

2025 IHRP Fellowship Final Report

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Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

My summer at the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (“CSALC”) has been a fruitful and rewarding experience as an emerging lawyer and community member. I had the opportunity to work closely with community legal workers and lawyers who are not only experienced in theory and doctrine but also in its practical application to their clients' individual needs. Utilizing my accumulated skills and knowledge, I was able to serve a diverse range of clients on various issues while witnessing the human and emotional side of the work. This was not only a rewarding experience in itself, but it also equipped me for my journey to become a practical, personable, and impactful lawyer. Thank you to the IHRP for making my summer term at CSALC possible.

The Host Organization: The Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (“CSALC”)

The Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic offers free and direct legal services to low-income, non-English-speaking clients from the Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian communities in Ontario. Clients receive legal advice and counsel in their native languages, with staff members trained to translate and explain complex legal and technical concepts. Located just minutes away from Chinatown in downtown Toronto, the clinic maximizes its in-person and online accessibility to a

diverse range of clients. In addition to providing legal services, the clinic participates in numerous community events, offering public legal education and outreach. This includes leading online workshops, setting up booths at city-wide events, and publishing multilingual brochures on areas of the law that their clients encounter most often.

CSALC also participates in law reform and test case litigation, making submissions to all levels of government to advance the rights of their clients and the communities they serve. CSALC has intervened in several cases heard at the Supreme Court of Canada and is currently intervening in *English Montreal School Board et al. v. Quebec (AG) et al.*

My unique background, upbringing, and language skills enable me to make meaningful contributions to the team at CSALC. Coming from a Chinese immigrant family, my understanding of CSALC's clients is bolstered by my previous experience working for a local law firm that specializes in serving Asian-identifying, non-English-speaking clients who struggle with immigration, family, and tenancy issues.

Work Deliverables

My work at CSALC encompasses a range of responsibilities, including client intakes, case law research, assisting with submissions to the Supreme Court, participating in city-wide outreach events alongside other CSALC members, and revising and writing brochures for publication.

Drafting Powers of Attorney

Most notably, I have participated in drafting several powers of attorney. Many vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals have found themselves in need of a power of

attorney so that they can be cared for more effectively by those closest to them. Our team, therefore, serves those clients who are unable to obtain such a document due to language barriers, a lack of understanding of the document's effects, advantages, and risks, or limited access to legal professionals. Through this experience, I have not only improved my professional client service in Mandarin and document review skills, but I have also found joy in helping those who do not understand the law to utilize it to their advantage. This does not mean our team has relentlessly mass-produced powers of attorney for every client – we remained prudent with assessing each client's needs and the risks they bear should they sign such a document. I have developed and tailored our client service skills by making our client meetings conversational, helping them feel at ease, and creating bonds with them all while securing the needed material facts for each case. On one occasion, after discovering the subtle yet vital clues that our client was under manipulation by a close family member, we tailored our discussions with them about their specific power of attorney to help them learn of the risks that come with their signature, as well as evaluating the benefits that would counter-balance these risks. In the end, although the client did not sign any document, we reassured them of the best course of action they could take in their particular circumstances and provided the most effective advice and assistance we could, given their personal background. I learned how each case can be so unique that small but crucial details can lead to drastically different conclusions. I applied these lessons to meeting with clients on other matters, including preparing them for hearings, assembling submissions to the Immigration and Refugee Board, or even visiting them at their unit when required and with their consent.

Many Other Tasks

Other tasks I have worked on throughout my internship include:

- Performed case law research and drafted memos to supervising lawyers who are submitting factums to the Supreme Court of Canada on the upcoming case regarding Quebec's Bill 21, *English Montreal School Board et al. v. Quebec (AG) et al.*
- Assembled slide decks for a community legal worker's upcoming online workshop aimed at the Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking communities in Toronto.
- Attended workshops on trauma-informed lawyering, fraud prevention, racism, de-escalation, and community organizing.
- Manned the clinic's booth during a city-wide outreach event for new immigrants and workers.
- Edited legal education brochures on permanent residency status and removals from Canada to be published in print and on the clinic's new website.

Some Photos from CSALC



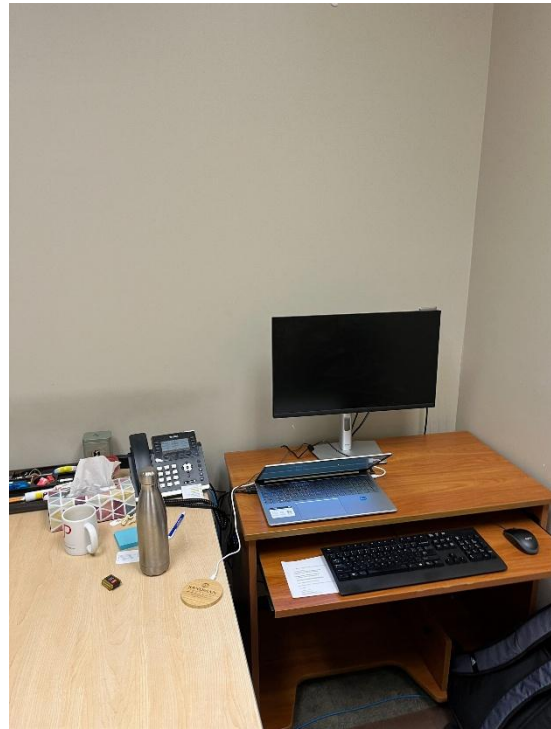
Simon (on the right), a staff lawyer with whom I have worked very closely and from whom I have learned a lot



Our booth seen at the Asian Heritage Month Celebration in Toronto on May 30, 2025



A photo of me and the other law students at the clinic getting hotpot as our farewell dinner



My workstation at the clinic