



BLACK LAW STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
L'ASSOCIATION DES ÉTUDIANTS
NOIRS EN DROIT DU CANADA

2022-2023 Funding Report

Prepared by:
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National Treasurer 2022-2023

Forward & Upward, Bending the Arch Towards Justice



A Note From Our *Alumni*

Dear BLSA Canada Sponsors,

As alumni of the Black Law Students' Association of Canada (BLSA), it is a source of immense pride to witness the growth and impact of the organization over the years. BLSA is a community of driven and passionate individuals dedicated to promoting the interests of Black law students and legal professionals across Canada.

Being part of this organization is an experience that stays with you *long after you graduate*. It's a feeling of being part of something bigger than oneself, a feeling of being part of a community that cares deeply about issues affecting Black people in the legal profession and beyond.



*Together we change
the face of law.*

Over the years, BLSA Canada has continued to grow and transform into something we never could have imagined. It has been inspiring to watch each new board leave a lasting mark on the organization. From *humble beginnings* to becoming one of the most influential long-standing student-run organizations in Canada, BLSA has continued to innovate and overcome challenges to leave its mark on the legal profession.

BLSA Canada's impact on the legal profession has been profound, with numerous initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering Black law students and legal professionals. From organizing (what was once small) conferences and seminars to providing mentorship and networking opportunities, BLSA Canada has helped changed the face of law.

As alumni, we are proud to have been part of this organization and to have contributed to its *growth and success*. BLSA Canada gave us sense of belonging and a network of support that will last a lifetime. I am confident that BLSA Canada will continue to grow and thrive, and produce the Black leaders of tomorrow.

- BLSA Canada Alumni

A Note From the Outgoing *Board*

Dear BLSA Canada Members & Supporters,

As outgoing executives of BLSA Canada, we are proud of the organization's growth and impact over the years. BLSA Canada has been a community of *passionate and dedicated* individuals; BLSA Canada has been a family. This year, we worked tirelessly to leave our impact; we worked hard to leave something meaningful behind for those who will come after us.

Being a BLSA Canada board member has been a transformative experience for us, leaving us with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment. As we reflect on our time with the organization, we are inspired by the impact we are able to leave behind. We are thankful for the friendships and bonds that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives.



It is no secret that being on BLSA Canada requires hard work and dedication. Knowing that there was 32 years of blood, sweat and tears that came before us motivated us to go above and beyond. No doubt we had big shoes to fill this year, and we hope our alumni and future board members are proud of the progress we have made.

As outgoing members, we have been privileged to witness firsthand the dedication and hard work of BLSA's members, who have *worked tirelessly* to make the organization what it is today. We are confident that BLSA Canada will continue to thrive and make a positive impact on the community for years to come.

As we move on to the next chapter of our lives, we take with us the valuable experiences and friendships, skills and lessons we have received gained. We are grateful to have been afforded the privilege to serve our community through BLSA Canada, and we *look forward to seeing what the future holds*.

- BLSA Canada National
Board (2022-2023)

Empowering *Change*

BLSA Canada is committed to empowering change by advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Through our initiatives, programs, and partnerships, we are working to create a more equitable and just legal system for all. We provide a platform for Black law students and legal professionals to connect, learn, and grow, and we offer resources and support to help them succeed in their careers. By empowering Black legal professionals to excel, we are helping to create a more diverse and inclusive legal profession, which in turn benefits society as a whole. We believe that everyone has the potential to make a positive impact on the world, and we are committed to helping our members realize that potential.



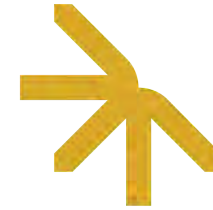
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Highlights From 2022-23

It has been an incredible year of progress, milestones and new beginnings for BLSA Canada.



SOCIAL EVENTS



Members of the executive team at the BLSA Canada Social event hosted in Downtown Toronto

SPONSORSHIP MEETINGS



Members of the executive team attending a meeting at McCarthy Tétrault's Toronto office.

EXECUTIVE RETREAT



Executive team members are attending BLSA Canada's Annual Retreat.



WE HOSTED OUR
LARGEST EVER
CONFERENCE

BOLSTERING CHAPTER FUND

BLSA Canada recently bolstered its Chapter Fund model, an initiative designed to provide financial support to BLSA chapters nationwide, by developing a disbursement model to ensure that funding is distributed equitably and transparently based on the needs of each chapter. The Chapter Fund has already provided nearly \$13,000 in funding to chapters in various cities, enabling them to host events, participate in conferences, and engage with local communities. This initiative is a testament to BLSA Canada's commitment to supporting the development and growth of its chapters, and to promoting community and solidarity on a grassroots level.

