

FACL BC

FEDERATION OF ASIAN CANADIAN LAWYERS

2021 Bencher Candidate Statements on Diversity and Equity

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Kamloops

Kim Carter

1. Why is equity and diversity important to you?

As a racialized women and lawyer who works for Legal Aid BC, this is an issue that I am passionate about on a personal and professional level. I know what is like to be part of system that has made advancements in recognizing that EDI is important, but work still needs to be done to address the systemic changes that are sought by equity seeking groups. It is imperative that our profession and our Benchers reflects the diversity of our society, and that we challenge the assumptions of “what is and what was” and move forward with tangible, practical solutions that are inclusive, diverse, and equitable. Diversity in our profession and at the Bencher table demonstrates that we all belong our voice matters.

2. If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

I will continue to speak and educate members of the BC Bar. I firmly believe, acknowledgment of bias and acknowledgment of our unconscious bias is the first step towards change, as it leads to increased effectiveness and implementation of equitable policies. I have frequently guest lectured at Thompson Rivers University Faculty of Law and have participated as a keynote speaker for FACL.

I believe continuing to consult and work collaboratively with equity seeking groups such as FACL, SOJIC, the Indigenous Bar, as well with the universities will foster discussions of respect, advance education and intercultural competency within our Bar.

3. What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress and commitments?

As a bencher I know that LSBC’S strategic plan includes work on EDI initiatives. Regularly reviewing and assessing, (in consultation with equity seeking groups) is essential to develop policies that are reflective of LSBC’s EDI initiatives. This in turn can be recommended to the Benchers.

As a Bencher I support the work of the LSBC, the promotion of EDI, and the continuation of collecting and relying on data. It is important as Benchers that we have this information so we can make informed decisions. However, it is equally important for the members of the

Bar to have this information so they can have an opportunity to address and implement these initiatives on a base level in our communities.

Nanaimo

Brian Dybwad

Thank you for reaching out to me and providing me with questions regarding equity and opportunity.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are key areas of my Election Statement. As an Indigenous person practicing law in Campbell River with a territory that spans from Port Alberni to Port Hardy I am aware of the need for more diverse representation in places, such as the Bencher table, that can provide the voice that marginalized and underrepresented people in my County need. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are needed to bring a balanced view to the legal profession and to provide the public with assurances that a broader range of representation is available to voice, and protect, their interests.

If elected I will seek out colleagues, from all backgrounds, to encourage them to take a more active role in promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. I will encourage them to join or volunteer with the many organizations that are committed to advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. If appropriate, I would also like to arrange Outreach and Engagement Activities within the communities in my County to further raise awareness and to keep the conversations alive.

I expect through monthly Bencher Updates that I can provide information as to Outreach and Engagement Activities in my County. I will reach out to the organizations within my County for feedback as to my efforts to raise awareness and promote positive action. I will also ensure that I be the voice of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the Bencher table.

Through my candidacy for Bencher for the County of Nanaimo I also hope to inspire others, from diverse backgrounds, to put their names forward in an effort to enact positive change that includes Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Vancouver

Nazanin Aram

Thank you for your email and giving me the opportunity to speak to your members. The following are my answers to your questions.

1. As an immigrant, I am convinced of the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) based on my personal experiences in the legal profession and in wider society. It is only logical that the legal profession should reflect the diversity of our multicultural diverse society. Promoting EDI is important for both practicing lawyers and the public's relationship with our profession.

As I mentioned in my statement for the last bencher by-election, I think our profession has underlying cultural deficiencies that affect all of us, regardless of any particular group we may belong to. The challenges experienced by female lawyers, minorities, students and new lawyers and our high rates of mental health problems and job dissatisfaction are manifestations of the culture problem. In my view EDI issues, mental health issues and the culture problem are all interconnected; cultural change is needed to create a healthier more sustainable legal profession.

2. As a bencher, I would support the development and implementation of the positive changes that are already underway with the goal of promoting a culture of respect, tolerance and equality for all. I believe profession-wide education and dialogue are very important tools in effecting change. If elected as a bencher, I would advocate for programs to educate the bar regarding EDI, cultural, and mental health issues. Examples, which are already part of the Law Society's 2021-2025 strategic plan, are cultural competency and cultural bias training programs for lawyers. I would add increased education regarding mental health, substance use, civility and emotional intelligence.

I would also advocate for collecting updated statistics regarding diverse groups, mental health, and reasons for departure from the profession. Proper data is extremely helpful not only to guide the Law Society's policy decisions, but also to inform and educate lawyers.

As bencher, I would advocate for moderation, respect and civility in all of our interactions. The most recent AGM and the debate around the resolutions are a reminder that we need to be able to maintain respectful dialogue within the profession no matter how contentious or divisive the issues.

