



American College of Trial Lawyers

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF TRIAL LAWYERS SELECTS PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA'S INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM AS 2019 EMIL GUMPERT AWARD RECIPIENT *\$100,000 Grant to Assist with Two Pilot Clinics*

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIF. (March 27, 2019) - The American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL) has selected the Indigenous Human Rights Program of Pro Bono Students Canada as the 2019 Emil Gumpert Award recipient. Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) is being recognized for its groundbreaking proposal to create two pilot Indigenous Human Rights clinics in Ontario, Canada's most populous province. The clinics will be staffed by volunteer law students and pro bono human rights lawyers who will provide culturally-sensitive legal services to Indigenous peoples.

Pro Bono Students Canada will receive a \$100,000 grant and will be honored during a ceremony on April 24, 2019 at the 18th Annual Symposium sponsored by the Advocates Society and ACTL.

In Canada, Indigenous peoples* disproportionately experience discrimination in many aspects of their lives. A long history of state-sponsored colonization has had lasting negative impacts on Indigenous peoples, who make up almost 5% of the national population. Despite the systemic discrimination Indigenous peoples experience, the availability of free or affordable legal assistance to address these human rights complaints represents a significant access to justice gap. The establishment of Indigenous Human Rights clinics would therefore be a major step forward in bridging this gap and improving the administration of justice for some of Canada's most vulnerable and victimized citizens.

The goal of the clinic is to connect Indigenous peoples, who have experienced discrimination, to lawyers and law students who can deliver culturally appropriate human rights assistance in a safe and welcoming clinical setting. The legal services offered will include:

- Assisting clients to identify, draft and file human rights complaints with provincial and federal human rights bodies;
- Providing *pro bono* representation to clients in mediations or at hearings before human rights tribunals;
- Developing and delivering public legal education workshops; and
- Assisting community organizations to document systemic human rights abuses, over time creating an evidentiary foundation for advocacy, law reform and litigation, with and on behalf of Indigenous communities.

PBSC's legal and community partners are an integral part of this project:

- The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is the largest urban Indigenous service network in Ontario. Its programs and initiatives, housed in community friendship centres across the province, span justice, health, family support, long-term care, healing and wellness, employment and training, education and research. The OFIFC will house the pilot clinics (in Toronto and Ottawa), host public legal education workshops, deliver customized cultural competency training to volunteers, provide access to Elders**, and co-chair an Advisory Council.
- McCarthy Tétrault LLP, one of Canada's leading firms, is PBSC's National Law Firm Partner (since 2004). McCarthy Tétrault will provide pro bono lawyers to represent Indigenous clients at human rights mediations and tribunals.
- Other important partners include: the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Legal Support Centre (Ontario), Thomson Reuters and the Faculties of Law at the University of Toronto, York University, and the University of Ottawa.



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“These pilot clinics are needed, important and timely. This generous award allows us – PBSC and our partners – to make a real step forward in redressing the human rights of Indigenous Canadians. We are so grateful to the ACTL for believing in our vision. We will build clinics that we all will be proud of,” said Kim Snell, Interim National Director, PBSC.

ACTL President Jeffrey S. Leon, LSM said: “The College is proud to facilitate the creation by Pro Bono Students Canada of these pilot Indigenous Human Rights clinics. Promoting access to justice is fundamental to the College’s mission to maintain and improve the administration of justice in Canada and the United States. We recognize the particular importance at this juncture in Canadian society of providing culturally-sensitive legal representation as part of the truth and reconciliation process for those Indigenous individuals who are in need of legal services. This imaginative project captures the spirit and essence of our Emil Gumpert Award and we are so pleased to be able to provide financial assistance for this most worthwhile endeavor.”

About [Pro Bono Students Canada](#)

As the largest pro bono organization in Canada, PBSC offers an extensive suite of pro bono experiences for Canadian law students and lawyer supervisors. It is a nationally respected program, actively supported by Canada’s bar, judiciary and academy. PBSC is a leader in the profession and is considered the voice for law student *pro bono*. For over two decades, PBSC has been helping Canadians in vulnerable circumstances with their essential legal needs, while providing generations of law students with experiential learning opportunities and exposing them to the pro bono ethic. Each year, PBSC recruits over 1,600 law students and 400 lawyer volunteers across Canada, who work with over 450 community organizations, courts, legal centers, and clinics. PBSC trains and oversees these over 2,000 student and lawyer volunteers, who in turn provide free legal services to more than 14,000 low-income Canadians. PBSC is governed by a national board of directors pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding that has been signed by twenty-two of Canada’s twenty-three law schools.

About the [Emil Gumpert Award](#)

The Emil Gumpert Award is the highest honor conferred by the College on any organization and was established to recognize programs whose principal purpose is to maintain and improve the administration of justice. The programs considered may be associated with courts, law schools, bar associations or any other organization that provides such a program. This award is made in honor of the late Honorable Emil Gumpert, Chancellor-Founder of the American College of Trial Lawyers. Judge Gumpert, throughout his more than half-century professional career as an eminent trial lawyer, State Bar president and trial judge, substantially and effectively devoted himself to the administration of justice and to the improvement of trial practice.

About the [American College of Trial Lawyers](#)

The American College of Trial Lawyers is comprised of the best of the trial bar from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico and is widely considered to be the premier professional trial organization in North America. Founded in 1950, the College is an invitation only fellowship. The College thoroughly investigates each nominee for admission and selects only those who have demonstrated the very highest standards of trial advocacy, ethical conduct, integrity, professionalism and collegiality. The College maintains and seeks to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice through education and public statements on important legal issues relating to its mission. The College strongly supports the independence of the judiciary, trial by jury, respect for the rule of law, access to justice, and fair and just representation of all parties to legal proceedings.



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*“Indigenous Peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three distinct groups of Indigenous Peoples: Indians (now referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit.

**“Elders” are members of those groups who have attained a high degree of understanding of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, and healing practices.