

ANNUAL REPORT





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Every donation counts.

When you give today to BCCLA, you stand resolutely in the path of those threatening to erode our rights and freedoms in Canada.

To donate via mail, send a cheque to:

BC Civil Liberties Association, 306-268 Keefer Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1X5

We used to include a donation reply card with our Annual Reports. However, to use our limited resources impactfully and reduce the cost of printing this report we have removed it this year. Find more information about Ways to Give at: bccla.org/ways-to-give

Letter from the President



As I reflect on my second year as President, I am again in awe of the extraordinary depth of work the Association takes on, and the remarkable staff who carry it forward with skill, conviction, and

care. The trust placed in us by members, funders, pro-bono counsel, and communities across BC and Canada is something we do not take lightly.

2025 was a year of action and reflection. Our campaigns responded to the moment — defending our courts' role in ensuring democratic accountability, protecting freedom of expression from unprecedented challenges, and standing alongside people facing violations of their *Charter* rights.

Board and staff came together to look ahead at the next five years and develop a strategic plan that honours our

bold legacy while reflecting critically and preparing us for new challenges. We've worked to build a unified vision that responds effectively to the needs of impacted communities and upholds conditions for our exceptional staff to thrive. We emerge energized and clear on our path forward.

I imagine that every BCCLA President, since our founding in 1962, has had to contemplate the troubles of their times. I find both humility and resolve in that thought. Our work to protect civil liberties has always been crucial to the protection of human rights more broadly, and our commitment to promote, defend, sustain, and extend civil liberties and human rights is unwavering.

In hope and solidarity,

Hasan Alam

Letter from the Executive Director



These are perilous times for civil liberties. Amidst an onslaught of distressing news, appalling uses of the *Charter's* notwithstanding clause, unprecedented attacks on free expression and protest,

and government attempts to backtrack on important steps towards advancing reconciliation, BCCLA stayed focused on tackling the roots of these issues.

Governments are evading accountability to the *Charter*, the law, and the people they represent. In 2025, we saw attempts to “sprint” through public consultation on AI regulation, a standstill in RCMP oversight, and the weaponizing of disinformation to pit settlers against Indigenous rights-holders. Political and ideological influences are eroding the structures of free and fair democracy.

We launched our *We're Not(with)standing For This* campaign and video to highlight shifting trends in the use of the notwithstanding clause. We went to court to ensure that commitments to recognizing Indigenous rights in BC have enforceability. We also produced letter-writing campaigns, blog commentary, and our biggest Youth Conference ever — building the critical resistance this moment calls for.

Attacks on our rights and freedoms can make us feel powerless, but it's in these moments that our solidarity and willingness to work across differences matter most. Join us in standing together for a free and just democracy.

With hope and commitment,

Liza Hughes

What We Do



Founded in 1962, BCCLA is Canada's oldest civil liberties organization. We carry a steadfast commitment to protect human rights, with a particular focus on the civil liberties that create conditions for liberty, dignity, and equality to flourish.

BCCLA focuses on the unique relationship between people and the state, and how state actions can impede or promote human rights and civil liberties. Our tools include strategic litigation, policy-based advocacy and law reform, and public legal education.

We advance civil liberties perspectives in a manner that upholds and fosters respect for human rights broadly. We understand civil liberties and other human rights to be mutually reinforcing and equally necessary for the flourishing of society.

BCCLA commits our resources to working on structural issues that generate systemic change. We pay particular attention to the rights of equity-deserving groups, recognizing that groups and individuals who are denied equity are the ones most vulnerable to rights infringements, and that strengthening the guarantee of rights where they are most vulnerable is the strongest approach to protecting rights and liberties for all.

As a distinctly non-partisan organization, our principled positions bridge political divides and speak to fundamental issues at the heart of our democracy, like voting rights, freedom of expression, privacy, bodily autonomy, and equality rights.

We are ready to meet the uncertainty of these times. Attacks on civil liberties are visibly eroding human rights in Canada. BCCLA will meet this moment with strategic clarity, solidarity with those impacted, and the strength of our long history behind us.

We particularly acknowledge our dedicated members and donors who have supported us, challenged us, grown alongside us, and sustained our important work as we tackle a broad range of complex and important issues.

In a time of increasing polarity, we value discourse, debate, and the freedom of expression that enables us to speak truth to power every day.

We envision a future that honours our shared dignity, upholds liberty, achieves lasting justice, and affirms the rights of all — let's build this future together.

BCCLA By The Numbers

28 

policy submissions, open letters,
and testimonies to various levels
of government

33 

active court cases and interventions

1,985 

hours of pro-bono work
contributed from **71 lawyers**

6,718 

publications and resources distributed,
downloaded, or accessed online

1,685 

appearances in media

1,400,000 

views on our top 3 Instagram posts —
our most significant reach to date on
social media

200,314 

website page views from **99,491** users

At BCCLA

2025

was a year of action,
reflection, and solidarity
as we worked to protect
civil liberties and human
rights under threat.



Building Power: Youth Rights & Resistance

Since 2005, BCCLA has hosted an Annual Youth Conference, bringing together high school students from across Vancouver and the Lower Mainland to engage with emerging civil liberties and human rights issues. In 2025, we organized our biggest conference yet, but unfortunately, it didn't go off without a hitch.

Young people are major drivers of social change and often the ones leading important social movements that change all our lives for the better. Yet, they have fewer rights and are unable to vote for the people in power who make decisions that affect them and their futures.

That's why we created a space for young people to come together, develop a deeper understanding of their rights, engage critically in issues that affect them, and walk away feeling equipped with the skills and tools needed to fight for social justice, civil liberties, and human rights.

