**MAY MINUTES**

May 20, 2025

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

Attendees: Alexander Bjornson, Anwar Mujtabah, Carly Haynes, Clare Jennings KC, Darren Williams, Freya Kodar, Geneva Houlden, Jacquelyn Miller, Jessica Thomson, Marcia McNeil, Marlisa Martin, Sheila Simpson, Sofia Green, Stephen Lyons

**BOARD MEETING**

1. **Approval of meeting minutes** 
   1. **Motion**: to approve the minutes from the April 2025 Board Meeting

* Moved by Sheila, seconded by Clare
* One abstention, no opposition
* Motion carried

1. **Reports**
   1. UVic Report (Freya Kodar)

Freya Kodar’s Report

* The Faculty of Law is confident they will have occupancy of the new wing in August, with tours available soon after
* Reminder that UVic Law’s 50th anniversary celebration will happen on the weekend of October 25-26. They have engaged someone to help them coordinate the festivities.
  + A reminder about the event was included in the Praecipe and the UVic Law alumni newsletter.
  + If you did not get their newsletter yesterday and want to get it, you should update your contact on the alumni website (and adjust your communication preference settings)

Action Item

* Sheila will include this info about the anniversary celebration on the VBA website, with a link to UVic Law for more info.
  1. Benchers’ Report (Jim Legh/Marcia McNeil)
     1. Next call ceremony: June 26, 2025 at 4:30pm

Marcia McNeil’s report

* There hasn’t been a Benchers meeting since the last VBA meeting.
* The next meeting will be the following weekend for a retreat in Whistler. Jody Wilson Raybould will be the JWR featured speaker, with a number of other speakers.
* Bencher meetings open to the public to attend remotely. The agenda is on the LSBC website.
* The meetings of the transition committee are ongoing. Members of the public can ask to attend those meetings remotely as well.
* They had one call ceremony a few weeks ago. The LSBC has been reaching out to those who had been overlooked during the pandemic first, before other more recent calls. Despite that, in the last couple of call ceremonies there have been more recent calls, as a lot of people chose not to go through the formal call ceremony.
* The next call ceremony in Victoria will be on June 26. There is not another one for Victoria scheduled beyond that, but there may be one in the fall if there’s enough interest.
* They are looking at a possible ceremony in Nanaimo, led by the new Bencher in that area, and there are ongoing call ceremonies coming up in Vancouver as well.

Discussion

* Clare noted that in some recent call ceremonies there was not a lot of notice given to the CBA-BC and the VBA and that it’s important for more notice to be given to allow each to prepare to participate.
  1. President (Sheila Simpson)

Report by Sheila Simpson

* Well done to Sports Committee for the bowling event, which was so much fun.
* No other updates at this time.
  1. Vice-President (Stephen Lyons)

Stephen Lyons’ Report

* 222 active members as of today.
* Stephen filled in for Sheila at the first call ceremony in a while. He is happy to do it again as needed.
  1. Treasurer (Anwar Mujtabah)

Anwar Mujtabah’s Report

* Right now we are sitting at approximately $10,400 (also refer to Treasurer Report document).
* He believes that we are caught up on our expenses. All invoices provided to him so far have been paid.
* He noted that we will need to make decisions about the summer dinner.
* He reviewed how we have done on recent events for this year, starting from Nov 2024.
  + For the Nov 20, 2024 Inns of Court on Fraud Prevention, there was a surplus of $344.47.
  + For the VBA Holiday Lunch on Dec 4, 2024, there was a surplus of $938.22.
  + For the Curling Bonspiel in February 2025, there was a deficit of $522.32.
  + For the Trivia Night on Feb 13, 2025, there was a deficit of $378.37.
  + For the Inns of Court on Feb 24, 2025, there was a deficit of $197.63.
  + For the VBA Spring Dinner on April 9, 2025, there was a deficit of $900.98
  + For the Inns of Court on April 23, 2025, there was a surplus of $478.71.
  + For the Bowling event on May 2, 2025, Anwar sees a current surplus of $421.76, but he received an expense report from the Sports Committee that shows a surplus of $492. The difference could be a result of PayPal fees and they will investigate further.
* Anwar asked for directors to please reach out if they have different numbers for those events.

