



**level | égaliser**  
building a future of equity and justice    construire un futur équitable et juste

# Annual Report 2022-2023

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**Shelan Markus**

Executive Director

# Letter from the Executive Director

The Level team extends our heartfelt gratitude to you for your unwavering support. Your contribution helps us provide tailored justice education programs, mentorship for social justice leaders, and professional growth opportunities for legal professionals committed to creating a better tomorrow.

The Indigenous Youth Outreach Program at Level successfully reached to over 650 students in 24 different locations throughout Canada this year. Justice Jodie-Lynn Waddilove and Justice André Chamberlain joined the program yet again as exceptional and experienced volunteers. We also had the privilege of witnessing the appointment of a longstanding and dedicated volunteer, Richard Nathanson, as a new judge in the Ontario Court of Justice.

We launched two new programs: the Black Youth Justice Program (“BYJP”) and the Environmental Justice Program (“EJP”). BYJP reached 45 students and EJP reached xx. Both programs shed light on ongoing justice issues in Canada and encouraged to envision a more equitable future.

The Campus Chapter Program transformed into the Social Justice Fellowship Program (“SJFP”); a significant milestone for Level. The program offers law students the chance to participate in social justice research and advocacy, and it has been successfully implemented at seven law schools across the nation.

The Blazing Trails Mentorship Program (“BTMP”) successfully matched 31 mentees from 9 different law schools across the country with 30 legal mentors. The program facilitates connections between law students and social justice professionals and provides invaluable mentorship opportunities for law students who are interested in pursuing social justice careers.

Throughout the year, Level conducted Cultural Humility and Empathy Training sessions for a variety of legal and business sectors. These sessions were specifically designed to help the legal sector transition from a passive approach to reconciliation to a more active one.

Level hosted its first in-person Facing Resistance Speakers Series since 2019. We invited legal professionals, health experts, and activists to share their knowledge on reproductive and gender rights in Canada. Thank you to all our supporters who attended this successful event!

We're thrilled to announce that Level has had an exciting year, marked by the upcoming launch of our next 5-year Strategic Plan. We took a collaborative approach; with the help of the Level Strategic Planning Consultant, Karen Cohl, we consulted with over 77 individuals who are both internal and external to our organization. Based on the feedback we received during consultations, our staff, Board members, and Strategic Planning committee came together for an in-person brainstorming retreat to create a plan that we're all very proud of. We can't wait to share it with you when it launches in the fall of 2023.



**Shelan Markus**  
Executive Director

# Letter from the Executive Director

Of course, all of this would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, including:

**National Funders:**

Department of Canadian Heritage  
McCarthy Tétrault LLP  
Blakes LLP  
Connected North - TakingITGlobal  
Enbridge  
TD Bank  
Koskie Minsky LLP  
LexisNexis

**Local Funders:**

Law Foundation of Ontario  
Law Foundation of British Columbia  
Law Foundation of Manitoba  
Law Foundation of Saskatchewan

**Event Funders:**

Babin Bessner Spry LLP  
McMillan LLP  
OKT LLP  
Krista Hill and Linda Plumpton

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to create justice systems that serve and reflect every member of our communities.

With gratitude,

# About | Level



Caption: Level board and staff at the Strat Plan Retreat, 2023

Photo by Shelan Markus

# Our Mission & Vision

## Who?

Level is a national Canadian charitable organization.

## What?

We level the barriers to justice by disrupting prejudice, building empathy and advancing human rights.

## How?

We deliver programs - to youth, law students, and lawyers - focused on innovative justice education.

## Why?

We envision a justice system that treats everyone with dignity and an informed society where everyone can exercise their rights

# Our Values

## Integrity

We believe in transparency and accountability

We are accountable to the communities we aim to serve and are committed to following best practices

## Dignity

Inclusion is only possible with respect and humility

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.

# Annually We engage...



650+

Indigenous youth in justice education and mentorship

600+

Legal professionals mentoring Indigenous youth and law students

2,000+

Law students and professionals to champion social justice issues





# New Strategic Plan 2023-2028

In the fall of 2023, Level will launch its new Strategic Plan for the next five years, 2023–2028. As a national justice education and human rights charity, Level provides innovative and specialized programs for youth, law students, and legal professionals. This Strategic Plan will deepen our impact and strengthen our relationships with communities. Level’s achievements include the expansion of the justice education programme for Indigenous youth, and the recently added Black Youth Justice Program and Environmental Justice Program, as well as the reimagined programs for law students and legal professionals. Level acknowledges the need to continue to strive towards significant changes in equity and access to justice.

To accurately reflect our organization's strengths, diversity, and community connections, Level Executive Director, Shelan Markus, in collaboration with Level’s strategic planning consultant, Karen Cohl, consulted over 77 individuals both internal and external to Level’s work. The feedback we received during consultation, was used by Level’s Board and staff to outline four main strategic directions for the next five years: Programs, Relationships, Awareness, and Capacity. With each strategic direction Level will expand our initiatives, amplify our achievements, sustain and forge new partnerships, enhance awareness and knowledge, and strengthen our resources and impact measurement.

We’re grateful for the input we received from program participants, partners, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, program advisory board members, Program Facilitators, volunteers, funders, Level staff and Board members, access to justice experts, and other people familiar with Level's work. Your diverse perspectives, knowledge and wisdom greatly contributed to the strength and success of Level for an impactful future.

