

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION

We level barriers to ensure equitable access to justice.

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Indifference is injustice's incubator; it's not just what you stand for, it's what you stand up for; and we can never forget how the world looks to those who are vulnerable.

- The Honourable Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella
(Commencement Speech to Brandeis University Graduates on
May 22, 2017)

Empowering people and communities has always been at the heart of our work at Level. It began 13 years ago when our organization was founded to advance human rights projects overseas. It continues today as we pursue innovative ways to increase access to justice through public legal education, research, and advocacy initiatives in Canada.

2016 was a big year for Level, and one dedicated to optimizing our impact in every way.

Organizational highlights include growing and diversifying our leadership team, investing in staff and board training, increasing sustainability by welcoming new multi-year sponsors, and engaging in a strategic planning process that enabled our organization to reflect on our past successes and challenges, and to set ambitious goals for the future.

Level's programming has also continued to evolve, with significant strides being made as a result of our extraordinary volunteer Elders, students, lawyers, judges, teachers, parents, youth, and community partners.

Since 2012, Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program has engaged over 600 Inuit, Métis and First Nations youth across Canada, with 2016-17 being our largest program delivery yet. The program is now being delivered in 10 communities reaching youth from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. We are also thrilled to be expanding to Winnipeg, Manitoba in the fall of 2017.

This year, through Level's Student Chapter Program at 12 law schools across Canada, over 500 students learned and raised awareness about women's rights. Our students demonstrated outstanding leadership by conducting research, organizing on-campus and community events, facilitating the expansion of our youth program, and by hosting fundraising events in support of Level's mission.

In summer 2016, Level placed 20 student interns with NGOs in Canada, the US, Ghana, Namibia, Kenya, Thailand, India and Bangladesh, where they gained practical human rights research and advocacy experience. While Level has made the difficult decision this year to shift its focus to local and remote internship opportunities, we are proud to have facilitated international internships for over 220 students since 2005. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing partners for their support of our student initiatives, and their commitment to making justice a reality for some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

In 2017-18, we will be focused on expanding Level's programming to reach even more stakeholders, as well as improving our storytelling and impact measurement tools in order to capture the incredible changes we see in our program participants, volunteers and communities.

The generosity of our donors makes everything we do at Level possible. We are incredibly grateful for their support and the opportunity to partner with them in the communities we serve. Together we will continue to find innovative ways to level barriers to justice and drive change by fostering empathy, understanding, and humility in the justice sector.



BRITTANY TWISS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brittany Twiss". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light background.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

200

Indigenous youth empowered through justice education across Canada

85%

Of youth participants said that learning about the law was fun

75

Legal professionals engaged in inter-cultural competency training

15

Conferences, panels & community events held on women's human rights

30

Social justice research & internship opportunities provided

\$300,000

Donated in-kind to Level by Canada's legal community

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OUR TEAM

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Brittany Twiss
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OUR APPROACH

We broaden horizons and contextualize law to build an understanding of its value and to create opportunities for justice.