Discussion

* Darren noted that he has different numbers for the Feb 24, 2025, Inns of Court, noting that we profited by $1146.04, and that he will be sending cheques from that event over to Anwar shortly.
  + Anwar asked for that to include an expense report, which Darren confirmed he would include.
* Sheila summarized by noting that it looks like we break even with Inns of Court generally making some money and other events often but not always losing some money
* Anwar noted that looking at last year’s Summer Dinner, it appears that there was a deficit of $3,724, and for last year’s Spring Dinner, we had a surplus of $139. Summer dinners tend to be more expensive.
* Anwar also noted that Sofia informed him that she has different numbers for the Spring Dinner, so they will review and clarify that.
* Sheila thanked Anwar for looking into that and noted that it would be helpful for the Social Committee in planning events.

Motion

* Anwar moved the above motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report for April 2025
* One abstention. No opposition.
* Motion carried
  1. Awards Committee (Sofia Green, Darren Williams & Sheila Simpson)
     1. Email blast went out and we have received 1 nomination so far!

Report by Sheila Simpson

* We’ve received one nomination so far, but there are four awards and we would like more nominations

Report by Sofia Green

* The one received didn’t say why the person should be nominated, but simply nominated the person, so will need more information from the nominator. Sofia has followed up but not received a response.
  1. Social Events Calendar (Danielle Young, Sofia Green & Geneva Houlden)

1. Summer Dinner date: discussion on deficient for Laurel Point Inn vs different venue
2. AGM date: November
3. Holiday Luncheon date: December

Report by Sofia

* Board members were advised to refer to Sofia’s May 13 email for background on deciding on which venue to book for the Summer Dinner.
* Given the financial considerations, the Social Committee thought they it would be helpful to bring this matter to the board for discussion.
* The Social Committee proposes we use the Inn at Laurel Point again this summer. It is a beautiful venue that has an outdoor patio as well as indoor seating for the meal part of the evening.
* The Hotel Grand Pacific is indoor only, which is less ideal for our Summer Dinner.
* The Deep Cove Chalet, which we’ve hosted Summer Dinners at before, is no longer possible for us and hasn’t been for a number of years.
* In terms of the numbers, the key considerations include:
  + To make it feasible, we will have to charge more than $100/each (the previous ticket price)
  + The food was very good and there was tons of it. People were getting good bang for their buck relative to a plated dinner. The food was abundant, fresh, delicious, and great variety.
  + If we priced the event at $125 per ticket, which is the highest we’d be willing to go at this point, that may be best in the circumstances.
  + We don’t know how many tickets we will sell in advance. If we sell a similar as last year (98) at $125 per ticket, we’d still have a deficit, the calculation of which depends on how we want to cover the tickets for the UVic Law students (we previously voted to provide up to 5 complimentary tickets to UVic Law students for such events). If we sell the same number at $125/ticket and include the costs of the students’ tickets in the cost of the event, then that would likely result in about a $1,300 deficit. If the VBA covers the cost of the students’ tickets directly not out of the cost of the event, then the deficit would be closer to $700-$750 for the event.
  + She also noted that previously when the board agreed to provide student tickets, her understanding is that we agreed to do so knowing that the board would subsidize those tickets. It was not her understanding of that motion back in 2024 to be that student tickets had to be subsidized through ticket prices. In addition, what we agreed was to support up to five tickets, so we could offer fewer than five tickets to students for such events.
  + We’ve had good student feedback from these events, though there was one student who was a no show at the Spring Dinner.
  + A suggestion in response to Sofia’s May 13 email was to have sponsorships for such events to help with the cost of the event, but we’d need to confirm what we’d want them to contribute and what they’d want in return, keeping in mind if we were to promote them, we’d have to think about other costs and factors like printing and so on.
  + When we agreed to include students assumed would be covered directly by VBA not out of ticket price – maybe less than 5?

Motion

* Sofia moved that we hold the dinner the Inn at Laurel Point at $125 per ticket.
* Alexander seconded the motion.

