

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION FORM

(ALL SECTIONS IN THIS FORM MUST BE FILLED FOR PROJECT REVIEW AND APPROVAL)

**Chapter:** University of Toronto

**Program year:** 2025-2026

**Project Name:** Indigenous Rights and Cumulative Impacts of Climate Change in Canada

*Note: The project name should be concise, distinguishable from other projects, and easily identifiable for volunteers, partners, and clients.*

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## SECTION A – ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

1. **Name of Organization:** Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)

2. **Mailing Address of Organization:** 55 University Ave #1500, Toronto, ON M5J 2H7

3. **Website of Organization:** <https://cela.ca/>

4. **Type of Organization:**

☒ Not-for-profit

☐ Other please specify

5. **Brief overview of the organization's mandate (2 to 4 lines maximum):**

CELA is a legal aid clinic dedicated to advocating for environmental justice, both in litigation and policy reform. Additionally, we are developing this proposal with guidance from Grand Council Treaty #3. GCT3 is comprised of 28 First Nation communities, spanning 55,000 square miles across Northern Ontario and part of Manitoba. GCT3 advocates for Indigenous rights, including environmental rights, and they have provided us with information about the impacts of climate change that affect their communities the most.

6. **Organization Contact Person**

Name: Jacqueline Wilson

Title: Counsel

Telephone Number: 416-960-2284 ext. 7213

Email Address: [jacqueline@cela.ca](mailto:jacqueline@cela.ca)

7. **Preferred mode of contact:** Phone ☐ Email ☒

8. **How often will the organization contact person be available to meet with the student(s)?**

Biweekly

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## 9. Lawyer supervisor(s)

*Note: For certain projects, students work with a roster of lawyers. In such instances, please include the information of all lawyer supervisors, and indicate who the lead lawyer/key point of contact is.*

Type of Lawyer Supervisor:

Lawyer Supervisor - Insured

Name: Jacqueline Wilson

Title: Counsel

Organization/Firm: Canadian Environmental Law Association

Telephone Number: 647-300-6199

Email Address: jacqueline@cela.ca

The lawyer supervisor is:

- ☐ An employee of your organization
- ☐ Other (please specify relationship)

## 10. How often will the lawyer supervisor be available to meet with the student(s)? Biweekly

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## SECTION B – PROJECT INFORMATION

### 11. Please describe the project tasks:

*Note: If there are multiple projects, please complete a separate Project Description Form for each project. Include details on the final deliverable and expected timelines, etc. Include details on the division of workload, etc.*

#### Description of Project

This project explores the effects of climate change on various aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada. This includes exploring how Canada's commitment to implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP) may require the government to take action to prevent devastating impacts of climate change.

The key output includes a detailed report indicating potential constitutional strategies for legal action to broadly protect Indigenous people's rights in the face of climate change.

#### Phase 1: Legal Research (Fall Term)

Students will receive research assignments from the Project Leads which may include:

- Researching historical constitutional challenges by indigenous groups related to large industrial projects (ex. pipelines)
- Researching the evidential burden required to support a finding that harm was in fact caused by industrial/government activity

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- Researching whether a broader duty to consult should be triggered when industrial projects are proposed
- Researching whether the government can be held accountable for causing harm via industrial projects to Indigenous communities

## Phase 2: Memo Writing (Winter Term)

Students will work with their peers to develop a detailed research report outlining the research conducted in the Fall term. Ideally, this report will be used as a guideline for self-represented Indigenous litigants seeking to hold corporations and governments accountable for making it unsafe for Indigenous communities to safely exercise their rights.

## Role of Student Volunteers

Students will work closely with the Project Leads and supervising lawyer to research several legal questions including:

- Do repeated evacuations without mitigation infringe s. 35 treaty rights?
- Can land protection be linked to s. 35 treaty rights?
- Can s. 35 be used to compel the government to fund resilient infrastructure for Indigenous communities?
- When communities experience long delays in returning to their land after an extreme weather event, does the prolonged lack of land access violate s. 35 treaty rights?
- Whether UNDRIP or the *United Nations Declaration Act* compels the Canadian government to implement better consultation and protection procedures for Indigenous communities related to environmental issues.

Students will then collaborate to produce a detailed report indicating potential avenues for legal action that can be taken to more broadly protect Indigenous peoples' rights in the face of climate change. This report will be shared broadly with Indigenous communities to assist with future legal challenges.

## Role of Supervising Lawyers

As PBSC volunteers are law students, they are not authorized to give legal advice. The supervising lawyer will review and sign-off on all work produced by students before it is used by CELA. The lawyer will also provide guidance, feedback and answer student questions as they arise.

## Role of Project Lead

The Project Leads will work closely with the organization contact and supervising lawyer(s) to develop a work plan for the upcoming year. Project Leads will create research questions for student volunteers, monitor progress throughout the year, and act as a liaison where required.

