

FEBRUARY AGENDA

February 18th, 2025

Time/Location: 5PM @ the Barrister's Lounge or MS Teams

Present: Andrew Kaban, Anwar Mujtabah, Clare Jennings KC, Danielle Young, Darren Williams, Geneva Houlden, Jacquelyn Miller, Jessica Thomson, Katherine Tochor, Malakai Suppin, Marlisa Martin, Selina Wall, Sheila Simpson, Sofia Green, Stephen Lyons, Xiaopeng (Leo) Yuan

Regrets: Jim Legh, Marcia McNeil, Freya Kodar, Carly Haynes, Alexander Bjornson

BOARD MEETING

1. Approval of meeting minutes

- a. **Motion:** to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2025 Board Meeting
- This item was tabled to the next meeting. The minutes are attached to the meeting invite.

2. Reports

- a. UVic Report (Freya Kodar)
 - Dean Kodar was unable to attend, so this item was tabled to the next meeting.

- b. Benchers' Report (Jim Legh/Marcia McNeil)
 - Jim Legh was away, and Marcia was just elected and not able to attend, so this item was tabled to the next meeting.

- c. President (Sheila Simpson)

Report by Sheila

- Kudos to the Social Committee for organizing a great trivia night event, and to the Sports Committee about a great curling event.

- d. Vice-President (Stephen Lyons)

Report by Stephen

- There's been a flurry of paper renewals arriving in the mail. He processed 178 new renewals this weekend, which should add about \$5k to our account balance.
- There were 86 members noted as active on the website on the day of the meeting, which isn't a total count, as he's still processing the manual renewals / applications.

e. Treasurer (Anwar Mujtabah)

i. Treasurer's monthly reports

- Motion: to approve the February 2025 report

Report by Anwar

- The balance as of February 17 was \$13,992.12, up from \$6,208.27, mainly from membership renewals / applications.
- We have paid all or most of the outstanding expenses for trivia and curling before this report, but there may be expenses for the upcoming Inns of Court event.
- The VBA can now accept etransfer – Marlisa has arranged for an email address at her firm to accept etransfers directly into the VBA's bank account.

Discussion

- Selina noted that she had cheques for Anwar from when there was a postal strike .

Motion

- Moved by Anwar
- Carried

f. Awards Committee (Sofia Green, Darren Williams & Sheila Simpson)

i. Motion with respect to wording and nomination form to be tabled to next meeting

- This item was tabled to the next meeting, as the committee has had to attend to other obligations.

g. Social Events Calendar (Danielle Young, Sofia Green & Geneva Houlden)

Report by Sofia

- Quiz Night was successful. It sold out and the response was positive. Looking at doing another one in the fall.
 - Food was included in the ticket price, so with food and prizes we probably lost about \$300. At the next event, we might get less food to come out closer to even.
- The committee met to set dates for our next dinners. We are looking at April 9 for the Spring Dinner, and looking at a new option for that event, Ithaka's Greek Restaurant. It's a nice space. The committee will confirm with them in about a week, and if we do not book with them, then we will go with the Hotel Grand Pacific.
- The Summer Dinner will be held at the Inn at Laurel Point in July.
- And then the AGM and Dinner will be held in early November, and the Holiday Lunch in early December. The committee is work on getting us the dates we want.

h. Sporting Events Calendar (Andrew Kaban, Carly Haynes & Alexander Bjornson)

Report by Andrew

- Curling was successful. There were 4 teams competing with each other. We almost ended up with 6 teams, but it worked out in the end, and everyone had a good time.
- The event came out at a net loss of about \$430, including from some great prizes and pizza lunch for participants, which everyone enjoyed.
- The committee met recently, and is planning some exciting upcoming events, including:
 - A bowling tournament on May 2 @ 6-9 pm. Will be posted in the next couple weeks.
 - Pickleball in May or June. Looking at venues, including Uptown.
 - Looking at putting together a VBA soccer team to play in a local leagues. Carly will take the lead on organizing this.
 - Looking at organizing a cycling social event. Alex will take the lead on organizing this. He'll pick a route and a time like on Friday after work or on the weekend and see what level of interest there is.
- Andrew will send Geneva info about bowling for the next Praeipce and about pickleball.

i. CPD/Inns of Court (Selina Wall, Darren Williams)

Report

By Selina

- Building Nation to Nation Relationships with Miles Richardson, OC, next Monday, February 24 at the Hotel Grand Pacific. 25 currently registered.
- In reminder tomorrow, need to note that tomorrow afternoon is the cut off.
 - Sheila reminded Selina that she can also end ticket sales online for the same time.