Discussion

* Sheila suggested we consider pricing the tickets at $110, as moving from $100/ticket to $125/ticket is a big jump and the dinner is a buffet.
* Geneva acknowledged that the social committee considered that concern, but also wanted to minimize any deficit from the event, and that it’s a challenging balance.
* Stephen noted that at a past meeting the event financials were off because there were a number of cheques that hadn’t been received by him as Treasurer before that meeting and when he was able to do the event reconciliation the difference between where we were and where we expected to be came down to the cost of the complimentary tickets for the students. That said, he said, he doesn’t think we should stop supporting the students from attending. It’s a great thing to do for the students. He also commented that from his perspective we have to choose between having an accessible ticket price and a fancy venue, and we should include the cost of including the students in the reports for the cost of the event.
* Freya asked for the name of the student that didn’t show up to the Spring Dinner, and noted that for future reference, the Spring Dinner may not be the one to invite the students to, as it is hosted during the students’ final exam period and because UVic Law has had a session for students to meet with Victoria law firms in May over the last couple of years.
* Alex noted that he thinks it is ideal to have the Summer Dinner at Laurel Point. Having the venue with that access to the patio and the sun coming in at that time of year will attract more people than an indoor venue. He also suggested that rather than offering free student tickets we subsidize tickets and offer them at reduced prices for students instead.
* Clare noted that she thinks that people understand that the price of food has gone up and that costs have increased generally, so she thinks that they will understand an increased cost. She also noted that she thought that once break through that $100 barrier, it doesn’t matter that much whether it’s $110 vs $125 for a ticket. People think in steps, so if you break $100, people will think of it as basically $125 even if it is $110. She suggests we go with $125 per ticket and have it at the Inn at Laurel Point.
* Jessica agrees that $125 is the next logical step after $100. She is supportive of holding it at the Inn at Laurel Point. She was a bit surprised by the deficits that we’re running, and suggested that we consider having something like a centrepiece at each table with a firm name or ask firms to sponsor a student, ensuring that the student knows who paid for the ticket.
* Stephen suggested increasing student tickets for other events and potentially not giving them away for gala events, as we have many other great events for mingling.
* Sheila noted that we tend to give free tickets to students for sporting events, but not to the events for which tickets sell out (e.g., Inns of Court / trivia). The issue with trivia in particular is that we have a lot of people who want to go who can’t go, so it’s not the best fit for adding free tickets.
* Marlisa added that many students might feel out of place at the formal dinners and they might feel more comfortable at the other events Stephen noted that are less formal.
* Sofia noted that she’s had really good feedback from the students who have attended the dinners, but maybe we should consider 3 students per dinner rather than 5.
* Jacquie added that she’s been a buddy to students at each of the past several dinners and they’ve all really enjoyed it, including the Spring Dinner, despite its overlap with exam season. She also said that she supports holding the dinner at the Inn at Laurel Point for $125 per ticket.
* Geneva said that at each of the dinners the students are buddied up with board members, and she recalls that after the summer dinner last year all of the students who attended emailed her afterward to tell her how much they appreciated the event. She agreed that maybe 5 is too many, but she wouldn’t drop it to 2 or 3 because she found that it is helpful to them to have a few other peers in the room.
* Freya agreed that the buddying system the VBA uses for students at these events, and noted that when other organizations offer free tickets for students, UVic suggests they use the buddy model that the VBA uses. Most students are not comfortable mingling alone at such events.
* Clare added that we should develop a sponsorship policy before accepting sponsorships for this dinner.

Vote on Motion

* Sheila called the vote on the motion
* No abstentions or opposition.
* Motion carried.

Additional report by Sofia Green

* The AGM & Dinner will be held on Nov 5.
* The Holiday Lunch will be held on Dec 9.
* The Social Committee will reach out to the Inn at Laurel Point and hopefully confirm the Summer Dinner for July 28.
  + Geneva noted that she will need to confirm that, as they wanted our deposit a few weeks ago, but we’ve needed to wait until this board meeting to confirm our commitment to holding the Summer Dinner there.
* Sofia said that the Social Committee would look into another social event like music bingo or trivia for the fall and hopefully provide an update at the next meeting.
  + Sheila noted that the Judges’ Dinner would be on Oct 25.
  1. Sporting Events Calendar (Andrew Kaban, Carly Haynes & Alexander Bjornson)
     1. Bowling update
     2. Next events

Report by Alexander Bjornson

* Alex noted that Andrew did most of the heavy lifting for the bowling event on behalf of the Sports Committee, including bringing his cute baby as the guest star of the event.
* Bowling ran a profit. Andrew had raised the ticket price by $10, which didn’t diminish interest in participating.
* Thanks to Shiela for giving out the prizes when Andrew had to leave with his baby.
* Next events:
  + Looking at golf in Oct or late Sept. Considering earlier for better weather.
  + Looking at softball near the end of summer.
  + Not sure if pickleball will happen in summer since the best venue is indoors and that won’t be ideal for turnout during the summer.