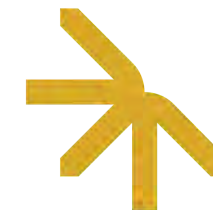
GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

This year, BLSA Canada was actively involved in the federal government's pre-budget consultations, where we advocated for issues affecting Black law students and the wider Black community. BLSA Canada's pre-budget submission called for increased investment in the education and training of Black lawyers and law students, as well as support for programs and initiatives that address systemic racism and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. BLSA Canada also spoke with the Department of Justice on its Black Criminal Justice Strategy and our advocacy efforts highlight the need for meaningful action to address the ongoing barriers faced by Black Canadians.

CENSUS REPORT

The BLSA Canada Black Law Student Census Report is a novel research project that examines the experiences and challenges faced by Black law students in Canada. The report provides valuable data on issues such as representation, equity, and inclusivity within Canadian law schools. BLSA Canada aims to conduct this research project every few years to track progress and identify areas for improvement. The report is a critical resource for Canadian law schools, policymakers, and stakeholders who are dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession.

THE BLSA *Impact*



At BLSA Canada, we are committed to empowering change by providing resources that create sustainable impact both domestically and internationally. Our programs, such as the National Conference and the Chapter Fund, offer valuable resources and support to help students succeed and make a positive impact in their communities. Nationally, our mentorship program provides critical support in the form of mentorship to help Black Law Students thrive in their careers. By providing these resources and programs, we are working to create a more equitable and just legal profession for future generation of lawyers.

On average, only 4 per cent of contributions go toward administrative costs. Having such a low administrative rate means we are able to focus on creating sustainable change where it matters most.

BLSA Canada's national scope allows us to focus on breaking the cycle of systemic barriers that have historically burdened Black law students and lawyers. We seek to develop communities through holistic, sustainable solutions and advocacy.

In law schools across Canada, BLSA Canada works to engage hundreds of Black law students through programming that focuses on developing the students of today into future change-makers and leaders in the legal profession.

We want to provide every Black law student with the resources and skills not just to change their own lives, but to positively affect the lives of others in their communities—at home and across Canada. By providing Black law students with opportunities and tools for success, we help empower them to further educate, advocate and innovate to solve the issues facing our world.

96%

of revenues support our programming.

4%

goes toward our administrative costs.



TRANSFORM THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

Develop inspired agents of change committed to addressing issues of systemic racism in the legal profession.

EMPOWER BLACK LAW STUDENTS

Equip Black law students with the core career skills, network and opportunities needed to succeed.

REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Facilitate scholarship funds to help offset the cost of attending law school and advocate for increased representation within law schools.



Pillars of *Impact*

Mentorship, community, experience, and support play vital roles in helping Black law students achieve their goals. We provide guidance, networks, practical experience, and resources to navigate systemic barriers and discrimination. Our support ensures that our members can thrive in their careers in law and beyond.



Community

As Black law students pursue their education, they equip themselves with the knowledge, confidence, and determination to advance their careers, uplift their communities, and inspire future generations. In addition to providing resources for legal education, we offer support by providing a vibrant community and network. This allows for career development, mentorship, and extracurricular activities that foster a sense of community and well-being. This comprehensive approach ensures that Black Law Students are equipped to succeed in their studies and future legal careers.



In 2023, we hosted a number of community events including are largest conference ever which saw more than 500+ attendees from across Canada and the United States.



Experience

Access to practical legal experience through internships, externships, and other opportunities can help Black law students build their skills, confidence, and networks. Practical experience can also help students identify their interests and goals within the legal profession. BLSA Canada is proud to host several student competitions that will help students stand out in this competitive job market.



In 2023, BLSA Canada submitted a proposal to the federal government for a wage subsidy that will allow us to hire two summer research students.



Mentorship

Mentorship plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of Black law students. It is incumbent upon all of us to assume the role of a mentor and assist those who are striving to catch up with us. Through the BLSA Canada mentorship program, we are able to provide professional support law students and legal professionals from Black and other underrepresented communities. Our mentorship program is designed to provide mentorship, guidance, and support to Black law students across Canada.



By the end of 2023, BLSA Canada will have matched more than 150 Black law students with mentors.



Support

Black law students face systemic barriers and discrimination that can affect their academic and professional success. Access to academic, financial, and emotional support can help students navigate these challenges and overcome obstacles to achieve their goals.



In 2023, BLSA Canada Partnered with BMO to distribute \$10,000 in scholarships to Black Law Students across the country.