3. Internally, I would commit to taking all steps possible to promote and carry out my commitments, to the extent it is realistically possible to do so within the Law Society's committee framework and pre-determined action plan. Externally, I am open to discussing my views and activities as a bencher with any lawyers who may want to know; in fact I would be interested in hearing the views of as many lawyers as possible. When I practiced in Prince Rupert and Victoria, some local benchers reported to lawyers periodically and I found that useful, but I do not know at this time whether such reporting is workable in the Vancouver county given the number of its members. I think one of the best things I can do is make myself available to lawyers who may want to ask about my bencher work or share their ideas with me.

Tara Callan

1. Why is equity and diversity important to you?

The public is best served, when decision making is made by persons that reflect the community they serve. When people of different backgrounds collaborate to achieve a common goal, better results are reached for everyone.

Equity and diversity mean everyone's viewpoint is included in the decision-making process. Diversity and inclusion promotes respect, and teamwork despite differences of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation.

2. If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

I believe the Law Society is required to meet the needs of all our members and want to adopt measures that reduce barriers and facilitate true equality for membership. Two of my longstanding concerns with our profession is the poor retention rate of women in practice, as well as the significant wage gap between male and female lawyers.

In 2017 the Law Society of British Columbia raised a concern that while the law schools had gender parity for over a decade, women lawyers only comprise 34% of all practising lawyers in the province and only 29% of lawyers in full time practice. This trend is also prevalent with senior positions in government offices and in house legal departments.

Further even where women continue to practice law, there are long standing average pay gaps between males and females which is even more pronounced for women and men who also identify as Black, Indigenous or as Persons of Colour.

In that regard, I would like to work towards requiring law firms to report to the Law Society on their progress on facilitating equality and diversity in their workplace.

I would like to conduct exit interviews on lawyers who are choosing to leave the practice of law to find out why our members are leaving, and what they suggest could be done to reverse the trend.

I am also supportive of updating the member's directory to add prefixes or pronouns and/or pronunciation guides for members names, and engaging diversity champions where necessary.

3. What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments.

I would like to require law firms to be required to report to the Law Society their plans on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as their progress on trying to maintain a diverse and inclusive workplace. I would like this to be publicly available on the Law Society website.

As part of this requirement, law firms will be required to report on associate and partner pay as well as report on their plans to close the wage gaps (if any).

Tanya Chamberlain

In order to create a more equitable society, individuals and groups must be consulted as to their particular circumstances and needs. Resources and opportunities can then be allocated accordingly to allow these persons to achieve equal outcomes. Justice is more likely to result from equitable policies when it produces long term, sustainable access to power. Diversity is the practice of including and involving individuals of different social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, different genders, and sexual orientations in the development of policies and norms through consultation.

Equity and diversity are important to me because they are necessary to ensure access to justice for all British Columbians. Lawyers must consult with persons of colour, other marginalized groups, and Indigenous people, in order to understand the barriers they face in trying to access justice. I want to ensure that the legal profession in BC is more diverse by creating a culture of inclusion and belonging. It is important that the Bar reflect the diversity of our Province. The public interest requires it. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. There are significant barriers to entry and remaining in our profession which need to be acknowledged.

One significant obstacle to achieving equity and diversity in the legal profession is the high cost of legal education. Today law school tuition ranges from \$15,000 to \$35,000. Many students cannot afford the cost of a legal education without family support or assuming crippling debt. This barrier must be addressed through increasing funding to post-secondary education and ensuring that minorities, and in particular Indigenous students have financial aid, not loans.

The profession's failure to accommodate women in the legal profession continues to lead to the loss of many talented women forced to choose between their careers and families. Women continue to face significant discrimination and harassment as lawyers. Sexual harassment is still tolerated in workplaces and is something that I have personally experienced in my career. Women are not paid the same as our male colleagues. These are unacceptable barriers to the retention of female lawyers and I am

sure that they are more deeply experienced by persons of non-dominant cultures and groups. If elected I will take steps to address harassment, pay inequity and discrimination in the legal profession in order to retain female lawyers and lawyers from other marginalized groups.

Any Bencher elected will be accountable to the members of the Bar for their record at the next election. If I am elected, I will be accountable to the Members of the Bar for my efforts

at ensuring that I advocate and promote policies that promote and enhance equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Jennifer Chow, Q.C.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

My questions are below:

1. Equity, diversity and inclusion are important to me because our legal profession should reflect the demographics of our society. The legal profession is changing and the demographics are reflected in our law schools. However, in the more senior ranks and among certain groups, the profession continues to be underrepresented in terms of Indigenous lawyers, racialized lawyers and lawyers with disabilities. These issues are important to me because I am a racialized who continues to advocate for greater representation in our profession.

