



David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

2024-25 Annual Report

**David Asper Centre for
Constitutional Rights**

78 Queens Park, Toronto, ON M5S 2C5
(416) 978-0092 | www.aspercentre.ca

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About Us

The David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights is a centre within the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto devoted to advocacy, research, and education in the areas of constitutional rights in Canada. The Centre aims to play a vital role in articulating Canada's constitutional vision to the broader world. The cornerstone of the Centre is a legal clinic that brings together students, faculty, and members of the bar to work on significant constitutional cases and advocacy initiatives.

Through the establishment of the Centre, the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto joins a small group of international law schools that play an active role in constitutional debates. It is the only Canadian Centre in existence that attempts to bring constitutional law research, policy, advocacy, and teaching together under one roof. The Centre was established through a generous gift from alumnus David Asper (LLM '07).

Vision, Mission and Values

VISION Sophisticated awareness, understanding and acceptance of constitutional rights in Canada.

MISSION Realizing constitutional rights through advocacy, education, and academic research.

VALUES The Centre's ideals are those of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and will guide the Centre in its work.

- **Excellence:** the Centre is committed to high quality academic research, intellectual engagement, and intellectual rigour as the foundations for all of its work.
- **Independence:** the Centre's location within an academic institution provides the basis for trust, integrity, and intellectual freedom and diversity.
- **Diversity:** the Centre is committed to diversity in its interaction with community organizations and groups and to intellectual diversity in its work and approach to legal analysis.
- **Innovation:** the Centre seeks to shape the direction of constitutional advocacy, to be flexible in order to respond to emerging constitutional issues, and to use the Charter to transform Canada's legal and policy landscape.
- **Access to Constitutional Rights:** the Centre seeks to promote access to constitutional justice and human rights for vulnerable individuals & groups.

Message from Executive Director

This past year has been a very productive time for the Centre with a number of significant constitutional cases being heard at the Supreme Court of Canada and at courts below. We have also expanded our capacity with the addition of a research associate, Roberto De Luca, who is contributing his superior research and writing skills toward various reports and guides that are described in this annual report. While the political news south of the border strikes a significant contrast to the constitutional context here in Canada, we cannot be complacent. Our working group on the Charter's notwithstanding clause and intervention in the Supreme Court of Canada appeal of the *Hak v Attorney General of Quebec* are motivated by concern about the increasing use of the clause to diminish the rights of marginalized groups by provincial governments across Canada.

Our student working groups reflect the contemporary interests of law students who seek to advocate for social justice, while integrating with the litigation and policy priorities of the Centre more generally. In addition to the working group on the notwithstanding clause, a working group helped to organize and write the report on the role of interveners in constitutional appeals. We convened a group of frequent interveners for a discussion on how they experienced the courts' acceptance of interventions by public interest groups with a report that we released around the same time as the media has picked up on practices that exclude interveners from appearing in person at the Supreme Court of Canada. At the same time the Court has extended intervener standing to 38 separate intervener groups in addition to Attorneys General from across the country in the *Hak* case. A hearing date has not yet been set for what might be one of the most consequential constitutional decisions for the Court and the interpretation of the Charter. Provincial governments seem intent on pushing the use of the clause in pre-emptive ways that were not contemplated until recently. The Asper Centre will be there as the *Hak* case and others make their way through the courts.

I was delighted to be working with this year's Constitutional Litigator in Residence, Mary Birdsell. We worked together for many years at Justice for Children and Youth where she is the Executive Director. Our joint project representing 12 young people from across the country to challenge the voting age has been a fantastic experience for law students in the clinic and who have worked as research assistants over the summer. It what seems like another full circle moment, our Constitutional Litigator for the Fall 2025 term is Megan Savard, a criminal defence lawyer that I taught in the very first Asper Centre clinic in the winter term of 2009. It is a wonderful privilege to be at the start of the distinguished careers of many of the law school's graduates.

This report describes so many interesting projects that we have worked on this past year, some that have continued from past years, such as our successful podcast and our environmental rights guide, but many new ones that reflect our challenging times. I hope you enjoy catching up with us.



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Cheryl Milne". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cheryl Milne
Executive Director,
David Asper Centre for
Constitutional Rights

Advocacy and Litigation

Hak v. Attorney General of Quebec

The Asper Centre has been granted leave to intervene in *Hak v. Attorney General of Quebec*, a case challenging the validity of Bill 21, or an *Act Respecting the Laicity of the State*. The appeal concerns the banning of wearing religious symbols and headwear in certain professions with the goal of affirming Québec as a secular state. This would effectively prevent those who wear religious headwear, such as hijabs, from being hired in certain professions. Though there are clear Charter implications relating to equality rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion, the government pre-emptively used the notwithstanding clause to prevent any constitutional challenges.

At the Supreme Court, the Asper Centre will focus its submissions on the background and theory surrounding the notwithstanding clause. Specifically, the Asper Centre is arguing that the invocation of the notwithstanding clause does not preclude the challenging of legislation on constitutional grounds. Further, declaratory judgments on the constitutionality of legislation may be issued as a means of describing Charter violations, which are ultimately overridden by the notwithstanding clause, to the electorate and the legislature. The Asper Centre will be represented by Cheryl Milne, our Executive Director, and Mary Eberts, an acclaimed constitutional litigator and an elected Officer of the Order of Canada.



Attorney General of Québec v. Kanyinda

In May 2025, the Asper Centre intervened before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Attorney General of Québec v Kanyinda*. This appeal concerned the constitutionality of a regulation that excluded refugee claimants from eligibility for a subsidized childcare program operated by the Province of Quebec. Due to the inability to secure affordable childcare, Ms. Kanyinda was effectively barred from being able to work.

At the Supreme Court, the Asper Centre jointly with NAWL, (the National Association for Women and the Law) argued that the s. 15 analysis should be modified to consider the concept of intersectionality and the idea that women experience multiple forms of discrimination. The substantive equality analysis in s. 15 must include consideration of “social, political and economic structures, systems and institutions” and, where relevant, intersecting systems of subordination. In turn, the Centre argued that the analysis of a claimed ground (or claimed grounds) of discrimination should consider whether and how it interacts with other oppressive systems or structures that feature in the case. Further, the analysis of what constitutes “disadvantage” must also consider the intersection of discriminatory structures. The Asper Centre was represented at the Supreme Court by Kerri Froc, Suzanne Zaccour and Cheryl Milne, our Executive Director.

Asper Centre & NAWL Factum





Attorney General of Ontario v Working Families Coalition (Canada) Inc. et al.

In 2024, the Asper Centre intervened before the Supreme Court of Canada in Attorney General of Ontario v Working Families Coalition (Canada) Inc. et al. This appeal concerned the constitutionality of the limits on third party spending on political advertisements, which were imposed for the first time by Ontario's Election Finances Act in 2017. Initially, the third party advertising was restricted within 6-months leading up to the issuance of the writ of election and the spending limit was set at \$600 000. The Ontario government subsequently increased the restriction period to 12 months prior to the issuance of the writ of election. Several applicants challenged the constitutionality of the limits based on section 3 of the Charter (democratic rights). Although the constitutional challenge was dismissed by the application judge, the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned that decision by a 2-1 margin.

At the Supreme Court, the Asper Centre argued that when governments change legislation, it is relevant to the Charter analysis in several ways. For instance, where a government changes legislation without any explanation, study, or analysis, that can be important evidence in determining whether it is carefully tailored (which is required for determining whether the informational component of section 3 has been infringed). Similarly, changes in legislation are a consideration during the section 1 analysis. In particular, a change in legislation sheds light on the government's pressing and substantial objective and whether minimal impairment is met. The Asper Centre was represented at the Supreme Court by Debbie Boswell and Earl A. Cherniak from Lerner LLP.

