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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters of Level,

After 14 years of programming, we continue to be humbled and amazed by the dedication of our stakeholders and volunteers. Your openness to hearing and sharing hard truths and support of bold ideas aimed at disrupting systemic inequities have driven Level's mission and impact forward in the face of a social climate fraught with human rights setbacks and up-hill battles.

For Level's team, this was most evident following the trials regarding the deaths of Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine, which rocked our stakeholder communities and reinforced the notion that our justice system is utterly failing Indigenous youth. At the height of our frustration and anger we witnessed a surge in the engagement of our Indigenous youth participants across Canada, who initiated sharing circles, wrote papers, and gave speeches on the prevalence of systemic racism and injustice in our country.

It was during these difficult conversations that the impact of **Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program (IYOP)** was revealed. For instance, one youth participant expressed a feeling of hope despite the current state of the justice system, sharing a story about the 7th fire prophecy, an Anishinaabe belief that outlines the phases of life on Turtle Island. She explained that the youth are the 7th fire, and are on a quest to reclaim their culture, traditions and languages. She also shared that her participation in IYOP helped her to understand the law, learn more about the injustices facing her people, and to develop the tools and confidence she needed to express her ideas for change.

We are truly inspired by the resilience and leadership these youth have demonstrated, and Level is proud to play a small role in elevating their voices both through IYOP, and the launching of our Indigenous Youth Justice Toolkit. This youth-designed and led project aims to help youth across the country navigate justice issues through Indigenous worldviews and teachings. Working with our new Indigenous Youth Council, and under the generous guidance of elders and knowledge keepers across Canada, we are developing this culturally responsive resource to empower youth to avoid conflict with the law and lead reform. We would like to give special thanks to Elders Bob Phillips, Constance Simmonds, Verna McGregor, Hal Eagletail and Randy Bottle, as well as the Honourable Justice Harry LaForme and Senator Murray Sinclair, for your support of this important work.

As you will see in the pages of this report, Level also launched a **new research program** this year, through which 13 young advocates tackled barriers relating to the human rights of marginalized communities in Canada, including immigrants and refugees, youth experiencing homelessness, and members of LGBTQ2S communities.

We also welcomed 20 law students to participate in Level's inaugural Blazing Trails Mentorship Program which challenges young social justice champions to carve out bold, entrepreneurial careers in law. Students were matched with strong role models, covering topics related to effective leadership, navigating the lack of diversity in the legal sector, and how to define principled metrics of career success grounded in social impact.



Finally, in late 2017 and after several years of rapid growth, Level's Board of Directors and Executive launched a new five-year <u>Strategic Plan</u>, focusing on four key objectives: improving corporate governance, amplifying innovation within our programming, strengthening financial sustainability, and diversifying our community engagement. Level's accompanying <u>Theory of Change</u> illustrates how Level will leverage our diverse communities of youth, post-secondary students and justice sector professionals to advance human rights and build hope for a fairer and more inclusive Canada in the years to come.

Of course, all of this would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, including: CN, Peter Gilgan Foundation, Law School Admission Council, Department of Justice Canada, Inspirit Foundation, Calgary Foundation, Suncor Foundation, RBC Foundation, LexisNexis Canada, Winnipeg Foundation, Blakes LLP, Laidlaw Foundation, McMillan LLP, Enbridge, Goodmans LLP, Torys LLP, WeirFoulds LLP, Stockwoods Barristers, Torkin Manes LLP, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, and Casino Rama.

Thank you for supporting Level. Thank you for your courage, humility and unwavering belief that our justice system can serve and reflect every member of our nation. Level's focus on making this a reality – through the collective learning and leadership of our stakeholders – has never been stronger.

Sincerely,

Brittany Twiss, J.D.



In 2017, our Board of Directors and Executive launched a new Strategic Plan which will guide Level's programs and activities over the next five years. Staying true to our roots, Level will continue to place emphasis on young people and raising up the next generation of leaders to ensure long-lasting, systemic change.

Read more about our <u>Strategic Plan</u> and <u>Theory of Change</u>.







YOUTH EXPERIENCING INTERSECTIONAL BARRIERS TO JUSTICE

Level will prioritize engagement with Indigenous youth, as well as other youth communities that are disproportionately affected by Canada's access to justice crisis. Youth experiencing intersectional barriers are defined as people under the age of 18 who experience inequities related to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, place of origin, citizenship, geographic location, education, and physical or mental

wellness.

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Level's second Priority
Target Group is college,
university and law
students in Canada in any
field of study who have an
interest in advancing
Level's mission.