By Darren

- Upcoming Inns events:
 - Proprietary Estoppel with Heather Fisher, John Alexander, and Darren Williams at the Maple Room at the Stickey Wicket, which can extend ticket sales and adapt food order to the final day, which is a good perk.
 - Judges Brooks and McKimm have accepted our invitation to do an Inns of Court event in May – from the bench, in the rearview mirror perspective.
- Selina will send this info to Geneva for the Praeipce

j. Donations Committee (Marlisa Martin, Katherine Tochor, Leo Yuan & Selina Wall)

Report by Marlisa

- Received request we get annually for the Battle of the Bar Bands, requesting \$2,500, which Marlisa believed was the same as requested last year. Proceeds go to the Benevolent Society. They were able to donate \$17,000 last year. We've always gotten behind that.
- There is also a group wanting to put an Immigration and Refugee 101 together to help those wanting to do pro bono work for trans families wanting to relocate from the US. Selina wrote back to them to get more specifics about the intended use of the funds (e.g., do they intend to pay an immigration lawyer to do the training, pay for a venue, etc.?)
 - Selina spoke with the person and they discussed potentially doing an Inns of Court virtual training session.
- Battle of the Bar Bands Mar 28 – same amount donated to them in the past – their proceeds go to the benevolent society, we've always gotten behind that

Motion

- Marlisa moves that we donate \$2500 to Battle of the Bar Bands this year
- Darren seconded

Discussion

- none

Outcome

- Motion carried

Next Steps

- Marlisa will put them in touch with Anwar re transferring the funds
- Anwar will look at last year's RBC records to see how it was done last year

Other Discussion

- Leo asked if we take sponsorship events
- Sheila noted that, yes, they make a request to the Donations Committee. The criteria should be on the website.

k. Newsletter (Jim Legh/Geneva Houlden)

- i. Next newsletter: March 1

Report by Geneva

- At the time of the meeting, the content provided to her and Jim was barebones, but enough to put something together. Additional content requested, including the President's sentence, the CBA report, and the UVic update
- Aiming to distribute it for March 1, subject to Geneva's health

Discussion on Letter to the Editor

- Geneva noted that a member of the board (Selina) wrote a letter to the editor, because we have an opinion section of the newsletter and have included opinion pieces before. The Executive recommended that this be brought to the board for discussion, with regard to this letter and how we should approach such opinion pieces generally.
- Selina, as the writer, explained that the letter asks members of the Victoria bar to write to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, copying the Member of Parliament for Victoria, calling on the Minister to withdraw Canada from the Safe Third Country Agreement with the US, which requires refugees coming to Canada from the US to be returned to the US, in light of the changed circumstances in the US.
- Sheila summarized by stating that the question is whether we as a board want to allow letters to the editor that are of a legal nature but that do not necessarily impact lawyers' ability to do work.
- Sofia noted concerns not with the content but with it being a call to action to members, which implies support of that position. The issue she struggles with is not so much about the member's opinion, but about the VBA's endorsement of opinions put forward by

members via the newsletter. She's not sure if the VBA has taken such stances. She asked those who have been on the board longer to comment on that.

- Clare noted that apart from the content of the letter, if we are going to open the Praeceptum up for letters to the editor, which she isn't inherently opposed to, we need to be clear about the guidelines both for submissions and editorial guidelines. That needs to be clearly communicated before just having one out there where people don't know that's an option or that that may be coming.
- Darren noted he has some nervousness about this, that he likes Clare's idea about guidelines, but has concerns that it could turn into a slippery slope which he's seen in numerous situations where if perhaps we don't disagree internally people who we're applying the guidelines too may disagree and we would get accused of fettering freedom of expression, which would be avoided by not providing such a platform. He's not sure where he stands but is concerned about the prospect of us being criticized for being selective.
- Clare noted that effectively Jim has been doing letters from the editor for years, sharing his own personal opinions as the editor. So, it would be inaccurate to say that there have not been views expressed, some of which individual members may have agreed with and some of which they may not have agreed with.
- Sheila pulled up a copy of the Praeceptum and we do invite comments from the public, which are to be emailed to the editor. While we have had comments from the editor, they're usually looked at by the board and we've had discussions with the editor before about the wording to be clear it was coming from him and other changes. Another concern she has is if we include an opinion piece and it's not clear to the bar that they can do that, it could be a concern to other members if we published a board member's letter without that opportunity first being clearly opened to all members. She added that another concern is that we usually keep the Praeceptum to being about lawyers and advocating for lawyers, and a general opinion piece may not fit that criteria.