2. I have sat on the Law Society of BC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee for several years. This year I have been fortunate to chair the EDI Committee. At this point in time, when racism and discrimination have commanded media headlines and generated greater discussion in society, I will continue to do my best to promote diversity, including promoting the gathering and greater use of demographic data to help identify unconscious and structural barriers in our profession.

3. As chair of the EDI Committee this year, I have continued to work towards deliverables for the committee and will continue to contribute to anti-racism discussions and issues. It is important for all of us in the legal profession to acknowledge that we can all benefit from diversity and inclusion in our work with our clients and the public interest.

Cheryl D'Sa

1. Why is equity and diversity important to you?

I am a first generation Canadian. My father was born in Goa, India and my mother was born in Nairobi, Kenya. My parents came to Canada in 1971. I entered a profession that I love, but that has long been dominated by people who don't look like me. To a visible minority, it matters to see yourself reflected in the bar, and in the leadership of the bar.

Lawyers, specifically benchers, have a duty to the public. There is no question that the public is best served by a profession that reflects its diversity. To be involved in any type of Court proceedings as a litigant, but especially as a self-represented litigant, and not see counsel or members of the Judiciary who look like you, does nothing to inspire confidence in the bar and the profession as impartial and welcoming.

Benchers have many roles. They welcome students to the profession in articling interviews, participate in conduct reviews, and sit on hearing panels, among other roles. Just like members of the public, members of the profession need to see themselves reflected at the Bencher table.

2. If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

I will continue the work I have been doing to improve equity and diversity in the bar. In 2018 I became the first visible minority female President of the Vancouver Bar Association. Our firm is a long-time supporter of FACL BC, and we are frequent attendees of the AGM. I have been a guest mentor for FACL BC and was pleased to support FACL BC's application for funding to the Law Foundation of BC for the documentary "But I Look Like a Lawyer."

I recently spoke to first year law students at the University of Victoria about my experiences starting a practice, being a visible minority in law, and being a parent. Outreach is incredibly important to me. I believe young visible minority students need to be encouraged to apply to law school, and that the LSBC needs to encourage women, especially visible minority women, to stay in practice. Lastly, I believe the LSBC needs to continue to encourage visible minorities to apply for leadership positions.

3. What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

As a Bencher, I am accountable to the public and to the profession. But I am also accountable to my firm and my family. It is important to me for many reasons that diversity

in the bar continues to improve. The LSBC's Strategic Plan includes continued work on EDI initiatives. I am presently on the EDI Committee, and if re-elected and re-appointed to that Committee will continue to work on these initiatives which are reported to the bench table.

Lisa Dumbrell

Hello and thank you FACL BC for this opportunity. It is very much appreciated. I hope to be one of your choices for bencher for Vancouver County.

My answers are provided below:

1. Why is equity and diversity important to you?

First of all, I am a Caucasian woman from a middle class background. I remember thinking law school and articling were hard. They were, but I now realize how much harder those formative experiences would have been for those students from different backgrounds who had additional challenges put upon them that I did not have. If they even got the chance to be there in the first place, which many did not.

There is absolutely no question that understanding the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion is critical to all elements and cross sections of our society, and the legal profession should be no different. We need to better represent the public that we serve.

We need to strive to be a profession where people feel included and engaged, and value diversity and inclusion of perspectives. In my view, diversity is a strength, and by cultivating a profession that is equitable, diverse and inclusive, we will provide better services to our clients and will heighten our understanding of systemic discrimination and the inequities that people face and that manifest in access to justice in a myriad of ways.

2. If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

Hiring and interviewing practices are key to this goal in my view. In my experience in the last year as a Bencher on the LSBC's Credentials Committee, I have seen the disproportionate impact of hiring practices on minority students, particularly on foreign trained students who are often doubly disadvantaged. There are fewer articling opportunities for them and often they are not provided the support that is needed. I know that the Alternative Pathways to Articling Task Force is considering these issues, and is trying to ease this inequity and I support their work.

Personally, as Crown Counsel with the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, I have been serving on our local Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, under the leadership of Ms. Baljinder Girm, who is also a National Representative. As a committee, we are trying to ensure that a representative from EDI is present on recruitment, hiring, and promotion

committees, in addition to promoting awareness of the issues related to diversity and inclusion throughout the PPSC.

The Law Society has an Ombudsperson to assist students and counsel if they encounter discrimination and other issues in their practices. I would also like to see the appointment of a Diversity and Inclusion officer as an adjunct to the Ombudsperson role, to deal more specifically with racial discrimination and to better assist foreign trained lawyers who may not have the same contacts in the profession. More hands on help is needed.