Every year, we invite community organizations and experts to deliver a wide range of workshops that have included: student journalism, youth worker rights, freedom of expression, Indigenous law, migrant rights, trans and gender diverse youth rights, and youth privacy rights, to name a few.

2025: BCCLA's 20th Youth Conference

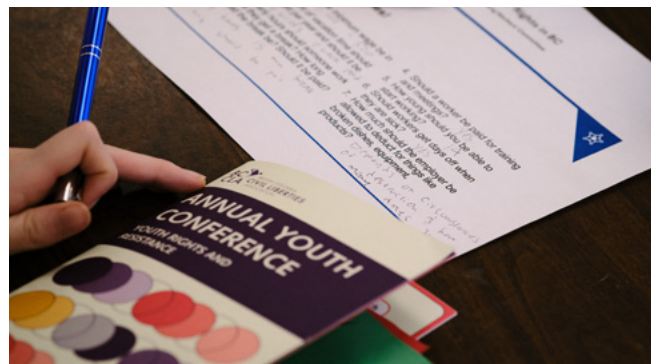
For our twentieth Annual Youth Conference, we worked hard to make it the most impactful conference yet. We invited more students and registered schools from districts that had never attended before. We expanded the number of workshops, which were delivered by the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU), Teachers for Palestine, West Coast LEAF, Vancouver Tenants Union, Rainbow Refugee, the Griffins' Nest, and of course, BCCLA.

We set up a tabling fair, so that students had a chance to engage with all partner organizations involved and not only the ones delivering their chosen two workshops.

We designed and printed a program to give students a memento from the day and a way to reach out to BCCLA and all the organizations who took part.

Misinformation & Disruption

We were lined up to welcome 250 students — our biggest number to date — when, only a week before the event, the BC Ministry of Education spread misinformation about BCCLA and one of our conference presenters: Teachers for Palestine. This workshop was co-facilitated by a Palestinian teacher and an Amazigh Sephardic Jewish educator, and focused on freedom of expression in relation to Palestine in schools.





Without verification, the Ministry claimed that the Teachers for Palestine presenters were associated with Samidoun — an organization listed under Canada's extremely flawed, opaque, and heavily-criticized terrorist listing apparatus.

The Ministry wrote to all high school Superintendents in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, who then wrote to Principals (who passed this message on to teachers and parents) resulting in many schools being instructed not to attend. **Over a hundred students were pulled from the event.**

Surrey's Superintendent told BCCLA: *"Students can access a variety of learning resources to enhance their learning in relation to civil rights which do not involve a risk of potential contact with members of a terrorist organization."*

Despite BCCLA giving the government a chance to correct their admitted mistake, as of yet, no real action has been taken to undo the harm they caused. We succeeded in securing a retraction of the misinformation and an apology, but to date, this retraction does not appear to have been communicated to the teachers and parents of the students no longer allowed to attend our conference.

In our view, this attempted sabotage was an abuse of power, aimed at undermining our efforts to educate youth about censorship, human rights, and community organizing in the face of authoritarianism and government repression.

A Successful Conference Despite the Odds

The erosion of civil liberties we're seeing today is a challenge that demands action. The Ministry of Education's actions highlight this. Young people today are the generation poised to stand up, speak out, and safeguard fundamental rights for years to come. This is why BCCLA has hosted this event for the past 20 years and why we will continue to do so far into the future.

Despite this disruption, we welcomed 150 students last year and had a fantastic day of debate, discussion, and learning. Young people had the chance to meet students from other schools, hear different perspectives, expand their horizons, and gather the tools needed to protect their essential rights and freedoms. We are proud to have faced this attack, stood alongside Teachers for Palestine, and still delivered another successful Youth Conference.

Court Victories in Prisoners' Rights

Every person, regardless of their circumstances, deserves to have their fundamental rights protected. Inside Canada's prisons, these rights are far too often being ignored.

In 2025, important decisions in cases where BCCLA intervened affirmed that these rights need to be defended. These victories strengthened legal protections for prisoners and reinforced the principle that the state must still respect human rights when restricting liberty in prisons.



Strengthening Fairness in Prison Discipline

In a significant victory for fairness in prisons, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that people cannot be subjected to serious disciplinary penalties without the strongest procedural protections. In *John Howard Society of Saskatchewan v Attorney General of Saskatchewan*, the Court confirmed that allegations punishable by segregation or loss of earned remission must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case challenged Saskatchewan's use of a lower standard of proof in prison disciplinary hearings, even when the consequences included segregation or the loss of earned remission, effectively extending a person's

sentence. These penalties carry profound impacts on liberty and well-being, yet were imposed without the same safeguards required in criminal proceedings.



Solitary confinement is an inhumane practice that should be banned in all its forms. While greater procedural protections are welcome, the rights of prisoners will never be truly vindicated until solitary confinement is abolished."

– Vibert Jack, Litigation Director

BCCLA intervened to push for stronger protections, arguing that section 7 of the *Charter* must provide meaningful and independent safeguards when liberty is at stake. We argued that the Court should recognize that, even where other *Charter* rights may not apply, section 7 must fill those gaps to ensure justice.

The court agreed. It ruled that when the consequences are this severe, both section 7 and section 11 of the *Charter* require that allegations must be proven “beyond a reasonable doubt.” This win upheld prisoners’ right to the presumption of innocence and affirmed the need for strong procedural protections before prisoners experience further loss of liberty as a punishment.

Expanding Access to Habeas Corpus

Habeas corpus, often called the “great writ of liberty,” is one of the most powerful tools to challenge unlawful detention. It exists to ensure that no one is deprived of their liberty without meaningful and timely court oversight.