Annual *Financials*

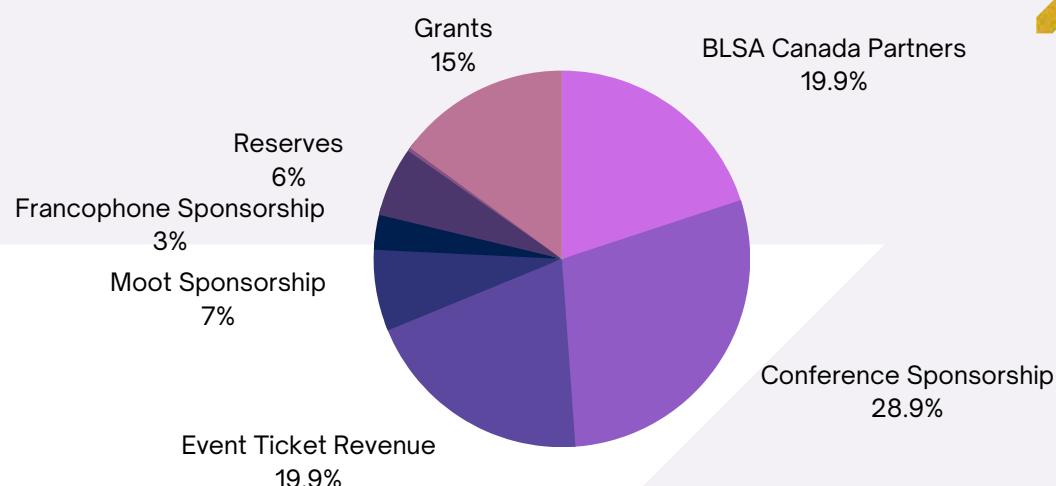
Our fundraising model reflects our vision for sustainable development and empowering Black law students across Canada

By honouring every donation, general sponsorship and the BLSA Canada partnership program, we are developing a leading standard of financial responsibility that ensures all contributions are spent effectively.

Your contributions to BLSA Canada is an investment in the future of the legal profession. We use an asset-based approach to development, so instead of BLSA Canada members being passive recipients of aid, they are empowered to lead the change.

SOURCES OF INCOME*

We are, effective and transparent.



* Please note that these figures are approximations. BLSA Canada's year-end is March 31st. Our Accountants are still in the process of finalizing our financial statements.

Our sponsors play a vital role in supporting the work that we do at BLSA Canada. Their generous contributions help us to fund our initiatives, programs, and events, and empower us to create positive change in the legal profession and in society as a whole. In addition to their financial support, our sponsors provide us with valuable resources, expertise, and networks that help us to achieve our goals and expand our reach. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our sponsors, and we recognize that without their contributions, we would not be able to make the impact that we do.

EXPENDITURE OF INCOME*

We are sustainable, transformative and impactful.

4%	Operational Expenses	\$23,813.68
81%	Conference Expenses	\$444,947.39
8%	Moot Expenses	\$43,751.57
4%	Francophone Expenses	\$24,343.11
3%	Chapter Fund Disbursements	\$14,673.86

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

\$551,529.61

* Please note that these figures are approximations. BLSA Canada's year end is March 31st. Our Accountants are still in the process of finalizing our financial statements.

BLSA CANADA PARTNERSHIPS

BLSA Canada has established partnerships with several law firms that share our commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Through these multi-year partnerships, we can achieve a high level of financial efficiency, which empowers us to maximize the impact of our initiatives and programs.

Our partnerships with law firms enable us to maintain financial stability and sometimes receive pro bono legal services to assist us in our efforts, which helps to advance our mission and achieve our goals. In addition, our partners allow us to tap into their expertise, resources, and networks to support our programs and initiatives.

We are proud of our partner firms for sharing our values and vision and helping us change the face of law. Together, we are positively impacting Black students, the legal profession and society as a whole.

Learn more about BLSA Canada's Partners at www.blsacanada.com/blsa-partners.



Francophone *Events*



CIVIL LAW SYMPOSIUM

The 2023 BLSA Canada Civil Law Symposium was a resounding success, bringing together the most attendees in its history. The Symposium brought together legal professionals and students from across the country to discuss critical issues in civil law. The symposium featured a range of panels and workshops, covering topics such as access to justice, human rights, and environmental law. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from prominent legal professionals and policymakers, including judges, lawyers, and government officials. The event was also attended by the President of the Quebec Bar.

The symposium also provided a platform for law students to connect with legal professionals and learn about career opportunities in civil law. Overall, the 2023 BLSA Canada Civil Law Symposium was a valuable learning experience and a testament to the organization's commitment to supporting our Francophone members.



NEGOTIATIONS COMPETITION

The first-ever BLSA Canada Negotiations Competition was a thrilling event that showcased the exceptional negotiation skills of law students from across the country. The competition required participants to negotiate a series of complex legal scenarios, demonstrating their ability to communicate effectively, think strategically, and navigate difficult negotiations.