The Supreme Court handed down its decision on March 7, 2025. In a narrow majority (5-4), the Court found that Ontario's restriction on third-party political advertising in the 12 months prior to an election breached section 3 of the Charter because it unjustifiably interfered with the electorate's ability to access a diversity of crucial political information.

Asper Centre Factum

Supreme Court Decision

Mikhail Kloubakov, et al. v. His Majesty the King

This appeal confirmed the constitutionality of two Criminal Code sex work provisions. Both impugned provisions were introduced in the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (“PCEPA”), which Parliament enacted following the Supreme Court of Canada’s 2013 decision in *Bedford*. The first provision at issue in *Kloubakov* is the “material benefit” offence (section 286.2), which prohibits individuals from receiving a financial or other material benefit which they know came from the purchase of sexual services, subject to several exceptions (set out in section 286.2(4)) and exceptions to those exceptions (set out in section 286.2(5)). The second impugned provision is section 286.3, which prohibits procuring, recruiting, harbouring, or exercising control over someone for the purpose of selling their sexual services. The Alberta Court of Appeal held that both provisions were constitutional. The Asper Centre’s intervention focused on the framework for the section 7 analysis. The Asper Centre submitted that specific provisions within a legislative scheme must be read consistently with the overarching purposes of the scheme. In the context of the PCEPA, this means that all provisions must be consistent with the objective of protecting sex workers’ safety. The Asper Centre also argued that illusoriness can be understood in terms of instrumental rationality. If defences fail to eliminate the very criminal liability which they were intended to remove, then they will effectively be underboard (and therefore failures of instrumental rationality). Applied to the PCEPA, the Asper Centre contended that – to the extent that the defences provided for in section 286.2(4) deny sex workers’ access to safety measures – they are illusory. Special thanks are owed to Gerald Chan and Stephen Aylward from Stockwoods LLP, who are acting as counsel for the Asper Centre in *Kloubakov*.

The hearing took place in November 2024, and the decision per curiam was released in July 2025. The Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, finding that both offences did not violate the life, liberty, and security interests of sex workers because the *Criminal Code* provisions still allow for sex work to be conducted safely. The Court rejected that the exceptions pertaining to legal sex work practices were “illusory” because the material benefit and procuring offences both permitted sex workers to use cooperative practices to enhance the safety concerns contemplated in *Bedford*.

Asper Centre Factum

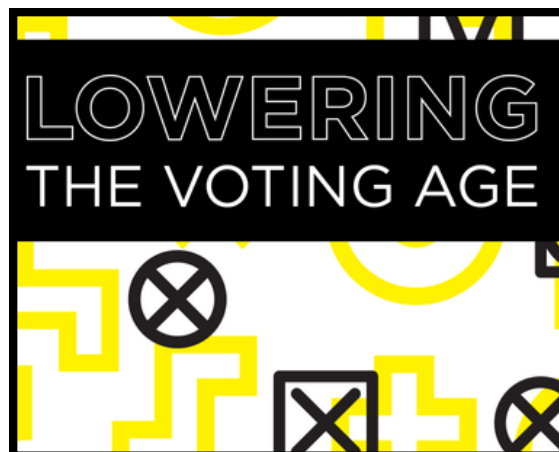


Constitutional Challenge to the Voting Age: Update

The Asper Centre, in partnership with Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY) and other youth rights organizations, has been hard at work this past year on this constitutional challenge. With the help of organizations like the Students Commission of Canada, Children First, the Society for Children and Youth of B.C., Vote16, and UNICEF Canada, the Asper Centre and JFCY have consulted and engaged with Canadian youth across the country, building a solid team of youth litigants along the way who are ready to challenge Canada's voting age.

The voting age challenge is the first constitutional challenge that Asper Centre has undertaken from the ground-up. For years, it has provided opportunities for law students in clinics and practicum placements to engage in evidentiary and lower court practical legal work. On December 1, 2021, 13 young people between 12 to 18 years old from across the country filed an application at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to challenge the voting age in Canada. The joint parties argue that the Canada Elections Act, SC 2000 c 9, which requires eligible voters to be 18 years or older, infringes both section 3 and 15 of the Charter. Jointly with JFCY, the Asper Centre has been preparing for this ground-level litigation since 2019.

In this reporting period, the case is currently before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Students at the Asper Centre are heavily involved in the case, including filing submissions, motions, drafting factums, and securing expert evidence to put before the courts. Over the last few months, the Asper Centre has consulted experts in the fields of history, electoral policy, sociology, and democracy to submit their academic and scientific research to support the Court in upcoming hearings. The Government of Canada has recently put forward their evidence from experts supporting their position in this case, and both sides will now proceed with reply affidavits and cross-examination of expert witnesses. For more information, see the Asper Centre statement on the filing of the constitutional challenge [here](#).



Reconciliation Initiatives

TRC CTA no. 28: “We call upon law schools in Canada to require all law students to take a course in Aboriginal people and the law, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action no. 28, the Asper Centre has engaged in the following relevant initiatives during this reporting period:

Morris A. Gross Memorial Lecture - “Crimes Against Humanity and Indian Residential Schools in Canada”

The Asper Centre convened this special lecture on Tuesday, February 25, 2025. The lecture was presented by Kimberly Murray, who was most recently the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools until December 2024 and is now an Associate Professor, Queen's National Scholar in Indigenous Legal Studies at the Faculty of Law, Queen's University.

The lecture examined the significance of sites and places to the continued reconciliation efforts between Canada and Indigenous peoples. The buildings, burials grounds, and cemeteries on the sites of former Indian Residential Schools are etched deeply in Survivors’ memories. Once places of silence and suffering, they are now sites of truth. Once places of brutal violence and genocide, they are now sites of conscience. Survivors can never forget the memories of trauma and death held in these sites; now Canada, and all Canadians, must do so as well by recognizing that genocide and crimes against humanity were perpetrated on Indigenous Peoples.

[Link to Video Lecture](#)



This year, our Indigenous Rights Student Working Group convened a Constitutional Roundtable on Indigenous Child Welfare & Self-Governance (see page 18) and produced Episodes 6 & 7 of Charter: A Course podcast (see page 12).

Charter: A Course - An Asper Centre Podcast



List of Season 4 Episodes

Episode 1: Constitutional Remedies

In this episode, we revisited the topic of constitutional remedies, previously discussed in the context of climate change in season 1 episode 5. With our guest Professor Kent Roach, we looked at how ss. 24(1) and 51(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 operate in courts and what they mean for litigants in practice.

Episode 2: Practice Corner Episode on Criminal Law Remedies

Although we normally include a “Practice Corner” in every episode, this season we opted to dedicate a fully separate Practice Corner on Charter remedies in criminal law to pair with the previous episode on Constitutional Remedies. This master class with lawyer Megan Savard covered everything about different criminal law remedies available, including strategies in deciding what Charter remedies to pursue for clients, from exclusion of evidence obtained by Charter breach to stays of proceedings.

Episode 3: Section 12 of the Charter

Professor Lisa Kerr joined this episode to discuss the most significant jurisprudence and application of Section 12 of the Charter, which provides that everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Catherine Latimer joined us for the Practice Corner to discuss her work with the John Howard Society of Canada in aiming to reform administrative segregation in Canada.

Episode 4: Charter Applicability to Non-Citizens

Although many believe non-citizens do not have rights under the Charter, this has not necessarily been the case. This episode addressed the ultimate question of who has rights under the Charter, including refugees, new immigrants, permanent residents, and other non-citizens, with the help of Professor Audrey Macklin. Prasanna Balasundaram, Director of Downtown Legal Services, joined us for the Practice Corner to speak to his experience fighting for non-citizens through the legal system.