But for many people in prison, that protection has been out of reach.

The case of *Dorsey v Canada* involved two individuals who were denied transfers to lower-security institutions. These decisions have serious consequences. They limit access to certain programming (which is generally only available at lower and medium security levels), reduce chances of parole, and keep people in more restrictive conditions for longer. Yet courts had ruled that these denials did not count as a loss of “residual liberty,” effectively blocking access to *habeas corpus*.

BCCLA intervened to challenge that narrow approach. When decisions have real and lasting impacts on a person’s liberty, they must be open to meaningful review. Anything less undermines the rule of law inside prisons.



To maintain the rule of law, court review must always be available in the case of illegal detentions — and when someone is unlawfully being held in a higher security institution, that’s an illegal detention.

This is particularly important because the evidence shows Indigenous and racialized people are more likely to experience discrimination and be over-secritized in institutions, which has a cascading effect on access to parole and re-integration. Conditions of detention must always be legal, period.”

– Ga Grant, Litigation Staff Counsel

The system that was challenged forced people to rely on slow, ineffective processes that fail to provide timely remedies. This is especially concerning given the disproportionate incarceration of Indigenous and racialized people in Canadian prisons, and the existing systemic barriers they face.

In a victory for expanded access to *habeas corpus*, the Court ruled that denials of security reclassification applications can be reviewed by way of the great writ. This case represents an important step toward ensuring that the rule of law applies meaningfully within prisons and that all deprivations of liberty are subject to timely judicial oversight.



We're not(with)standing for this!

In recent years, our governments have increasingly used section 33 of the *Charter* — the notwithstanding clause — as if it's a hall pass to violate our rights without any accountability. They're invoking the clause to attack minority rights, to evade responsibility, and to pass laws that they know a court would find unconstitutional.

We've been fighting back by working to uphold the crucial role of the courts in deciding if a law violates *Charter* rights, pushing for recognition of the court's role to provide remedies to those harmed by laws invoking the clause, building broader awareness about how the clause is being used politically, and working to mobilize the public to hold our governments to account.

Challenging Governments in Court

The *Charter* puts limits on government power. When governments choose to invoke the notwithstanding clause to pass laws they know violate rights, they are overriding the crucial accountability mechanism of the courts.

Regardless of whether you agree with what a proposed law is trying to achieve, using the notwithstanding clause is an egregious power grab that undermines the checks and balances of our legal system and consolidates power in the government of the day.

There's a battle happening in the courts to retain the judiciary's important role.

In 2024, BCCLA intervened in *UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity v. Saskatchewan* — a constitutional challenge to the Saskatchewan government's use of the notwithstanding clause to enact Bill 137, the so-called "Parents' Bill of Rights", which puts trans youth at risk through a policy that forces teachers to out gender-diverse kids to their parents.

The Saskatchewan government invoked section 33 to pass Bill 137 in 2024 after the Saskatchewan Supreme Court found that the original 2023 policy subjected gender-diverse youth to irreparable harm.

We intervened to protect the rights of trans youth, and to push back against governments' increasingly targeted use of the notwithstanding clause to violate minority

rights today in Canada — including the rights of people, like trans youth, who can't even vote for the elected officials making the calls.

In 2025, we saw a major victory when the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan issued a decision that courts **can** declare that a law is unconstitutional when the notwithstanding clause has been invoked.

This win tells politicians: the public will know when you're passing legislation that violates their rights and will use this information when exercising their voting and protest rights to hold you to account.

BCCLA also argued that the court can offer tangible remedies to those whose rights are violated. This decision gets us one step closer to realizing this.

In 2026, we went to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) to bring the same argument in the biggest case that the SCC has ever heard — 20 parties (including 7 organizations and 7 individuals who brought the challenge) and a staggering 51 intervenors (including BCCLA!).

The case is a constitutional challenge against Quebec's Bill 21 — legislation passed in 2019 and renewed in 2024 using the notwithstanding clause that forbids people who work or want to work in the Quebec public service from wearing religious symbols, including hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes, and crosses. The bill violates *Charter* rights to freedom of religion and expression, and has a disproportionate impact on Muslim women, Sikhs, Jews, and racialized and newcomer communities.

What the heck is the notwithstanding clause?

While the issue of the notwithstanding clause gains increasing attention as it comes to a head at the SCC, there is very little accessible information available for people who don't have legal or political backgrounds.

In 2025, we wanted to build public awareness to help people understand how critical this moment is, and to empower people to fight back, knowing that, throughout Canadian history, people power is truly the only thing that has stopped governments from using the clause.

So, we launched a campaign to do just that.

We created a [10-minute video](#) that dives deep into the clause's history, how it's been used up until now, why what's happening currently is so alarming, and what we can do about it. This video has since been used as a learning tool by schools, universities, and unions. We also shortened the video into an Instagram reel, which was viewed over 13,000 times.



To shift public discourse away from fear and scapegoating towards solidarity and mutual liberation, we asked people across Canada to sign the [Peoples' Pledge](#).

The People's Pledge

"I hereby pledge to stand up for justice, freedom, and equality.

I vow to hold my elected representatives to account, if ever they invoke or threaten to invoke section 33 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* – known as "the notwithstanding clause" – to violate the rights of anyone subject to Canadian law.

I promise to act in defence of the rights of all persons, regardless of whose rights are violated, recognizing that all our rights and freedoms are bound together by the guarantee of the *Charter*."