# Our Staff



**Shelan Markus**  
Executive Director



**Desneige Frandsen**  
Program Manager



**Fatima Ahmed**  
Program Manager



**Caitlin MacDonald**  
Senior Program Manager

# Our Board



**Susan Spence**  
Secretary



**Richard Zeni**  
Treasurer



**Adrian Di Giovanni**  
Vice-Chair



**Jewel Amoah**  
Director



**Fallon Melander**  
Director



**Brittany Twiss**  
Director



**Jennifer Guerard**  
Board Chair



**Heather McKay**  
Director



**Tanya Mushynski**  
Director

# Our Facilitators



Jordan Calladine  
Program Facilitator



Brooke Cross-Worobec  
Program Facilitator



Danielle Davyduke  
Program Facilitator



Justin Fontaine  
Program Facilitator



Paul Porter  
Program Facilitator



Thomas Milne  
Program Facilitator



Shawnee Monchalin  
Program Facilitator



Brianna Morrison  
Program Facilitator



Sarah Schmaus  
Program Facilitator



Vivian Sim  
Program Facilitator



Sage Streight  
Program Facilitator



Kennedy Pinette  
Program Facilitator



Robert Bassett  
Program Facilitator



Misko Kicknosway  
Program Facilitator



Verukah Poirier  
Program Facilitator



Aisha Abawajy  
Program Facilitator



Hilena Demelie  
Program Facilitator



Dan Rutabingwa Gakire  
Program Facilitator



Samantha Craig-Curnow  
Program Facilitator

# Our Programs

We advance our mission through three main program areas:

## Youth

Indigenous Youth  
Outreach Program

Black Youth  
Justice Program

Environmental Justice  
Program

## Law Students

Social Justice Fellowship  
Program

Blazing Trails Mentorship  
Program

## Lawyers


Facing Resistance  
Speaker Series

Cultural Humility and  
Empathy Training

# Programs | Youth Outreach

Caption: IYOP Mock Trial, 2023

Photo by Shelan Markus



# Indigenous Youth Outreach Program

The Indigenous Youth Outreach Program (“IYOP”) is an Indigenous youth justice education and mentorship program that engages First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth in a fun and collaborative way. The program provides information and offers Indigenous youth the opportunity to engage in activities that empower them to reach their full potential, build confidence, critical thinking and leadership skills, and promotes relationship-building between the youth and legal professional volunteers and facilitators. The IYOP celebrates Indigenous culture and traditions throughout the lessons and activities embedded in the program; through this, the IYOP also advances reconciliation by offering youth and legal professionals the chance to learn and grow together throughout the program.

The IYOP aims to:

- **Engage** Indigenous youth in exciting and collaborative justice-based activities.
- **Inspire** Indigenous youth to explore careers in the legal sector to enhance diversity throughout the legal profession.
- **Build** Indigenous youth's confidence in their public speaking abilities.
- **Enhance** Indigenous youth's critical thinking and leadership skills.
- **Promote** reconciliation through educational content and relationship development between Indigenous youth and legal professionals.
- **Celebrate** Indigenous customs, practices and beliefs.

# What Participants Have to Say

(Through this program) I learned that even if I'm quiet, sometimes I can have a powerful voice if I'm loud enough to be heard.



(Through this program I learned) I can talk better in front of people than I thought and I shouldn't have been scared for the mock trial because it is now one of my favourite things and was super fun!



(Through this program I learned) That when I grow up I maybe want to be a lawyer and I can succeed at being a lawyer its very interesting for me.





# National Program Highlights

38%

**INCREASE IN  
YOUTH REPORTED**

knowledge of what happens at a Canadian criminal trial after participating in the IYOP.

36%

**INCREASE IN  
YOUTH REPORTED**

knowledge of the different jobs that people can have in the legal profession after participating in the IYOP.

11%

**INCREASE IN  
YOUTH REPORTED**

feelings of seeing themselves working in the legal profession after participating in the IYOP.



# Indigenous Youth Outreach Program

## Manitoba

### Winnipeg

Elmwood High School

### Fisher River Cree Nation

Fisher River School

### Split Lake

Chief Sam Cook Mahmuwee  
Education

### Nelson House

Otetiskewin Kiskinwamahto-  
wekamik School

## Ontario

### Ottawa

Robert Hopkins Public School (x2)

### Toronto

Wandering Spirit School

### Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

Antler River Elementry School

### Rama

Mnjikaning Kandaaswin Elementry  
School

### Sioux Lookout

Sioux North High School

### Midland

Georgian Bay District Secondary  
School

### Fort Frances

Seven Generations Education  
Institute

## Alberta

### Siksika First Nation

Siksika Outreach School

### Edmonton

Jasper Place High School

## British Columbia

### Vancouver

Xpey' Elementry School  
Tsleil-Waututh Nation School

### Quatsino First Nation

K'ak'ot'lats'l School

## Saskatchewan

### Saskatoon

Wesmount School (x2)

### Pelican Narrows

Wapawikoscikan School

### Cote First Nation

Chief Gabriel Cote Education Complex

## Nunavut

### Pond Inlet

Ulaajuk School

# Law Firm & Courtroom Visits

## A Program Highlight

The final part of the IYOP includes the opportunity for youth participants to visit a local courthouse and/or law firm. If we can visit a local courthouse, we will hold the mock trial and sentencing circle there. This elevates these activities and allows the youth to really feel they are the roles they have chosen to play. After the mock trial and sentencing circle at the courthouse, the youths enjoy a delicious pizza lunch, and then, if we are able, we head to a local law firm. This visit allows the youth to build more meaningful relationships with legal professionals, hopefully enabling them to see themselves in the profession.

This year the youth participants from ɣpeý Elementary School in Vancouver, British Columbia, were able to visit the Vancouver Law Courts to play out their mock trial activity. Visiting the courthouse allowed the youths to really engage with the roles they have been practicing for; they became more interactive and engaged while standing at the counsel tables, sitting in the jury box and even in the body of the court.