Episode 5: Section 32(1) of the Charter: Application to Quasi-Government Bodies

Section 32(1) of the Charter clearly illustrates how the Charter applies to government bodies, such as the federal Parliament and legislatures of each Canadian province. Questions remain, however, regarding how the Charter may apply to quasi-government bodies, such as school boards, universities, colleges and hospitals. Susan Ursel, our former Constitutional Litigator in residence, joined us to explore jurisprudence under this section. Research lawyer Jennifer Taylor joined us for the Practice Corner, where we delve into the application of the Charter to university settings.

Episode 6: Section 35 of the Constitution and Bill C-92 Reference

This episode, along with episode 7, formed a two-part series on Indigenous self-determination and its intersections with the Constitution and the Charter. This episode was centred around the Supreme Court's Reference case on Bill C-92 and its impact on section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, particularly in respect of Indigenous self-government and child welfare. Professor John Borrows joined us as our guest for the first half of the episode, with lawyer Jessica Orkin joining us for the Practice Corner.

Episode 7: Section 25 of the Charter and Dickson v Vuntut Gwitchin FN

For the second part of our series on Indigenous self-determination and our finale for season 4, this episode focused on Section 25 of the Charter alongside the Supreme Court's decision in *Dickson v Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation*. Professor Kerry Wilkins joins us to discuss the development of Section 25, which provides that certain rights and freedoms in the Charter "shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada." Kris Statnyk joins us for the practice corner to discuss his Indigenous rights legal practice.

Panel Discussions, Guest Speakers, Symposia

Climate Justice: Court of Appeal Ruling in Mathur, et al. v. Ontario (November 4, 2024)

In *Mathur, et al. v. Ontario*, Ridhima Mathur and a group of Canadian youth have argued that the Ontario government's decision to roll back its greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets violated their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and security of the person (under Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) and the right to equality (under Section 15).

Cheryl Milne, ED of the Asper Centre and an intervener in *Mathur, et al.*, was a panelist in this discussion of a landmark case concerning climate change and government accountability. Kent Roach, Chair of the Asper Centre's advisory group, also served as a panelist.



Organizer: Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto

Moderator: Brenda Cossman

Panelists: Jutta Brunnée, Steve Lorteau, Cheryl Milne, Kent Roach

Watch clips from the panel [here](#)

Reflections on Litigating Equality in Canada: An Asper Centre Book Launch Event

(January 16, 2025)

Over the past decade, several decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada have revised the way that section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is applied to legislation and government action, leaving the jurisprudence shifting and uncertain. In light of this, the Asper Centre convened a full day symposium in 2023 to critically examine the status of equality litigation in Canada, which resulted in a collection of papers that were published by Lexis Nexis in 2024 in *Litigating Equality*. The book “delves into many of the resulting difficulties and offers strategies for litigators as well as carving out issues for future academic research. Contributors include leading scholars of equality and members of prominent advocacy groups for equality rights in Canada whose litigation efforts have helped to shape the concepts of substantive equality and discrimination.” The panel event included presentations from four of the contributors to the book and was moderated by Prof Sophia Moreau, the co-editor of the book.

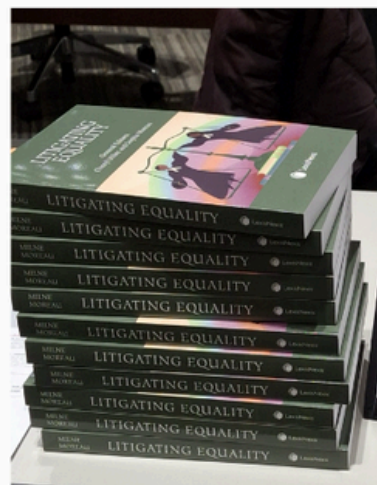
Moderator: Sophia Moreau

Organizer: David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Panelists: Cheryl Milne, Anthony Sangiuliano, Margot Young, Adriel Weaver

[Link to the event page](#)

[Link to the book published following the Symposium](#)



Encampments and the Charter Workshop (February 28, 2025)

The Centre for Constitutional Studies at the University of Alberta and the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights co-hosted a “Housing Encampments and the Charter” workshop in Edmonton, AB. The event brought together legal scholars and advocates to examine the legal, social, and political dimensions of housing encampments in Canada.

As encampments continue to grow in response to the housing crisis, they have faced a range of legally and politically contentious governmental responses. The workshop explored both procedural and substantive legal issues, focusing on how provincial and municipal governments regulate encampments and how those regulations are being legally challenged. Discussions centered on the application and limitations of Charter rights to encampments, Indigenous legal traditions, legal barriers to advocacy, and encampments as spaces of harm reduction and mutual aid. For more information, read [Encampments and the Charter Workshop: Charter Challenges, Systemic Barriers and Indigenous Legal Perspectives](#).



Organizer: Centre for Constitutional Studies, David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Moderator: Richard Mailey

Panelists: Margot Young, Alexandra Flynn, Anna Lund, Martha Jackman, Estair van Wagner, Heidi Stark, Avnish Nanda, Chris Wiebe, Renee Vaugeois, Gerard Kennedy, Shaun Fluker

Interveners Roundtable (March 7, 2025)

The Asper Centre's student working group examining the role of interveners assembled a group of experts to unpack the key issues to produce a "What We Heard" report on the current role of interveners in public interest litigation, including suggestions for ways that practice could be improved to ensure meaningful engagement.

The roundtable took place on Friday, March 7th at the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto. The main issues that were covered were the granting of leave to intervene, time and space allotted for oral and written arguments, effective collaboration among interveners and the influence of interveners on decisions.

Organizer: David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Moderators: Cheryl Milne

[Read the report here.](#)



Lawyering for a Cause: Experiential Education Conference (March 14, 2025)

The Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto hosted a half-day conference examining the role of lawyers in addressing the most critical social issues of our time. Through a series of thoughtful panel discussions with legal educators and practitioners, the panelists explored the profound impact of clinical and experiential education on society. Cheryl Milne participated in a component of the conference titled “Teamwork makes the Dreamwork: Fostering Collaboration in Legal Practice and Education”. The Asper Centre also played a role in organizing and facilitating the event.

Organizer: Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto

Moderators: Sara Faherty, Mariana Prado, Prasanna Balasundaram

Panelists: Jonathan Rudin, Jennifer Stone, Julia Croome, Cheryl Milne, Justin Safayeni, Amar Bhatia, Fathima Cader, Vincent Chiao

[Link to event information here](#)



Constitutional Roundtables

Constitutional Roundtable with Professor John Borrows, Professor Maggie Blackhawk, and Sara Mainville: “Panel on Indigenous Child Welfare & Self-Governance” (October 31, 2024)

Abstract: Over the past few years, both Canadian and American courts have decided cases that impact Indigenous Nations' ability to care for Indigenous children. Both countries have histories and present realities of removing Indigenous children from Indigenous homes, thereby jeopardizing the safety of Indigenous children and undermining Indigenous Nations' sovereignty and governance. With this context in mind, the recent Supreme Court of the United States *Haaland v Brackeen* decision, and the Supreme Court of Canada *Attorney General of Québec, et al. v. Attorney General of Canada, et al* decisions are of paramount importance to Indigenous sovereignty and safety. Both cases address federal legislation introduced to address the historic and ongoing harms caused by the apprehension of Indigenous children by settler governments. In both countries, these decisions also demonstrate how child welfare is closely connected to Indigenous assertions of and rights to self-government. The Asper Centre Indigenous Rights Working Group presented a panel event to unpack the significant legal issues and potential future implications of these cases, with a focus on the Bill C-92 Reference case and its meaning for the interpretation of Section 35 of the Constitution and Indigenous self-governance.

