



2015 Annual Report



level

changing lives through law



People make choices. Choices make history.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on 2015 – a year full of exciting developments for Level – I keep returning to a story shared by Blackfoot Elder Randy Bottle during one of our volunteer training sessions in Calgary. As a survivor of residential schools, Randy understands the complicated and difficult relationship that many Indigenous communities have with Canada’s justice system. That is why Randy felt so moved when a former student in Level’s Indigenous youth outreach program, “Dare to Dream”, told him that the program changed his outlook on life. Specifically, the student described how the mentorship he received from a volunteer lawyer inspired him to believe that a career in law was within his reach, and that he had the potential to make a positive difference in his community. Randy believes that Dare to Dream is casting a new and powerful vision for Indigenous youth and their role to play in shaping Canada’s future. We, very humbly, agree.

For me, Randy’s story highlights the unique way in which Level’s specialized justice education programming is empowering young people to reach their full potential. It also demonstrates the significant role the legal community can play in building a more inclusive society.

In this Annual Report, you will read about Level’s efforts to “level the playing field” through our three main program areas: Youth Outreach, Research, and Advocacy. Through Dare to Dream, Level delivered experiential justice education workshops to over 200 Indigenous youth across the nation, and provided volunteer and cultural competency opportunities for over 90 legal professionals.

In the summer of 2015, 23 exceptional law student interns joined NGOs in Ghana, Namibia, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, the USA and Canada to advance human rights through research and community outreach initiatives. Additionally, our 13 dedicated Student Chapters at law schools across Canada spent the school year exploring the complex and important issue of human trafficking, with special attention to commercial sexual exploitation and the labour conditions of migrant workers.

Our accomplishments in 2015 would not be possible without the hard work, energy and commitment of Level’s outstanding volunteers – we are truly grateful for your support. We would also like to thank our sponsors, whose financial support enables our organization to focus on creating innovative, effective programming. Finally, we would like to thank Level’s Advisory Board and Indigenous Elders and advisors for your ongoing advice and encouragement. Together, we are changing lives through law.

Yours very truly,



Brittany Twiss
Executive Director



ABOUT LEVEL

VISION

We believe that uniting the power of people, education and law will lead to a more equitable and just society.

MISSION

We level the playing field and empower marginalized communities through public outreach initiatives and human rights advocacy.

OBJECTIVES

We pursue our mission through justice **education** and **mentorship**, which are reflected in our three main programs: Youth Outreach, Student Chapters and Global Internships.





OUR TEAM

Staff & Volunteers

Brittany Twiss
Kenya-Jade Pinto
Josh Smith
Alyssa Flaherty-Spence
Laura O'Brien
Fallon Melander
Thomas Milne
Ashley King
Chloe Mathioudakis
Roxanne Seekins
Kelsey O'Brien
Khorshid Rad

Board of Directors

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David Winfield





Dare to Dream

Overview

Level's innovative Justice Education Program, "Dare to Dream," is rooted in:

- building trust;
- acknowledging colonial legacies;
- honouring indigenous practices and customs; and
- maintaining two-way transfer of knowledge between the Indigenous youth and volunteer legal professionals.

Through storytelling, mentorship and interactive learning experiences like mock trials, sentencing circles, and justice focused field trips, the program is **breaking down barriers** between Indigenous communities and the justice sector.

Due to its unique and specialized approach, Dare to Dream empowers Indigenous youth to succeed in an entirely new way, instilling cultural pride and confidence, and combatting their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. The program also enhances Indigenous cultural competency of all volunteer participants and promotes respect for diversity in the general community.

Why the Program Exists

Historically, First Nation, Métis and Inuit youth in Canada have had an imposed system that denied any emphasis on their own languages, cultures, traditions and laws. The legacy of residential schools in Canada has left a Eurocentric and paternalistic view that continues to affect First Nation, Métis and Inuit children today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report includes calls to action to **improve education attainment and success rates, develop culturally appropriate curriculum** and to **ensure reconciliation** takes place between both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through cultural competency training.

Dare to Dream directly responds to these calls to action, and aids in the process of reconciliation and community building by providing critical cultural competency training for both Canada's legal and business community.