LEGAL PROFESSION

Finally, Level will engage with justice sector professionals or "responders" including law students, lawyers, judges, judicial workers, court workers, paralegals, legal clinics and any other members of the legal profession committed to advancing Level's mission.





Our Mission

We disrupt prejudice, build empathy and advance human rights.

Our Vision

We envision a world where every person is treated with dignity, can exercise their fundamental human rights, and has the opportunity to thrive.

Our Approach

Unlike education and health care, inequitable access to justice and its devastating impacts are not well understood by the Canadian public. Creating access to justice for all is a complex endeavour. It requires more than just the keys to a courtroom. Transforming the justice sector requires the **collective effort** of an **empowered** and **empathetic** society.

We believe that if our stakeholders are empowered to understand, shape, and use the law then they can become active participants in breaking down barriers to justice. We also believe that if our legal professionals have **empathy** and **cultural humility**, we can disrupt prejudice and create a justice system that serves the people who need it the most.



Our Values



We believe in transparency and accountability.

We are accountable to the communities we aim to serve and are committed to following best practices for charitable organizations.



Dignity

We strive to honour every stakeholder.

We listen to, respect, and empower our communities, building confidence and curiosity for the benefit of all.



Diversity

Fairness requires the input of many.

We build bridges by connecting a wide range of people and cultures to make a tangible difference.



Our Staff



Brittany Twiss
Executive Director



Lisa Del ColDirector of Programs



Kenya-Jade Pinto
Program Manager



Emily Bonnell
Program Leader



Marleea Lagimodiere
Program Leader



Sarah MackOutreach and Program Coordinator



Our Board of Directors



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Director



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Director



Our Programs

1

Youth Outreach

- Indigenous Youth Outreach
- Indigenous Youth Justice Toolkit

2.

Research and Advocacy

- Research Projects
- Campus Chapters
- Facing Resistance Event

3.

Training and Mentorship

- Cultural Humility Training
- Empathy Building Workshops
- Blazing Trails Mentorship Program













YOUTH OUTREACH













Justice Education

Canada's history of colonialism, the legacy of residential schools, and continued systemic racism have resulted in Indigenous communities facing the harshest consequences of unequal access to justice. Many studies have shown that Indigenous youth are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of high school and be engaged in the criminal justice system compared to non-Indigenous Canadian youth.

Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program (IYOP) is an innovative justice education and mentorship program that engages First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth aged 11 - 14 in fun and collaborative activities that empower them to reach their full potential.

IYOP is rooted in building trust, acknowledging colonial legacies, honouring Indigenous practices and customs, and promoting a two-way knowledge exchange between volunteers and Indigenous youth.

What began as a pilot program in Toronto in 2012 with 25 participants has grown to a program that reaches over 250 youth annually and involves over 100 justice sector volunteers in programs working with youth from Ontario, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.



Youth Testimonials

What did you learn about yourself through the program?

- I'm capable of more than I think
- I have respect for others
- I am confident
- I 100% want to be a lawyer
- I can have a role in the justice system
- I want to be a judge

What surprised you about the program?

- How one thing can change everything
- How fun it was
- How everyone was really nice
- There are a lot of roles in the court

What did you like best about the program?

- The volunteers
- I went from knowing nothing to knowing a lot of things
- Learning about justice
- Everything!



APRIL 2018

A Word from the Honourable Senator Murray Sinclair

Canada is facing an access to justice crisis, with Indigenous communities facing the harshest of consequences. One needs only to look at the outcomes of the trials regarding the deaths of Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine to see that the justice system is failing our youth. The final report and calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada ("TRC") included a call to eliminate the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in custody over the next decade.

Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program helps advance this call to action with its unique and preventative approach, combining mentorship and education during a critical time in the youth participants' development. What sets Level apart is the organization's commitment to grounding their justice education programming in Indigenous pedagogy and multi-directional knowledge sharing.

Level's program unites two worldviews, introducing youth to the concepts and practices of the Canadian criminal justice system while honouring Indigenous laws, customs and practices. Of equal importance is Level's work to reform the justice sector through training workshops focused on empathy, intercultural awareness, and inherent and systemic bias.

Level recognizes that in order to advance reconciliation, the justice sector must learn from and walk with Indigenous communities. Level creates space for humility, cross-cultural understanding, and community-led reform: all of which are critical to combatting systemic racism and injustice in our country.



2017 Highlights





252

YOUTH ENGAGED

in justice education and mentorship activities across Canada. 215,000

DOLLARS

worth of in-kind hours from lawyers and lawstudent volunteers. 90%

OF YOUTH

indicated an increased level of comfort working and interacting with justice sector professionals.