Organizer: David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Moderator: Cheryl Milne

Panelists: John Borrows, Maggie Blackhawk, Sara Mainville

[Link to webcast here](#)

[Link to blog here](#)



Constitutional Roundtable with Professor Richard Bellamy: “Democracy through Courts” (November 12, 2024)

Abstract: The democratic critique of judicial review by constitutional courts has prompted its defenders to counter that courts have democratic qualities as good as, and in certain respects even stronger than, conventional democratic politics. This article offers a critical analysis of three arguments favouring this approach. The first argues that constitutional courts operate as exemplars of democratic deliberation. In particular, they give expression to the public reasons underlying democracy and ensure democratic practice does not subvert its ideals. The second holds that rights-based litigation offers a form of democratic participation, providing a voice to those who might have been excluded from electoral democracy. The third contends that judges operate in a similar way to elected representatives, who are best conceived as trustees rather than as delegates. All three views are found wanting. Courts do possess certain limited democratic qualities. However, they are not intrinsic features of courts themselves. They arise from their being dependent upon rather than independent from the conventional democratic process.

Organizer: David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Panelist: Richard Bellamy



Asper Centre Constitutional Roundtable with Prof. Richard Bellamy

Professor of Political Science, University College of London, UK

“Democracy through Courts”

Tuesday November 12, 2024

12:45 to 2:00pm

Solarium, Falconer Hall, University of Toronto Faculty of Law

*All Are Welcome * Light Lunch * No RSVP Required*

Constitutional Roundtable with Professor Margot Young: “Zombie Concepts: Contagion in Canadian Equality Law” (January 14, 2025)

Abstract: Jurisprudence under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has not forged an easy or seemingly consistent path. The most recent decision about equality from the Supreme Court of Canada, *R v Sharma*, is illustration of this assertion. Here, the equality harm the claimant, an Indigenous woman, faces could not be starker: a toxic mix of racism, sexism, and the legacy of settler colonialism. Yet, the majority judgment finds no evidence of discriminatory harm. While claiming adherence to past doctrinal formulations, this judgment recasts significantly recent tests for section 15, scaffolding their rejection of the equality claim with much criticized and, in many instances, disavowed concepts from equality law’s history. These are the zombie concepts of equality thought: causation, arbitrariness and negative obligation. The metaphor of the zombie highlights the continual dismissal and then resurrection of these notions as markers of a deep judicial anxiety stalking equality rights law. The repeat appearance of these somnambulist concepts reveals another haunting – the transformative promise of substantive equality is itself spoiled by judicial anxieties around both social change and institutional role.

Organizer(s): David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Panelist: Margot Young



Constitutional Roundtable with Professor David Vitale: “Trust, Courts and Social Rights: A Trust-Based Framework for Social Rights Enforcement”

(February 11, 2025)

Abstract: Trust, Courts and Social Rights proposes an innovative legal framework for judicially enforcing social rights that is rooted in public trust in government or ‘political trust’. Interdisciplinary in nature, the book draws on theoretical and empirical scholarship on the concept of trust across disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, psychology and political theory. It integrates that scholarship with the relevant public law literature on social rights, fiduciary political theory and judicial review. In doing so, the book uses trust as an analytical lens for social rights law – importing ideas from the scholarship on trust into the social rights literature – and develops a normative argument that contributes to the controversial debate on how courts should enforce social rights. Also global in focus, the book uses cases from courts in Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America to illustrate how the trust-based framework operates in practice.

Organizer(s): David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

Panelist: David Vitale



Clinical Legal Education

Clinic Projects

Students in the Fall 2024 clinic worked on the Asper Centre's interventions in the continuation of the Safe Third Country challenge that is now back at the trial level on the section 15 claim. They also continued to work on the Voting Age challenge, helping to complete our reply affidavits, as well as a case from Justice for Children and Youth that related to MAiD for mature minors.

Clinic Speakers and Pro Bono Assistance

In addition to the contribution made by our Constitutional Litigator in Residence, Mary Birdsell guest speakers included former litigator in residence and now Justice Breese Davies, Glenn Stuart of the Law Society of Ontario, Senwung Luk of OKT LLP and Joseph Cheng of the Department of Justice. From the Faculty of Law we were joined by librarian Alexandra Kwan.



Student Working Groups

The Asper Centre convenes, supports and directs several working groups every year. Each working group is comprised of upper-year student leaders and first-year student members working on a contemporary constitutional issue or legal advocacy project. Working groups partner with external civil society organizations and/or U of T Law faculty advisors. The working groups for 2024-2025 were as follows:

Interveners

Advisor: Cheryl Milne

Student Leaders: Sakina Hasnain, Akash Jain, Katherine Shackleton, Navya Sheth

Student Members: Lakshmi Anandaraj, Lauren Cristoforo, Juliano Gaglione, Jack Gangbar, Mo Kanofsky, Charna Perman, Mobina Rismanchi-Mohammadi, Sasha Steeves

This working group investigated the trends of how courts, especially the Supreme Court of Canada, approach interveners. In Canada, interveners offer valuable insight into what impact decisions will have beyond the parties involved and provide considerable expertise in areas like civil liberties, youth rights, and Indigenous experiences. The working group considered the granting of leave to intervene, time and space allotted for oral and written arguments, and the influence of interveners on decisions. The Courts' restrictive attitude towards interveners in several recent cases raises pressing concerns about whether the Charter rights of affected communities are being meaningfully accounted for.

The working group helped to convene a meeting of experts in March 2025 to discuss topics such as the granting of leave to intervene, time and space allotted for oral and written arguments, effective collaboration among interveners and the influence of interveners on decisions. The working group then produced a "What We Heard" report titled More than Busybodies on the current role of interveners in constitutional litigation and potential ways that the Court's approach to interveners could be improved.

Encampments and the Charter

Advisor: Seema Kavar, Richard Mailey (E.D. of the Centre for Constitutional Studies), and Cheryl Milne

Student Leaders: Albert Cheng, Matthew Farrell, Cam Flanagan, Vlad Mirel

Student Members: Amir Ayazi, Eric Dong, Harleen Grewal, Trent Johnson, Jonathan Ku, Tyler Lee, Alysha Mohamed, Tourang Movahedi, Andrew Peters, Christian Smyth, Jay Wai, Kristen Wang, Amanda Yu

This working group focused on two different types of encampments that have recently come into the public eye in Canada and the important constitutional and Charter issues involved in both housing encampments and protest encampments.

The group researched jurisprudence on housing encampments to support a workshop that the Asper Centre convened with the Centre for Constitutional Studies at the University of Alberta (see page 15).

The group also worked with Downtown Legal Services housing division to draft a submission to the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate making recommendations for legislative amendments to align statute with current case law.

The Notwithstanding Clause

Advisor: Jean-Christophe Bedard-Rubin

Student Leaders: Ben Beiles, Aidan Carli, Amanda Currie, Emma Farrell

Student Members: Etienne Beaudoin, Lynn Hu, Hasti Jamalomid, Abdul Karim Kadri, Avery Kelterborn, Feeman Pirzada, Ethan Sabourin, Sachnoor Sahni, Evan Tanovich, Jeffrey You

This working group focused on Section 33 of the *Charter*, otherwise known as the Notwithstanding Clause, which has long been a controversial issue and has only become more relevant in the last decade with the increase in provinces relying on the clause to enact *Charter*-infringing legislation. The clause has been used to target many marginalized and disenfranchised communities such as Muslim women and other religious minorities through Bill 21 in Quebec and gender diverse youth as seen in the *UR Pride v Saskatchewan (Minister of Education)* case. On the federal level, a leader of one of Canada's major parties has raised the possibility of invoking the notwithstanding clause for the first time by a federal government as a mechanism of criminal justice reform.

