



## Black and Indigenous Business Law Clinic

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

In order to make a meaningful contribution to our communities, we believe that we need to create programs that actually reach priority groups. As such, DLA Piper launched the pro bono Black and Indigenous Business Law Clinic (the “Clinic”) in 2020.

The Clinic provides qualifying Black and Indigenous founders with practical and timely corporate and commercial legal advice. The Clinic focuses on common legal issues encountered by entrepreneurs and small business owners, including incorporations, structuring, employment matters, e-commerce

issues, and basic commercial matters (e.g., non-disclosure agreements, simple lease review, distribution agreements, etc.). The Clinic also runs business law education seminars to help first-time business owners understand some of the risks they should keep in mind as they grow their businesses.

The Clinic services are currently offered in British Columbia from the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

Beginning in 2022, the Clinic services are also offered in Ontario from the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and that is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Given our extensive experience working with start-ups, we know how valuable early-stage legal advice can be and how far it can go to helping businesses succeed. That being said, legal services are not one-size-fits-all, and we recognize that systemic racism has a significant role in shaping the challenges faced by Black- and Indigenous-business owners. Since its inception, the Clinic services have continued to evolve as we work collaboratively with clients to identify and better serve their business needs. Some of the Clinic's work to-date includes the following:

- Assisting a membership association with organizing a vendor pop up for their member businesses during the summer months in downtown Vancouver by drafting an agreement between the association and their members for use of the licensed space.
- Working with israella KOBLA, a women's ready to wear fashion label located in Ontario, drafting various commercial agreements, including hiring agreements and influencer agreements.
- Drafting various commercial agreements, including volunteer and referral forms, for Redeem Clothing Recycling, a social enterprise that provides a platform to donate used clothing items for free and receive rewards for donations. The items received are then repurposed, resold and upcycled.
- Assisting an e-commerce business that designs and sells women's footwear with general corporate/ commercial and intellectual property advice.
- Providing an entrepreneur with incorporation and intellectual property advice to assist her business of hosting networking events for other members of the deaf and hard of hearing community and allies.
- Working with a graphic/web/marketing design firm located in BC, on incorporation and drafting of commercial agreements.
- Engaging with Faded Living, a cannabis consulting company located in BC. The Clinic has assisted Faded Living with their incorporation and drafting of website terms and conditions.
- Working with Accelerate Auto, a not-for-profit dedicated to advancing career opportunities for Black talent in the automotive industry, on governance matters and a variety of commercial agreements

- Hosting legal education webinars/workshops for Damage Labs (a game studio accelerator focusing on marginalized game designers), the Rise Up Pitch Contest (a pitch competition for female Black entrepreneurs), the Black Business Association of BC, and the Indigenous Fashion Support Program at the Fashion Zone by Ryerson University (a fashion business incubator).

As of October 2022, the Clinic is now operating in both British Columbia and Ontario. Additionally, we are in the process of expanding the Clinic and its community outreach to include Black and Indigenous law student mentorship opportunities in both provinces.

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

If you would like to hear more about the Clinic, the services we offer, or how you can get involved, please contact us at [theclinic@dlapiper.com](mailto:theclinic@dlapiper.com) if you are from British Columbia or [theclinic.toronto@dlapiper.com](mailto:theclinic.toronto@dlapiper.com) if you are in Ontario.

If you are a Black or Indigenous founder looking for legal assistance, a Client Intake Form can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/Rh4SkRYjQ6>