After the mock trial at the courthouse, the youths from ɣpeý visited Level supporter law firm, Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP. This allowed the youth to not only learn from lawyers in this prestigious firm but also, hopefully, to begin seeing themselves as legal professionals. Beyond this, the firm visit strengthened relationships between the youth and program facilitators and volunteers. The IYOP is more than legal education; it is about building confidence and showing youth participants that they have a place in the legal profession if they choose to pursue a career there.

# χρηý Elementary School Field Trip Photographs





# Black Youth Justice Program

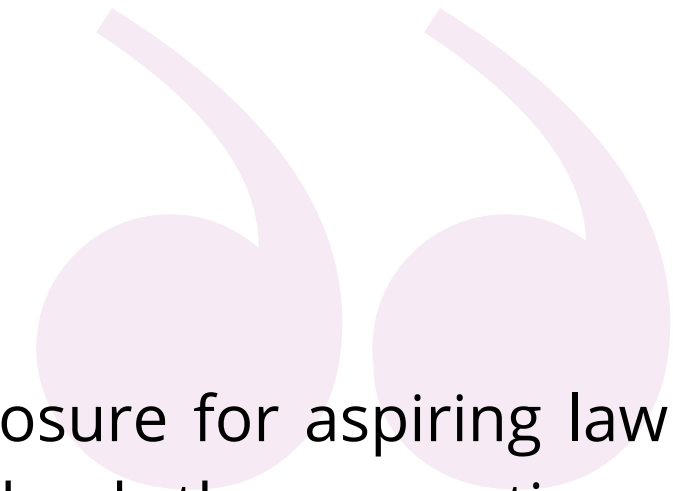
In 2022-2023, Level conducted the pilot program for the Black Youth Justice Program (BYJP). BYJP offers culturally relevant justice education that increases students' knowledge of the justice system, builds positive relations between Black youth and the legal sector, imparts important leadership skills, as well as enhances accessibility to the Canadian justice system and sparks interest in legal careers

BYJP aims to:

- **Engage** Black youth in exciting and collaborative justice-based activities
- **Create** meaningful relationships between Black youth and the Canadian justice system
- **Inspire** Black youth to explore legal sector careers and enhance diversity in law  
Increase a sense of belonging and support in the justice sector
- **Build** the confidence, critical thinking, and leadership skills of Black youth
- **Motivate** Black students to pursue positive attitudes toward school and reach their full potential
- **Connect** Black youth to the wider legal community



# What Participants Have to Say



It was a really great program and provided a lot of good exposure for aspiring law students... It gives us the ability to interact with lawyers and ask them questions. Students have an opportunity to ask for advice from lawyers and law students.

**2022-2023 Student Participant**

[BYJP] was an informative and useful program which helped me understand my rights better and opened my eyes to the history of institutional racism within the justice system.

**2022-2023 Student Participant**

The most rewarding aspect of the program was having the students tell me that they would like to become a paralegal, lawyer or judge in the future. This is a testament to the power and importance of the program. This is just the start; I look forward to watching the BYJP grow in the future.

**BYJP Facilitator Aisha Abawajy (Toronto)**



# Program Highlights

**45** **YOUTH ENGAGED** In justice education and mentorship activities across Canada

**3** **PROGRAM DELIVERIES** establishing our capacity to grow and expand in other locations in the coming years

**100%** **CONTINUATION RATE** confirming that all locations were satisfied with the program and invited us to return

# Program Locations





# BYJP Premier Partnership McCarthy Tétrault

In 2023, McCarthy Tétrault and Level launched a premier partnership to help support Level's youth programs, including the Black Youth Justice Program. As Level's new Premier Partner, McCarthy Tétrault, will help scale BYJP for the upcoming cycle of deliveries.

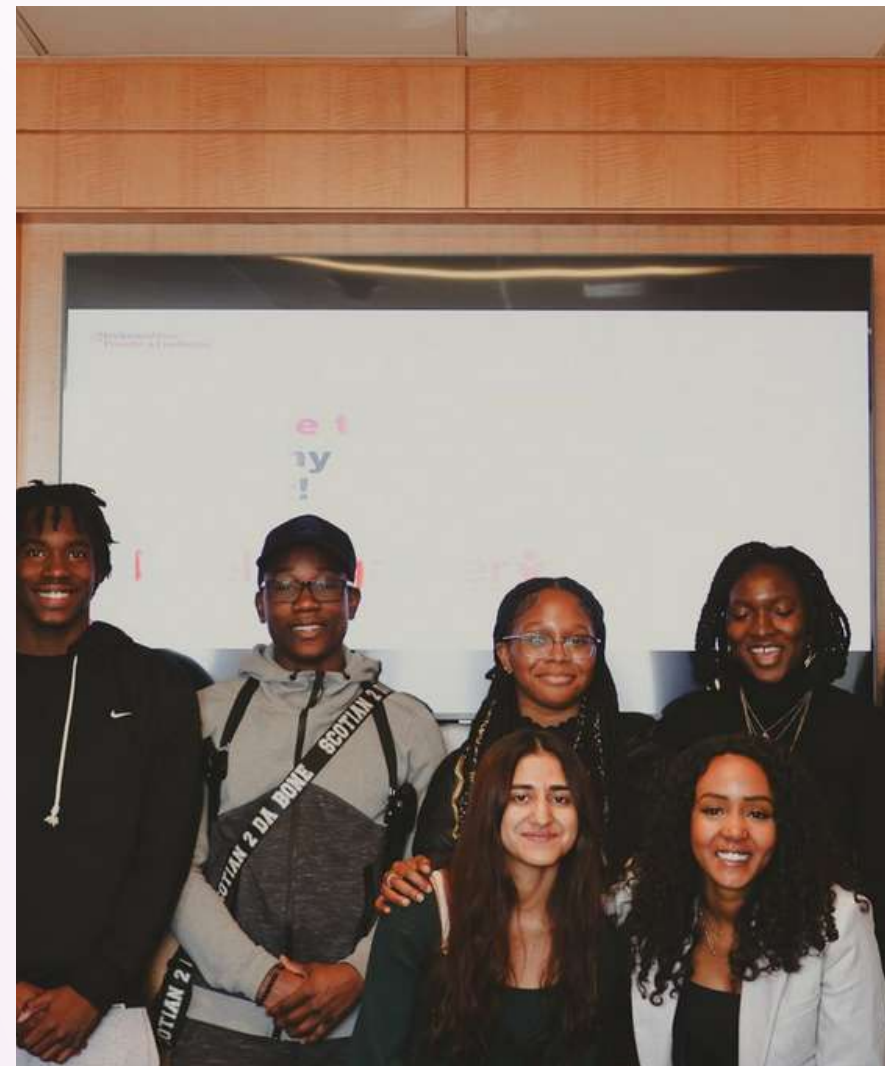
A key component of this partnership is to increase access to justice for Black communities in Canada. The programs offer a two-way knowledge exchange between McCarthy Tétrault lawyers and youth participants. McCarthy Tétrault lawyers offer the students insight about the justice system, while relationship building with the students, and training throughout the program, also enhances volunteer lawyer cultural humility.