Click [here](#) to read Dare to Dream endorsements from Canadian leaders.



2015-16 Dare to Dream Program Delivery

In 2015-16, Dare to Dream was delivered in five urban and three reserve schools across Canada with over 200+ students and 90+ volunteers participating. Specifically, the program was delivered at:

Alberta

Sherwood School in Calgary
GP Vanier School in Calgary
Siksika Outreach School in the Siksika Nation
Morley Community School in Stoney Nakota

Ontario

First Nations School of Toronto
Sir Robert Borden High School in Ottawa
Mnjikaning Kendaaswin Elementary School in Chippewas
of Rama First Nation

Saskatchewan

St. Mary's School in Saskatoon





Dare to Dream Outcomes

After concluding this year's Dare to Dream program, we surveyed our volunteers, teachers and students, and conducted in-person, small group interviews with the students and volunteers in all locations.

An analysis of the results shows that the Dare to Dream program met its goals during the 2015-16 year. The students reported increased knowledge about the justice system, benefiting from meeting role models from the legal community, gained increased confidence and self-esteem, and identified the criminal mock trial as their favourite activity. The volunteers reported an increase in knowledge about Indigenous peoples, customs, culture and traditions. The volunteers, teachers and students all greatly appreciated their involvement in the program and supported Dare to Dream's continuation and expansion.



CANADIAN CHAPTERS



Overview

Since 2005 Level's Chapter Program has motivated tomorrow's lawyers, leaders and change-makers to champion social justice causes and make positive contributions to their communities. Focused on an annual theme, students across the country organize community events, inform their peers, and host conferences.

Social consciousness is at the **heart** of Level's chapter program. Students are encouraged to think critically and assess how their unique set of skills can be used to better the world around them.

At Level, we believe in socially conscious career development and acknowledge that today's students are tomorrow's lawyers. Our Canadian Chapters are creating a more aware, diverse and responsive bar.

A close-up portrait of a young woman with long dark hair and bangs, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a white top and a dark blazer. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

Laura O'Brien,

Level Student Intern (2016)
uOttawa Level Chapter Member (2014-2015)

David Whalen,

Level Volunteer, July 2016



2015 Activities: Highlights

In 2015, Student Chapters across the country organized events around the theme of “human trafficking”. Chapters across Canada took on the challenge of educating and empowering their colleagues and the greater public to think about the impact of human trafficking.

For example:

The **University of Ottawa** hosted a panel discussion on modern slavery which included: Sally Lee, a lawyer who worked for the International Justice Mission in the Philippines, Professor Penelope Simons who teaches about forced labour and corporate social responsibility; and Pauline Gagne whose work centres around human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the Ottawa area.

The **University of British Columbia** hosted a documentary screening of “Not My Life”, a film that addresses many forms of slavery. Specifically, it addresses the military use of children in Uganda, involuntary servitude in the United States and forced begging and garbage picking in India.

A black and white portrait of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing glasses and a white top, smiling slightly. The portrait is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text on the right side of the page.

Kenya-Jade Pinto

Director of Law Student Programs (2016)

Global Intern (2015)

uOttawa Level Chapter Member (2014-2015)

GLOBAL INTERNS



Overview:

Global Internships provide law students with important learning experiences beyond the classroom, and enhance the capacity of international and Indigenous social justice organizations.

Through Level's Global Internship Program, passionate and talented JD/LLB students from across Canada have a unique opportunity to spend a summer working for an NGO in Canada or overseas on pressing and often groundbreaking legal issues.

Since 2005, 180 students have provided valuable legal assistance to over 40 organizations in 15 countries.

In 2015, through the Global Internship Program, Level provided 23 law students with in-the-field learning opportunities in Africa, Asia, the United States and Canada, where they supported grassroots efforts to **increase access to justice** and **combat poverty, inequality and exploitation**.





2015 PLACEMENTS

International

- Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek Namibia
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Bangkok Thailand
- Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Dharamsala, India
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Centre for Democratic Development, Accra, Ghana
- Federation of Women Lawyers, Nairobi, Kenya
- International Commission of Jurists, Nairobi, Kenya
- Yukon River Intertribal Watershed Council, Anchorage, USA
- Centre for Justice and International Law, Washington D.C.