OUR BOARD



Jennifer Guerard, Chair



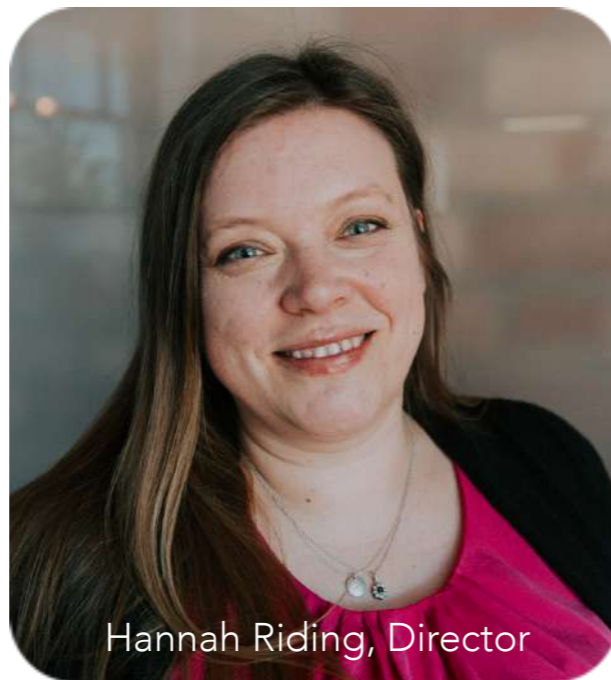
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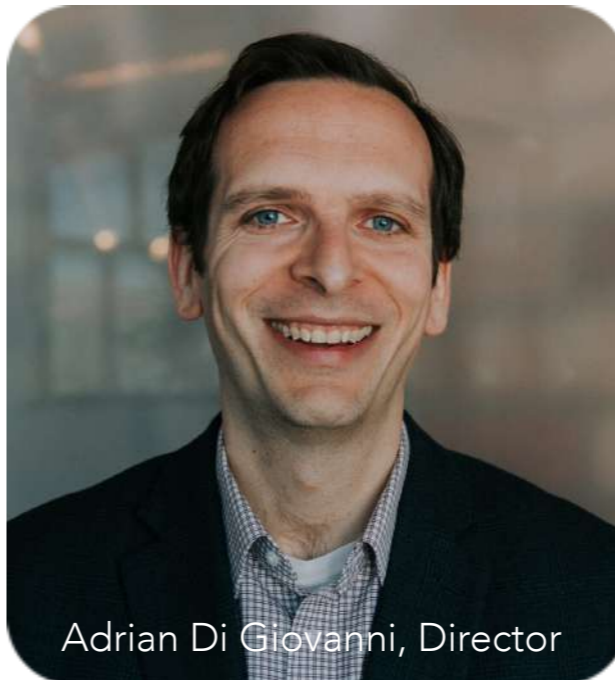
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YOUTH OUTREACH



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The closing of residential schools did not bring their story to an end. The legacy of the schools continues to this day. It is reflected in the significant educational, income, and health disparities between Aboriginal people and other Canadians—disparities that condemn many Aboriginal people to shorter, poorer, and more troubled lives. The legacy is also reflected in the intense racism some people harbour against Aboriginal people and the systemic and other forms of discrimination Aboriginal people regularly experience in Canada.

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 5, Page 3)



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As for the kids; aren't they just the best? As I told them, their mock trial day is always a very special day for me. I love how hard they work and it always comes through during the trial. They have every right to feel proud and should. They are special young people to me, all of whom I'm extremely proud of. At least one of them - and likely more - will go on and work in the justice system. If I'm there when that happens, I will once again be there for them. Finally, I can't thank you and all the staff, volunteers, and supporters enough. I adore all of you for this special undertaking.

- The Honourable Justice Harry LaForme,
Ontario Court of Appeal



JUSTICE EDUCATION

The access to justice crisis in Canada, particularly as it relates to Indigenous communities, is well-documented. We also know that compared to non-Indigenous Canadians, our Indigenous population is young, more likely to live in poverty, less likely to graduate high school, and disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.

Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program ("Dare to Dream") is both preventative and empowering, providing Indigenous youth with the knowledge and leadership skills to avoid conflicts with the law and to make positive choices for their futures. Additionally, the program uniquely improves volunteers' intercultural competency, and fosters inclusivity and respect for diversity in the general community.

Level began our youth outreach initiatives in Toronto in 2012, with only 25 participants. Now, the program is reaching approximately 300 youth and legal professionals annually, with ambitious goals for program expansion on the horizon. We would like to extend a sincere miigwetch (thank you!) to Level's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and program advisors throughout Canada. Your support and guidance is invaluable to us.

2016/2017 SCHOOLS

ALBERTA

Ernest Morrow J.H. School in Calgary
A.E. Cross School in Calgary
Siksika Outreach School

ONTARIO

First Nations School of Toronto
York Street Public School in Ottawa
Mnjikaning Kendaaswin
Elementary School in Chippewas of
Rama First Nation
Christian Island Elementary School
Northern Youth Abroad in Ottawa

SASKATCHEWAN

St. Frances School in Saskatoon



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The memory that is particularly representative of the Dare to Dream program is having my thirteen-year-old son participate in the program and watching him in the courtroom speaking with knowledge. I am so grateful for this experience for him and well as the other youth involved. I was so very proud to work with such a great group of young people.

- Kellie Wuttunee, uSaskatchewan law student and member of the Red Pheasant Cree Nation located on Treaty Six Territory





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Level’s youth program is amazing because of its focus on building confidence. It helps direct youth towards thinking about and working toward a great future whether in the legal profession or in something else. High school is such a turning point for young people so encouragement from those outside their usual points of reference makes a world of difference — they believe the positive enforcement because they took on a new challenge themselves and made it work.