The working group analyzed the use of the Notwithstanding Clause to date and made recommendations for how it should be invoked in the future.

Indigenous Child Welfare & Self-Government

Advisor: Prof. John Borrows

Student Leaders: Julianna Lyon, Gabrielle Dunning, Brianna Morrison and Isabel Klassen-Marshall

Student Members: Joshua Schwartz, Emma Blanchfield, Meg Zhang, Benjamin Beiles, Shelah Kwok, Harjaap Brar, Ariana Zunino, Navya Sheth, Yiming Cao, Meghan Delaney Cullin, and Raashil Jain-Sarkar

Over the past few years, both Canadian and American courts have decided cases that affect how Indigenous Nations are able to care for Indigenous children. Both countries have histories and present realities of removing Indigenous children from Indigenous homes, thereby jeopardizing the safety of Indigenous children and undermining Indigenous Nations' sovereignty and governance. With this context in mind, the recent Supreme Court of the United States *Haaland v Brackeen* decision, and the Supreme Court of Canada ("SCC") *Attorney General of Québec, et al. v. Attorney General of Canada et al* decision is of paramount importance to Indigenous futurity and safety. Both cases address federal legislation introduced to address the historical and present harms caused by the apprehension of Indigenous children by settler governments. In both countries, these decisions also demonstrate how child welfare is closely connected to Indigenous assertions of and rights to self-government. The working group studied these cases and convened a constitutional roundtable for the law school community about the cases (see page 20). They also developed and produced 2 podcast episodes for *Charter: A Course Season 4* about the issues arising from the Quebec Reference case and its meaning for Indigenous rights and the interpretation of Sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution. Lastly, members of the working group assisted Prof John Borrows to teach the *Attorney General of Québec, et al. v. Attorney General of Canada et al.* decision in his first-year course, *Indigenous Peoples and the Law*.



First Session, Forty-second Parliament,
64-65-66-67-68 Elizabeth II, 2015-2016-2017-2018-2019

STATUTES OF CANADA 2019

CHAPTER 24

An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and
Métis children, youth and families

ASSENTED TO

JUNE 21, 2019

BILL C-92

Wilson Moot

On February 21-22, 2025, the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto team brought home the first-place trophy at the Wilson Moot. This year's problem was concerned with the rollback of benefits and imposition of workfare conditions in a guaranteed income program. The team was comprised of Emma Blake (2L), Ikran Jama (2L), Emma De Tommaso (2L) and Joel Seifert (3L). The team placed second with their factums. Emma Blake and Emma De Tommaso were named the second and third place oralists, respectively. The team was coached by the Asper Centre's Executive Director Cheryl Milne and Joseph Cheng, General Counsel with the Department of Justice Canada along with four student coaches (Carson Cook, Jarren Fefer, Liza Markova and Joshua Schwartz).



Courtroom L-R: Joshua Schwartz, Joel Seifert, Emma Blake, Senator Kim Pate, Justice Karen Horsman, Justice Steve Coroza, Emma De Tommaso, Ikran Jama, and Cheryl Milne.

Research and Writing

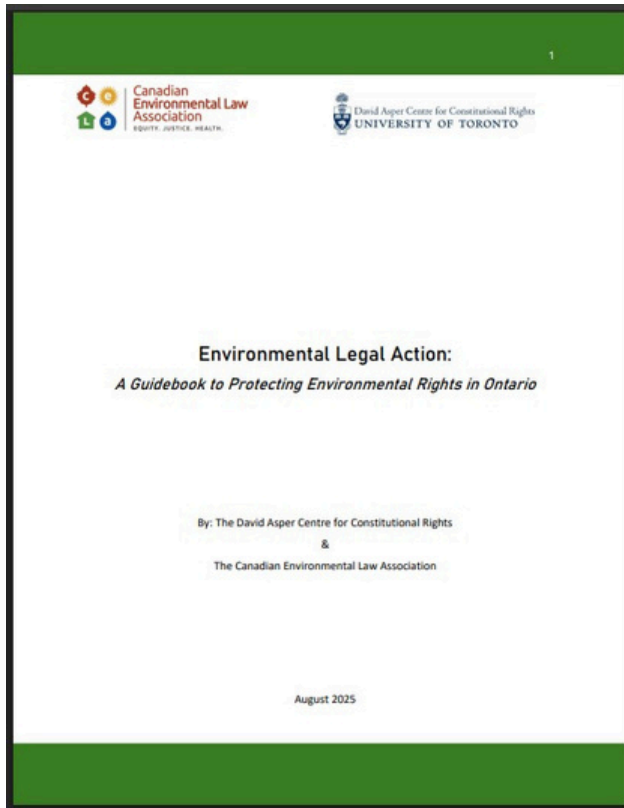


Asper Centre Outlook Newsletter (March 2025)

In April 2025, the Asper Centre published Volume 18, Issue 1 of our Outlook Newsletter. This issue features articles about conceptual approaches to the notwithstanding clause, the Supreme Court's Decision in *Dickson v. Vuntut Gwitchin*, and updates from our Student Working Groups.

Read the Newsletter [here](#)

Environmental Legal Action: A Guidebook to Protecting Environmental Rights in Ontario



Link to the [GUIDEBOOK](#)

Alongside the Canadian Environmental Law Association, in July 2025 the Asper Centre published a guidebook that consolidates legal and policy information on environmental law into one guide. While the guide focuses on Ontario, it also surveys national and international examples, highlighting the strengths and limitations of current laws and suggesting reforms.

Topics discussed by the report include the *Environmental Bill of Rights*, a discussion of nuisance law as it applies to environmental matters, environmental rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Indigenous rights and governance in environmental protection, and reform opportunities through a comparative analysis.

Overall, the guidebook emphasizes the need for persistence, creativity, and procedural compliance to effectively litigate environmental issues. Both direct action and systemic reform are necessary for meaningful change in environmental justice.



Policy Briefs

A brief regarding Bill C-273, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code of Canada (Corrinne's Quest and the Protection of Children)*

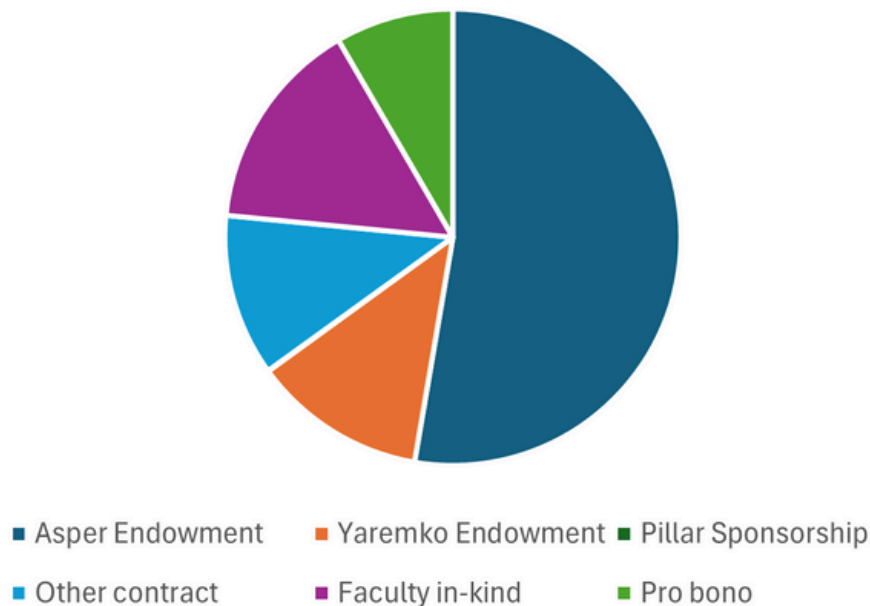
Cheryl Milne, our Executive Director, submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights supporting the enactment of Bill C-273. The Bill set out to repeal section 43 of the *Criminal Code*, which enabled the use of force to correct and discipline children. The brief detailed constitutional concerns with section 43 relating to the rights of children under sections 7 and 15 of the *Charter*. Milne also explains the confusing nature of the provision, which may ultimately send mixed messages to children regarding the use of physical violence in society.