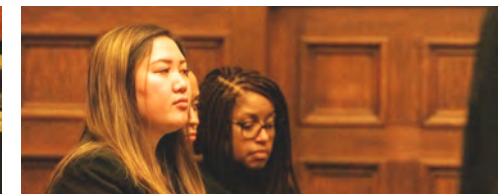
The event provided a valuable learning experience for participants, who had the opportunity to receive feedback from experienced judges and legal professionals. In addition, the competition provided a platform for law students to network and connect with legal professionals from law firms and organizations. Overall, the BLSA Canada Negotiations Competition was a remarkable event that highlighted the talent and potential of future legal professionals in Canada.



Julius Alexander Isaac *Moot*

Canada's only student-run for credit law school Moot

The moot is named after the first Black person to sit on the Federal Court of Canada and a trailblazer in the legal profession: Justice Julius Alexander Isaac. The Moot brings together students from across Canada to compete in a simulated court case related to Critical Race Theory. The 2023 Julius Alexander Isaac Moot was our most successful moot to date, with 44 students competing from 12 law schools across Canada. The moot drew the attention of more than 150 attendees, including lawyers and judges. BLSA Canada was honoured to have the Honourable Mahmud Jamal (Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada) as a final-round moot judge.



Oral advocacy is a crucial skill for any lawyer, and it is especially important for Black law students who face unique challenges in the legal profession. The Julius Alexander Isaac Moot provides an opportunity for Black law students and allies to hone their oral advocacy skills in a supportive and empowering environment. By competing against their peers from across Canada, participants have the chance to showcase their talents and gain valuable experience that will serve them throughout their legal careers. Additionally, the moot is named after a trailblazer in the legal profession who broke down barriers and paved the way for future generations of Black lawyers. Participating in the moot is not only a way to develop legal skills, but it is also a way to honor the legacy of Julius Alexander Isaac.

Thank you to our Sponsors

Thank you for supporting the 2023 Julius Alexander Isaac Moot. Your contribution helped make the event a success and gave Black law students from across Canada an opportunity to improve their oral advocacy skills. Your support covered expenses and showed your commitment to providing Black law students with experimental learning opportunities. Your support continues the work of Justice Julius Alexander Isaac and promotes greater representation in the legal profession. Thank you again for your generosity.

As a Black law student, it was special to be able to participate in a moot for and by Black law students. The law school experience can oftentimes feel divorced from the Black experience, but the Isaac was a unique opportunity to bring those two parts of my identity together in a challenging and meaningful way.

**Isaac Moot Top Oralist,
Tom Ndekezi**

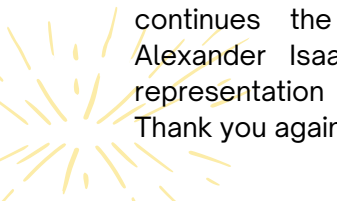
A word from BLSA's Moot Director

Organizing the Julius Alexander Isaac Moot was a challenging yet rewarding experience. As the Moot Director, I had the opportunity to work with a dedicated team of volunteers to plan an event that would bring together law students from across Canada. We spent countless hours researching and preparing the case materials, coordinating travel and accommodations for the participants, and securing funding to cover the event expenses.

Despite the challenges, seeing the moot come to life and witnessing the passion and dedication of the participating students made it all worth it. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of such an important event for BLSA Canada, and I look forward to seeing the impact it will have on the legal profession in Canada.



**Chino
Ekeanyanwu**
2023 Moot Director



National *Conference*

We made history together...

The Black Law Students' Association of Canada (BLSA Canada) hosted its largest-ever conference this year, drawing over 500 attendees nationwide. The conference provided a unique opportunity for Black law students and legal professionals to network and learn about critical issues impacting Black communities in Canada. One of the event's highlights was a bus tour of North Preston and Africville, which gave attendees a chance to learn about the vibrant African Nova Scotia history.

North Preston is a historically Black community just outside Halifax, Nova Scotia. It is one of the oldest Black settlements in Canada and has a rich cultural history that spans generations. The tour took participants through the community, stopping at significant locations such as the historic St. Thomas Baptist Church and the North Preston Community Centre. In addition, attendees had the chance to learn about the community's history and culture from local residents who shared their personal stories and experiences.

Africville, located on the outskirts of Halifax, was once a thriving Black community before it was demolished in the 1960s as part of an urban renewal project. The tour included a stop at the Africville Museum, which preserves the history and legacy of the community. Attendees learned about Africville's vibrant past, including its history as a thriving seaport and the struggles its residents faced when their homes were forcibly taken away.

The bus tour gave attendees a unique opportunity to learn about African Nova Scotia history and the contributions of Black communities in Canada. As well, it allowed participants to engage with local residents and gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting Black communities in the area, including racism, poverty, and systemic discrimination.

In addition to the bus tour, the BLSA Canada conference featured a range of panels, workshops, and keynote speeches that explored issues facing Black legal professionals and our communities. Attendees heard from prominent speakers, including lawyers, judges, community members and policymakers, who shared their perspectives, experiences and advice.