3. What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

That is a more difficult question. However, I believe the Law Society keeps statistics on lawyers who leave the profession. For instance, women are often leaving the profession after only a few years of practice and there are various initiatives to try to improve the retention of women lawyers. It would be helpful if the Law Society, in consultation with representatives from the impacted groups, could better account for who is leaving the profession and why or could better identify obstacles for entry into law school and articles. Consultation with impacted groups is critical as well meaning initiatives without substantial input from the affected groups is going to miss the target. Representatives from those impacted groups need to be at the table in a capacity that allows their concerns to be heard and acted upon.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address your membership and please let me know if you require any further information.

Brook Greenberg, Q.C.

1. Equity, diversity, and inclusion (“EDI”) are important to me for two interrelated reasons. First, having a plurality of voices, which are not just present but are welcomed, heard and appreciated, clearly improves the profession and the Benchers table. Increasing EDI better enables the profession to serve all of the public and the LSBC to regulate in the public interest. Fostering those two outcomes are part of a Benchers’s responsibility, and so increasing EDI is necessarily part of that role. Second, a personal commitment to promoting EDI is what we all owe to each other. Consequently, I make every effort to hear and respond to the views of members of equity seeking groups, as well as to strike a balance between leaving space for people to speak on their own behalf, while not leaving them to carry the burden of promoting a more equitable profession on their own.
2. I will continue to listen, hear, and support equity seeking groups, rather than try to impose my views about how best to address their interests. One specific area where I will remain active is with respect to mental health issues in the profession. In my presentations about mental health, including the one sponsored by FACLBC, I discuss that anecdotal evidence shows that impostor syndrome and other forms of self-doubt are issues that for lawyers are compounded by the lack of diversity and inclusiveness in the profession.

Additionally, I am excited to receive the report resulting from the Federation of Law Society’s National Lawyer Wellbeing survey which was conducted last summer. As a member of the survey steering committee, I advocated for the collection of data (after consultation with members of the groups being asked to provide responses) relating to the intersection between underrepresentation within the profession and the additional or different effect such circumstances may have on lawyer mental health.

3. The LSBC Mental Health Task Force has already planned to assess the National Wellbeing survey report, including reviewing questions of intersectionality, and what steps the LSBC can and should take based on the report findings. We will certainly carry out this important work. It was the primary reason we asked for such data to be collected. In more general terms, because I consider promotion of EDI to be a professional and a personal responsibility, I hold myself accountable with the same force that I hold myself accountable for all such duties. Additionally, I previously served as a member and Vice-Chair of the LSBC’s EDI committee, during which time we committed to collecting (in an appropriate and inclusive way) and relying on data to inform our policy recommendations to the Benchers. That is an approach I continue to support.

Kyla Lee

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

As an Indigenous lawyer, a woman, and a member of the queer community equity and diversity issues impact my life on a daily basis. Being white-passing has allowed me privilege but it also has allowed me to see the extent of bias against people of colour and Indigenous people in the legal profession.

I have long been outspoken in social media and online about issues facing members of diverse groups. In previous campaigns, I have criticized the lack of diversity at the Law Society Bencher table. While there are many people of colour who have been elected, there are still disproportionately fewer Indigenous Benchers. To aid in reconciliation, I would advocate for a dedicated elected seat for an Indigenous Bencher. Similarly, I would advocate for an appointed seat for a Bencher from a BPOC community. While we have an appointed Indigenous Bencher, there is no dedicated representation for the BPOC community. This needs to change.

I would also require Benchers serving on the discipline and credentials committees to undertake cultural competency EDI training before serving in those roles. Recent ONCA decisions have highlighted how understanding the issues faced by diverse communities is necessary for the judicial system, and the quasi-judicial role that Benchers play in the discharge of their functions is no different.

I have advanced initiatives to improve diversity and equity in the BC Bar. To that end, I have created and continue to offer an annual event designed to provide women in law school with free suits, through the Allard Law Women's Suit Drive. I co-sponsored a resolution at the AGM, which passed, requiring the Law Society to change the member directory to allow lawyers to list their pronouns, forms of address, and to provide unicode support for non-traditional characters, as well as to allow lawyers to list their traditional names.

If elected Bencher, I will continue to advance these steps to make the bar more diverse and equitable.

Insofar as accountability is concerned, by making cultural competency and EDI training mandatory to serve on the discipline and credentials committees, this will ensure that Benchers complete the necessary training. My initiatives would be undertaken at the rules and Code level to make them mandatory.

I also never shy away from calling out inequity when I see it. In my work as a Bencher, I would continue to express my concerns as they arise and speak out. My voice and my

position would hold people accountable on a personal level, even where it may make me unpopular. In a dilemma between an unpopular position that is morally right, and a popular position that is silent about inequity, I view the choice as obvious.

Steven McKoen, Q.C.