We started a letter-writing campaign — targeting Alberta Premier's Danielle Smith's rampant use of the clause — to give people a practical tool to speak out and push back. Since then, we've been building on-the-ground connections to support localized momentum.

The work to fight against the use of the notwithstanding clause is far from over, but BCCLA is committed to making sure people know that they are not powerless in the face of this heavy-handed government action.

2025 Work Highlights



Brittany



Jason



Zee



Photo by Luka Cyprian

▶ Jan 30

BCCLA, along with three individual plaintiffs — Zee, Jason, and Brittany — file lawsuit against the City of Vancouver for the city's cruel, dehumanizing, and deadly ban on daytime sheltering

▶ May 14

85 organizations, including BCCLA, call on Prime Minister Trudeau to stop plans to use federal prisons for immigration detention

▶ May 14

Latoya Farrell, BCCLA Policy Staff Counsel (Community), joins John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights' panel 'Pathways to Justice: Strengthening Legal Advocacy for Police Accountability'

▶ March 11

BCCLA joins press conference to speak out against Vancouver Public Library's controversial ban on Palestinian symbols



▶ May 29

Pivot Legal and BCCLA launch toolkit for submitting freedom of information requests to municipal police

January

February

March

April

May

June

▶ Feb 28

BCCLA protects the right for public interest groups to challenge government decisions in court after partnering on an intervention with Animal Justice and Centre for Free Expression in *Democracy Watch v Ontario Integrity Commissioner*

▶ March 13

BCCLA releases statement against the systemic suppression of support for Palestine

▶ April 16

BCCLA issues statement condemning a lawsuit brought by UBC Professors claiming diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) values and land acknowledgements are inconsistent with civil liberties



▶ June 3

Dale Culver's fight for justice moves forward as judge denies officer's *Charter* challenge

▶ Feb 28

BCCLA holds 20th Anniversary Youth Conference: Youth Rights and Resistance

▶ March 14

BCCLA joins #JusticeForJared and supporters in launch of People's Tribunal to investigate police violence against Indigenous peoples across BC

▶ June 16

BCCLA holds Annual General Meeting, welcoming new board members Kareem Hassib and Mark Iyengar

▶ July 18

BCCLA celebrates Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R v IM* and *R v SB* upholding protections for youth in sentencing



▶ July 28

BCCLA is granted Interested Person status in precedent-setting 'Flying While Black' case, *Francis v Air Canada*

▶ Sept 9

BCCLA launches 'We're not(with) standing for this' campaign with new video "What the heck is the notwithstanding clause?" to educate people in Canada on section 33 of the *Charter*



▶ Oct 31

BCCLA joins over 40 civil society and human rights groups in rejecting the federal government's "national sprint" consultation on AI strategy



▶ Dec 5

First Nations Leadership Council and BCCLA congratulate and uplift Gitxaala and Ehattesaht Nations on landmark BC Court of Appeal victory



July

August

September

October

November

December

▶ Aug 11

BCCLA welcomes Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision that courts can declare that a law violates *Charter* rights when section 33 — the "notwithstanding clause" — has been invoked

▶ Sept 19

BCCLA launches letter-writing campaign calling for the Federal government's unfounded, biased, and authoritarian decision to bar Irish-language rap group Kneecap from Canada to be reversed

▶ Nov 5 & 14

BCCLA presents Know Your Rights workshops for the Central Interior Native Health Society

▶ Dec 16

BCCLA celebrates win for religious freedom in Alberta Court of Appeal decision finding oath of allegiance to the sovereign of Canada for lawyers being called to the bar unconstitutional in *Warring v Alberta*

▶ June 18

BCCLA sends joint open letter to Prime Minister and other Federal leaders demanding the federal government abandon Bill C-2



▶ Nov 25

BCCLA publishes Volume 60 of re-designed DEMCOM newsletter

A Watershed Moment for our Civil Liberties

Protecting fundamental freedoms is crucial to ensuring all people in Canada can engage in public discourse, challenge systems of oppression, and sustain a healthy democracy. During 2025, BCCLA continued to witness deeply concerning and widespread suppression of free expression in support of Palestine. Here are some of the ways that we took action.

A Statement on Suppression of Support for Palestine

In March, we issued [a statement](#) condemning the systemic suppression of support for Palestine.

“Over the past 16 months we have witnessed a widespread pattern of professional discipline, loss of educational and training opportunities, censure, harassment, and the criminalization of individuals who have exercised their right to free political expression in calling Israel’s actions in Gaza a genocide and demanding those actions cease. Such heavy-handed responses cast a chilling shadow over civil liberties and advocacy for Palestinian human rights across Canada.”

In it, we looked at how seemingly individual instances of suppression — like Vancouver Public Library’s staff ban on watermelon symbols, or police cautioning of lawyers and journalists for pro-Palestine social media posts — painted a broader picture of a nation silencing free dialogue and dissent on its foreign policy.

We wrote about Samidoun’s addition to Canada’s Listed Terrorist Entities and how the government uses this problematic tool to stifle free expression. BCCLA has long opposed this flawed tool, which is riddled with accountability gaps and violates *Charter*-protected due process rights.

We condemned antisemitism and looked at how the broad application and acceptance of the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s \(IHRA\)](#) definition of antisemitism, which erroneously conflates criticism of actions of the state of Israel with antisemitism, has enabled this crackdown on support for Palestine.

Kneecap’s Travel Ban

In September, MP Vince Gasparro — Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime) — announced that Irish-language rap group Kneecap were barred from entering Canada, citing “the advocating of political violence, terrorism or antisemitism and hate more broadly.” He claimed to be speaking “on behalf of the Government of Canada.”