The conference also provided a platform for law students to network and connect with legal professionals nationwide. Attendees had the opportunity to attend career fairs, participate in mock interviews, and meet with representatives from top law firms and legal organizations.

Overall, the BLSA Canada conference was a tremendous success, bringing together a diverse group of legal professionals and students to learn, network, and engage with critical issues related to our theme of justice. The bus tour of North Preston and Africville was a powerful reminder of the importance of preserving and celebrating African Nova Scotia history, and the role that the legal profession can play in advancing social justice and equity.



“This year’s conference was an unparalleled opportunity to experience and participate meaningfully in Canada’s vibrant Black legal community.”

— Machel Maxwell, Conference Attendee

Attendee *Testimonials*

Perspectives from a 1L



Machel Maxwell
Dalhousie University

This year's conference was an unparalleled opportunity to experience and participate meaningfully in Canada's vibrant Black legal community.

In 1L, networking with senior law students and legal professionals often feels daunting, but this year's conference provided a supportive and fun atmosphere to connect with Black students and professionals from across the country. This year's theme was "Bending the Arc towards Justice," and the conference's presentations and panel discussions did an excellent job of speaking to it. I particularly enjoyed the panels which touched on such subjects as being Black in legal academia, how Black lawyers can engage in effective community advocacy, and the merits abolitionist criminal practice. There was also ample opportunity for more informal networking and recreation, including a tour of North Preston.

The conference ended with the 32nd Annual Conference Gala, wherein the members of BLSA's 2023-2024 executive cohort were announced. This was followed by live music, dancing, and other festivities. All in all, the conference was a success and one of the best moments of my 1L experience so far!



Perspectives from a Second Year



Donna Mbamy-Conci
Dalhousie University

I am grateful for the incredible experience I had at the 32nd Black Law Student Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

As a law student at Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law, I was proud to see the conference showcase the legacy of African Nova Scotians, an integral part of Canada's legal history.

During the conference, I had the opportunity to learn about the contributions of African Canadians to Canadian law and society, and visits to North Preston, one of Canada's oldest African communities, and the Africville Museum, were transformative experiences that opened my eyes to the struggles and resilience of the community. This inspired many students, including myself to continue working towards a more equitable society.

In addition to attending the conference, I helped organize the inaugural in-person Pre-Law Expo in Halifax, designed for undergraduate Black students aspiring to enter law school. As a panelist, I shared my experiences and provided guidance on navigating law school, as well as the importance of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. It was a deeply rewarding experience to inspire and empower these students.

I extend my gratitude to the BLSA executives and members who organized the conference, along with the generous sponsors who made the vision come to fruition. This unforgettable experience has had a lasting impact on me, and I look forward to attending future conferences and contributing to the ongoing efforts to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in the legal profession.

Articled Clerk Perspective



Jahvon Delaney
Dalhousie University,
Valedictorian 2022

As an alumnus of the Dalhousie University Black Law Students Association, it was an honour to attend the 32nd annual Black Law

Students' Association ("BLSA") National Conference hosted in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I found this year's conference to be a unique experience, as it was hosted in my home city, and I had the honour of speaking on a panel to provide my perspectives as a Black Articled Clerk in the Atlantic region.

I would first like to say that the BLSA Executive team truly outdid themselves, and as always, I found the conference to be such an amazing success. As an attendee, it is easy to see the vast benefits the conference provides to Black law students. Aside from the many professional and social networking opportunities, students are able to hear personal stories and anecdotes from experienced Black lawyers of the ways in which they navigated the legal profession. These stories help to equip students to shape their own future practices and better understand the benefits and pitfalls of being a practicing lawyer.

Ultimately, I view the conference as a demonstration of Black excellence and perseverance against the very real and omnipresent systemic racism in Canada. The fact that BLSA just held their 32nd annual conference demonstrates the glass ceilings that Black lawyers in Canada have burst through. As someone who is fresh out of law school and is just entering into my professional career, I firmly believe that the BLSA conference creates an even stronger sense of community amongst Black law students, Articled Clerks, and lawyers. I feel comfort in knowing that BLSA is present to be a support system for Black law students and to reinforce the fact that we are not alone, and that we are most definitely worthy and are more than capable of achieving greatness in this profession.

Thank you to the BLSA Executive for an amazing event. It was truly my pleasure to attend the conference and gala, and I am looking forward to attending next years event.

Attendee *Testimonials*



Desron Harry
University of Ottawa

This year's conference was my first BLSA Canada conference. It was exceptional. The conference was well-organized; there were variety of panels and panelists; the guest speakers and keynote addresses were inspirational; the opportunity to create new relationships with other Black law students, lawyers, and judges in a short period of time and in the same place was unique, and could only happen at a BLSA Canada's conference.