- The Honourable Justice Marsha Erb,
Court of Queen’s Bench of Alberta

The following is a summary of a one-on-one interview with a Grade 7 Mohawk and Mi'ikmaq student following her participation in the Toronto Dare to Dream program:

Q: Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

A: I like to take naps, draw, do gymnastics and watch YouTube on my computer.

Q: Before participating in the Dare to Dream program, what did you think about the justice system?

A: All I knew was that if you are accused, that you get sent to jail.

Q: Did the Dare to Dream program change the way you think about the justice system?

A: Yes it did. I learned that it can be scary if you are on the wrong side and it is more complicated than I thought. I didn't know there was so much stuff that went into being a lawyer. I think the justice system is good because it helps

keep bad people off the streets. I liked the sentencing circle much better than being in the courtroom, because it is more like the Aboriginal way of doing things.

Q: What did you like about Dare to Dream?

A: I liked when we got to play games with the lawyers because I learned that they are really fun to be around, and I liked the food that we got to feast on after each session.

Q: What else did you learn from this experience?

A: Being in the jury is fun because (everyone) gets to come together to share opinions and come to a final decision together...it helped me be patient and polite.



Special thanks to our "Dare to Dream" champion, the Honourable Justice Harry LaForme

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY



relative
→ dependency
distane → blood relationship
not member → adoption
lineal descent
common ancestor



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The most advanced justice system in the world is a failure if it does not provide accessible justice to the people it is meant to serve.

- The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, P.C.
Chief Justice of Canada

Tatyana Budilskaya, uOttawa Faculty of Law student
2016 Intern with Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
Nominated Level's Most Outstanding Intern in 2016



Chapters & Internships

Level engages in human rights research and advocacy through our Student Chapters, which are student-led groups affiliated with Level at 12-15 law schools across Canada, as well as our Global Internship Program.

Focused on an annual theme, Level's Chapters organize community events, host conferences and panel discussions, and contribute research papers to an annual human rights journal. In 2016-17, our Chapters advanced awareness of women's human rights both in Canada and abroad, and encouraged their peers to think critically about how they can use their budding legal skills to make a positive impact in their communities.

Through our Global Internship Program, 20 passionate and talented JD/LLB students spent the summer working for NGOs in Canada or overseas supporting grassroots efforts to increase access to justice and combat poverty, inequality and exploitation. Since 2005, over 220 students have advanced the mission of 45 organizations in 15 countries, while at the same time developing practical skills to advance their careers.

Social consciousness is at the heart of Level's student programs; we are proud to be creating a more aware, diverse and responsive bar.

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Each year Level works with law students to elevate important issues relating to law and development from a critical perspective. As a student researcher at Level, I focused my research on women's human rights in the domestic and international context. My interviews with legal practitioners exposed the critical importance of analyzing this topic through an interdisciplinary perspective while reflecting on my privilege as a law student.

- Laura O'Brien, 2016 Level
Research Intern





CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

In 2016-17, Student Chapters across the country raised awareness of and challenged their peers to think critically about this year's human rights theme - Women's Rights. Highlights include:

- The University of Saskatchewan raised over \$300 in support of Level's mission and hosted a panel on women's reproductive rights, examining the current legal landscape in Canada.
- The University of Victoria embarked on an ambitious letter-writing campaign with 128 students focused on raising awareness about family reunification and the impact of immigration policies on women migrants.
- The University of Montreal published a student legal journal and held a conference at the Faculty of Law.
- The University of Ottawa hosted a panel discussion on International Women's Day, inviting Catherine Gribbin, Senior Legal Advisor at Canadian Red Cross, Level Co-founder Yasmin Shaker, as well as our Executive Director Brittany Twiss to speak about women and leadership in law.