Domestic

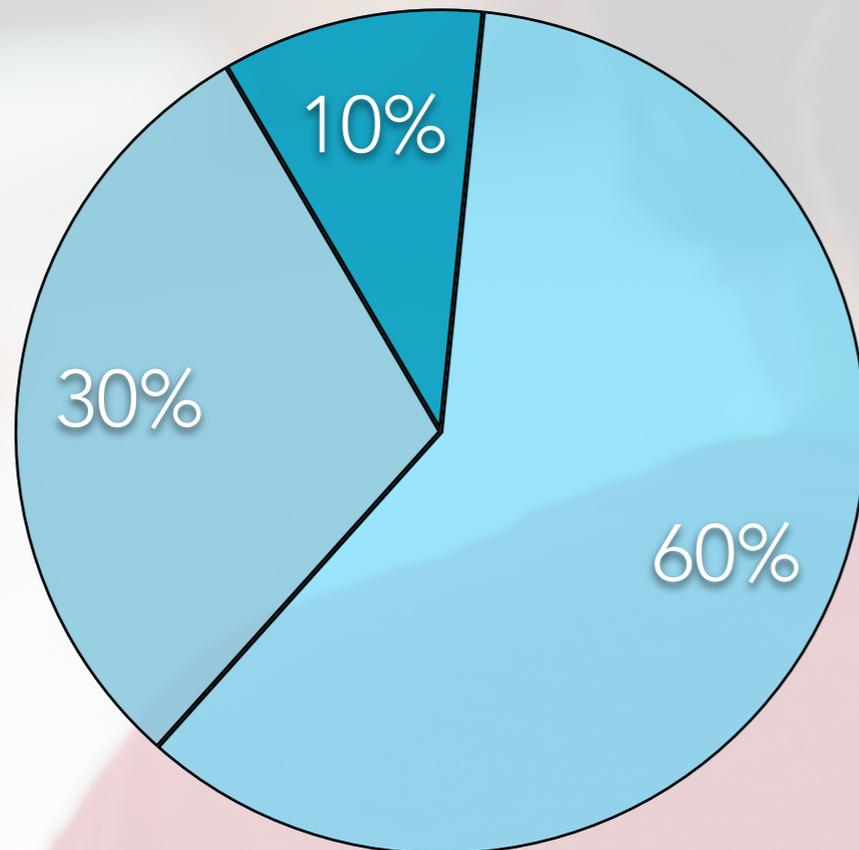
- Avocats Sans Frontiers, Quebec City, Canada
- Mikisew First Nation, Fort McMurray, Canada
- Chiefs of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
- Yukon Human Rights Commission, Whitehorse, Canada
- Yukon Conservation Society, Whitehorse, Canada
- Beyond Borders, Ottawa, Canada





International Commission
of Jurists in Nairobi, Kenya

Financial Summary



- Dare to Dream
- Student Programs
- General and Admin

90% of funding directly supports Level's innovative programming

REVENUE & EXPENSES	
For the Year Ended December 31, 2015	
Support	
Donations / Grants	82,191
Donations from Other Charities	81,039
Other Income	6,788
	\$170,018
Expenses	
Admin (Consultancy)	6,203
Bank Charges	383
Insurance	1,293
Office and Miscellaneous	5,358
Website	887
Professional Fees	(63)
Rental	1,767
Travel	657
	\$16,485
Direct Project Expenses	
Consultancy	55,826
Website	7,981
Dare to Dream	23,950
Student Program	17,310
	\$105,067
Total Expenses	\$121,552
Excess of support over expenditures	48,466
Net Assets (beginning of year)	50,369
Net Assets (end of year)	98,835

Level's Sponsors and Partners

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PARTNERSHIPS & PRO BONO SERVICES





How to Donate

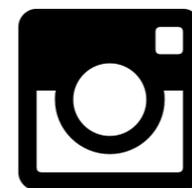
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you change lives.

Make an online donation today through our secure **CanadaHelps** account, or donate **Aeroplan** points to help cover the cost of Level's travel and supplies.



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