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada have since said that only one band member’s travel application was cancelled for inadmissibility in August due to “omitting to disclose complete and accurate information on his application.” The two other band members’ applications were still under review.

In November 2025, the Prime Minister’s Office and the Canada Border Services Agency said they were not “involved” or “consulted” in the parliamentary secretary’s announcement.

BCCLA immediately challenged this travel ban. In our view, it was unfounded, biased, and authoritarian; another example of the systematic targeting of voices



speaking out against genocide. Our Instagram statement was viewed by over 1.3 million people. If this ban stands, it sets a dangerous precedent around government censorship of artistic expression.

Soon after, we launched a letter-writing campaign to demand the Prime Minister, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Minister of Public Safety, Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), and MP Gasparro reverse this decision.

5,271 people answered our call, sending 26,766 emails to almost every MP in Canada. MP Jenny Kwan — who received the most emails — wrote to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and later published an open letter to the Prime Minister raising questions about transparency, process integrity, and political interference in Canada’s immigration system.

Biased Police Complaint Investigation

In 2024, BCCLA and Pivot Legal Society filed a complaint asserting that the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) violated policies and procedures while infringing the protest rights of people expressing support for Palestinian human rights.

The Police Board appointed retired VPD Deputy Chief Constable Robert Rolls as the “external” investigator. Mr. Rolls produced a biased report, which uncritically adopted the VPD’s position, made no effort to gather evidence from affected community members, relied on VPD research and analysis, ignored inconvenient parts of the complaint and effectively re-wrote others, and failed to address how surveillance impedes the right to free expression.

His report concluded that *“BCCLA and Pivot are correct in their assertion that pro-Palestine protests have*

come to be policed differently than...other human rights demonstrations,” illustrating the systemic racism embedded in BC’s policing and oversight mechanisms.

Data from the report shows alleged *Criminal Code* violations were recorded at less than 5% of Palestine demonstrations in 2024, resulting in no convictions. Yet over 68% of all surveillance drone deployments for protests and events that year targeted Palestine solidarity demonstrations.

BCCLA, Pivot, and West Coast LEAF called on the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) to ask for an independent investigation by an impartial investigator, but it declined to do so.

A Fight Worth Fighting

Universities exist to foster open debate and discourse, not to silence dissent. In October 2025, BCCLA intervened in a case involving Vancouver Island University (VIU) and the two-year suspension of a student protestor who participated in on-campus protest activities in solidarity with Palestine. Of the approximately 20 students involved in the action, the only two disciplined were Palestinian.

BCCLA argued that universities are bound by the *Charter* when determining student access to education and must consider students’ fundamental rights and freedoms when issuing discipline.

In December, the BC Supreme Court upheld VIU’s decision, stating the University has the independence to regulate disciplinary processes and that the *Charter* was not applicable.

Student protest is a critical driver of societal and political change. BCCLA will not stop working to protect freedom of expression on campus.

Protecting Democratic Participation

The right to vote is at the core of our democratic system. However, obtaining and even exercising this right has been a hard-fought battle for many. During 2025, BCCLA fought to protect our voting rights, improve transparency in Election Canada's accountability processes, and expand voting rights for those currently excluded.

Defending Voting Rights in Nunavik

During the federal election on April 28, 2025, polling stations in the riding of Abitibi–Baie–James–Nunavik–Eeyou were reported to have been closed at the last minute or, in some cases, not opened at all. That Inuit communities were stripped of their right to vote is a deep affront to both democracy and reconciliation. As is far too often the case, the consequences of government failures are being borne by Indigenous people.

Elections Canada cited weather affecting workers' flights as the reason for the voting failure, but did not take any immediate action to address the issue. This lack of action is another example of routine political abandonment of Indigenous communities — from the lack of access to clean drinking water in Grassy Narrows to the BC government's walking back of DRIPA. The Makivik Corporation called for Elections Canada to investigate the closures.



Every community's votes matter, and every community deserves equal support in casting their ballots. This is especially the case for Indigenous voters, who were denied the ability to participate in Canadian elections for far too long."

– Aislin Jackson, Policy Staff Counsel

BCCLA submitted a formal complaint to Elections Canada demanding information about what legal authority Elections Canada used to close the polling stations and what action it planned to take to remedy this harm. Alongside the complaint, we launched a letter-writing campaign, giving our supporters and the public at large a chance to raise their concerns and call for Elections Canada to investigate this voting failure.

Over 300 complaints were sent from BCCLA supporters and members alone.

Elections Canada's initial response to our letter-writing campaign outlined that their role was to administer the Canada Elections Act, and *"not [to] conduct enforcement activities, such as investigations."* Yet in a statement issued a week earlier, its Chief Electoral Officer said that *"Elections Canada will review the circumstances that led to this situation....and publish the findings."* This apparent contradiction gave BCCLA pause over whether these poll closures would truly be fully explored, and any issues effectively addressed before the next election. We made further inquiries and confirmed that the Elections Integrity Unit of Elections Canada was tasked to look into it. We wrote again to the Chief Electoral Officer to maintain pressure and call for better transparency.

In November 2025, the [review](#) findings were published, and Elections Canada admitted that these poll closures were due to *"a lack of adequate planning and engagement with Nunavik communities combined with oversight issues at headquarters."* The Chief Electoral Officer has committed to *"acting on the inquiry's*

recommendations and doing the important work needed to better understand and serve northern communities, particularly in Nunavik, in future elections.”

Elections Canada cited the “362 complaints [received] between April 28 and May 8, 2025” as a reason for the inquiry,

alongside letters of complaint from both the Kativik Regional Government and the Makivvik Corporation.