I believe that I have demonstrated through my actions at the bench table that I have and will work to promote diversity in those aspects of the profession that the LSBC can directly influence. The most direct thing the LSBC can do is ensure that in its appointments it work to ensure that the people it appoints to various bodies reflects the diversity of our province. I recently wrote to the executive committee to advocate for enhanced diversity in our appointments to the public representative pool for our discipline tribunal. As it happens, the lack of diversity I was pointing out was a lack of Asian Canadians in our pool. To fit into your 450 word cap I have only included extracts:

“On representation issues, I would give us a middling grade. With these appointments, the pool is 10:8 men & women and we have at least two people of Indigenous descent. BC’s population is about 60% European in origin, 28% Asian & Mid-East, 6% Indigenous and the remainder of a variety of origins. Just looking at the names of the full pool (which I acknowledge is a very imprecise guide), we seem to be over-represented with people of European descent and have no-one of Asian descent. Zero representation from a group that is over a quarter of the population and was historically discriminated against by our legal system is not a good outcome.

...

All in, I think the current candidates are acceptable as they do look like they have good skills, they give us near gender balance, they add two Indigenous people to our pool and they partially rectify the under-representation of the lower mainland. However, in our next recruit I think we should make serious efforts to get people of Asian descent and more people from the lower mainland. Since the lower mainland has large Asian communities, it should be relatively easy to address those imbalances.”

I believe that I have been an effective advocate for diversity, while keeping in mind the lessons of intersectionality. If re-elected I intend to continue the advocacy I have been engaged in.

Jacqueline G. McQueen, Q.C.

Thank you for your email and the opportunity to reach out to this group. Below is my response to your questions. I am happy to engage in discussion with any of your membership if there are further questions.

The LSBC is mandated with protecting the public interest in the administration of justice. Equity, diversity and inclusion is central.

True access to justice requires that the diverse public is able to access legal advice/ support from people that they are truly comfortable with – individually, culturally, in the language of their choice, etc. For the law to fulfill its promise of equal justice for all, we need a diverse bar (and judiciary), and participants in the justice system must act as fearless advocates lifting up diverse views and experiences, thus allowing the law to evolve and to reflect the communities/ world we live in. Lawyers have privilege, and with privilege the obligation to work to achieve the lofty ambition of equality in the law, and to make space for others.

There are a variety of barriers to increased diversity, including at the law school admission stage (imagining the career is possible/desirable), meaningful support during law school, fair access to articles, and fair opportunities to work following call.

Outreach and role modelling are important; we need to reach young people in high school and let them see that a career in law is within their reach. Once in law school, mentorship makes a big difference, and law schools have a role to play in matching students of diverse backgrounds with practicing lawyers. This will help those students securing good articles and job opportunities, and with support when facing the inevitable challenges of practice. The LSBC can support these efforts through mentoring registries.

The LSBC is currently working on alternate paths to licencing to allow candidates to gain hands-on learning through a defined course of study and mix of practical opportunities instead of articling. Unfortunately, diverse candidates, including NCA candidates, often struggle to secure articles. Alternative pathways would allow them to attain their licence to practice, while providing them with valuable work experience, contacts, and exposure to various practice areas, including public interest law even if they are not able to secure an articling position. If I am reelected, I hope to be involved in in the Lawyer Development Task force in 2022; it is a critically important objective.

The Strategic Plan

https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/about/Strategic-Plan_2021-2025.pdf guides the LSBC. Under the Strategic Objective: “Promoting a Profession that Reflects

the Diversity of the Public it Serves”, the plan sets out specific policy/collaboration objectives. The Benchers regularly monitor progress.

Benchers are appointment to committees/task forces by the President. All matters come before the Bencher table for discussion and adoption. Benchers have the opportunity to ask questions and participate, whether on the working committee or not. Benchers must carefully review and evaluate reports, ask questions and work to ensure the LSBC is meeting our objectives. This is key to the Bencher’s oversight function.

Julian Porritt

Thank you for your inquiry as to my thoughts on the following questions:

1. Question: Why is equity and diversity important to you?

Answer: Let us start with the obvious negative problem that people of different backgrounds face – prejudice. My personal belief is we all have mixed genetics and it makes no sense to try to differentiate based on race. Also, my personal opinion is prejudice is a result of insecurities / fear on the part of the person that is behaving in a manner that prejudices others. I also feel that “prejudice” is not confined to genetic background. “Prejudice” extends to sexual orientation, gender, physical and mental disabilities, religion, etc., etc. My own personal belief is none of the foregoing matters. What matters to me is the actual individual’s strengths and weaknesses. Broad brush profiling is completely counterproductive.