Since Level's inception in 2005, fifteen thousand youth, law students, and lawyers have been connected, and exposed to justice education and cultural humility training. Together, we will deepen this impact. From 2022 to 2023, McCarthy Tétrault commits \$30,000 to elevate these programs and inch closer to leveling the barriers to justice.



# BYJP Field Trip to McCarthy Tétrault

On April 21st, 2023, the students of Emery Collegiate's Law class enjoyed a field trip to the offices of Level's Premier Partner, McCarthy Tétrault, in Toronto. McCarthy Tétrault hosted the students as part of their partnership with Level.



# Environmental Justice Program

## A New Level Youth Program

In 2022-2023, Level conducted the first pilot of the Environmental Justice Program (EJP) in Ottawa, ON at Notre Dame High School and Vincent Massey Public School. Both of these pilot programs allowed Level to gain invaluable feedback on the program and will lead to a greater roll out in 2023 - 2024. The EJP imparts important leadership skills, as well as enhances youths understanding of environmental issues and justice, such as, climate change, environmental racism and rights.

The EJP aims to:

- **Engage** a new generation of environmental justice advocates.
- **Increase** the number of youth pursuing environmental-justice-related careers.
- **Build** youth's confidence, critical thinking and leadership skills to bring them closer to a better, greener and healthier society.
- **Advance** environmental advocacy and reconciliation by showing connections between the environment and Indigenous traditions and cultures.
- **Show** the connection between environmental justice, Indigenous knowledge and youth action.

A young man with dark curly hair, wearing a white zip-up hoodie over a green t-shirt, stands in a classroom. He is looking down at a smartphone in his hands. In the background, there is a bulletin board with various notices and a door. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text on the left side of the slide.

# Environmental Justice Program

## Brief Overview

Through seven sessions, the Environmental Justice Program (“EJP”) looks at and breaks down the complexities of environmental law and justice in Canada for students aged 10 – 18. The program examines current environmental issues which continue to impact the nation, such as, wildfires and lack of clean water within Indigenous territories. Throughout the EJP facilitators and volunteers work with students to discuss the history of environmental justice in Canada; they look at concepts such as environmental racism, injustice, advocacy and more. We examine human rights and responsibilities related to the environment, discuss the inextricable link between environmental law and justice and Indigenous peoples’ legal orders and culture; a part of this is bringing in an Indigenous Elder to speak with the students during one of the sessions. Beyond learning about these concepts, we work with students to help them understand how they can take action to be a part of environmental justice initiatives in Canada. The program finishes with an engaging, interactive and impactful mock environmental negotiation circle based on an Indigenous environmental fact scenario.

# New Environmental Justice Program

The soft launch of the EJP involved two schools in Ottawa, ON; Notre Dame High School and Vincent Massey Public School.

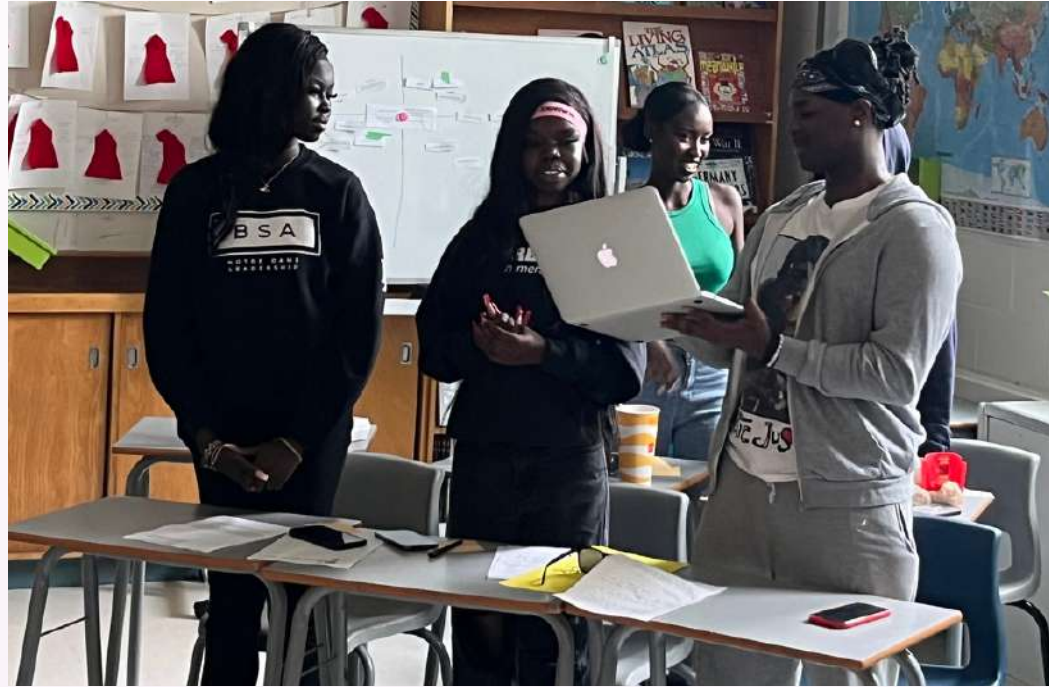
The program was facilitated by the amazing Dan Rutabingwa Gakire. Dan has been involved in the EJP from the very beginning, even helping develop the content of the program. Program volunteers came from the University of Ottawa's EcoJustice initiative.