Blog Posts

- [Meet Megan Savard, the Asper Centre's new Constitutional Litigator in Residence for Fall 2025](#) (Tyler Lee & Romina Hajizadeh)
- [Encampments and the Charter Workshop: Charter Challenges, Systemic Barriers, and Indigenous Legal Perspectives](#) (Aurora Lawrence & Jay Wai)
- [The City of Toronto's Potential New Bylaw Limiting Public Demonstrations](#) (Rob De Luca)
- [Asper Centre ED Receives University of Toronto Chancellor's Leadership Award](#)
- [Supreme Court concludes limits on third-party spending for political advertising violate the right to vote](#) (Taoran Li)
- [Kimberly Murray presents findings from Report on Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children and Unmarked Burials in Canada](#) (Taoran Li)
- [Asper Centre hosts panel on Indigenous Child Welfare and Self-Governance](#) (Taoran Li)
- [Ontario Court of Appeal Allows Appeal by Youth Climate Litigants in Charter Challenge to Ontario's Emissions Targets](#) (Chelsea Gordon & Daniel Kiesman)
- [Meet Mary Birdsell, the Asper Centre's new Constitutional Litigator in Residence for Fall 2024](#) (Kate Shackleton)
- [The State Is Not Immune: The Supreme Court Affirms that Crown Can be Held Liable in Damages for Unconstitutional Laws](#) (Vlad Mirel)

Financial

Funding Sources



Pro Bono Contributions

Faculty Contributions: Professor Kent Roach provided expert consultation for our interventions in *Mathur v His Majesty the King* as well as for our Podcast and our Police Accountability Guide which should be released within the next year. Professor John Borrows provided expert assistance to our working group on Indigenous Child Welfare and Self Governance. Professor Jean-Christophe Bedard Rudin was our faculty consultant for the notwithstanding clause working group and our intervention in the appeal of the *Hak* decision. Thank you also to Professor Audrey Macklin and Downtown Legal Services Director, Prasanna Balasundaram for their assistance with the podcast.

Pro Bono Counsel: Adriel Weaver and Jessica Orkin of Goldblatt Partners LLP are representing us in our intervention in the case of *R v Cope* that will be argued in the coming year. Ewa Krajewska and Meghan Pearson of Heinen Hutchison continue to represent us in our intervention in *Mathur v Ontario*. Gerald Chan and Stephen Aylward of Stockwoods LLP represented us in the *Kloubakov* appeal at the Supreme Court of Canada. And additional acknowledgements go to Debbie Boswell and Earl Cherniak of Lerner LLP who represented us in the *Working Families* appeal.

Agency: Norton Rose Fulbright continues to act as our pro bono agent in our Supreme Court of Canada interventions.

Constitutional Litigator-in- Residence: Mary Birdsell



Mary Birdsell is a lawyer and the Executive Director at Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY), having been a lawyer at JFCY since she was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1996. JFCY is a child and youth rights organization and legal clinic that protects and advances the legal, equity, and human rights of children and youth. She is a leading expert on children's rights, providing legal services to young people who are facing significant adversity, and have complex personal, social and legal issues. A tireless advocate, Mary has appeared as counsel or as an intervener at every level of court on a range of child rights matters. Beyond direct representation of young people, Mary has also been active in all areas of JFCY's work, including test case litigation, public legal education, community development, systemic law reform, and mentoring and supporting child rights advocates.

Mary is significantly involved at the local community level, as well as in various provincial, federal, and international organizations. Her many involvements include her work as the Chair of the CBA Child and Youth Law section; a board member of A Way Home Canada; a member of the OBA's Access to Justice Committee; was a founder, and is a past chair of the OBA's Child and Youth Law section; is a former board member of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children; and has been involved in many committees and activities to advance the rights of children including Ryerson University's Cross-Over Project; Legal Aid Ontario's Criminal Justice Advisory committee; the Ministry for Children and Youth Services Provincial Roundtable on Youth Criminal Justice; the OCL's VYSA advisory group; and on the development committee of 311 Jarvis Court's mental health diversion court.

In recognition of her significant achievements, Mary has been the recipient of the Senate of Canada's Sesquicentennial Medal (2018), the Law Foundation of Ontario's Guthrie Award (2018), Legal Aid Ontario's Sidney B. Linden Award (2018), the Bertha Wilson Honour Society of Dalhousie University Schulich School of Law (2020), the Law Society of Ontario's J. Shirley Denison Award (2020), and the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada's Lynn Factor Stand Up for Kids Award (2021). She is also a co-author of *Prosecuting and Defending Youth Criminal Justice Cases*, 2d. Ed. (Toronto: Emond Publishing, 2019).

University of Toronto Chancellor's Distinguished Leader Award Recipient: Cheryl Milne



This year the Centre's Executive Director was the recipient of the University Chancellor's Distinguished Leader Award. Established in 1999, the Chancellor's Leadership Award recognizes exceptional contributions by administrative staff and librarians. The Distinguished Leader Award is presented to an administrative staff member or librarian who demonstrates leadership excellence and contributes significantly to their own Faculty.

Cheryl Milne has dedicated her career to advocating for access to justice and the human rights of marginalized groups, particularly children. She was a pioneer in children's human rights advocacy long before it gained widespread recognition. At Justice for Children and Youth, Cheryl handled numerous high-profile constitutional cases, many reaching the Supreme Court of Canada. Cheryl's career progressed to the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights at the Faculty of Law, where she became the centre's inaugural Executive Director. This unique role allowed her to excel as a constitutional litigator and innovative legal educator. Cheryl was instrumental in shaping the centre's mission to advance constitutional rights through advocacy, education, and research. She developed its objectives to contribute significantly to constitutional advocacy, serve as an expert resource, and increase awareness and acceptance of constitutional rights.

Recognized as a leading constitutional lawyer, Cheryl is also a respected legal educator. Her teaching approach combines classroom theory, practical training, and critical and ethical reflection opportunities, exemplifying modern experiential legal education. Her "Constitutional Litigator in Residence" program enhances the Centre's advocacy and educational goals by pairing students with leading practitioners in an immersive environment. In 2019, Cheryl received the Law Society of Ontario Medal for her contributions to the profession, including her advocacy for children's and marginalized communities' rights, groundbreaking constitutional litigation, innovative legal education methods, and volunteerism.

Cheryl was nominated by Brittany Twiss, Assistant Dean, JD Program, Faculty of Law.

Advisory Group

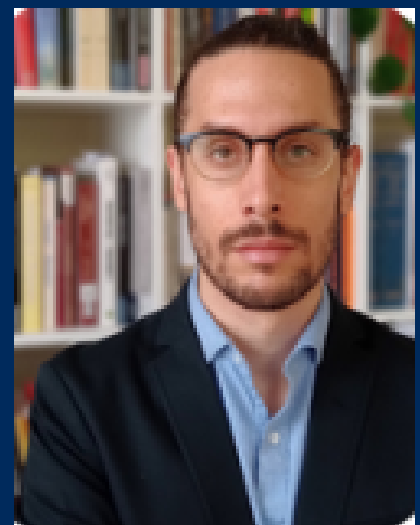
Kent Roach – Chair

Kent Roach is Professor of Law at the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto and of Yale, and a former law clerk to Justice Bertha Wilson of the Supreme Court of Canada. Professor Roach has been editor-in-chief of the *Criminal Law Quarterly* since 1998. In 2002, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. In 2013, he was one of four academics awarded a Trudeau Fellowship in recognition of his research and social contributions. In 2015, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada. In 2016, named (with Craig Forcese) one of the top 25 influential lawyers in Canada (change-maker category) by *Canadian Lawyer*. He was awarded the Molson Prize for the social sciences and humanities in 2017.