In its positive form, cultural diversity enriches our lives. At a surface level, the obvious enrichment is food, musical and visual arts, and expertise. But at a deeper level, cultural diversity brings different methods of approaching and solving problems. Medical treatments/procedures, engineering and architectural approaches, computer technology, agricultural practices, social housing, etc. etc. have all been impacted and expanded in a positive manner by cultural diversity. And cultural diversity (if embraced) brings understanding of others’ opinions and the realization/understanding that that there is no single source that has all answers. All of us can easily point to examples of improvements to our lives as a result of cultural diversity.

2. Question: If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

Answer: Throughout my working life I have always focussed on the building of my practice and the building and management of our law firm. As a consequence, I have not been political and I have refrained from being involved within the Law Society until now. My immediate concern is the rehabilitation of the current Trust Accounting and Discipline “systems”. That work fits my skill set. But I also need to learn how the Law Society works internally and I have to learn the details of the initiatives the Law Society is pursuing to improve equity and diversity. I do not pretend to have any great plans regarding equity and diversity at this point in time, because I simply do not presently have enough information about the initiatives that the Law Society may be pursuing. But I can promise to actively support positive equity and diversity initiatives and I can promise that I will bring my 37 years of practical experience to such initiatives. Further, I can promise to bring to the Law

Society my personal beliefs as explained in response to the foregoing Question #1 plus my personal belief in the importance of fairness, inclusiveness, education and my experience of how the real world will impact upon initiatives.

3. Question: What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

Answer: If elected as a Bencher, I intend to be an active Bencher. My hope and intention is to initiate contact with practitioners as is necessary to bring real world experience and advice into the Law Society regardless of background. I am aware that the practice of law is rooted in mono-cultural traditions. I am aware that barriers need to be erased to allow full integration within the legal profession. I am aware that we have to guard against back-sliding and the erosion of progress that has been achieved.

I will respond to enquiries, concerns and input from practitioners. I will stand ready to explain my position/thoughts on a given matter. I cannot promise to be perfect, and I cannot promise to always be in alignment with others on any given matter. I can promise to be an "open door" and to bring fair, well reasoned, real-world experience and my fundamental belief in equality and inclusiveness to my duties.

Kevin Westell

1) Why is equity and diversity important to you?

Prioritizing equity and diversity is an essential aspect of promoting respect for human dignity and fairness, concepts that the legal profession are meant to safeguard.

My core values include a commitment to supporting measures aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion and ensuring that members of equity-seeking groups are at all times heard, accounted for, and supported within our bar.

As a white, cis-gendered lawyer and Bencher, it is not my job to tell members of equity-seeking groups within our bar what their wants and needs should be. Rather, it is my job to listen to those members and, as an ally, strive to create and maintain an environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed and where those who have traditionally been marginalized feel welcome to share their views on how the profession should evolve going forward.

I have made it a personal priority to enhance my learning and contribution around diversity and inclusion. Examples of that include:

- In the last year, I was fortunate to contribute as a member of the organizing committee to the development and implementation of a free Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia (CLEBC) program called "[Confronting Racism in the Criminal Justice System: Identifying Racism at Every Stage of the Process.](#)"
- I established a brand new [scholarship](#) for incoming law students at UBC's Allard School of Law who identify as Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC).

2) If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

If re-elected, I will continue in my commitment to those values and will continue to push for and support Law Society initiatives that are in line with those values. I will continue to support and build on measures including the development of the LSBC's [2020 Diversity Action Plan](#). If re-elected, I will continue to make promotion of equity and diversity a priority in all aspects of my work as a Bencher.

3) What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

I will welcome input from members and continue to support evidence-based research and monitoring measures aimed at keeping myself and other benchers accountable to the principles and values we espouse around diversity and inclusion. There is no better

accountability measure than direct engagement with our members. If re-elected, I will continue to invite our members to engage me directly on all issues and particularly issues related to the promotion of equity and diversity within our bar.

Gaynor Yeung

1) Why is equity and diversity important to you?

Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (“EDI”) is the right thing to do. The hallmark of our profession is doing what is right, pursuing what is just. We are failing our calling if we sit, hope, and merely wait for EDI to become universally accepted values in our profession. EDI must be promoted, by all of us.

Further, advancing EDI is the smart thing to do. We are called to guide our clients through their legal woes and conundrums. Our role requires us to analyze, anticipate, strategize, and problem solve. How can any of this be undertaken exceptionally if it is done by a homogenous legal team with identical blind spots? Our role requires us to build trust, understand, and communicate effectively with our clients. How can this be broadly achieved in a society as diverse as the one in BC, if our profession does not reflect the diversity of our population? We cannot practice optimally if EDI is not a part of our practice.