The soft launch of the program garnered much positive feedback as well as suggestions for future implementation.

We look forward to incorporating the feedback from the pilot in Ottawa and rolling the program out further in 2023 - 2024.



# Notre Dame High School Mock Negotiation Photographs





# Programs | Law Students

Caption: Universite de  
Montreal Fellows, 2022

Photo by Shelan Markus

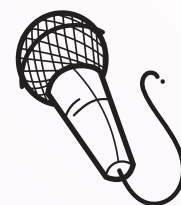


# Social Justice Fellowship Program

In 2022-2023, Level conducted the pilot program for the Social Justice Fellowship Program (SJFP). Level's new Social Justice Fellowship program sought to empower law students and equip them with the skills to become social justice advocates. As part of the program, fellows received a stipend and funding to participate in the program. They further participated in advocacy and leadership workshops, received certification for Empathy Training, as well as received opportunities to be mentored by Level's vast network of legal professionals.

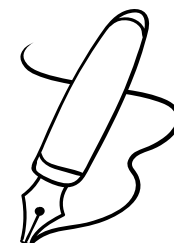
Level's fellows picked a social justice theme and promoted the selected theme by organizing a project of their own devising on campus. By engaging in the Social Justice Fellowship program, fellows had the opportunity to learn about social justice issues, engage their campuses, perform outreach to the broader community, refine their leadership skills and become better advocates for social justice.

# Social Justice Project Highlights



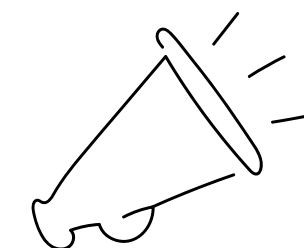
## *PANEL EVENTS*

Student leaders engaged law students, legal professionals and community members through panel events on several themes.



## *RESEARCH REPORTS*

Fellows were involved in a plethora of research initiatives. For example, Level's Univerisity of Ottawa fellows worked on a research report relating to environmental justice