**Which types of law are used in this project?**

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Environmental Law, Indigenous Law, Constitutional Law (UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act)

## 12. What is the main project deliverable?

A. Creating produced content (e.g. research memos, brochures, podcasts, etc.)

## 13. What is the project delivery format?

Virtual

**Please provide details** (e.g. volunteers will attend the clinic once a week on Friday afternoons or weekly virtual bi-weekly meetings with the team):

Enter text

## 14. If you checked boxes A or C in question 12, above, do you consent to the Student Volunteer(s) sending to PBSC a copy of the project deliverable? Please note it is your responsibility to collect and retain any project deliverable or documentation required to carry out the work set out in this Form. If you consent to PBSC saving a copy of the project deliverable (this strictly applies to Research and Public Legal Education projects), the documents will be securely saved and used solely for the purposes of monitoring the progression of the project, informing project development, and offering efficient continuity to returning projects, and will not be reproduced, shared, or used outside of these stated purposes.

- A. ☒ I consent to PBSC saving a duplicate of the project deliverable.  
B. ☐ I do not consent to PBSC saving a duplicate of the project deliverable.

## 15. If you checked boxes B or C in question 12, above, what is your plan for distribution of PBSC's Client Impact Survey?

**Note: PBSC's Client Impact Survey** is an important tool that allows our organization to measure client satisfaction and impact, report to stakeholders, and improve our programming. The Client Impact Survey is available through Qualtrics, which meets all federal and provincial privacy and security laws (data is stored in Canada).

☐ Click to select drop down option

Volunteers will be provided with the hyperlink and QR Code at the start of their placements. Where appropriate, printed copies of the survey may be used as long as there is a protocol in place to safeguard client confidentiality.

☐ Other. If neither of the above options are an appropriate means of distributing PBSC's Client Impact Survey for this project, please explain your plan for distribution.

Enter text

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16. A work plan is required for this project: Yes ☒ No ☐

*If yes, the student(s) must reach out to the lawyer supervisor, draft a work plan, and submit it by email to the Program Coordinator and the lawyer supervisor by November 1st at the latest. Please note that workplans are required for all legal research and writing projects.*

Students will communicate their schedule, including reading weeks, time off, to coordinate a workplan with the Organization Contact and Supervising Lawyer. Ideally, the student will have benchmarks to strive towards in each semester (i.e. complete research, draft guide, finalize guide). The Program Coordinator will provide a precedent work plan as a basis to develop a work plan.

17. Is this a joint project with students from any other PBSC chapters?

*If yes, please indicate details: which sections, the division of work, and the model of supervision, etc.*

No.

18. What type of training will the organization provide to the student(s)?

Note for University of Toronto volunteers: All first year PBSC volunteers and all volunteers working on research projects are highly encouraged to attend Bora Laskin Library's research training sessions for both West Law and LexisNexis.

Enter text

19. How many students would you like assigned to this project?

5-10 + 2 Project Leads (Olivia Parker and Rehana Lalani)

20. How many hours per week will the student volunteer(s) be expected to work?

*Note: PBSC students are expected to volunteer 3-5 hours per week. Additional hours are at the students' discretion, but at no time should the student be volunteering more than 10 hours per week.*

3-5 hours per week.

21. Will the student(s) be expected to show up for regular shifts each week, or is the schedule flexible?

No. The schedule is flexible and will be decided at the outset of the project from agreed upon deadlines.

22. Is workspace provided for the student volunteer(s) at your organization?

No.

23. Please list the devices and technologies the students will require to have at home in order to complete their volunteer work remotely (ex. Computer, Internet access, telephone, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.)

Computer, Internet, Zoom, Telephone.

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## SECTION C – STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

24. Is there an expectation for the student(s) to be bilingual?

No.

25. Can first year law students volunteer for this project? Yes ☒ No ☐

26. Please list any law school prerequisites required for this project. (e.g., administrative law, family law, immigration and refugee law.)

No formal prerequisites are required to participate in this project.

27. Please list any other requirements or expectations for this project. (e.g., professional or academic background, experience, etc.)

Familiarity with Indigenous history and the cultural nuances particular to environmental issues is considered an asset.

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## SECTION D – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

28. Which project model(s) most accurately describes this project? If the project has multiple activities, please choose a **maximum of 3** project models. In order to obtain the most accurate data, please only select the project models that describe the majority of the project's activities. If the relevant project model is not indicated below, please contact your Program Officer.

- ☐ Public Legal Education (presentations, workshops, podcasts, brochures, blogs, etc.)
- ☒ Research (memoranda used for internal purposes only)
- ☐ Client services (court forms, shadowing, mock hearings, intake, legal clinic, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

29. Which communities does this project serve? Please identify the top **3** communities that this project serves. Please choose the primary (1), secondary (2) and tertiary (3) communities served by selecting 1, 2 or 3 next to the community. This will help us understand gaps in our programming, resource allocation and provide us with information for funding proposals and reports. We understand that due to the intersectionality of identities, it is difficult to rank the top three communities served. Please note that by ranking, you are not prioritizing any issues, or communities. If you would like to add any comments, please use the comment box below.

1. Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
2. Self-represented litigants

Comments:  
Enter text

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For internal Chapter use

Project reviewed and approved by the PBSC Chapter On-site Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
On-Site Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Note: A final/complete copy of this Project Description Form must be provided to the Organization Contact Person, Lawyer Supervisor(s), Student Volunteer(s) and Program Officer at National Office.**