BCCLA will continue monitoring how Election Canada implements these recommendations.

Expanding the Right to Vote

In July 2025, BCCLA made a submission to the Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform (the Committee) with three key policy recommendations to strengthen democratic inclusion: extend voting rights to permanent residents, lower the voting age to 16, and conduct electoral reform without referenda.

Permanent residents live, work, pay taxes, send their children to school, and contribute to the social and cultural fabric of their communities. Yet, they are excluded from the most fundamental expression of democracy: the right to vote.

At 16, many young people want to be active members in the democratic process. Youth vote at higher rates when embedded in their home communities, and research from Austria, Germany, and Scotland shows that allowing youth to vote increases levels of civic engagement and long-term voter turnout.

Electoral reform is fundamentally a matter of democratic justice. It determines how power is distributed and how meaningfully the people are represented. By placing the burden of electoral reform solely on referenda, elected officials avoid their responsibility to make the necessary policy reforms required for the protection and representation of marginalized people's rights.



While referenda may seem to democratize the process, they often oversimplify complex policy questions, entrench the status quo, and risk marginalizing voices with less access to public platforms.”

– Meghan McDermott, Policy Director

The Committee included reference to our submission in their first report: *Towards a Stronger Democracy in BC* and recommended further examination into extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds, as well as permanent residents in BC.

In the past, arguments against extending the right to vote have been used to exclude women, Indigenous peoples, and other minorities from the right to vote. We must resist this logic of exclusion and ensure all members of our society are represented in our democratic institutions.

Shelter is Survival

In January 2025, BCCLA joined forces with three individual plaintiffs — Jason, Zee, and Brittany — and filed a lawsuit against the City of Vancouver to challenge the city's cruel, dehumanizing and deadly ban on daytime outdoor sheltering.

It's well established through BC courts that people have a constitutional right to shelter outdoors when there is no sufficient shelter available. So, when people have nowhere to go, they have the right to shelter themselves in public spaces. Yet, people are still left vulnerable during the day, forced to pack up their lives or face state violence and displacement.

BCCLA took a different approach to the launch of this case; rather than the typical press release and press interview structure, we worked in partnership with the individual plaintiffs to develop a trauma-informed media engagement strategy.

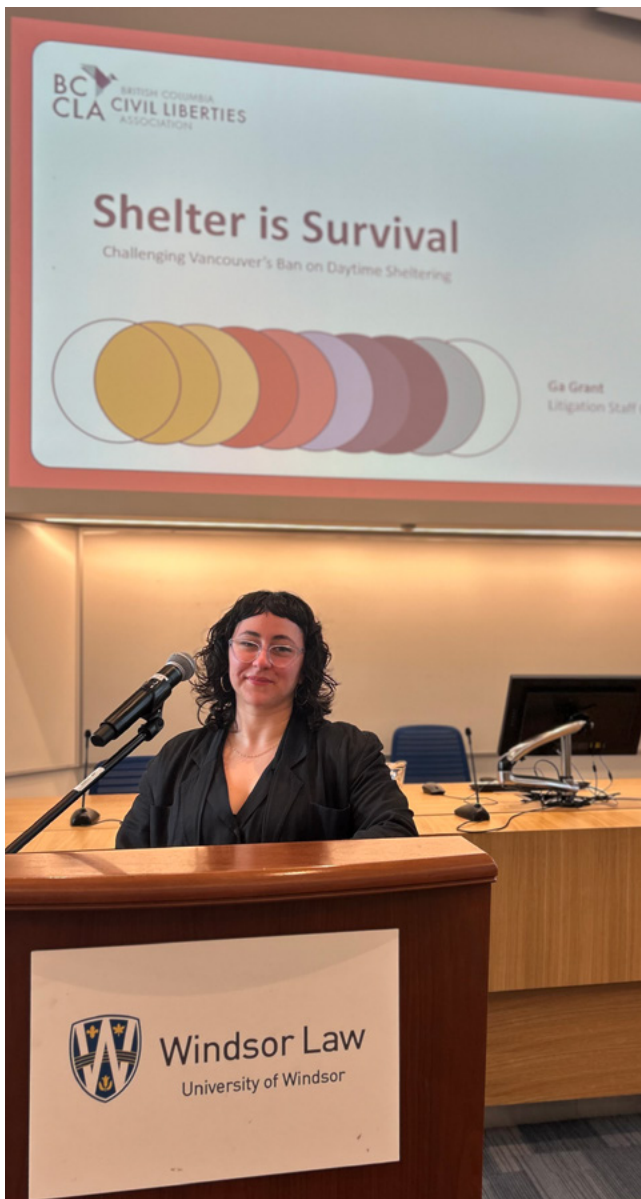
We prepared an extensive media package with high-quality, media-ready photos, video and audio clips that outlets could use at their discretion. This approach worked to overcome barriers to inclusion that often prevent people who are marginalized and facing complex challenges from participating in media interviews, and to ensure the perspectives of our fellow plaintiffs were centered with care.

As 2025 came to a close, we launched a fundraising campaign to support the hard work of this case. The outpouring of support for our fundraising appeal was incredible. It proved the dedication of our members and donors, and the shared will to act against the cruel and deadly ban on daytime sheltering.

Though this case is challenging the daytime sheltering ban in Vancouver, we hope that as it progresses through the courts, it creates a precedent that secures impactful change for unhoused communities across Canada.

Our work in and around this case is built upon the efforts and legacy of unhoused community members showing up for each other, providing for and protecting each other, and continuing to fight for their collective rights in the face of a system that dehumanizes and discards them. This legal case is for them.