Communities Engaged

2017-2018

In 2017/18 Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program was delivered in 11 locations, across four provinces and territories. In 2017, Level also launched IYOP in Winnipeg for the first time.

Level has identified Prince Rupert (British Columbia), Iqaluit (Nunavut), and Thunder Bay (Ontario) as areas for potential program expansion in 2018/19.



Alberta

Calgary

Vincent Massey Public School Louis Riel School & John Ware School (joint program)

Siksika First Nation

Siksika Outreach School

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

St. Frances School

Manitoba

Winnipeg

William Whyte School

Chippewas of Rama First Nation

Mnjikaning Kendaaswin Elementary School

Ottawa

Meadowlands Public School Northern Youth Abroad (delivered in Ottawa for youth from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories)

Toronto

First Nations School of Toronto University of Toronto Faculty of Law's 'See Yourself Here' outreach event





"The students made me very **proud**. I will remember them for a long time. Indeed, they made me feel like I was home on my reserve and amongst my people. IYOP is a terrific program, which I have no doubt will create new dreams in the students and I have every confidence that some of them will take it to heart.

They are special young people and deserve the chance to go anywhere they want to in life. I believe they will. A big **Chi Miigwetch** to them and all the generous volunteers."

- The Honourable Justice Harry LaForme, Ontario Court of Appeal





"I have been volunteering with Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program for four years now, and it has been one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences of my legal career. I've been working in the criminal justice system as an Assistant Crown Attorney for over 17 years,

and while I enjoy my career, the work by its very nature often centres around conflict and the harm people sometimes do to one another. In contrast, IYOP is forward-looking and focuses on the promise of youth and bringing greater inclusiveness to the justice system. It celebrates the history and tradition of Indigenous Peoples and encourages the students to strive to become involved in the justice system and improve its responsiveness to Indigenous issues from within."

- Rick Nathanson, Assistant Crown Attorney and IYOP Volunteer



BY YOUTH FOR YOUTH

Indigenous Youth Justice Toolkit

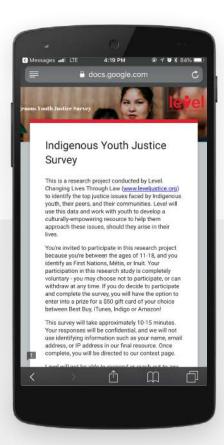
SUPPORTED BY JUSTICE CANADA AND CALGARY FOUNDATION

In 2017, with support from Justice Canada and the Calgary Foundation, Level launched the creation of a youth-led and designed justice education resource aimed at raising awareness about youth justice issues, elevating voices, and empowering Indigenous youth by increasing their capacity to navigate the justice system.

In 2018, First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth aged 11-18 will identify the top justice issues impacting them and guide the development of a resource that will help youth navigate these issues. To support the project, Level recruited three research fellows to provide key legal research.

The design of the final toolkit will be **led by an Indigenous Youth Council**, and will be culturally anchored, featuring the input, illustrations and artwork of the youth. The toolkit will be finalized in the summer of 2018.

















RESEARCH & ADVOCACY















Research Projects

DISRUPTING SYSTEMIC INEQUITY



Disrupting Barriers to Justice

Fellows

Aneta Bajic Avineet Cheema Farah Zaman Jadeney Wong



Human Rights

Fellows

Erinne Paisley Ivana Vujeva Jordan Kazan-Baigrie Muriam Fancy Sheren Kamaei



Indigenous Youth Justice

Fellows

Carol Drumm Kayla Fast Tawny Allison





FOSTERING NEW WAYS TO DRIVE CHANGE

Disrupting Barriers to Justice

In 2017, under the supervision of Level's Executive Director and Program Manager, and using a designthinking approach, Level recruited four research fellows to research and identify key barriers to justice in Canada and opportunities to overcome these barriers.

The fellows are exploring 'crimmigration' - the intersection of criminal and immigration laws that create barriers to justice for foreign nationals in Canada. Their report and accompanying legal factsheet are forthcoming in June 2018.

Research Fellows



Avineet Cheema

LLM Candidate



Jadeney Wong
JD/MA Candidate



Farah Zaman
Dual JD Candidate



Aneta Bajic



Human Rights Research

INSPIRING YOUNG CHANGE MAKERS

In 2017, Level established a partnership with the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto to work with and mentor a **team of service-learning students**. In 2018, six students joined Level as fellows on our human rights research team.

The students (L-R), Erinne Paisley, Muriam Fancy, Jordan Kazan-Baigrie, Nida Islam, Sheren Kamaei, and Ivana Vujeva, were responsible for identifying, researching, drafting and pitching three key human rights issues for Level's future annual themes.





ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



LGBTQ+ RIGHTS



YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



Indigenous Youth Justice

Research Fellows



Carol Drumm BA



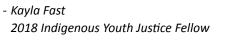
Tawny AllisonJD Candidate



Kayla Fast JD Candidate

Level's Youth Justice Report Fellows engaged in legal research to support the creation of the Indigenous Youth Justice Toolkit (read more about the project on page 18).

Working on this project, I was continually reminded of the human context that the law operates in. Often lawyers and law students get so caught up in the theoretical letter of the law that we forget that living law affects people's lives in a very real and often detrimental way. I was grateful for the opportunity to situate my understanding of law in this human context and create something that hopefully makes justice more accessible for those whose needs are not often contemplated by lawmakers.







Campus Chapters

ACTIVATING CHANGE MAKERS

Level's student-led Campus Chapters are champions of our mission and engage in human rights research and advocacy at law schools across Canada. Focused on an annual theme, Level's Campus Chapters organize community events, host conferences and panel discussions, and contribute research papers to an annual human rights journal.

In 2017-18, our campus chapters advanced reconciliation in the justice sector, and encouraged their peers to think critically about how they can use their budding legal skills to make a positive impact in their communities.



Active Chapters

University of Victoria
University of British
Columbia
Thompson Rivers
University
University of Calgary
University of
Saskatchewan
University of Manitoba
Western University
Queen's University
University of Ottawa
Université de Montréal

2017/18 Highlights



DOCUMENTARY SCREENINGS

Level chapters hosted documentary screenings around our annual human rights theme, including screenings of: Angry Inuk, Trick or Treaty, and The Skin We're In.



STUDENT-LED JOURNAL



PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Student leaders engaged over 230 law students and community members by hosting panel discussions on advancing reconciliation in the justice sector.



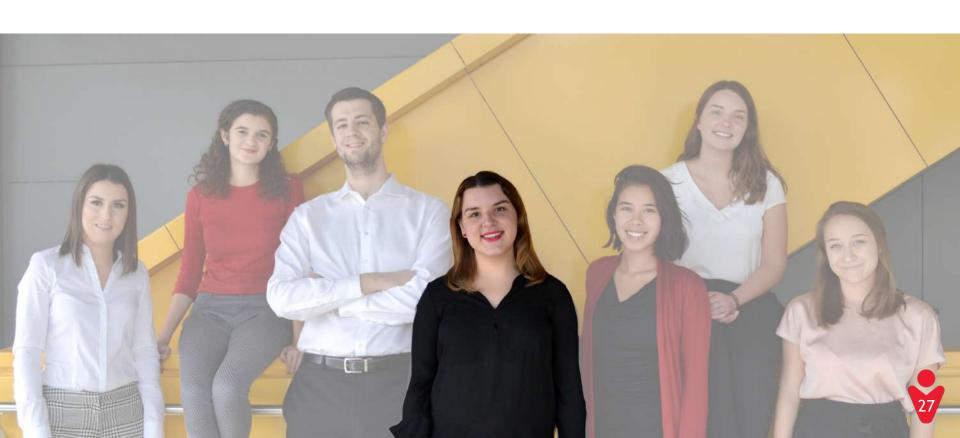
Being the Université de Montréal's Chapter President has been a challenging, yet rewarding experience. This year our chapter chose to focus on compiling and editing a student journal on this year's human rights theme: Advancing Reconciliation in the Justice Sector. Students from across Canada contributed to the journal with articles varying in themes and languages.

Our aim with this journal was to create a place where students could share their thoughts, experiences and insight in a supportive environment.

The result was an accessible journal that our team worked tirelessly on in order to provide quality content.

Level was extremely helpful and made us feel heard and supported throughout the entire process. I've enjoyed my time as a Level executive immensely, and cannot wait to see the impact the organization will continue to have.

Katya Ukrainetz
 2017/18 Université de Montréal Chapter President



72% of student leaders indicated increased organizational and problem solving skills after their year as chapter executives.

86% of student leaders indicated that they would recommend joining a Level chapter to a friend.

79% of student leaders indicated that their involvement with Level inspired them to stay involved with human rights and social justice issues.











86% of student leaders indicated that they felt more confident about advancing reconciliation in the justice sector after their year as chapter executives.





#FacingResistanceTO

In April 2018, Level hosted "Facing Resistance," an event that inspired Toronto's legal community to challenge the status quo and think about new ways of **disrupting** inequitable access to justice in Canada.