Discussion

* Darren added that if baseball is going ahead in Sept, that we have chili competition again. We haven’t had that since before Covid, and he still has the trophy from the last time three years ago, which needs to recirculate.
  1. CPD/Inns of Court (Selina Wall, Darren Williams)

Report by Darren Williams

* He has different numbers for the financials for the Inns of Court than in Anwar’s report, and wants to sit down with Anwar to see what is happening with our PayPal, as most of the revenue comes in through online ticket sales, with only a few registrations happening through cheque. Darren’s math involves counting the number of paid people multiplied by ticket price, minus the one expense which is food, which is fairly straightforward.
* From Darren’s accounting, there was an $1146 profit for the Proprietary Estoppel event in April
* He projected that the May Inns of Court would have a profit of $1762.61 profit.
* So that’s close to $2,900 profit for the last two Inns of Court events.
* Next Inns of Court will be on the ethical use of AI, with good speakers from the Law Society and maybe the CBA.
* After that, the next one will be on family law.

Discussion

* Sheila noted that PayPal takes a certain cut of revenue from ticket sales, so we’ll receive less in revenue from tickets sales than the cost of tickets.
  1. Donations Committee (Marlisa Martin, Katherine Tochor, Leo Yuan & Selina Wall)

Report by Marlisa Martin

* She has seen no requests to date.
  1. Newsletter (Jim Legh/Geneva Houlden)

Report by Geneva Houlden

* The draft newsletter went out today and Geneva will finalize it in next few days.
* Need additional volunteer(s) to help with the copy. Geneva is happy to format.
* Before Jim recently went away, Geneva advised Jim of the need to discuss a policy about publishing member articles. Jim is returning soon, so that item will be discussed as soon as possible.

Discussion

* Sheila proposed that if Jim and Geneva are unable to meet to propose a policy for the publication of member articles for the next meeting, we should form a subcommittee to address that. Sheila noted that there is still a member who has put forward an article without confirmation of whether or when it will be published.
* Carly offered to talk to Geneva about how she could provide some support.
* Jessica also offered to help.
* Darren suggested involving an articled student or two where their principal would be interested in providing some of their time on a monthly basis. An articled student who is interested in connecting with the local bar could be a good person to gather that info.
  1. CBA Report (Clare Jennings K.C.)

News

CBABC held its Provincial Council meeting on May 3, 2025, during which elections were held for the 2025-26 Board of Directors. Successful candidates from Victoria include Sarah Klinger, Second Vice President, and our own Anwar Mujtabah as Young Lawyer’s Rep.

In addition to hearing from the national CBA president and learning about AI and the legal profession, CBABC [honoured three lawyers with awards](https://www.cbabc.org/news/cbabc-honours-three-b-c-lawyers-for-exceptional-contributions-to-legal-community/?utm_source=IFZ&utm_medium=EM&utm_campaign=BC&_zs=EOS7O1&_zl=6tAJ3):

* Hasan Alam, at BCGEU, was awarded the Equality and Diversity Award;
* Gurminder Sandhu, KC, at Hamilton Dunca, was awarded the Harry Rankin, QC Pro Bono Award; and
* barbara finlay, KC, of Lawyers Against Transphobia, was awarded the President’s Medal.

The Georges A. Goyer, QC Memorial Award for Distinguished Service will be awarded at the Vancouver Bench & Bar Dinner on June 11, 2025.

Advocacy

* CBABC filed their intervenor response in the Law Society of BC’s challenge to the *Legal Professions Act.* Learn more and read submissions [here](https://www.cbabc.org/our-impact/initiatives/regulation-of-the-profession/resources-reading/?utm_source=IFZ&utm_medium=EM&utm_campaign=BC&_zs=EOS7O1&_zl=uBgI3)
* CBABC delivered a submission to the BC Supreme Court on the impact of the October 17, 2023, amendments made to practice directions on class proceedings, asking for the court to reconsider. Learn more and read the submission [here](https://www.cbabc.org/our-impact/submissions/impact-of-practice-direction-amendments-on-class-actions/?utm_source=IFZ&utm_medium=EM&utm_campaign=BC&_zs=EOS7O1&_zl=wBgI3).
* CBABC President Lee Nevens wrote to the premier to express concern about comments he made in the Legislature about the alleged perpetrator of the Lapu Lapu Day attack in Vancouver, and has made comments in various media about this issue. Read the letter [here](https://www.cbabc.org/our-impact/submissions/letter-to-the-premier-after-remarks-on-the-justice-system/?_zs=EOS7O1&_zl=7tAJ3).
* CBABC has developed a toolkit to help lawyers speak confidently about the need to uphold and defend fundamental legal principles. Learn more and access the toolkit [here](https://cba.org/resources/practice-tools/speaking-up-for-justice-a-messaging-toolkit-for-legal-principles/).

Get Involved

CBABC is looking for member to join its various committees and contribute to the work of the CBABC. Learn more and apply [here](https://www.cbabc.org/our-impact/committees/).