- Geneva agrees with the discussion so far, but noted that since she's been involved with the Praecepte, we have solicited opinions from the public but no one has taken us up on that before. Here we wrote that we long for the days in which people used to send us things, and then someone did. Her thinking is that so long as we're clear that this is an opinion piece received by a member and does not necessarily reflect the views of the VBA, as long as it's not something like hate speech, it's within the VBA's mandate to provide a platform for that opinion and then in a subsequent issue someone can provide an alternate opinion. She also recognized that it could be a slippery slope in deciding what can get published and not.
- Stephen noted that from his recollection Jim may have put in a parenthetical comment maybe slightly teasing people in a playful way.
- Sheila noted that he put in his own lengthy opinion pieces re the new legal professions legislation
- Geneva noted that in a recent version we copy pasted an article from the Globe and Mail, so not unheard of to reproduce content not by a member or about the legal profession
- Danielle noted that there was at least one time a comment made by the editor prompted people she knew to reach out to her to get clarification if those statements represented the VBA's position.
- Sheila suggested we table this discussion until Jim returns as his knowledge and perspective could help shed some light on past practice and after Geneva and Jim can discuss.
- Clare shared that her point about it being important to have clearly communicated guidelines stands regardless of whether Jim and Geneva want to change anything because we're already inviting comments. She noted that she's in favour of the piece being included but not in favour of us deciding on an ad hoc basis depending on how we feel about it as a board. We should try to come to the next meeting with proposed guidelines.
- Geneva added that we are currently calling for such comments, so if we're not prepared to receive them until we develop the guidelines, we should remove that call for comments in the interim.
- Sheila noted that guidelines should either be proposed by a subcommittee or by Jim and Geneva to the board.
- Geneva noted that she thinks the latter is best in the circumstances, that she will discuss with Jim upon his return, and put together a draft framework for review at the next board meeting.
- Sheila asked if anyone else wanted to be part of that discussion with Geneva and Jim.
 - Jessica and Clare put themselves forward to participate in that process.
 - Selina put herself forward for participating in that with respect to other pieces.

- Jim returns on March 13.
- Jessica asked about the call to action part of the letter, if we as a board frequently look at doing calls to action and taking positions on issues like this.
- Sheila noted that previously we had a call to action about the new legal professions legislation, which she believed included the option to attend an event to discuss as well as letter writing. That's the only other call to action she can recall in recent years.
- Geneva noted that another option is to take out the calls to action and make it clear that the letter reflects the views of the writer not necessarily the VBA.
- This matter was referred to the subcommittee and tabled to the next meeting.

I. CBA Report (Clare Jennings K.C.)

i. TBD

Advocacy

There has been media attention to the Agenda for Justice, including [Canadian Lawyer Magazine](#), [Law360](#) and [Business in Vancouver](#).

CBA has been advocating for [proper funding for the courts](#).

Participation

CBABC is looking for members to join committees, and be County Representatives, Section Representatives, and members of the Board of Directors: [learn more and put your name forward](#).

CBABC is looking for volunteers to emcee or judge at the Barry Sullivan Law Cup, the annual province-wide public speaking competition for high school students that takes place on April 11, 2025, at UBC Robson Square. Email events@cbabc.org by March 28th.

CBABC is looking for candidates interested in serving on the [Board of Directors of the l'Association des jurists d'expression française de la Colombie-Britannique \(AJEFCB\)](#) for a 2-year term.

[Nominations are being accepted for CBABC awards](#); deadline is February 24, 2025.

Events/CPD

Learn more about CBABC events, by list or calendar view, [on the CBABC website](#).

CBABC organised the successful Bench & Bar dinner with Chief Justice Wagner and Justices Karakatsanis and Kasirer from the SCC on February 3, 2025, with more than 180 attendees. Pictures are [available on the SCC website](#), of this and other Victoria events.

CBA had its annual [AGM](#) on February 4, 2025, at which 7 resolutions were passed and Loreley Chekay, KC, from Saskatchewan was announced as the new incoming VP.

CBABC had its annual AGM on February 7, 2025, with keynote speaker Chief Justice Skolrood of the BCSC.