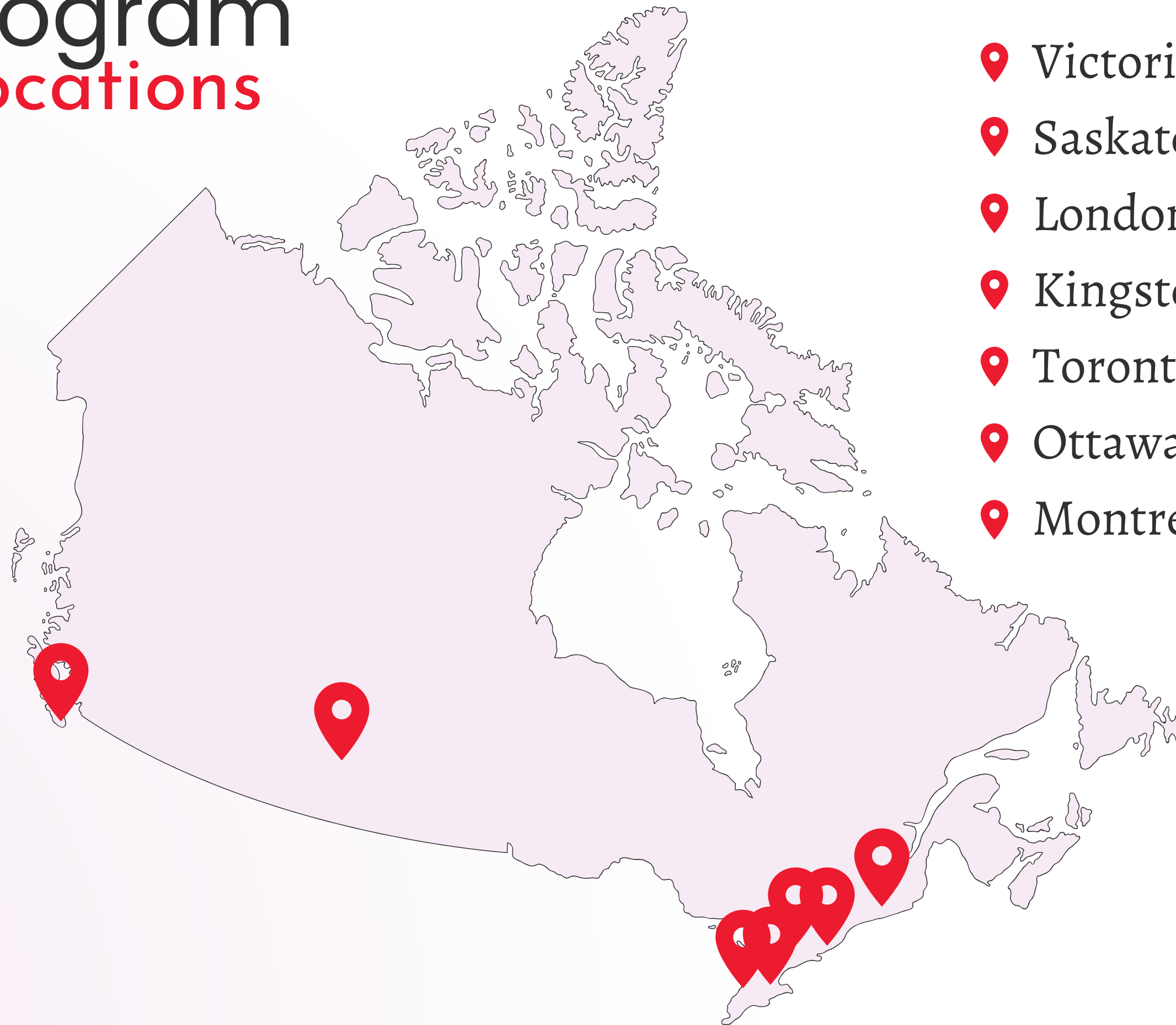
## *ADVOCACY INITIATIVES*

Students engaged in advocacy initiatives that assisted in promoting their issue of choice, through delivering public legal education





# Program Locations



- 📍 Victoria, BC
- 📍 Saskatoon, SK
- 📍 London, ON
- 📍 Kingston, ON
- 📍 Toronto, ON
- 📍 Ottawa, ON
- 📍 Montreal, QC





# Blazing Trails Mentorship Program

Since 2004, Level has worked closely with law students across the country on advancing various human rights issues. Through this work, we have gathered 15 years of feedback, and one of the common themes that stood out was the feeling of disempowerment among students seeking to pursue alternative legal careers. Specifically, students communicated that law school had the effect of obscuring their career goals, and pushing them towards more traditional streams of law that they were not passionate about.

In 2017, to help address this concern, Level launched Blazing Trails, a unique program designed to connect law students with “trailblazers” - daring professionals who carved out their own path and redefined what it means to be successful in the legal profession. In the 2022-23 Academic year, Level’s Blazing Trails program partnered 31 law students representing 10 law schools across the country, with 30 legal mentors. Mentorship cohorts were provided with a toolkit to facilitate discussion, and worked through three 1-hour sessions designed to provide law students with the support and answers they needed to navigate the early stages of their legal career.



# Program Highlights

**31** **MENTEES** engaged and assisted with social justice career options

**30** **MENTORS** who have blazed their own trails and defined their own metrics of success

**10** **LAW SCHOOLS** represented as part of the mentorship program



# Program Locations



- 📍 Victoria, BC
- 📍 Saskatoon, SK
- 📍 London, ON
- 📍 Calgary, AB
- 📍 Toronto, ON
- 📍 Vancouver, BC
- 📍 Windsor, ON
- 📍 Kamloops, BC
- 📍 Winnipeg, MB



# Programs | Lawyers

Caption: Facing Resistance  
Speaking Series Event, 2022

Photo by Ray Cornelisz



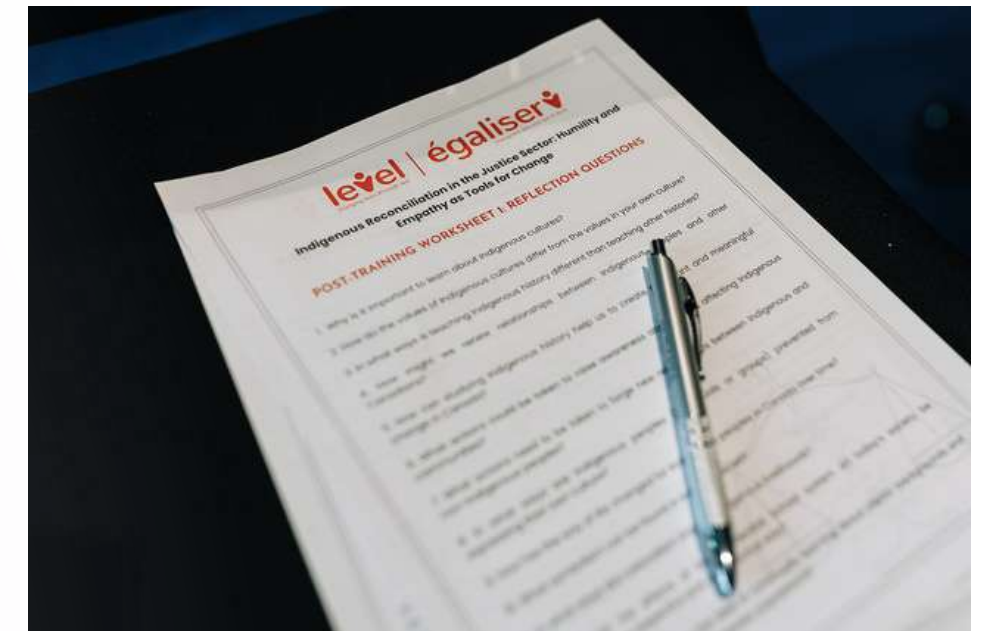
# Cultural Humility & Empathy Training

Our new in-house specialized cultural humility training involves working with justice sector actors, including lawyers, court clerks, administrative staff, and more, to increase their knowledge of the histories and lived realities of Indigenous communities. “Cultural humility” is a step beyond mere competency and involves critical self-reflection to understand how personal and systemic biases impact how we interact with the individuals and communities we aim to serve. Level’s training sessions provide participants with some of the tools needed to approach their work with empathy and understanding. Level has been facilitating cultural humility training sessions with justice responders since 2012.

These sessions highlight the histories and lived realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada and encourage attendees to approach their work with Indigenous communities from a place of allyship. Sessions are led by Level's Indigenous team member and are begun in a good way by Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers, who provide cultural teaching, often focused on humility and finding balance using traditional practices. Our training sessions provide attendees with insights and challenges for shifting from a passive form of reconciliation to a more active one, encouraging attendees to embrace cultural humility rather than mere cultural competence and giving them action items they can implement in their lives to engage in meaningful reconciliation personally and professionally.