The Aboriginal Lawyers Forum is still looking for donations for their annual auction, the proceeds from which support the Warrior Project – a project that provides funding to support Indigenous articled students. Learn more, and how to donate, [here](https://www.cbabc.org/sections/aboriginal-lawyers-forum/the-warrior-project/?utm_source=IFZ&utm_medium=EM&utm_campaign=BC&_zs=EOS7O1&_zl=1CgI3).

Upcoming Professional Development sessions that may be of interest to VBA members:

The UVic JD/JID Program: What It Means To have JID Experience in the Legal Profession, online only: [May 22nd, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.](https://www.cbapd.org/details_en.aspx?id=BC_BC25ABI02R)

Young Lawyers – Victoria June End of Term Networking, in-person only: [June 5th, 5:30 p.m., Craft Beer Market](https://www.cbapd.org/details_en.aspx?id=BC_BC25YLI06M)

* 1. Courthouse Liaison

No report at this time for Civil.

Report by Clare Jennings, KC

* There’s a new criminal practice direction on restricting publication of information from conferences for criminal proceedings. There exists a mandatory immediate publication ban with respect to pre-trial proceedings generally, and now it is overtly and clearly applies to pre-trial conferences.
* The BCSC has decided if Section 530 language rights are canvassed in Provincial Court don’t need to be recanvassed at the BCSC, which will significantly save court time and will reduce confusion for accused, who often only speak English.
  1. Website, Email and Forum (Sheila Simpson, Clare Jennings K.C. & Maliki Suppin)
     1. Follow us on LinkedIn at: [www.linkedin.com/in/victoria-bar-association-281050366](http://www.linkedin.com/in/victoria-bar-association-281050366)
     2. Sheila sent email instructions to the members who had email issues at the last meeting. No further follow up was requested after the email.

*Please make sure our emails are not getting lost in your junk/spam folder and update your safe contacts with “*[*info@vicbar.ca*](mailto:info@vicbar.ca)*”  and if using Outlook ensure you are enabled to receive notifications from “*[*quarantine@messaging.microsoft.com*](mailto:quarantine@messaging.microsoft.com)*”. This will ensure you are receiving your Victoria Bar updates!*

Report by Sheila Simpson

* She has created a LinkedIn account and started to follow people. Everyone should go follow our account. She has made one post so far, about the May Inns of Court event, which LinkedIn has told her people have started to see on LinkedIn.
* If you’re having a challenge with receiving VBA emails, please see the note above for how to address the issue.
  1. Barrister’s Lounge & Court Boxes (Marlisa Martin)
     1. Update on the new registration system

Report by Marlisa Martin

* She is trying to streamline the court box billing system. You may have seen an email saying that you can pay using PayPal. She is trying to make it as automated as possible.
* It is a learning process. Some court boxes are paid by one person but for several people per court box.
* We can’t fully automate the registration system with the version of PayPal that we have. That would cost an extra $30 a month. We may move to doing that in the future, which would also help us with memberships.
* She’s also realized that her correspondence has only been with those with existing court boxes, but there might be new lawyers that don’t realize it is an option.
* There are 9 people who have paid so far, with 4 using PayPal. Some firms want to pay by cheque. She will try to move people over to PayPal.
* Stripe is another payment system that could be used. It is more global and allows more automation.
  1. Lockers (Danielle Young & Darren Williams)

No report at this time.

1. **Old Business:**

Report on Pride by Clare Jennings, KC

* The parade is July 6. The CBA-BC has registered us. Join us!

1. **New Business:**

Policy and Governance Committee

* Sheila proposed a sponsorship policy committee be formed to develop a policy for accepting sponsorships from firms
* Clare proposed that it should be a policy and governance committee to deal with that and other matters, including publishing member articles in the Praecipe, and including our bylaws.
* The committee is composed of Clare, Darren, Jacquie, and Jessica
* Clare will coordinate the first meeting

1. **Confirm that next board meeting is to be held on Tuesday June 17, 2025, at 5PM in person at the Barrister’s Lounge at the Victoria Law Courts and/or by MS Teams**

**2024/2025 VBA Board Composition**

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| --- | --- |
| **Executive** | **2025** |
| Past President | Sofia Green |
| President | Sheila Simpson |
| Vice President | Stephen Lyons |
| Treasurer | Anwar Mujtabah |
| Secretary | Jacquelyn Miller |
| **Portfolios** | **2025** |
| 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 |
| Praecipe 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 |
| Policy and Governance Committee | Clare Jennings, K.C., Darren Williams, Jacquelyn Miller, Jessica Thomson |