

CSU Legal Information Clinic Annual Report 2021-2022 dated 22 April 2022

Mandate

The CSU Legal Information Clinic is a free service that provides legal information, referrals and accompaniment in both French and English to undergraduate and since Fall 2021, graduate Concordia students. The LIC offers information related mainly to issues on immigration, discrimination and consumer protection law as well as other areas of law. On average, the majority of clients require multiple consultations, appointments and follow-ups for legal information and assistance with complex and sensitive issues such as immigration, discrimination and racial profiling, fines, sexual violence, contracts, civil disputes cases and much more. This does not include community outreach or collaborative projects with community organizations or other CSU departments.

Statistics

From May 2021 to April 2022, the LIC has handled about 112 Cases, not including the multiple consultations, appointments and follow-ups necessary for each file. Of these 112 Cases, 102 had multiple appointments. On average, about 49% of the files dealt with immigration, about 26% with discrimination, sexual violence, and racial profiling and the rest with family law, COVID fines, contracts, civil disputes among other fields of law. This does not include community outreach or collaborative projects with community organizations or other CSU departments.

Summary of Activities since May 2021 -April 2022

Due to the present pandemic, the LIC has been prompted to an online working environment. This has caused ongoing challenges such as trouble shooting the Salesforce system set-up for the CSU, adapting protocols and policies reflecting the change to only online consultations and virtual working environment, remote training and supervision of new staff and volunteer law students.

As detailed below in some of the LIC's activities, the impact of Covid-19 has continued to influence the type of legal information and assistance requested by students:

- Organized for Asian Heritage Month, a panel discussion May 26, 2021 on anti-Asian racism and how we can respond to it. Our panelists, Cathy Wong (Montreal City Council), Fo Niemi (Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations), Dolores Chew (Montreal's South Asian Women's Community Centre) and Walter Chi-Yan-Tom (CSU Legal Information Clinic), spoke on anti-Asian racism, resources, and actions to take in response to it. They also spoke on the mental health impact of anti-Asian racism and on issues impacting Asian women & their relationship to others.
- Organized for Asian Heritage Month, a panel discussion May 27, 2021 on racial and intergenerational trauma with therapists and mental health specialists from various Asian communities to explore issues of mental health in Asian communities. While maintaining mental health has been a struggle throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian students have had to face additional challenges due to the uptick in anti-Asian violence and discrimination since the beginning of the pandemic. More generally, the impacts of racial and intergenerational trauma cannot be ignored when it comes to discussing mental health in racialized communities.

- One issue that of major concern is the questionable racial and social profiling and application by the police of draconian COVID-19 fines that can disproportionately affect students. The LIC has provided workshops and been assisting students to contest or minimize their impact of these fines.

- In the context of the rise of anti-Asian hate incidents and racial and religious intolerance since the start of the pandemic, and at the request of Concordia students, LIC partnered with other community groups to pressure the City of Montreal to address issues of systemic racism and discrimination within the City, particularly on employment and internship, racial and social profiling, housing, the fight against inequality, and gentrification, urbanism and land-use planning. Among the activities organized in collaboration with the Chinatown Working Group, were the following:

The first ever municipal debate held in Chinatown on October 16, 2021 gave residents the chance to voice their fears over land encroachment of the only remaining Chinatown in Quebec. The focus of the debate, which took place on Oct. 16, was on major issues such as social and racial justice, arts and culture, climate justice, economic development, and the protection of Chinatown. Four political parties in Montreal's municipal election took to the stage in the Chinese Community and Cultural Center where the room hit maximum capacity at 60 people.

An outdoor press conference on January 24, 2022 to highlight the intrusion of private real estate developments in the Montreal Chinatown neighbourhood, organized with the Progressive Chinese of Quebec, Comité logement de Ville-Marie, and other Chinatown community organizations. Despite the Quebec government's recent decision to classify a limited part of Chinatown as a heritage site and the City of Montreal to update its urban development plan by setting up parameters to limit construction in historical areas of the neighbourhood, much more needs to be done beyond protecting buildings. The heritage designation which is part of the Chinatown Action Plan must be given life by providing for all the needs of the community, such as social housing, support for heritage businesses, health-related services, and green spaces.