# Cultural Humility & Empathy Training

In 2023, LEVEL delivered CHET to our Premier Partners at McCarthy Tétrault LLP in a hybrid format; we had approximately 160 legal professionals attend, tuning in virtually from the Toronto and Calgary McCarthy offices and engaging in person at their Vancouver office. Participants learned some historical issues and documents that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples and communities today. With their new knowledge, attendees went through some self-reflection exercises. They were then given action items they could start practicing immediately to promote reconciliation in the office and outside of it.





# Facing Resistance Speaker Series

Level's Facing Resistance Speaker Series offers a diverse virtual platform to not only confront challenging topics and questions, but also learn how we can collectively create a justice system that is responsive, balanced and fair. This year, we hosted one virtual Facing Resistance Speaker Series event:

## GENDER AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS - NOVEMBER 24, 2022

In the wake of the overturning of Roe v Wade by the United States Supreme Court, this event addressed the following questions: How legally secure are reproductive and gender rights in the Canadian legal regime? What is the historical and current legal context of reproductive and gender rights protected under Canadian law? What progress has already been made and is yet to be made with regards to gender rights in Canada? In answering these questions, this Facing Resistance Speaking Series event examined what access to justice and rights looks like for Canadian women and gender diverse individuals. Specifically, it sought to understand how we can improve the current regime of gender rights, how the legal community can work together to accomplish this goal, and how to find solutions to improve outcomes for all women and gender diverse individuals.



# Facing Resistance Speaker Series

Below are some snap shots of our November 2022 Facing Resistance Speaker event:





# General | Updates

Caption: Level board and staff  
at the Strat Plan Retreat, 2023

Photo by Shelan Markus

# Level Portraits

Level's story begins in the year 2005. Co-founded by Catherine McKenna and Yasmin Shaker, the two started Canadian Lawyers Abroad with a simple goal: to engage the Canadian legal community to positively change lives in Canada and abroad. In September of 2015, 'Level' was produced in the hopes of combating injustice, promoting equality in rights and opportunities, and changing lives through law.

The programs within Level provide innovative justice education, training, and mentorship. Level's vast network of people strive to disrupt prejudice, build empathy, and touch the lives of many. Level's prosperous community of teachers, mentors, law students, advisors, directors staff provide critical services that advance Level's mission and goals. These non-profit leaders are the voice of the people Level serves. Let's explore the Level Portraits to discover some of their wonderful stories...

# Level's New Program Manager

We are excited to announce the appointment of our new Indigenous Youth & Environment Program Manager, Desneige Frandsen, effective February 13, 2023.

Desneige is a Métis person who has always been passionate about her community and working with youth; she has coached gymnastics, taught preschool and more. In 2020 when she started her law school journey at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law in Toronto, she also began working as an Indigenous Youth Outreach Program Facilitator for Level, running programs in Midland, Quatsino First Nation and other locations as part of Level's partnership with Connected North.

Desneige holds a BA Hons in Criminal Justice and Public Policy from the University of Guelph and will graduate from the Lincoln Alexander School of Law at Toronto Metropolitan University with a Juris Doctor (JD) degree in April 2023.

**Desneige Frandsen**



# Get to Know Level's New Program Manager

## **What is an important justice issue for you and why?**

An important justice issue for me is the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian criminal justice system; did you know that in 2020-21, Indigenous people represented 32% of those in federal prisons but only accounted for 5% of the general population? This is a clear issue that Canada is not adequately addressing. At Level, I have the chance to examine this issue and proactively engage with it.

## **Why did you want to join the Level team?**

Another passion I have is working with youth, and Level has given me the platform to do this nationally. The youth are our future, and Level recognizes this. Educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth on real societal issues and showing them that they have a place on the stage of change-makers is a large part of why I wanted to join the Level team.

## **What do you want the future of justice to look like in Canada?**

I would like to see a future where lady justice takes off her blindfold and recognizes that justice is not impartial; we should see the hardships and trials that some in society are subjected to that others do not face, and we should consider this. I see a future where justice is equitable, not just equal.

**Desneige Frandsen**



# Get to Know Level Partners McCarthy Tétrault

## What is an important justice issue for you and why?

The overincarceration rates of Black and Indigenous people in Canada is important to me. Despite having one of the lowest incarceration rates in the world, Black Canadians represent 9.2 per cent of our incarcerated population despite representing approximately 3 per cent of the Canadian population. The disparate rate of overincarceration for Indigenous women reached record levels last year, hitting 50 per cent of the incarcerated women population. Furthermore, the experience of Black Canadians and Indigenous people in prison is reported to be coloured by racial bias and discrimination. I believe that our ability to correct these issues is a barometer of our commitment to engaging in the hard work of eliminating structural discrimination in all of our institutions.

**Charlene Theodore**



# Get to Know Level Partners McCarthy Tétrault

## Why did you want to join the Level team?

Last year, I had the honour and joy of introducing one of my heroes, Bryan Stevenson, to my colleagues at McCarthy Tétrault. Bryan is a visionary and has dedicated his legal career to ending mass incarceration. He inspired and motivated everyone in the room. Our firm has a deep commitment to pro bono work, and we have expanded our commitment to include support for justice issues related to disparities in incarceration. Level's demonstrated commitment integrity, diversity and dignity in the justice sector is aligned with our community impact goals.

## What do you want the future of justice to look like in Canada?

I dream of day when the term "Access to Justice" isn't a description of a problem but the operating principle underpinning our justice system.