2016 GLOBAL INTERNSHIPS

INTERNATIONAL

Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek Namibia

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Bangkok Thailand

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Dharmsala, India

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Centre for Democratic Development, Accra, Ghana

Federation of Women Lawyers, Nairobi, Kenya

International Commission of Jurists, Nairobi, Kenya

Yukon River Intertribal Watershed Council, Anchorage, USA

CANADIAN

Avocats Sans Frontiers, Quebec City

Mikisew First Nation, Fort McMurray

Chiefs of Ontario, Toronto

Beyond Borders, Ottawa



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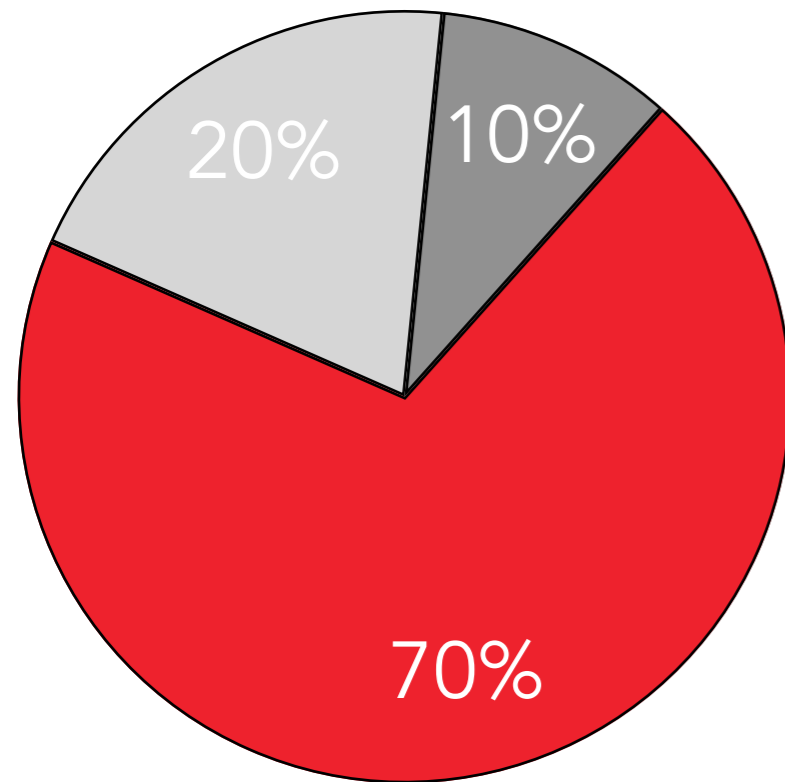
One of the best things about being part of the Legal Assistance Centre was to witness the direct impact that the organization has on Namibian society. As the country's only not-for-profit public interest law centre, the LAC has a strong track record of protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens.

- Roojin Habibi, Level 2016 Global Intern and 2016-17 Ottawa Chapter President



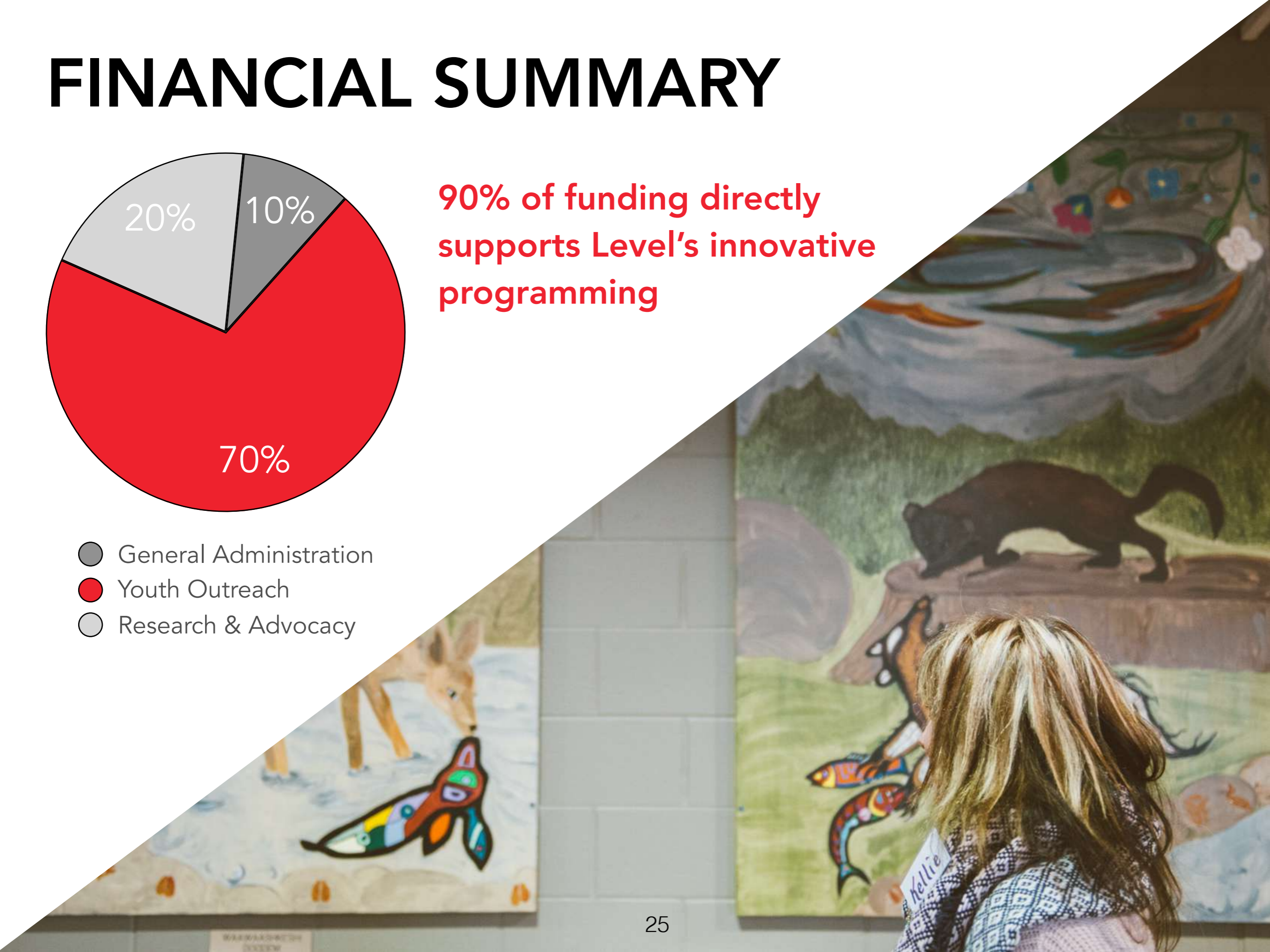
Emilie Scott,
uOttawa law student attending Level's
International Women's Day Luncheon