Collaborated with urban planning experts, activists, and community members to continue to oppose the development of the Réseau express métropolitain \$10 billion automated light rail project in Chinatown. Preservation of the neighbourhood is beyond infrastructure. Over the past year, the group expressed their concerns to the city as designs for development were drawn. However, these designs were always made without community consultation, which largely ignored the potential implications brought forth. These concerns include impacts on Chinatown's visibility, accessibility, development, businesses, residents, and overall community space.

- Bike Rights Campaign during Fall Orientation 2021 for CSU Clubs, to sensitize and encourage the 30+ clubs & communities and Concordia students about updated bike laws, bikers' rights, and the function of the Legal Information Clinic.

- The LIC continued to pursue many activities related to immigration law and the plight of international students affected by increasingly complex and confusing federal and provincial immigration legislation and policies, due to the evolving situation of the pandemic. This situation was worsened by the questionable decision of the provincial CAQ government and the University to force international students to return to in-person classes.

- A free online information session on November 19, 2021 about major changes to Quebec immigration law and Federal skilled worker programs. The seminar featured speaker, Me. David Chalk, Immigration lawyer and former President of the Association of Quebec Immigration Lawyers. The LIC

continues to provide ongoing support and information on the many arbitrary and unfair changes to Quebec immigration policies and procedures.

- Working with Sexual Assault and Resource Centre (SARC) and the Students For Consent Culture (SFCC) to develop and implement training for staff and volunteers at the LIC and other CSU departments, which is trauma-informed and survivor-centered. Workshops were provided to LIC staff and volunteers to assist in their handling of survivors of sexual violence, racism, and other forms of discrimination and human rights abuses.

- GSA Fee Levy Campaign: Previously, the LIC was mandated to provide services to only undergraduate students who fund the LIC through a CSU fee levy. After many years of effort, the LIC finally succeeded in obtaining a GSA fee levy to open our services to graduate students, who consistently require and request the LIC's services.

- Organized the Annual Interfaith Ceremony on January 25, 2022 for Commemorating five years since the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting took place. This year's event focused on National Day of Remembrance of the Québec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia, as well as addressing the concerns of Muslim students not feeling safe at Concordia. The event also provided students from different faith backgrounds with the opportunity to honour the victims of the tragedy and stand together against hatred and intolerance in Montreal and the Québec community.

Keynotes speakers were: Harrison Kirshner, Internal Affairs Coordinator, CSU- Concordia Student Union Yousha Hyatoolla, President and Hayat Akiki, VP External of MSA- Muslim Student Association of Concordia, Lina El Bakir: Quebec Advocacy Officer NCCM - National Council of Canadian Muslims, Sameer Zuberi Federal MP Pierrefonds-Dollard, Quebec, Rev. Ellie Hummel, Chaplain- Coordinator, and Sonia Masand, Interfaith Facilitator of MFSC-Multi-faith & Spirituality Centre.

- Organized with the Centre for Gender Advocacy a drop-in support clinic at their Guy street office on February 22nd, 2022 for folx who would like to change their designation of sex and preferred name on legal documents and qualify under the current Quebec program.

- Assisting Ukrainian international students within Canada and their overseas family members and friends from February 24, 2022 to the present through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach. In response to the Russian invasion, Immigration Canada launched a temporary residence program for Ukrainians fleeing the country. However, Ukrainian asylum-seekers fleeing war are not officially considered refugees in Canada because they do not fit the legal definition of a Convention refugee, who must show that they either suffer persecution by their own government or that said-government cannot protect them from persecution. Also, the LIC has been assisting Ukrainian international students struggling to pay their tuition fees due to difficulty contacting family in Ukraine to transfer funds and restricted bank account access.