Jean-Christophe Bédard-Rubin

Assistant Professor Jean-Christophe Bédard-Rubin's work explores Canadian constitutional culture from historical and comparative perspectives. He studied law, political science, and philosophy at Université Laval, Yale University, and the University of Toronto. During his doctoral studies, Jean-Christophe was the McMurty Fellow of the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History and a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Scholar. He has done consultancy work on constitution-building for International IDEA and, prior to his graduate studies, he worked in litigation for the Quebec Department of Justice.





Anna Su

Professor Anna Su's primary areas of research include the law and history of international human rights law, comparative constitutional law, technology and international law, and law and religion. She is currently a Faculty Fellow at the Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology and Society. Anna holds an SJD from Harvard Law School where her dissertation was awarded the John Laylin Prize for best paper in international law. She received her JD and AB degrees from the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.



Nader Hasan

Nader Hasan, B.A. (Harvard), M.Phil (University of Cambridge), J.D. (Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto) is a partner at Stockwood Barristers in Toronto. He practises criminal, regulatory and constitutional law at the trial and appellate levels. Nader has been recognized by Best Lawyers magazine as one of Canada's leading appellate lawyers. He has appeared in 20 cases at the Supreme Court of Canada, including as lead counsel to the successful appellants in *Clyde River v. Petroleum Geo-Services Inc.*, 2017 SCC 40, a landmark Indigenous rights decision. Nader is a veteran Adjunct Professor, and was the past constitutional-litigator-in-residence at the Asper Centre.



Richard Stacey

Professor Richard Stacey holds a PhD from New York University's Institute for Law and Society and degrees in political theory and law from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He served as law clerk to Justice Kate O'Regan and Justice Bess Nkabinde at the Constitutional Court of South Africa, has taught courses in political theory, constitutional law, administrative law and human rights at the University of Witwatersrand, the University of Cape Town and the City University of New York Law School, and was involved in an advisory capacity in constitutional transition in Kenya (2009), Tunisia (2012 – 14), Egypt (2013) and Libya (2013).

Expanding the Asper Centre's Research and Policy Mission

We are pleased to welcome **Roberto De Luca** to the Asper Centre staff, who joined us in January 2025 as a Research Associate. To get to know Rob and his new role, we asked him a few questions about his background and experience.

Q: What sparked your interest in Canadian Constitutional Law?

A: “I moved to the U.S. when I was 24 for graduate school, with little exposure to the U.S. or anywhere outside of Edmonton until my move. I wound up studying, teaching, and confronting U.S. politics and U.S. constitutional law and theory for various reasons. The U.S. has both a very rich and very troubled constitutional tradition. At some point during my time there, the connections between this tradition and what I was seeing in everyday life, good and bad, began to become apparent. That general experience sparked a genuine interest in constitutional law and constitutional design as a window into who people are (or who they exclude) and whether, when, or how things meaningfully change over time. The interest naturally carried over to Canadian constitutional law.”



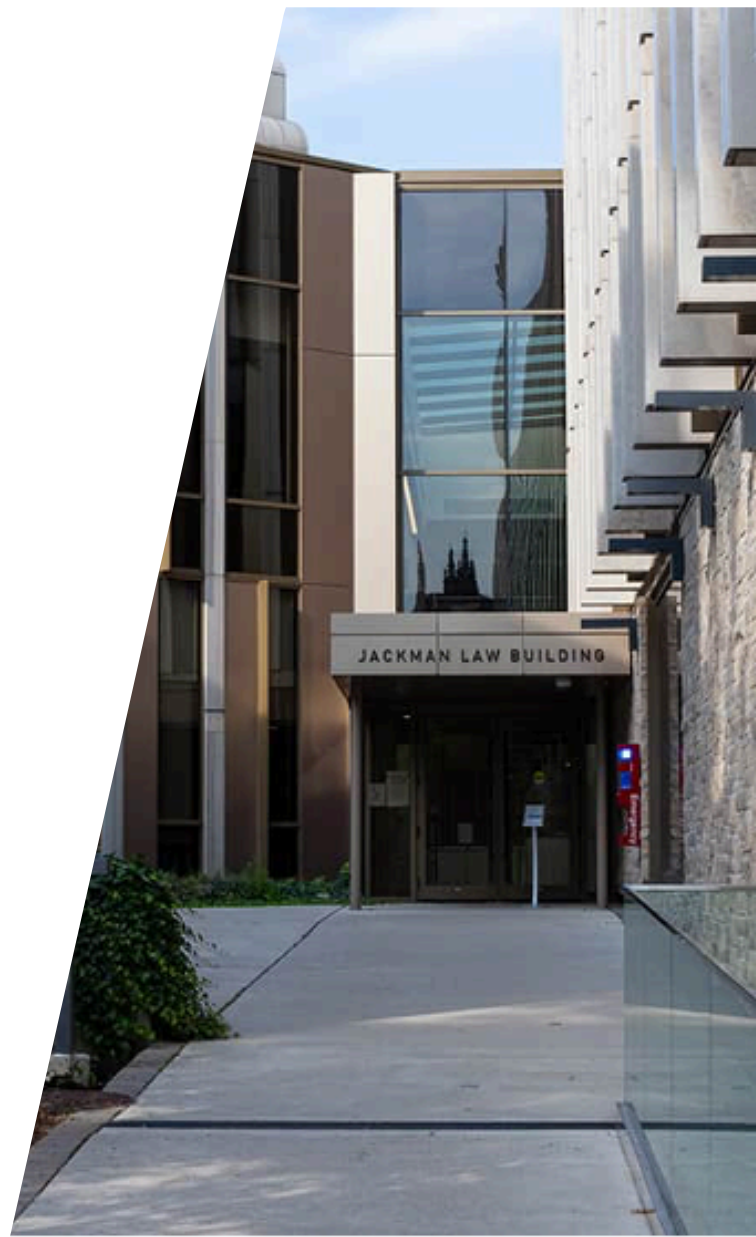
Expanding the Asper Centre's Research and Policy Mission

Q: What current initiatives with the Asper Centre are you most excited about?

A: “My most memorable time from law school was working on clinic and centre-type projects with classmates – in my case, my law school’s equivalent of DLS, co-teaching an undergraduate law class with classmates in a U.S. state prison, and journal work – so I am mostly excited about being involved with, and contributing to, student initiatives at the Centre for a new school year. I am also excited to carry forward a new project we are working on, including with the assistance of our current summer students, that takes a wider look at the consequences of unconstitutional legislation by examining the life cycle of certain criminal law provisions that were eventually declared unconstitutional by the courts.”

Q: Overall, how do you hope to contribute to the Asper Centre’s vision, mission, and values?

A: “The Asper Centre is fortunate to occupy a privileged position in Canadian law. Among other things, expert scholars and practitioners frequently assist the Centre in carrying on sophisticated work capable of making a meaningful impact in advocating for constitutional rights protection at the frontiers of the current jurisprudence. The Centre is also able to involve accomplished students in the difficult and complex process of advancing this same work. Alumni of the Centre have and will continue to be in positions where they can protect and promote principles and values that are at the core of the Centre’s mandate. Given this very particular context, my hope with respect to contributions is that I can facilitate projects that both carry on the work of protecting and advancing constitutional rights while also giving students the opportunity to engage with the often messy world of constitutional rights advocacy, where black-letter law is rarely (if ever) the end of the matter. In this same vein, I am also hoping to add to the Centre’s capacity to engage in policy-focused projects and reports, which have the luxury of being able to focus directly on what the law should or can be, as opposed to what it is.”