My experience at the conference was also rewarding because I was a part of it. I had the opportunity to moderate one of the first panels on the first day of the conference. The panel was topical for me because it related to the career path I envision to take from summer student to partner. I was delighted to interact with esteemed lawyers and taking in their wisdom and knowledge along with my peers in the audience. This experience will inform how I enter my summer role at a firm and the path I will take to partnership. I would not have this experience if I did not attend BLSA Canada's annual conference—the largest conference to date!



Shaye Erskine
University of Calgary

The 32nd Annual BLSA Conference did not disappoint. From the moment I landed to the moment I left, every detail was carefully thought out and executed. The panels were engaging, insightful, and empowering. The networking opportunities were abundant and enjoyable. I was able to make connections with people across Canada and the US.

The conference was such a healing experience too, as I met with future law students, current law students, and legal practitioners. It's inspiring to hear from people who were in your shoes, people with similar lived experiences, and people aspiring to enter the legal field. After the conference, my Chapter had only positive feedback, and everyone was feeling reinvigorated.

It was such a pleasure to attend the conference, and I am already excited for the 33rd annual BLSA Conference. Thank you to every firm, organization, and individual who made the conference such a memorable experience.



BLSA Canada Chapter *Fund*

The BLSA Canada Chapter Fund is a program that provides financial support to BLSA Canada Constituent Chapters to help them host events or attend conferences. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that BLSA Canada chapters can continue to provide valuable educational and networking opportunities for their members. Constituent chapters can apply to the fund for subsidies to help offset the costs associated with attending conferences or hosting events, such as guest speaker fees, venue rental fees, and catering costs. By contributing to the BLSA Canada Chapter Fund, sponsors can help support the growth and development of future Black lawyers and legal professionals in Canada by enabling them to participate in valuable learning and networking opportunities.

The Model

The BLSA Canada Chapter Fund establishes a mandatory minimum approved amount for each chapter, which remains consistent across all BLSA Canada chapters. This designated minimum amount is accessible to all chapters without any financial assessment criteria.

Eligibility for funds beyond the designated minimum amount is calculated using two multipliers. The first multiplier is based on chapter size in relation to the total nationwide membership of BLSA Canada. For instance, if a chapter comprises 100 students and the nationwide membership is 1000, the multiplier will be calculated based on the percentage the chapter's membership accounts for relative to the total membership. Chapters with a higher percentage will receive a higher multiplier. The second multiplier is based on financial need, with chapters ranked relative to each other. Chapters with a financial surplus or no need will not qualify for this multiplier; however, larger chapters will still benefit from the first multiplier based on chapter size.



Disbursements in the 2022–2023 school year...

Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law	\$1,000.00
Lakehead University, Bora Laskin Faculty of Law	\$683.31
Queen's University, Faculty of Law	\$1,098.34
Toronto Metropolitan , Lincoln Alexander School of Law	\$2,445.00
British Columbia, Peter A. Allard School of Law	\$1,281.13
University of Calgary, Faculty of Law	\$1,712.63
University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law (CIVIL)	\$1,325.19
University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law (COMMON)	\$1,074.64
University of Saskatchewan, College of Law	\$225.00
University of Victoria, Faculty of Law	\$606.63
Western University, Faculty of Law	\$1,221.99

TOTAL: \$12,673.86

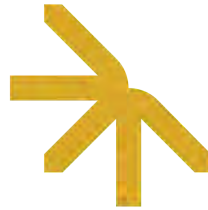


The photo depicts members of the DBLSA (Dalhousie Black Law Students Association) gathered at an indoor axe throwing venue, thanks to the BLSA Canada Chapter Fund. Overall, the photo captures the camaraderie and fun that can be enjoyed by members of BLSA Canada chapters thanks to the financial support provided by the Chapter Fund.



This photo showcases the University of Ottawa's Civil Law Section attending the BLSA Canada National Conference, thanks to the ticket subsidies provided by the BLSA Canada Chapter Fund.

This highlights the importance of enabling BLSA Canada chapters to participate in valuable learning and networking opportunities that can help develop the next generation of Black lawyers.



Scholarships that Leave an *Impact*



BLSA Canada Award Recipient—
Receiving this award has given me the motivation and drive to continue to work towards creating a more equitable and just society. I am honored and grateful for this recognition, and I pledge to continue to work towards achieving BLSA Canada's vision of a legal profession that reflects the diversity of Canada's population.

BLSA Canada Scholarships

Number of
Awards Granted

3

Two scholarships to pre-law students and one Award to a current law student.

Total Amount of
Funding Distributed

\$3,000

In total, \$8,000 in scholarship funding was distributed by BLSA on behalf of BLG to Black law students across Canada

Number of
Applicants

46

This year, BLSA Canada saw a record number of applicants for its scholarship program. We received 46 applications from law students nation wide.

