



Black and Indigenous Business Law Clinic

DLA Piper recognizes that by fostering strong values within its workplaces, in its business practices, and in its pro bono initiatives, the firm can have a positive and lasting impact in the communities in which we live and work. While working internally to identify and dismantle implicit biases is an important part of our diversity and inclusion initiatives, actively engaging in our communities is equally critical. As we look outward, we recognize the significant barriers that people of colour and Indigenous peoples may face when entering the corporate world. The path to success is never easy for small businesses, and systemic racism and lack of representation can make it that much more difficult for those businesses owned by people of colour and Indigenous peoples.

In order to make a meaningful contribution to our communities, we believe that we need to create programs that actually reach priority groups. As such, DLA Piper is now accepting applications from qualifying Black- or Indigenous-owned businesses in British Columbia to our newly formed pro bono Black and Indigenous Business Law Clinic (the “Clinic”).

The Clinic will provide qualifying Black and Indigenous founders with practical and timely corporate and commercial legal advice. The Clinic’s focus will be common legal issues encountered by

entrepreneurs and small business owners, including incorporations, structuring, employment matters, e-commerce issues, and basic commercial matters (e.g., non-disclosure agreements, simple lease review, distribution agreements, etc.). The Clinic will also run business law education seminars to help first-time business owners understand some of the risks they should keep in mind as they grow their businesses. The Clinic services in British Columbia will be offered on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam Nations.

Given our extensive experience working with start-ups, we know how valuable early-stage legal advice can be and how far it can go to helping businesses succeed. That being said, legal services are not one-size-fits-all, and we recognize that systemic racism has a significant role in shaping the challenges faced by Black- and Indigenous-business owners. Our expectation, and hope, is that the Clinic services will evolve over time as we work collaboratively with clients to identify and better serve their business needs. We are committed to showing up for our clients having already done our best to educate ourselves on issues that may uniquely affect them, but will always practice with cultural humility. As lawyers at a global law firm, we are the first to admit that we are in a position of extreme privilege and our Clinic providers are unlikely to share our clients' lived experiences - as such, we will continually re-assess our offerings in response to community feedback and demand.

In addition to the immediate opening of the Clinic in British Columbia, we have mid- and long-term plans for expanding the Clinic and its community outreach, including:

- Offering Clinic services in DLA Piper's offices in Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec (2021).
- Providing Black and Indigenous students with mentorship opportunities through the Clinic to help them build relationships within the legal market and local communities (2021).

Through the Clinic, we hope to make a tangible commitment to help combat systemic racism and promote long-term, sustainable changes in Canadian business. We are currently reaching out to Black- and Indigenous-owned businesses and business organizations supporting Black and Indigenous entrepreneurs to raise awareness of the Clinic. In addition, we are looking to form relationships with banks and accounting firms so that we can better assist the Clinic's clients.

If you would like to hear more about the Clinic, the services we offer, or how you can get involved, please contact us at theclinic@dlapiper.com.

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