

**Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic
Board Meeting Report
Coordinator of Legal Services
Sally Colquhoun**

Meeting Date: January 29, 2022

Client Service

Several staff members have been working at home since the pandemic issues deteriorated in December. We are being very diligent about wearing masks and staying apart when we are working in the office. We are still keeping the interior door locked and screening anyone who comes in. We have been having clients in the office for tribunal hearings, but are still trying to avoid having the client and the legal worker in the same space.

TDC continues to be very time-consuming, with hearings scheduled at least two days a week every week. Often we have to be on-line for hours for a single matter when we are representing someone at the LTB; that was the case in the past when we were doing in-person hearings but it was only two days a month.

Statistics

Our statistics are still less than pre-pandemic numbers but we are busy and responding to all requests for service.

Personnel

Molly finished work on the 20th, expecting to have her baby on the 28th, but he has surprised everyone by arriving early. We have just heard, and hopefully I will have more to share by next week.

We have hired Jennifer Fenton on contract to replace Molly, who was replacing Caycie. Jennifer has just finished the paralegal college course and will be writing her licensing exams in a few months. Caycie is planning to be back at work in mid-July.

Legal Aid Ontario

Our funding application is due at the end of the month.

Casework

We have had a number of successful tribunal hearings in the last few months. The majority of our SBT appeals are about whether someone is disabled, but we deal with other issues as well. Recently we were successful in having a \$13,000 overpayment rescinded for an ODSP recipient, and we were also successful in an appeal about the denial of our client's application for OW.

That client had been on interim assistance for over a year which she would have had to pay back if the appeal wasn't successful.

We have been successful in maintaining a number of tenancies for clients in subsidized housing.

Training

The northern clinics had optimistically hoped to have a training session before the end of the fiscal year, using surplus funds. Omicron has put the end to that plan. The specialty clinics and the ACLCO continue to organize various training sessions that our staff take advantage of, as well as sessions put on by the Law Society.

Community Development

1. ACLCO

They have been organizing staff training and development opportunities. Their staff person with the KnowledgeNow project is invaluable to clinic staff who have questions about our computer software and other IT issues.

2. Bora Laskin Faculty of Law

We interviewed four second-year law students who had applied to do their IPC placement with our office. We have sent in the ranking for and will hear in early February whether we have been matched with anyone.

3. SHIW Project

Esma will be reporting directly to the Board about the activity that she has undertaken. She has done several public education sessions, and is working on electronic materials to share through social media.

4. Public Legal Education

We have been asked to provide information to the Child and Youth Worker students at the college. We sent out our annual communication to community partners with copies of our annual report and a reminder that we can provide PLE, but have not had much response.

5. Lakehead University Research

We have several opportunities to collaborate on potential research projects with Lakehead University. A PHD candidate is planning research about the impact that the policing of social assistance has on recipients' mental health. A Masters student in Social Work is interested in doing research in an area where social work and law intersect.

Other

1. Indian Day School Class Action

We regularly meet with staff from other agencies that are assisting with IDSCA applications, at meetings organized by the Nokiiwin Tribal Council. We are expecting a surge in requests for service as the deadline to apply for compensation approaches in July.

2. SCSA

Claire has resumed responsibility as one of the northern representatives on this provincial legal clinic committee that works towards systemic solutions for social assistance issues.

3. Immigration and Refugee Law Clinic

The Newcomer Legal Clinic has started providing services to immigrants and refugees. They have space at Bora Laskin Faculty of Law and services are provided by law students. I am a member of the community advisory committee. It will be very useful to have somewhere to refer people who have immigration law issues. We will also be working with them to provide public legal education to their clients.

4. NOSM Student Placements

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is returning to in-person community placements for their students to learn about various community resources. We will be hosting two students for a day early in February.

5. Reduction in GIS payments

The federal government announced in their fall economic statement that they would be providing funds to seniors who lost entitlement to GIS in 2022 because of receiving CERB in 2020. Unfortunately there haven't been any further announcements of who is going to get money or when.

6. Other

I attended a number of meetings including the Access to Justice Collective, the Thunder Bay Housing and Homelessness Coalition, the Clinic Resource Office Caseworker Advisory Committee and various staff meetings and file reviews.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Colquhoun,
Coordinator of Legal Services.