Shelter is safety, shelter is stability, shelter is dignity, shelter is community, shelter is survival.



▶ As 2025 progressed, so did this precedent-setting case and our work around encampments:

▶ January 30

BCCLA and fellow plaintiffs file our constitutional challenge against the City of Vancouver.

▶ March 17

BCCLA receives the City's response, which echoed the same tired language to justify their violent policing.

▶ March 25

BCCLA Litigation Staff Counsel Ga Grant presents Shelter is Survival workshop at University of Windsor Faculty of Law.

▶ April

BCCLA finds pro-bono counsel to represent Prince George, BC encampment residents in an injunction hearing.

▶ April (and ongoing)

Zee, Jason, and Brittany begin meeting regularly with BCCLA and our lawyers on the case to go over updates and next steps.

▶ May 26

The Province advises BCCLA that it will be participating in the case. The Attorney General has the right to be a party when a law is challenged as being unconstitutional.

▶ June 16

BCCLA sends letter to the City of Kelowna over disturbing treatment of residents of Kelowna Tent City, and supports community advocates with media interviews.

▶ July 16

BCCLA supports launch of the Ayx Community Bus — a peer-led warming/cooling bus, organized by former residents of CRAB Park and people deeply connected to the DTES, aimed to help people experiencing homelessness beat the heat and access supplies.

▶ August 14

Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) files for leave to intervene with a similar position to the City of Vancouver.

▶ August 15

Plaintiffs deliver a list of documents; the first step in the discovery process. Discovery is the pre-trial process for parties to exchange information about the evidence they will be relying on in court to make their case. This includes things like exchanging documents, examining representatives, and presenting expert reports.

▶ September 23

Case management conference occurs. This conference is a meeting between the parties and a judge to set a plan for moving the case forward, such as filing deadlines and trial dates (expected to occur in spring of 2027).

▶ November

BCCLA provides legal research support for a non-profit in Smithers, BC on the denial of supportive housing building permits.

▶ November 1

BCCLA travels to Duncan to support local communities in preparation for community meetings on decampment law.

▶ December 2 – 14

BCCLA launches fundraising campaign in support of the case, with a goal of \$15,000 – which we surpassed, raising an astounding \$20,135!

Reconciliation Requires Action: Gitxaala v British Columbia

Reconciliation isn't built on empty promises. It requires that Indigenous rights be recognized and respected in law and in practice. In 2025, a landmark court decision helped bring BC one step closer to fulfilling its commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) to align its laws with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP).

Gitxaala v British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner) was a case concerning the Gitxaala and Ehattesaht Nations' appeals regarding the Province's *Mineral Tenure Act*. The Act allows prospective miners to register mineral claims for a mere \$1.75 per hectare without the notice, consultation, or consent of First Nations. BCCLA partnered with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) to intervene due to the case's far-reaching implications for how Indigenous rights are respected and upheld.

FNLC and BCCLA argued that courts must play a meaningful role in the implementation of DRIPA. Courts interpreting BC laws should either interpret them consistently with UNDRIP or explicitly say when this is not possible in order to provide the opportunity for inconsistent laws to be amended. If laws can't be tested for consistency with UNDRIP, this leaves no legal pathway to hold the government accountable to DRIPA's promises.



The work of truth and reconciliation is now and it belongs to us all, including the judiciary. There is no reason why DRIPA should not be legally enforceable when the government is shirking its duty to align the laws of BC with the rights and standards set out in UNDRIP."

– Veronica Martisius, Litigation Staff Counsel

The BC Court of Appeal agreed. In its groundbreaking decision, the Court affirmed that DRIPA incorporates UNDRIP into BC law and that courts can assess whether provincial laws are consistent with it. The Court also confirmed that the government has an obligation to consult cooperatively with Indigenous peoples to resolve any inconsistencies.



This decision is a significant step forward. It strengthens access to justice for First Nations and Indigenous peoples and reinforces that reconciliation is a process that must be reflected in law. But this fight is far from over. The BC government has applied to appeal the decision and is threatening to backtrack on the legislation it once hailed as the framework for reconciliation. In response, BCCLA has joined over 130 civil society organizations in calling on Premier Eby to hit the brakes on any proposed legislative amendments to DRIPA.

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

Thank You



BCCLA's impact in 2025 was a collaborative effort made possible by the incredible work of our dedicated staff, board, pro bono counsel, wide network of supporters, and community members who shared their expertise and entrusted us with their stories and experiences. We share our deep gratitude to our community partners who work alongside us, share knowledge and resources, and come together to build movements beyond what any one of us could achieve alone.

Thank you to everyone, especially our cherished donors and members who stood alongside us in 2025, for your trust, resilience, and dedication.

Pro-Bono Counsel:

Alexander Kirby	Katie Duke
Anna Lund	Kyle Thompson
Avnish Nanda	Lindsay Waddell
Bijon Roy	Mani Kakkar
Caroline Senini	Mannu Chowdhury
Cherlene Eloria	Mark Phillips
Cynthia Khoo	Michael Fenrick
Daniel Song	Nadia Effendi
David Wu	Nikolas De Stefano
Declan Redman	Noah Ross
Emily McKinnon	Nusra Khan
Emily McBain-Ashfield	Paul Champ
Emily Wang	Rosanne Kyle
Erica Olmstead	Safiyya Ahmed
Evelyn Tsao	Saheli Sodhi
Frances Mahon	Samara Sector
Frank Addario	Spencer Taylor-Robins
Greg Del Bigio	Sujit Choudhry
James Foy	Tabir Malik
James Mager	Teagan Markin
Jamie Thornback	Tim Dickson
Jason Gratl	Toby Rauch-Davis
Joelle Walker	Vincent Larochelle
Julia Riddle	Wassim Garzouzi
Karen Segal	
Kartiga Thavaraj	