**Charlene Theodore**



# Get to Know Level Partners Lexis Nexis

**Edward Noble**



**Deby Ko**



**Jay Brecher**





# Get to Know Level Partners Lexis Nexis

## **What is an important justice issue for you and why?**

Advancing the rule of law in Canada and around the world is something that is important to us personally, and to LexisNexis. A country can have the most elegantly-worded constitution and it will not matter if there is no rule of law. As a global provider of legal information, LexisNexis is very well positioned to champion rule of law, and we have made that a priority.

## **Why did you want to join the Level team?**

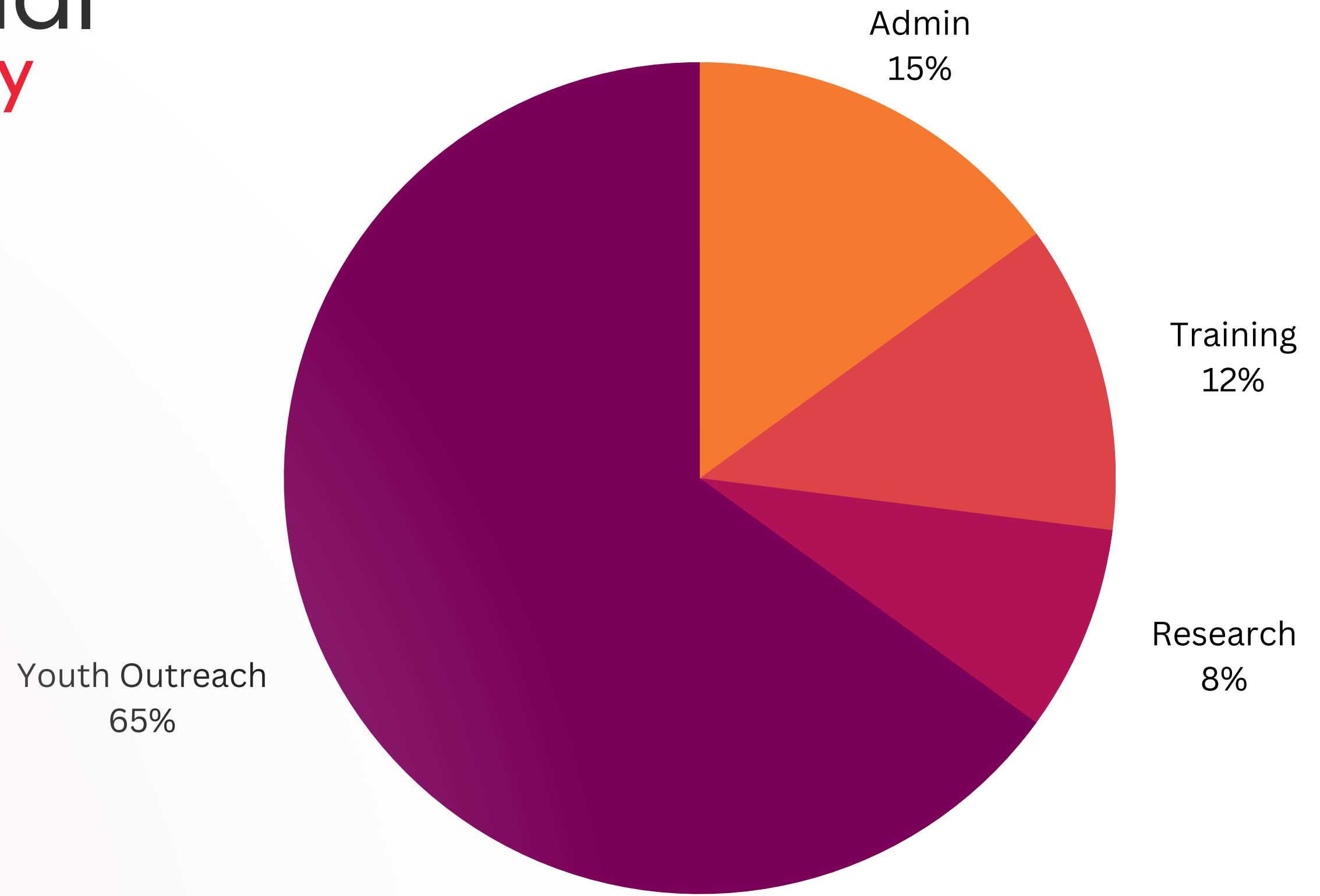
The original co-founders of Level came to speak to our employees about the work that they do, and it strongly resonated with us. The mission of our company's charitable arm is to advance the education of marginalized young people, and initiatives like Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program aligns perfectly with that mission. We have been greatly inspired by the students we worked with through that program, as well as by the group of students that we hosted to participate in some law-related games that we designed for them.

## **What do you want the future of justice to look like in Canada?**

We want it to include:

- Fairness and equality, including fair treatment and equal protection for all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, identity, and socioeconomic status and promoting diversity and inclusion in all professions;
- Access to justice, including access to legal resources and representation, regardless of the financial situations of individuals;
- Timely and efficient legal processes such as timely resolution of cases, increased judicial resources to reduce backlog and waiting times, and embracing technology to improve efficiency;
- Meaningful conflict resolution; and
- Collaboration with Indigenous communities to incorporate Indigenous legal traditions, practices, and perspectives.

# Financial Summary



# Level Supporters



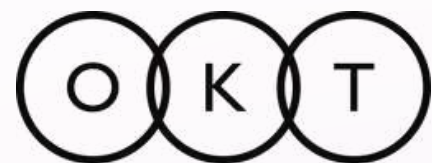
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**Krista Hill and Linda Plumpton**

# Thank You

To our sponsors and supporters, including the countless elders, experts, knowledge-keepers, teachers, judges, volunteers, mentors, advisors, research fellows, community leaders, champions and donors, thank you for your contributions. It is through your continued support, we are able to disrupt prejudice, build empathy and advance human rights.



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building a future of equity and justice

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