Asper Centre Staff

Cheryl Milne is the Executive Director of the Asper Centre and teaches a clinical course in constitutional advocacy at the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto. Prior to coming to the Centre, Ms. Milne was a legal advocate for children with the legal clinic Justice for Children and Youth. There she led the clinic's Charter litigation including the challenge to the corporal punishment defence in the Criminal Code, the striking down of the reverse onus sections of the Youth Criminal Justice Act for adult sentencing, and an intervention involving the right of a capable adolescent to consent to her own medical treatment. She has been the Chair of a number of organizations including the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children and Justice Children and Youth. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the National Association for Women and the Law (NAWL) and the Child and Youth Law Section Executive of the Canadian Bar Association. In 2019 she received the Law Society Medal from the Law Society of Ontario for her contributions to the profession through her child rights advocacy and legal education.



Tal Schreier is the Asper Centre's Program Coordinator, responsible for the Centre's events, community outreach, advocacy, and overseeing the Asper Centre's student researchers and student working groups. Tal holds a JD from Osgoode Hall Law School and an LLM from the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Prior to the Asper Centre, Tal served as the first Toronto Legal Coordinator for the Refugee Sponsorship Support Program & Lifeline Syria. From 2002 until 2014, Tal worked at the University of Cape Town Faculty of Law's Refugee Rights Unit, where she managed its UNHCR-funded legal aid clinic, convened and delivered training programs on refugee rights for government officials, police, social workers, and other community members; taught refugee law to law students; led research projects; and, co-edited/wrote South Africa's first textbook on refugee law, *Refugee Law in South Africa* (Juta: 2014, 2nd Edition 2023).



Asper Centre Staff

Roberto De Luca is a Research Associate at the Asper Centre, where his responsibilities include supporting the Centre's legal research and policy advocacy projects. Prior to joining the Centre, Rob's work experience has included practicing as a lawyer at a boutique labour firm in Vancouver; advocating on Charter-related policy issues, and directing interventions across Canada, as a lawyer and program director at the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; and, most recently, working for the Centre for Constitutional Studies, and teaching constitutional law as a sessional instructor, at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law. Rob holds a J.D. from Stanford Law School and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Texas at Austin.



Summer Students



Tyler Lee assisted with intervention applications in *Hak v. Quebec* and *Quebec (AG) v. Luamba*. He also contributed to a report tracking "constitutional harms" arising from criminal justice reforms in the Harper Era.



Romina Hajizadeh assisted with intervention applications in *Hak v. Quebec* and *R.B.-C. v R*, while also conducting case law research on criminal justice reforms in the Harper Era.



Work-Study Student

Taoran Li conducted research to support Cheryl's litigation work. Taoran also contributed to the Asper Centre website through her authorship of blog posts and newsletter pieces. She also helped launch our Instagram page.

Thank you

Thank you to all the faculty members, staff, alumni and legal practitioners who have helped the Centre. We would also like to acknowledge the following student contributors this year and thank them for their support.

Blog Contributors: Chelsea Gordon, Daniel Kiesman, Aurora Lawrence, Taoran Li, Kate Shackleton, Vlad Mirel, Jay Wai

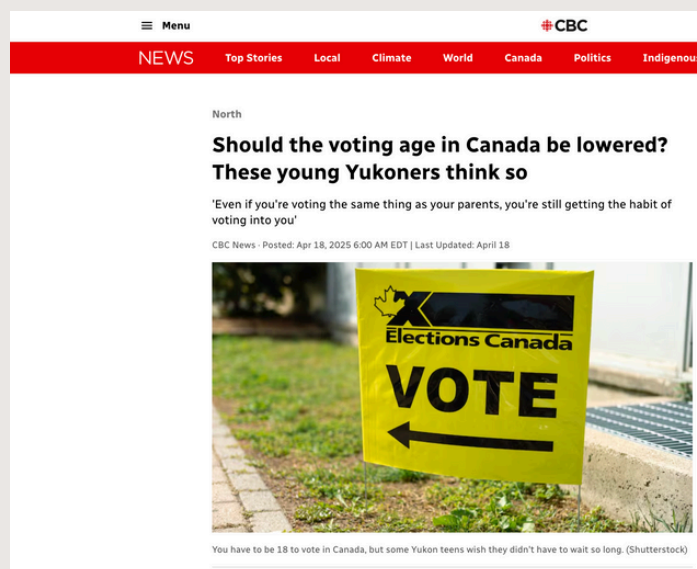
Newsletter Contributors: Ben Beiles, Aidan Carli, Amanda Currie, Roberto De Luca, Emma Farrell, Julia Ford, Kabir Singh Dhillon, Sakina Hasnain, Maya Hribar, Akash Jain, Daniel B. Jolic, Taoran Li, Kate Shackleton, Navya Sheth, Bjorn Wagenpfeil

These students' contributions along with those of the authors of last year's annual report appear in part or inform the content of this year's Annual Report.

Asper Centre in the News

CBC News, "[Should the voting age in Canada be lowered? These young Yukoners think so.](#)" 18 April 2025, Quoting Asper Centre Executive Director Cheryl Milne.

Canadian Lawyer Magazine, "[CBA members vote on sanctions, children's welfare, articling conditions at annual general meeting.](#)" 04 February 2025, Quoting Asper Centre Executive Director Cheryl Milne.



Media Snapshot

This year, the Asper Centre continued to expand its online presence and connect with a growing audience. Our new LinkedIn page has seen strong growth, attracting nearly 300 new connections. We look forward to further engaging with our alumni and the broader U of T Law community on this platform.

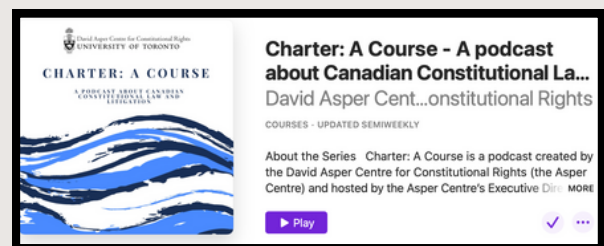
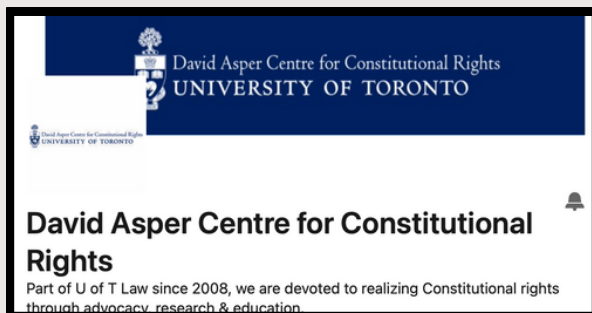
Our podcast, Charter: A Course, reached a total of 12,570 unique downloads during this reporting period, driven in part by a successful Season 4.

To strengthen our connection with alumni and the public, we also launched a new Instagram page and a Bluesky account this year. Stay tuned for more content and updates on these platforms.

Across all of our social media channels, the Asper Centre's posts continue to achieve high engagement, often reaching audiences well beyond our follower base. This is thanks in part to reposts and shares from widely followed accounts, including @UTLaw.

Connect with us:

- LinkedIn: **David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights**
- Facebook: **David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights (@daccr)**
- Instagram: **@aspercentre**
- Bluesky: **@aspercentre.bsky.social**
- Website: **www.aspercentre.ca**
- Podcast: **Charter: A Course**





David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

78 Queens Park, Toronto, ON M5S 2C5
(416) 978-0092 | www.aspercentre.ca