic also hosted its first summer internship for a Metis law student, funded by the Indigenous Justice Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General.



I AM AFFECTED

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, in collaboration with community partners, launched the I AM AFFECTED Two Spirit campaign on June 1st at Hamilton City Hall with a huge turnout to honour the intergenerational experiences of Two Spirit presenters. Canadian Indian Residential School imposed a religious view that supported homophobia and altered the roles, responsibilities and lives of two spirited people. The legacy of trauma continues to cause damage to Indigenous communities. The City supported the launch by providing free promotion for the posters in bus shelters across Hamilton for the summer. This campaign has brought requests for several workshop presentations from Indigenous service providers, especially in the health field.



Interregional Gladue Brief Pilot Project

Systemic background factors are as relevant for Indigenous people involved in other aspects of the justice system as within the criminal process. There is a clear role for Gladue factors being considered by decision-makers in other forums, especially administrative tribunals in which clinic workers appear regularly.

The Social Benefits Tribunal considering ODSP appeals, as well as the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the Landlord & Tenant Board are prime examples of the appropriate application of Gladue. An ODSP applicant's physical and mental health, ability and willingness to obtain treatment, as well as a healing and recovery prognosis are all greatly impacted by intergenerational trauma, colonization and systemic racism.

An inter-regional collaborative project with the **Elgin-Oxford Clinic, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, the Income Security Advocacy Centre, and Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic** in Thunder Bay established the *Gladue Initiative for Administrative Tribunals*. A Gladue Writer/Educator was hired in September on a six month contract to develop a training module on the purpose and practical use of Gladue Briefs when representing appropriate Indigenous clients in administrative tribunals. Caseworker training began to roll out in November along with outreach in the community to educate Indigenous organizations about the project. An Advisory Committee is supporting the Writer/Educator to ensure that the training and service delivery are inclusive and healing-focused.

Using Technology for Access to Justice

BOLD NESS

The Rural Boldness Project, a collaboration of representatives from the **Northwest Community Legal Clinic, Huron-Perth Community Legal Clinic, Community Advocacy & Legal Centre and Northumberland Community Legal Centre**, has launched a new APP: “The Legal Way”. The APP came about in the Rural Boldness project as a way to improve access to justice for rural Ontario residents by using technology to help ameliorate the effects of geography. The Rural Boldness project researched cell phone coverage and proposed an app to reach the vast majority of Ontario residents.

The Legal Way features 19 broad legal topics, most of which pertain to legal clinic work. In addition to a search function, the APP allows the user to choose:

- *Legal information, including a “might also like” feature (for example, the injury section will suggest that the user might also like to see the information under disability)*
- *Solve it steps*
- *Local Resources*
- *“Get Help Now”.*

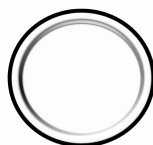


The “Get Help Now” feature will:

- *Geo-locate the closest legal clinic to the caller, and will prompt the user to make direct contact with that clinic.*
- *If the closest legal clinic is closed (eg. after hours, on holidays) or unavailable, the APP answering service will connect the caller to APP legal staff who will respond as soon as possible and provide assistance.*
- *The APP legal staff will ask the caller for permission to send their information on to the appropriate legal clinic.*

The task list for the Rural Boldness Project going forward is to create an API to connect to more robust legal information and solve it steps – this will include information in French; create an API to geo-locate local resources, using the geomapping feature created by Rural Boldness; create an android version and create a more robust search feature.

The APP is designed to keep the user within the app itself, without needing to exit the app for downloads, etc. This is in an effort to keep the data costs down for the user. The app itself is free.



Using Technology for Access to Justice

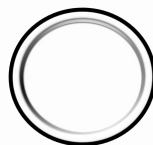
Community Legal Education Ontario Launches French Website - Justice Pas-à-Pas



Justice pas-à-pas est le fruit d'un partenariat entre plusieurs organismes du secteur de la justice. C'est un site Web qui aide les gens aux prises avec des problèmes judiciaires, un endroit essentiel où on peut aller pour trouver des renseignements pratiques et fiables.



ACLCO Co-Chair, Trudy McCormick & ACLCO Executive Director, Lenny Abramowicz join the Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Attorney General, at the launch of CLEO's French website, Justice Pas-à-Pas. Photo courtesy of the Law Society of Ontario (photo credit: David Trattles).