The event was a great success, raising over \$41,000 for Level's mission. Speakers included Nyle Miigizi Johnston, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Christien Levien, Max FineDay, and Hadiya Roderique. Read more about the evening, here.

























TRAINING & & MENTORSHIP













BRIDGING THE GAP

Cultural Humility Training

Working from our mission to disrupt prejudice and build empathy, and responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Level offers training opportunities for justice sector responders.

Cultural humility requires lifelong self-reflection and self-critique. In this process, an individual learns about another's culture, while also stepping back to recognize and understand their own assumptions, biases and values.

While many lawyers and law students have good intentions and a desire to work with marginalized communities, they are often removed from the lived experiences of those communities, which could lead to further alienation due to lack of understanding and humility.

To help respond to this issue, and to ensure our volunteers are equipped with the tools to effectively and respectfully engage with our stakeholders, we offer specialized inter-cultural competency, humility, and empathy training sessions.

In 2017 and in early 2018, Level delivered training sessions for the following groups:

- University of Calgary Faculty of Law
- Robson Hall Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba
- College of Law, University of Saskatchewan

Read more about our training event in <u>Calgary</u> and program launch in <u>Winnipeg</u>.



Empathy Building

In 2017, recognizing that many law students and legal professionals often lack fundamental communication and listening skills, Level began delivering empathy-building workshops tailored to post-secondary, law students and legal professionals.

These workshops incorporate the **Empathy Toy**, an innovative tool designed to spark conversations about mutual understanding, frustration, communication, and empathy.

Participants are encouraged to be vulnerable, embrace discomfort, and are guided to reflect on these experiences, drawing parallels to their work as social justice advocates, lawyers and/or law students.

In 2018, Level will continue to build empathy through workshops as well as by engaging in innovative storytelling projects that amplify the voices of those experiencing barriers to justice.

In 2017 and early 2018, Level delivered empathy building workshops for the following stakeholders:

- Upper Canada College
- Level Research Fellows
- Law Needs Feminism Because Conference, University of Ottawa
- Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario









CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE

Blazing Trails Mentorship Program

In 2017 Level designed and launched the Blazing Trails Mentorship Program aimed at helping law students connect and engage with lawyers who have blazed trails and defined their own metrics of success.

The Program is aimed at instilling confidence in young leaders so that they can take control of their career narratives. Level recruited seven mentors and 20 mentees with diverse backgrounds and experiences from across Canada. The program officially launched in 2018 and the first cohort completed their mentorship experiences in May 2018.



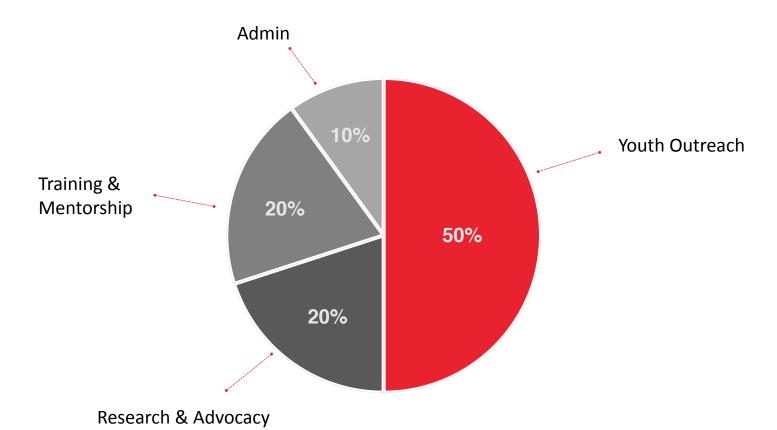


"Great initiative. I think it was really positive for an 'alt-law' student like myself! A breath of fresh air and a welcome change to only being afforded networking/mentor opportunities in corporate law."

Our Financial Summary

In 2017, with the help of Stern Cohen LLP, Level changed its fiscal year-end to August 31st to correspond with our program delivery calendar (September-August).

An unaudited financial statement for the stub period of January-August 2017 can be found here. Level's audited financials will be released and appended to this report in late fall 2018.





Our Supporters









Ministère de la Justice Canada Department of Justice Canada







RBC Foundation RBC Fondation































Thank You

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and Knowledge-Keepers The Honourable Justice Harry Laforme The Honourable Justice Gloria Epstein The Honourable Justice Michal Fairburn The Honourable Justice Rebecca Shamai The Honourable Justice Marion Cohen

The Honourable

Justice Hugh Fraser

Judges, Elders, Experts,

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Pauline Shirt

Gloria King

The Honourable Judge

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Bruce Dobbin

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Acknowledgments

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