Victoria lawyers may be interested in upcoming in-person events:

[Views from the Bench: Criminal Justice – Vancouver Island](#), February 25, 2025, 5 – 7 p.m., Moxies

[Young Lawyers – Victoria](#), March 4, 2025, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Sticky Wicket

[WLF – Vancouver Island Judges Dinner](#), March 11, 2025, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Hotel Grand Pacific (currently only tickets for Justices/Judges)

[Battle of the Bar Bands Victoria](#), March 28, 2025, 6 p.m. at the Da Vinci Centre

m. Courthouse Liaison

Report by Sheila (on Alex's behalf (sent via email))

- The welcoming ceremony for Justice LeBlanc will be held on March 14 at the Victoria Courthouse. Stephen will do the introduction on behalf of the VBA.
- There is an updated Administrative Notice 18 for MS Teams hearings: a notable point is that objections are to be made by turning on one's mic and raising the virtual hand.

Report by Clare

- There is an update on the practice direction around roving. You have rove up more. Take a look.

n. Website, Email and Forum (Sheila Simpson, Clare Jennings K.C. & Maliki Suppin)

Report

By Sheila

- No updates. She's heard nothing new about issues with email.

By Malakai

- He looked into the process around creating a LinkedIn page.
- With a basic free account, we can post, be followed, and can ask our 1st degree connections to engage with and share our content.
- If we pay for premium account, then we can ask others to follow. It wasn't very clear what the pricing was within LinkedIn itself. A 3rd party source said it is \$99 / month. A premium account allows you to message people who you're not connected to.
- He recommended that we go with a free account for now

Motion

- Malakai moved that we create a LinkedIn page associated with an executive member, starting with a free account
- This was seconded by Selina

Discussion

- Clare asked if the account could then be transferred if the person leaves the executive?
 - Malakai was unsure but noted that he'd look into that
- Selina asked if we can we create a generic account for the VBA
 - Malakai said that he did not think that was likely due to LinkedIn's verification processes
- Jacquie asked in the comments (due to illness) for clarification is Malakai meant a member of the executive or a member of the board – there was no clear response to this question
- This matter was tabled for while Malakai does further research
 - o. Barristers' Lounge & Court Boxes (Marlisa Martin)

Report by Marlisa

- Nothing to report on the Barristers' Lounge.
- On the courtboxes, Marlisa is working on getting payments more automated going forward. She's working on a system to show when one has been paid for or not paid. Someone who helps her firm with automation says that PayPal works better than etransfer.
- Notices go out for the current year in or about May. We are mainly caught up from previous years.

Discussion

- Sheila noted that Marlisa could create a yearly event that people signing up for / renewing courtboxes are "attending," seen only on the back end, for tracking.

p. Lockers (Danielle Young & Darren Williams)

Report by Danielle

- She noted that her goal is to get renewal / application notices out by the end of the month.

3. Old Business:

- n/a

4. New Business:

- n/a

5. Confirm that next board meeting is the AGM, to be held on Tuesday March 18, 2025, at 5PM in person at the Barrister's Lounge at the Victoria Law Courts and/or by MS Teams

- Adjourned at 5:57 pm

2024/2025 VBA Board Composition

<u>Executive</u>	<u>2025</u>
Past President	Sofia Green
President	Sheila Simpson
Vice President	Stephen Lyons
Treasurer	Anwar Mujtabah
Secretary	Jacquelyn Miller
<u>Portfolios</u>	<u>2025</u>
Social Coordinator – Sports	Andrew Kaban, Carly Haynes & Alexander Bjornson
Social Coordinator – Events Chair	Danielle Young, Sofia Green & Geneva Houlden
Awards Committee	Sofia Green, Darren Williams & Sheila Simpson

Donation Committee	Marlisa Martin, Katherine Tochor, Xiaopeng (Leo) Yuan & Selina Wall
Education CPD coordinator	Selina Wall, Darren Williams
Praeipce Author	Jim Legh & Geneva Houlden
Women's Locker Room	Danielle Young
Men's Locker Room	Darren Williams
Court Box Registrar	Marlisa Martin
Barrister's Lounge	Marlisa Martin
Court House Liaison (Civil)	Alexander Bjornson
Court House Liaison (Criminal)	Clare Jennings K.C.
Website & Email Coordinator	Sheila Simpson, Clare Jennings K.C. & Maliki Suppin
Member at Large	Jessica Thomson