A2J Guided Interviews



A partnership of community legal clinics is using online interactive tools to assist clients. Called *A2J Guided Interviews*, these help clinics save time on intake and document generation, freeing up resources for other services. The interactive tools help clinics prepare appeals of Ontario Disability Support Program denials; support students to deliver services; and enable clinics to better work with trusted intermediaries to serve hard-to-reach clients. Recently, work was also concluded on a new system of local portals. These are secure sites where clients will be able to access the technology, as clinics advise, to complete forms, like tenant applications.

KnowledgeNow

The ACLCO's **KnowledgeNow** program serves a critical role helping clinics benefit from the skills, experience and resources located throughout the clinic system by supporting the management of knowledge systemically. Access to timely information, advice and expertise is critical to increasing effectiveness and efficiency, as well as achieving better outcomes for our clients and communities.

KnowledgeNow has assisted some clinics to incorporate video streaming (YouTube, Facebook Live) and video-enabled training sessions into their practices, providing another avenue to connect with clients and community partners. This is particularly advantageous to clinics who have large service areas and increases access to public legal education across the province. The program has provided coaching to clinic staff, sharing lessons learned from the ACLCO's own services and collecting the experiences of member clinics along the way.

Clinics rely on digital tools to effectively share information, not only with the online legal research portals they use, but in other aspects of



practice. KnowledgeNow developed a web-based platform to house resources in areas of practice such as community development, clinic management, internal learning and training, and support for a variety of inter-clinic committees, working groups and projects. The site allows clinic staff across the province to contribute and improve the wealth of resources housed.

One of the most visited parts of the site was developed to support clinic staff's learning program. An extensive OnDemand Video Learning Library focuses on poverty law and clinic practice training. Many of the webinars are taught by experts from across the clinic system, passing on their expertise to others. Access to these resources help many clinic staff complete professional development requirements and also form an essential part of the orientation for new staff and students in local clinics.

Teaching Future Legal Professionals

Valuable Learning for Law Students



From a summer student at
Advocates for Injured Workers:

*If you want to apply your
theoretical knowledge to hands-
on advocacy, a legal clinic is the
best place to go.*

Advocates for Injured Workers (AIW) is a student legal clinic hosted by IAVGO Community Legal Clinic that represents clients in their workers' compensation claims. After workers have been injured on the job, they are legally entitled to certain benefits and services from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). The role of AIW is to guide clients through the appeal process when their claims have been denied. This summer, I worked as a student caseworker at the clinic, and, in my totally objective opinion, it was the absolute best possible 1L summer.

As a summer student, each caseworker has sole carriage over ten to fifteen files. The work is varied and interesting. Tasks include medical and legal research, developing case strategy, communicating with and on behalf of clients, and written and oral advocacy. (I know so many medical terms now! Please do not test me on this!)

I distinctly remember starting my summer at AIW and feeling like I had no idea what was going on. We had training sessions led by staff lawyers, legal workers, and experts from outside the clinic spread over a few weeks. On the first day, we had a morning and an

afternoon session scheduled, with some room in between to get up to speed on our new files. Instead, the second I sat down at my desk, my phone rang and I spent the next hour-and-a-half chatting with one of my new clients.

Although the level of responsibility can be daunting at times, the staff lawyers are extremely patient and generous with their time. All of the written work that you complete is reviewed by the lawyers before being sent out, so you can be sure that you are submitting quality work for your client for which you won't be sued. The lawyers are meticulous in their reviewing and, as a result, my legal writing has definitely improved since the beginning of the summer. (I make no promises about my non-legal writing.)

Working with other law students also makes for a fun and collaborative work environment. There were nine of us in total this summer and it was great to have peers around off of whom to bounce ideas and with whom to commiserate about course selection.

Thank you to my co-workers for (re-)teaching me how to use the postage meter and for helping me decipher obscure doctors' notes. To the many doctors undoubtedly

reading this, please, please just type your notes.

Throughout the school year, I had worked on a research project with IAVGO, the parent clinic to AIW. Over the course of that project, I read through more than 150 Workplace Safety and Appeals Tribunal decisions, combing through for factors that would give us insight into how the WSIB's decisions may produce unequal effects for workers facing racial, gendered, mental, linguistic, and other barriers. Following that research up with tangible, hands-on advocacy as a clinic worker was incredible. The workers' compensation system can be a confusing, frustrating maze to navigate and helping clients through it was extremely rewarding.