2) If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

If re-elected, I will continue to promote access to opportunities and leadership roles for underrepresented groups. The lack of diversity in leadership roles, in our profession, is disappointing. That has nothing to do with shortcomings in legal skill or expertise. It is about the lack of opportunity. Underrepresented groups have not sat idly by, waiting for opportunities. Organizations such as FACL and the CBA Women Lawyers Forum have made meaningful progress by inspiring, encouraging, and bolstering lawyers, through mentorship connections and programming, to aim high and to be resilient while doing so.

But the onus of promoting EDI should not rest on the shoulders of underrepresented lawyers. It rests on our entire profession. To that end, I will continue to push for progress through:

- Combating unconscious bias: I believe that unconscious bias is a barrier to accessing opportunities and leadership roles. Accordingly, I will push for mandatory education on gender and racial stereotypes and unconscious bias. At present, 2 out of our 12 required hours of annual CPD must relate to professional responsibility, ethics, and practice management. Education in EDI is considered a practice management topic, but an elective. I will call for education in EDI to be mandatory.

- Providing tools: I will advocate for free resources to be made available to support underrepresented lawyers seeking to open their own firms and create their own opportunities.
- Spotighting Diverse Legal Organizations: I will push for the Law Society to spotlight legal organizations who are leaders in recruiting, retaining, and promoting diverse lawyers. Such organizations should be lauded for being allies of change so as to encourage others to follow.

3) What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments

During my time serving as a bencher, it is clear to me that EDI is one of the priorities at the Law Society. There is more than mere openness to EDI; there is enthusiasm and drive at the Bencher table for progress to be made. The Bencher table is heavily weighted with an abundance of ideas and the discussions have been inspiring. That said, there are competing ideas and not every suggestion can be pursued. I cannot promise that my ideas will be enacted. What I promise to do is to continue giving my time, focus, and effort to promoting and effecting EDI initiatives.

I look forward to doing the work.

Victoria

Peter Ameerali

Thank you for this opportunity. Here is the statement I would offer to address these issues:

Although I am a BIPOC lawyer myself, I recognize that doesn't give me special license to speak to all experiences. I am able-bodied, neuro-typical, heterosexual and identify as he/him, which means I live privileges that many of my family, friends and colleagues do not. My life is personally enriched by understanding their perspectives and making room for their participation. I value equity and diversity in our profession for the same reasons: this province's increasingly diverse population deserves and would be enriched by a profession that respects, reflects and values it.

As a bencher, I would focus on:

1. Advancing, monitoring and reporting on the progress on the action items set out in the Diversity Action Plan released August 2020, especially those focussed on education, recruitment and retention.
2. Using the aggregated, anonymized experiences shared with the Equity Ombudsperson to help focus the educational and regulatory efforts of the Law Society. This would include ensuring discipline panel members are aware of the kinds of complaints that pervade the profession.
3. Ensuring the Law Society's attention to "diversity" is itself inclusive of issues beyond race/nationality and gender, such as religious background, gender identity and expression, sexual preference, neuro-diversity and physical disabilities.
4. Seeking out opportunities to be a visible, active face of Law Society initiatives in the legal community and beyond in order to normalize and encourage the participation of diverse people in our profession.
5. Looking for creative ways to participate in and support mentorship opportunities. While it is important to encourage and support the mentorship of diverse mentees from people of similar experiences, it is also important to encourage cross-diversity mentorship to foster normalization, appreciation and understanding between people of different backgrounds.
6. Encouraging that the PLTC materials in particular be updated to integrate diversity education and education about indigenous issues rather than treat them as separate topics, and encourage law schools to make similar efforts.

As a bencher, I will only be one voice, one vote and two ears at the governance table. As a result, it is difficult to set an accountability measure for achieving any specific objective.

Like past Victoria benchers, I will provide regular updates to the County about bencher activities and my personal role in them, including specifically reporting out on my efforts on the above issues. I will invite feedback in those communications, will respond directly as much as possible and, where feasible and appropriate, I will publicize those responses. I will also hold virtual open house meetings at least twice a year to have a genuine discussion with members of the bar who want to have a more direct and meaningful opportunity to hold me to account.

Westminster County

Lynett Jung

1) Why is equity and diversity important to you?

Equity, diversity and inclusion are important to me as an individual, as a lawyer and as a bench candidate. The Law Society is a self-governing profession that serves the whole community. Representation from different groups and individuals is essential for the Law Society to effectively serve both the profession and the public.

I have a biracial family. My husband is Chinese Canadian. His grandmother paid the head tax to immigrate to Canada. Our children are of Chinese, Irish and English descent. Ensuring that our society is inclusive and equitable is important to our family and to me personally.

As a criminal lawyer, I am very concerned by the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders. Change that promotes equity and brings diversity to the Law Society's regulation of the legal profession will help reduce Indigenous over-representation.