The BLSA Canada Pre-Law Scholarships and BLSA Canada Award of Excellence provides financial assistance and support current and aspiring Black law students across Canada. The scholarships aimed to increase diversity in the legal profession and to help address systemic barriers that Black students face when pursuing a legal education. The scholarship provides financial assistance, mentorship, and networking opportunities to its recipients. It also recognizes the outstanding achievements of Black law students who have demonstrated leadership, academic excellence, and a commitment to social justice.



\$21,000
 Total Scholarship Funding

Award Recipients

- **Haneef Amusat - BLSA Canada Pre-Law Scholarship**
- **Mohammed Odusanya - BLSA Canada Award of Excellence**
- **Danika Elias - BLSA Canada Pre-Law Scholarship**
- **Celestin Mardochee - BLG Scholarship**
- **Amélia Souffrant - BMO Scholarship**
- **Fanta Ly - BMO Scholarship**
- **Olashile Adeyoyin - BLG Scholarship**
- **Rebekah Smith - BMO Scholarship**
- **Nadreyh Vagba - BMO Scholarship**

Borden Ladner Gervais Scholarship

Number of
Awards Granted

3

Selected from a pool of applicants from law schools across Canada. One winner was selected from each geographical region

Total Amount of
Funding Distributed

\$8,000

In total, \$8,000 in scholarship funding was distributed by BLSA on behalf of BLG to Black law students across Canada

Number of
Applicants

17

In total, 17 law students applied for the BLG scholarship. Four applicants were from Western Canada, ten from central and three from Atlantic Canada.

Through our partnership with BLG, we are able to offer three scholarship that provide financial assistance and support to Black law students across Canada. These scholarships recognized the outstanding achievements of Black law students who have demonstrated leadership, academic excellence, and a commitment to social justice. By supporting Black law students, the BLG BLSA scholarship shows Black law students that BLG is a firm that is committed to investing in their individual success.

Bank of Montreal Scholarship

Number of
Awards Granted

4

Selected from a pool of applicants from law schools across Canada. One winner was selected from each geographical region

Total Amount of
Funding Distributed

\$10,000

In total, \$10,000 in scholarship funding was distributed by BLSA on behalf of BMO to Black law students across Canada

Number of
Applicants

34

The BMO Scholarship saw the highest number of applications, receiving 34 from Black law students across Canada.

BMO and BLSA Canada partnered to grant four scholarships, worth \$2,500 each, to Black law students in their second, third, or final year of law school in a recognized JD/BCL/LLB/LLL law program. BMO and BLSA Canada recognize that the cost of law school and articling is prohibitive to many racialized students. The BMO-BLSA Canada Scholarships reduce the financial burden of a legal education and licensing costs. In addition to financial support, BMO-BLSA Scholarship recipients have the opportunity to be mentored by BMO lawyers and attend select BMO events and workshops. Scholarship recipients were announced at the 32nd Annual BLSA Canada Conference.



BLSA Canada *Partners*

This year, BLSA Canada has expanded its partnership program by welcoming four new law firms to its fold: **Baker McKenzie**, **Norton Rose Fulbright**, **Dentons**, and **Gowling WLG**. This is a testament to BLSA Canada's growing influence and impact on the legal profession in Canada.

To ensure consistency and simplicity across all partnerships, BLSA Canada has standardized its partnership model. All new partners are required to pay a set contribution per year, sign on for at least three years, and receive similar benefits. This will help ensure that all partners contribute similarly and receive value from their partnership with BLSA Canada. These developments are a positive step forward for BLSA Canada and its mission to support and empower Black law students and lawyers in Canada. With the support of its partners, BLSA Canada can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Black students and lawyers and work towards creating a more diverse and inclusive legal profession.

Being a BLSA Canada partner is a strong signal to Black law students that your firm is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal profession. In addition, by partnering with BLSA Canada, your firm demonstrates its support for the organization's mission to empower Black law students and lawyers and address their unique challenges.

Black law students who are looking for a supportive and inclusive work environment are likely to be drawn to firms that are BLSA Canada partners. Knowing that their potential employer is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace can provide Black law students with a sense of belonging and help to build trust and confidence in the firm's values and culture. In short, being a BLSA Canada partner can help to attract and retain talented Black law students who are committed to making a positive impact on the legal profession and society as a whole.



Knowing that Baker McKenzie is committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion within the legal profession is meaningful as an incoming Black law student. The partnership between Black Law Student's Association and Baker McKenzie is a clear indicator that the firm shares my values and is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment. This gives me confidence that I will be able to thrive and make meaningful contributions to the firm's mission of providing outstanding legal services to clients around the world.

