

Escheat Act Modernization Project Backgrounder

Backgrounder no. 2: Project Committee Members

The Escheat Act Modernization Project is being carried out by the BC Law Institute with the assistance of an expert project committee. The committee members are:

Lydia Hwitsum (Xtli'li'ye) was the committee chair from the start of the project until December 2025. Ms. Hwitsum has over 20 years of experience in leadership positions in Indigenous governance in BC and Canada, and recently served a term as Chief of the Cowichan Tribes. She previously served four two-year terms as the elected Chief, and in 2019 was elected to a second term on the First Nations Summit Political Executive. Ms. Hwitsum has been a staunch advocate for Indigenous and human rights, presenting at local, national, and international stages, including at the UN Permanent Forum on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Nigel Baker-Grenier is the committee chair as of January 2026. Nigel is an Associate at White Raven Law. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in the History Honours program at the University of British Columbia and a Juris Doctor from the Peter A. Allard School of Law. He was called to the BC Bar in 2020. He was awarded the Beverly McLachlin Legal Access Award in 2019 and the Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP Indigenous Entrance Scholarship in 2016. Nigel has authored the following articles: “Kitimahkinawow ekwa Kitimahkisin: Pity and Compassion in Cree Law” (published in *Western Journal of Legal Studies* in 2021) and “Esdii Wal: Gitxsan Law Grounded in Epistemology” (published in the *University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review* in 2018). Nigel is a recipient of the 2022 Courage in Law award from the Indigenous Law Students Association and teaches as an Adjunct professor at the Indigenous Community Legal Clinic.

Nigel belongs to the Gisgahaast clan from the Gitxsan Nation. He is also Mushkegowuck (swampy Cree) from Churchill, Manitoba. During his upbringing, he was immersed in song, dance, oral history and law from his communities. Nigel chose to study law to revitalize Indigenous laws which are grounded in oral histories and traditions. Nigel is a lead dancer for Dancers of Damelahamid, an Indigenous dance company based in Vancouver.

Alexandra Flynn is an Associate Professor with Peter A. Allard School of Law. Alexandra's teaching and research focus on municipal law and governance, administrative law, and property law. She has published numerous peer-reviewed papers, public reports, media articles, and a book on how cities are legally understood in law and how they govern, including the overlapping geographies and governance of city spaces, and the formal and informal bodies that represent residents. She is the Director of the Housing Research Collaborative, which comprises CMHC and SSHRC-funded projects focused on Canada's housing crisis. She is also working on several projects related to precariously housed people in Canadian cities, including the governance of personal property of precariously housed people, and human rights and tent encampments.

Alexandra has a long history working in law and policy. Prior to entering academia, she practiced banking and securities law at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy in New York where she was the recipient of several Legal Aid awards. She also practiced Aboriginal Law at Ratcliff & Company in

Vancouver, representing First Nations, and worked in a senior policy role at the City of Toronto focused on intergovernmental relationships.

Stephen Mussell is Michif (Métis) and a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation. Among others, his mother Constance Mussell's (née Waldo) family is descended from the Brown, Whitford, Price, Spence, and Cook families, and his father Michael Mussell's family is descended from the Klyne, LaFrance, Cyr, and Nolin families.

Stephen is committed to using his western legal education and his belief in the inherent weight and force of Indigenous legal orders to bring about transformational change. Stephen is an associate with Mandell Pinder LLP. His practice focuses on advancing the legal rights of Indigenous Peoples and supporting Indigenous Peoples in exercising their right to self-determination. Stephen is driven by a desire to continue the good work of those who came before him, and to leave a better world for future generations.

Jeffrey Nicholls, an associate with Ratcliff LLP, has a practice which focuses on litigation, negotiation and law & policy development. He provides support on a wide range of files that come before courts in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, the Federal Courts and administrative tribunals. Jeff advises on land and resource issues, Aboriginal rights and title, matters under the *Indian Act*, First Nation governance issues, and Indigenous legal traditions.

Jeff is a proud member of the Lax Kw'alaams First Nation. Outside the practice of law, he is an avid birder, and photographer.

Greg Nielsen, Executive Counsel to the Public Guardian and Trustee, was called to the BC bar in 1990. He has worked for the Public Guardian and Trustee of BC since 1997 and has served that organization as a solicitor in Child and Youth Services, as Information and Privacy Officer and currently as Executive Counsel where he leads on issues such as corporate contracts, information sharing agreements, policy and legislative reform.

Brandi Stocks, in-house legal counsel to the Public Guardian and Trustee of BC works to help protect the legal and property interests of vulnerable persons in the province. Brandi enjoys being active in the legal community, including speaking for the People's Law School and Continuing Legal Education Society of BC. Brandi articulated and practiced in the Vancouver office of a large international law firm and clerked for the Supreme Court of British Columbia. She earned a law degree from the University of British Columbia.

Mary Childs, KC, General Counsel for Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN), frequently speaks at continuing education events, addressing issues relating to modern treaty nations. Before joining TFN in 2020, she practiced with a national law firm, working primarily with charities, cooperatives, and other purpose-driven organizations. She has also practiced corporate and commercial law. Mary has degrees from Carleton University, UBC, and Oxford University. She has held academic positions in law faculties in Canada and the UK, and has published scholarly articles on a variety of legal topics. Mary chairs the board of governors of the Law Foundation of British Columbia, is a member of BC's Passenger Transportation Board, and chairs the board of the Motor Dealer Customer Compensation Fund. In both 2021 and 2022 she was named one of BC's 500

most influential business leaders by *Business In Vancouver*. She lives on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people.

Tyler Nyvall (liaison / observer) works as legal counsel with the BC Ministry of Attorney General. Tyler has worked in law reform for 19 years and has participated as an observer on several past BCLI projects. He is also BC's civil law jurisdictional representative with the Uniform Law Conference of Canada.