I have served on the BC Prosecution Service's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-committee and the Advisory Committee on Gender Equity and Advancement. I have worked to advance diversity, equity and inclusion and I look forward to bringing my experience to my work as a bench candidate.

2) If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

If elected, I will support initiatives to educate lawyers about diversity, equity and inclusion and initiatives to increase the information we have about diversity and representation on Law Society committees and groups.

Being informed about obstacles to equity within the legal system is an essential competency for lawyers. The Law Society can assist its members to learn about systemic barriers to equity and inclusion by supporting programs that educate lawyers.

Making advances toward equity, diversity and inclusion will be encouraged by establishing measurements and statistics. The Law Society will be better placed to make changes once it has data about the diversity or lack of diversity within its committees and groups. Collecting and analyzing data about representation and about challenges to participation

will assist the benchers in implementing meaningful change that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion and thereby, better serve lawyers across the province and protect the public interest.

3) What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

As I mentioned in my response to question 2, I support implementing systems to measure representation on Law Society groups and to identify barriers to participation. Collecting and analyzing data will give the benchers the information they need to make changes that reduce barriers, increase accessibility to Law Society services and increase diversity on Law Society groups and committees.

Doug Lester, Q.C.

1) Why is equity and diversity important to me?

For many years I have been sensitive to the need in our profession for diversity, equity and inclusion. I have spent 35 years living and practising in the Fraser Valley. I have seen my firm and my community increasingly embrace and support equity and diversity over the course of my career. With the growth of diversity in my firm, I have witnessed, many the positive things that come from equity and diversity not the least of which is a culture of inclusion and respect. As an example, I believe my firm was one of the first in the Fraser Valley to implement a maternity leave salary top-up for female associates and partners. I believe that equity and diversity in the legal profession is an important element in the ongoing struggle for access to justice. Having practised law in the field of labour, employment and human rights, I am all too familiar with issues of discrimination as they relate to barriers and access to justice. Cultural and language barriers often present their own unique challenges in the fight for access to justice. Equity and diversity in our profession are both key elements in the advancement of human rights.

2) If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

I believe Law Society has an important role to play in breaking down these barriers and in continuing to promote equity and diversity within the profession. I will commit to working within the Law Society, with local bar associations and with members of the legal profession to learn about and to continue to promote and expand initiatives of equity and diversity within the profession.

3) What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

My door is always open and I am open to receiving phone calls and other means of communication to address any and all issues members of the legal profession may have when it comes to governance of the profession. That includes issues as they relate to equity and diversity.

Gurminder Sandhu

Respect and Equality. I will focus on these two principles if elected Bencher. Respect and Equality starts on the home front and for me that will begin in dealings with you, fellow Benchers and Law Society staff.

I am a first generation Canadian. I was born, raised and continue to live in a diverse multicultural neighborhood filled with people of all walks of life. My wife and I believe in investing in our community. Our children go to local public schools. We have friends, colleagues and neighbours that reflect our broad society.

I will advocate hiring and appointments to the Law Society and its committees that truly reflects our diverse society. We cannot rely on platitudes or tokenism if equality is to be implemented.

I will work with Bar Associations to raise awareness of law firms that pursue principles of representative hiring policies.

I will advocate for Law Society scholarships and bursaries that are supportive of students who reflect and espouse diversity.

I will work with you to hear and share your ideas towards diversity and equality.

I will be accountable to you. However, I also request your support and guidance for positive change to be implemented. Together, we will be accountable to each other.

Tom Spraggs

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these important questions. Please find below my responses.

1) Why is equity and diversity important to you?

In our context within the legal community, broadly, equity relates to the Rule of Law, ensuring that access to enter the legal profession and access to legal services for our clients are both publicly available equally and consistently provided to all. Diversity is about ensuring that we constantly challenge and question ourselves to ensure that all have both a seat at the table and a voice in decision-making. As lawyers we know that diversity of thought, of belief, of life experience, can be uncomfortable. That is what makes diversity hard. It is less challenging and more comfortable when everyone sees things the same way. The quality and sustainability of the services we provide however, is greater when we ensure that all perspectives and life experiences are present and heard.

2) If elected, what steps will you take to improve equity and diversity within the BC Bar?

Changes that may be required in order to ensure that equity and diversity are inherent in our work must be led by those who have experienced the lack of equity and diversity. My role is to work to ensure that the policies and procedures of the Law Society reflect increased access to participation by those less represented, in decisions that affect the quality of the services we provide to our members and to our clients.

3) What accountability measures (e.g. monitoring and reporting) will you use to ensure progress on your commitments?

In the context of transparency, I would suggest that equity and diversity benchmarks would need to be determined by the membership, led by the Law Society.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express my views and options. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss anything further.