If you have an interest in workers' rights, labour and employment law, public interest work, litigation, etc., I highly recommend getting involved with AIW, next year. There are so many ways to do so, whether as a volunteer, summer caseworker, or a for-credit student. Regardless of which you do, you'll get to do meaningful work with top-notch people. It's just that if you're a summer student, you'll get all of the above, plus three weeks of paid vacation. Just sayin'.

Access to Justice HUBs

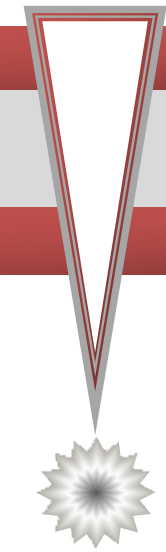


Several Community Legal Clinics participate and deliver their services through community Hubs. In these centres, legal clinics contribute to the health and sustainability of their communities. Working alongside their co-located community partners, clinics that include **Windsor-Essex Bilingual Legal Clinic**, **Unison Health and Community Services**, **Rexdale Community Legal Clinic**, **Services d'aide juridique du Centre francophone de Toronto** and, **Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa** have for many years provided innovative, client-centered, integrated health, social, legal and cultural services in a community hub setting.

The **Durham Community Legal Clinic** has now created an Access to Justice HUB. The new hub consists of paralegal students from Durham College working full time within this hub. The students are receiving professional experience while being supervised. The HUB also consists of agencies who provide their expertise along with the legal assistance provided by the Clinic to better serve the clients. The agencies currently participating in the HUB are: Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre, Durham Mental Health Services, Canadian Mental Health Services, John Howard Society and Community Development Council of Durham.



Recognitions & Awards



Maria Antelo

Maria Antelo, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic's Community Development Coordinator, is the recipient of the inaugural President's Award for Community-Engaged Scholarship from McMaster University. Maria has been part of a collaborative community research project led by a McMaster professor looking at long term settlement of immigrant women. The results of the study were the basis of a play that brought the research to life. The award speaks also to the commitment of the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic to community impact, collaborative partnerships and inclusive justice.



Bernadette Clement

Bernadette Clement, Executive Director of the Clinique Juridique Roy McMurtry (SDG) Legal Clinic, is the first woman ever elected as Mayor in Cornwall, an Ontario municipality with a 235 year history. She is also the first Black woman elected as a Mayor in Ontario. Ever.

Bernadette had the permission of the Board of Directors to campaign for Mayor on condition that she remain as Executive Director of the Clinic. Bernadette remains in the leadership role, and shares management duties with the clinic's Deputy -Director.



Mary Birdsell

Mary Birdsell, the Executive Director of Justice for Children and Youth, a community legal aid clinic dedicated to protecting and advancing the legal rights and dignity of children and youth, is the 2018 recipient of the Guthrie Award. The Guthrie Award is the Law Foundation of Ontario's signature award to recognize exceptional access to justice champions.

Mary has devoted her career to providing legal services, justice advocacy, community development, and research and education on behalf of the most vulnerable children and youth. She has taken the mandate of justice for children and youth and fashioned services that respond directly to needs identified by youth and delivers them in the ways and places that are most appropriate, whether that's a direct phone line, at youth groups, or literally on the streets.



Lenny Abramowicz

Lenny Abramowicz, ACLCO's Executive Director, has been recognized by the Law Society of Ontario as an exceptional legal professional. Lenny received the Law Society Medal in May for having committed his career to the Ontario community legal clinic system and for working tirelessly to promote access to justice and equality for low-income Ontarians. We all knew this about Lenny, but we are delighted that the rest of the profession has understood and acknowledged his dedicated work for clinics and the communities that rely on them. Each year, the Law Society of Ontario awards the Law Society Medal to selected lawyers who have made a significant contribution to the profession. The award is given for outstanding service within the profession where the service is in accordance with the highest ideals of the legal profession.