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



- General Administration
- Youth Outreach
- Research & Advocacy

90% of funding directly supports Level's innovative programming



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One of the students wants to go to law school now. I think the kids always understood this could be a career choice but I think as you start growing up, you start seeing the world a little differently; you start seeing limitations and barriers. I hope that, with the experience we gave them, they're able to break those down. The students could see the volunteers were once in their position, even the judge and how he's working in one of the top courts in Canada.

- Thomas Milne, Level's Youth Outreach Volunteer Leader in Rama First Nation and Associate at Nahwegahbow, Corbiere Genoodmagejig LLP (quote taken from the Law Foundation of Ontario's 2015 Annual Report)



Statement of Financial Position as at December 31, 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Revenue		
Grant revenue (Note 3)	107,350	-
Donations	25,114	147,517
Internship fees	8,200	-
	140,664	147,517
Expenses		
Salaries	72,746	62,029
Programs	12,705	37,259
Honorariums	10,050	4,000
Rent	5,041	1,767
Insurance	4,627	1,293
Travel	6,132	657
Professional fees	8,633	-
Dues and fees	970	906
Office and general	8,364	13,640
Amortization	271	-
	129,539	121,551
Excess of revenues over expenses for the year	11,125	25,966

Level's 2016 financial statements were audited by Stern Cohen LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants.

See the [Independent Auditors' Report here.](#)

special thanks

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Law Foundation of Saskatchewan
Laidlaw Foundation
Calgary Foundation
McMillan LLP
Turkstra Foundation
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
University of Ottawa Faculty of Law
McAuley Law Firm
Casino Rama

PARTNERS

Blakes Cassels & Graydon LLP
Ontario Justice Education Network
Pro Bono Students Canada - uCalgary
uSaskatchewan Native Law Centre
Legal Aid Ontario
Northern Youth Abroad





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Dare to Dream provides students with a glimpse into the legal community. While the students can see from their classroom the skyscrapers where much of the Ontario legal community is located, their reality is a world away. This program helps close that gap, and I think it makes an impression upon them and gives them the encouragement to aspire to a career in the legal industry. They learn about the law, and they learn that there are opportunities within their reach.

- Stephanie Robinson, Toronto youth outreach volunteer and Associate General Counsel, Capital Markets, Bank of Montreal

...we couldn't have done it without you

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thank you!



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When you support Level,
you change lives.