Keyonma Trojca
Incoming Summer Student at **Baker McKenzie's** Toronto Office

OSLER



大成 DENTONS



NORTON ROSE
FULBRIGHT

Stikeman Elliott

AIRD BERLIS

Baker
McKenzie

BLG

Cassels



Bennett Jones



Looking Forward to 2024

BLSA Canada has had an eventful year, began the year with ambitious targets and is proud to report that it achieved and, in some instances, surpassed our goals. BLSA Canada has been actively promoting our membership's engagement and implementing new initiatives, such as the inaugural Civil Law Negotiations Competition and new Black Law Student Census Report.

Over the last year, BLSA Canada has played an essential role in facilitating conversations around systemic issues and advocating for change, as demonstrated in our census report released in early 2023. BLSA Canada has strived to foster a supportive community and to deliver resources to our membership. We aim to provide a community for Black law students across Canada, empowering them to pursue their career aspirations and being an ally for them every step of the way.

Looking ahead to 2024, there is still much work to do. While we have made massive strides, Black law students still face racism at their law schools. Black law students are still passed over for job opportunities. Black law students are still stereotyped, and the merits of their admission to law school are questioned. As long as our membership is subjected to the systemic oppression so thoroughly engraved into Canada's legal institutions, BLSA Canada will have work to do.

BLSA Canada will continue to advocate on behalf of our membership and explore new ways to provide mentorship and networking opportunities to our members, particularly as the legal profession evolves. BLSA Canada will adapt to meet the changing needs of our members and continue to be a pillar of unity for Black law students nationwide. By virtue of BLSA Canada's existence, we are imbuing our members with the confidence they need to succeed. BLSA Canada gives our members confidence that they are not alone and that an unwavering community is cheering them on during their highs and running to catch them with open arms in their lows.

BLSA Canada is committed to providing value to its members and forging new relationships with sponsors in the coming year. The organization recognizes that building strong partnerships with sponsors is crucial to promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

To provide more value to its members, BLSA Canada will be working on expanding its offerings and resources. This includes developing more educational programming, offering mentorship opportunities, and networking events for its members. BLSA Canada will also strengthen its online presence to ensure its members can access the latest information and resources at their fingertips.

In addition to providing value to its members, BLSA Canada is committed to building a robust partnership model with its sponsors. The organization recognizes that sponsors play a critical role in supporting its mission and is committed to providing valuable benefits to its sponsors.

BLSA Canada is dedicated to providing opportunities for its sponsors to engage with its members and the wider legal community. This includes hosting events where sponsors can showcase their products and services and offering opportunities for sponsors to speak at events and engage with BLSA Canada's membership.

Overall, BLSA Canada is committed to supporting and advocating for its members and building strong partnerships with sponsors. The organization recognizes the importance of these relationships in furthering its mission of promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession and will continue to work towards these goals in the coming year.



Incoming President's *Address*



Dear Sponsors, Partners, and Supporters,

For over 32 years, BLSA Canada has been the premier voice for Black law students nationwide. We are a pillar of support, zealous advocates, and creators of opportunity for the next generation of Black lawyers. As a national non-profit operated solely by full-time student volunteers, the quality of our work demonstrates our passion and commitment to our communities. However, our work is only possible because of your continuous support and fervent devotion to a more inclusive legal profession.

Your investment in BLSA Canada opens up realms of possibilities beyond our ancestor's wildest dreams. Through your contributions, you are helping us to break ceilings and open doors for the first Black Prime Minister or Supreme Court Justice in Canadian history. You are supporting change-makers and trailblazers unyielding in our commitment to creating a legal profession and society where the inherent dignity of all people is respected and celebrated. Your investment ensures we can be steadfast in our advocacy, and finances will not hinder Black law students from accessing our programming.

This year was an unprecedented year for BLSA Canada. We fundraised the most capital in our history. As a result, we have been able to impact more Black law students than ever before. We hosted the most accessible and largest conference in our 32-year history, thanks to your investments. Because of you, Black law students benefited from mentorship, community building, and knowledge sharing.

We hosted our largest in-person moot competition with a Black-tie reception, providing students with an unparalleled oral and written advocacy and networking opportunity. We launched our national mentorship program, ensuring that Black law students have the mentors and support needed to excel in their careers. We hosted our inaugural francophone negotiation competition and civil law symposium, further bolstering our commitment to supporting our francophone members.

While we reflect on our successes, I know the future will present significant challenges. As some law schools nationwide heed our call to address the chronic underrepresentation of Black law students, we will require significantly more resources to ensure they are supported, and no student is left behind. The pervasive spirit of anti-Black racism still haunts our campuses, places of work, and social networks. At this pivotal time in history, we will need your support and investments more than ever. Together, we can continue to push boundaries, break barriers and do our part in creating an inclusive legal profession. I look forward to collaborating with you this year to make this vision a reality.

Sincerely,

Husoni Raymond

Husoni Raymond

Incoming National President, 2023–2024

Osgoode Hall Law School

Summer Law Student at McCarthy Tétrault LLP



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