Who We Are

The ACLCO is the representative body of Ontario's Community Legal Clinics. Seventy-one community legal clinics throughout Ontario are members of the ACLCO. We are governed by an elected 13-person executive, comprised of staff and board members from Clinics from all regions of the province. We have developed expertise in poverty law services delivered through the community legal clinic model. We act in a leadership role to advocate for sustainable legal aid services and, are recognized throughout Canada and internationally as a champion of community based legal services.



What We Do

The ACLCO communicates and collaborates regularly with government, funders, community and justice organizations regarding legal aid and community legal clinics. The ACLCO helps coordinate the clinic system's interactions with a variety of external justice partners.

Over the past few years, the ACLCO worked with other legal aid service provider groups, primarily through the Alliance for Sustainable Legal Aid, to pursue increased government funding for legal aid. Discussions with the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) led to a multi-year plan to raise the financial eligibility guidelines for legal aid services, along with funding to provide those services. Approximately \$10 million of this increased funding has been targeted for Clinics in the first three years, allowing many more people to be served.

Collaboration with the primary funder of Clinics, Legal Aid Ontario (LAO), remains an important focus for the ACLCO. We work with LAO to ensure robust and thriving poverty law services in Ontario.

In addition, the ACLCO works with LAO on a wide range of issues affecting the clinic system through the ACLCO Executive and a number of standing and ad hoc advisory committees.

The ACLCO has expanded its supports for community clinics. We operate the KnowledgeNow program, promoting knowledge creation and sharing throughout the clinic system. The ACLCO Policy Counsel plays an important role in clinic support and leadership. LAO has transferred the responsibility and funding for the clinic learning and training program to the ACLCO on a "pilot" basis, with a view to making the transfer permanent.

The ACLCO will continue to work on behalf of Ontario's community clinics by ensuring the ongoing flow of new funding into legal aid and the clinic system, by strengthening the clinic – LAO relationship, by fostering strong relations between the clinic system and our justice sector partners, and by expanding the supports we provide to clinics throughout the province.

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario Advocacy Centre for the Elderly Algoma Community Legal Clinic
 ARCH Disability Law Centre Black Legal Action Centre Canadian Environmental Law Association
 Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples Chatham-Kent Legal Clinic Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
 Community Legal Education Ontario/Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario(CLEO)
 Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa Clinique juridique Grand-Nord/Grand-Nord Legal Clinic
 Clinique juridique populaire de Prescott et Russell Inc. Clinique juridique Roy McMurry (SDG) Legal Clinic
 Community Advocacy & Legal Centre Community Legal Assistance Sarnia Community Legal Clinic – Brant, Haldimand,
 Norfolk Community Legal Clinic – Simcoe, Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes Community Legal Clinic of York Region
 Community Legal Services of Ottawa/Services Juridiques Communautaires d'Ottawa Downsview Community Legal Services
 Durham Community Legal Clinic East Toronto Community Legal Services Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic
 Elliot Lake & North Shore Community Legal Clinic Flemingdon Community Legal Services
 Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic Hamilton Community Legal Clinic/Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton
 HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO) Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic Income Security Advocacy Centre
 Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario (IAVGO) Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic
 Jane Finch Community Legal Services Justice for Children and Youth Keewaytinok Native Legal Services
 Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services Kingston Community Legal Clinic Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic
 Lake Country Community Legal Clinic Landlord's Self-Help Centre Legal Assistance of Windsor
 Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County Manitoulin Legal Clinic Mississauga Community Legal Services
 Neighbourhood Legal Services Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex)
 Niagara Community Legal Clinic/ Clinique juridique communautaire de Niagara Nipissing Community Legal Clinic
 North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services Northumberland Community Legal Centre
 Northwest Community Legal Clinic Parkdale Community Legal Services Peterborough Community Legal Centre
 Queen's Prison Law Clinic Renfrew County Legal Clinic Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
 Scarborough Community Legal Services Services d'aide juridique du Centre francophone de Toronto
 South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario South Etobicoke Community Legal Services Sudbury Community Legal Clinic
 The Legal Clinic Timmins-Temiskaming Community Legal Clinic/Clinique juridique communautaire Timmins-Témiskamingue
 Unison Health and Community Services Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
 West Scarborough Community Legal Services West Toronto Community Legal Services
 Willowdale Community Legal Services
 Windsor-Essex Bilingual Legal Clinic/Clinique juridique bilingue Windsor-Essex Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY



LEGAL CLINICS OF ONTARIO

ACLCO Member Clinics

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