Intervention Partners:

First Nations Leadership Council
Animal Justice
Centre for Free Expression

Pro-Bono & Summer Students:

Amrith David
Cale Laranjeiras
Eisha Sangha
Helena Minsky
Marko Stefanov
Tabby Beesley

Former Staff:

Kathleen Yang, Interim Communications & Outreach Manager

Former Board of Directors:

Derek Brackley

Funders:

BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU)
Canadian Bar Association (CBA)
Canadian Internet Regulation Authority (CIRA)
Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)
Court Challenge Program
Community Gaming
CUPE BC
Law Foundation of British Columbia
The Notary Foundation
The Vancouver Foundation

STAND WITH US

SUPPORT BCCLA

For over 60 years, BCCLA has tackled issues at the heart of civil liberties and human rights. Today, as our hard-won rights and freedoms come gravely under attack, we are determined to stand resolute and fight back.

We are a small but dedicated team working tirelessly to protect civil liberties and human rights, but none of our work would be possible without the support of our donors. As it was in our earliest days, your support now is crucial to sustaining our pursuit of justice, liberty, and equality for all.

BECOME A DONOR

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of folks like you. We have our work cut out for us, but with your support we can meet the moment and act boldly in defense of our rights and freedoms.

With our donors behind us, together we can fight for our shared vision of a just future.

CONTRIBUTE MONTHLY

Achieving lasting change can take years – our monthly donors are with us for the long haul.



Become a monthly donor and strengthen your support for the hard work ahead.

bccla.org/ar2025

Become a Member

There's strength in numbers. Join a growing community of people committed to protecting, sustaining, and expanding human rights and civil liberties in Canada. Members can join BCCLA's Board, vote at our Annual General Meeting, receive BCCLA publications, and get early invites to special events. Become a member today:

bccla.org/become-a-member

Leave a Legacy Gift

Leaving a gift to BCCLA in your will is a powerful way to extend the values you cherish beyond the here and now, well into the future. Legacy gifts ensure that we can continue to grow and plan for the years ahead with confidence.

Learn more at: bccla.org/ways-to-give

Financial Statement

Statement of operations and changes in fund balances

Year ended December 31

	2025				2024
	General Fund	Stabilization Fund	Trust Fund	Total	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
REVENUE					
Grants earned	654,924	—	—	654,924	397,662
Membership and donations	592,950	—	—	592,950	648,789
Law Foundation of B.C. – operating grant	437,000	—	—	437,000	484,500
Net investment income	2	86,066	337,725	423,793	333,554
Distributions BCCLA Legacy Trust Fund	300,000	—	—	300,000	185,000
Litigation recovery	32,584	—	—	32,584	47,695
Amortization of deferred contributions	13,624	—	—	13,624	10,200
Endowment distributions	10,612	—	—	10,612	8,330
Miscellaneous and special events	655	—	—	655	761
	2,042,351	86,066	337,725	2,466,142	2,116,491
EXPENSES					
Salaries and benefits	1,635,232	—	—	1,635,232	1,485,500
Rent and utilities	75,626	—	—	75,626	84,913
Office operating	64,784	—	—	64,784	58,474
Amortization	44,533	—	—	44,533	41,768
Accounting and audit	38,447	—	—	38,447	37,777
Publications	30,993	—	—	30,993	22,119
Database	25,820	—	—	25,820	24,903
Litigation costs	23,413	—	—	23,413	27,519
Contract fees	15,926	—	—	15,926	37,273
Events	11,528	—	—	11,528	11,403
Fundraising	10,006	—	—	10,006	5,878
Insurance	6,097	—	—	6,097	5,904
Bank and donation processing charges	5,776	—	—	5,776	4,818
Departmental development	5,590	—	—	5,590	14,714
Partner contributions	2,662	—	—	2,662	3,729
	1,996,433	—	—	1,996,433	1,866,692
Excess of revenue for the year	45,918	86,066	337,725	469,709	249,799
	45,918	86,066	337,725	469,709	249,799
Fund balances, beginning of year	324,018	417,389	1,513,029	2,254,436	2,004,637
Fund balances, end of year	369,936	503,455	1,850,754	2,724,145	2,254,436

The 2025 Financial Statements have been approved by the BCCLA Board and will be presented to our membership at the 2026 AGM on June 11.



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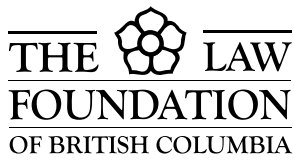
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We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia and generous support of the Law Foundation of BC in producing this Annual Report.

The BC Civil Liberties Association's main office is located on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people and səliłwətaɬ (Tseil-Waututh) Nation, and the Skwxwú7mesh sníchim speaking Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). These lands and the languages derived from them were never freely given up for settler occupation. As a predominantly settler organization, we acknowledge our complicity in colonial violence through our continued occupation of these lands. Our work spans the traditional territories of hundreds of Nations. We are grateful for their stewardship, including ongoing resistance to the destruction of these lands. We believe that the realization of human rights and civil liberties can never be achieved until the Indigenous Peoples of these lands can be fully self-determined. In this spirit, we pledge to use our resources to oppose violations of the rights and freedoms of Indigenous people now and in the future.

The Annual Report is a publication of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. Established in 1962, BCCLA is the oldest civil liberties associations in Canada. Our mandate is to promote, defend, maintain, and extend civil liberties and human rights in British Columbia and Canada.

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