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BLACK LAW STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY CHAPTER CONSTITUTION

(Created September 2020 - Revised September 2023)

The founders of the Black Law Students' Association of Lakehead University in 2019 are Tochi Nwaokocha, Patrick Palmer, Aaron Atwal, Danika Goshulak and Sharon Tathgur.

Mindful of the presence of Black Law Students attending Bora Laskin Faculty of Law, Lakehead University, and determined to provide a forum of unity, encouragement and collective action by these students, and recognizing the benefits which a formal organization with an explicitly constitution provides, we hereby establish the following Articles which shall be binding on the

executive and members of the Black Law Students' Association of Lakehead University, in accordance with BLSA Canada.

ARTICLE I

DEFINITIONS / INTERPRETATION

The name of the organization shall be Black Law Students' Association of Lakehead University ("BLSA-Lakehead or the "Chapter").

"Annual Conference"	means the annual conference held by the Black Law Students' Association. It is intended that the Annual Conference be held during Black History Month (February);
"Chapter" or "BLSA"	means the Black Law Students Association of Lakehead University
"Black Law Student"	means a law student registered at a Lakehead University, who self-identifies as black;
"By-Law"	means a by-law of the Chapter that has been approved by two thirds of the Executive and designated as a By-Law;
"Executive"	means those members elected at the Executive Meeting to hold office, or appointed by the President to fill a vacancy;
"Member"	means a member of the Chapter;
"Designated Signing Officer"	means that Executive member designated by the President and the Treasurer to be the third signing officer, when applicable;
"Voting Member"	means an individual who has paid any required fees and registered with the Chapter; Only registered and paid (where applicable) Chapter Members can vote;
"Quorum"	means fifty-one percent of BLSA-Lakehead's registered Chapter members;
"School year"	means the period commencing with the official calendar date upon which the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law/Lakehead University begins and ending with the official calendar date upon which the final semester ends;

“National Newsletter”	means the official monthly newsletter curated by the Black Law Students’ Association of Canada (“BLSA Canada”)
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MEETINGS

“Executive Meeting” means a meeting with the executive members;

“General Meeting” means a meeting of the Members of the Chapter;

ARTICLE II

OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

1. The Black Law Students’ Association of Lakehead University (hereinafter referred to as LU-BLSA) is one chapter of the broader national organization, which was created:
 - (a) To promote the welfare and interest of the members of BLSA and to provide services, activities, publications and facilities which address black students’ needs and objectives;
 - (b) To articulate and promote the professional needs and goals of black law students;
 - (c) To foster and encourage professional competence;
 - (d) To center relationships between black lawyers and the Canadian legal system;
 - (e) To instill in the black law student and black lawyer a greater awareness and commitment to the needs of the black community;
 - (f) To influence Lakehead University, the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law, legal fraternities and other legal-adjacent associations and institutions to utilize their expertise and resources to initiate a change within the legal system that will make it more responsive to the needs and concerns of the black community, and to educate such organizations about the importance and need for diverse student bodies in law;
 - (g) To encourage a more diverse field of applicants to apply to Lakehead University, Bora Laskin Faculty of Law;
 - (h) To enhance the political, cultural, legal, social and economic consciousness of members;
 - (i) To increase access for black students in legal education; and (j) To work with other organizations with similar goals;

ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP

All Bora Laskin Faculty of Law students may become members of the Chapter. Membership will be renewed each year until graduation. Members are required to attend General Meetings unless they give any member of the Executive reasonable notice that they will not be able to attend a meeting. If a Voting Member is not present at a meeting, they will not be able to vote on any matters discussed in that meeting. If a member is unable to physically attend a General Meeting and provides reasonable notice to the Executive, the Executive may arrange telephone or video conference to allow the member to participate in the General Meeting, upon the member's request. Members who participate remotely may vote in the General Meeting. Members' rights and duties are outlined in the Constitution & Bylaws of the LU-BLSA. Rights and duties may be subject to change and shall include the following:

1. Voting Members of the Chapter shall be entitled to:
 - (a) Vote at General Meetings, in elections, referenda and recall of the Chapter;
 - (b) Propose or second amendments to this Constitution;
 - (c) Stand for election or hold office on the Executive; and (d) Participate in all events or activities sponsored by the Chapter.
2. All members of the Chapter shall be entitled to:
 - (a) Attend all general meetings with the executives; and
 - (b) Participate in all events or activities sponsored by the Chapter.
3. All executives of the Chapter shall be entitled to:
 - (a) Implement general policy;
 - (b) Propose and enact By-Laws;
 - (c) The responsibilities of the day-to-day functioning of the Chapter;
 - (d) Stand for election or hold office on the Executive; and
 - (e) Propose or second amendments to this constitution;

4. Any judge, lawyer, professor (practicing or teaching in Thunder Bay), or other person who is approved by the Executive members of the Chapter may be appointed an ASSOCIATE MEMBER. Associate members shall not vote.
5. Any person who has graduated from Bora Laskin Faculty of Law and who was formerly a voting member of LU-BLSA may become an ALUMNI. Alumni members shall not vote.

ARTICLE IV

VOTING

1. Voting at the Executive Meeting shall be done by a show of hands. There shall be one vote per person and each vote shall be considered equal.
2. Voting at General Meetings or Executive Meetings shall be done by a show of hands. Each member present at the meeting and entitled to vote shall have one vote. Each member can elect to select a proxy where they are unable to attend the meeting in person and exercise their one vote.

ARTICLE V

MINUTES

1. Minutes of the Executive Meeting, General Meetings and all other meetings shall be made available to any members of the Chapter.

ARTICLE VI

THE EXECUTIVE

1. The Executive shall be the executive body of the Chapter and:
 - (a) Shall implement general policy;
 - (b) May propose and enact legislation; and
 - (c) Is charged with the day-to-day functioning of the Chapter;
2. The Executive shall be comprised of the following positions:
 - i. President
 - ii. Vice President
 - iii. Vice President Communication
 - iv. Secretary v. Treasurer

3. The Executive position for President shall be filled by election at the General Meeting.
4. In the event that a vacancy becomes available on the Executive, that vacancy will be filled by appointment during an Executive Meeting.
5. All Executive officers must be Voting Members of the Chapter.

ARTICLE VII

POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

1. The Executive shall be empowered to enforce the Articles of this Constitution.
2. The Executive shall be further empowered:
 - (a) To enact, amend, repeal, and enforce By-Laws within the provisions and spirit of this Constitution;
 - (b) To raise funds for the proper functioning of the Chapter; and
 - (c) To Administer all funds accruing to the organization and to engage in any legal or commercial undertaking necessary to achieve the objectives or purpose of the Chapter;
3. To call meetings of the Chapter;
4. To provide for the maintenance of Chapter property and facilities required for the furtherance of the objectives and purposes of the Chapter; and
5. To represent, or make statements on behalf of the Chapter at official functions and on public occasions, upon approval of the President.

ARTICLE VIII

MEETINGS

1. The Executive will hold regular and frequent (at least once per month) meetings on dates and at times to be agreed upon by the Executive. Executive Meetings will consist of only the Executive.
2. Notice of meetings shall be posted one week prior to the meeting date.
 - (a) In the case of an emergency meeting, forty-eight-hours notice is required.

3. General Meetings shall be held at least once a semester. Members of the Chapter should be given one weeks reasonable notice prior to the meeting, and the Executive will determine the frequency of such meetings.

ARTICLE IX

COMMITTEES

ARTICLE X

RESOLUTIONS

1. All decisions at Executive Meetings shall be arrived at with the support of a simple majority (50% + 1) of members at any meeting with quorum.
2. All motions shall be presented and seconded.
3. The President will call votes in a motion.
4. Voting on motions shall occur by the raising of hands and/or roll call (teleconference) and each member shall have only one vote. No secret ballots will be allowed.

ARTICLE XI

ELECTIONS

1. There will be one annual election meeting, the date of which will be set by the current Executive, but which must occur during the second semester of the school year, for the purpose of electing the next Executive.
 - a. A specific date for the transition of roles (“Transition Date”) must be established, at which the responsibilities of each role will shift to the next Executive.
 - b. The position will be held until a new Executive member is elected at the next annual election meeting and the next Transition Date occurs.
2. Any member of the Chapter may apply for the Executive position by submitting an email of intent to the President. The letter of intent must detail the position being applied for and why they are suitable to fill said position. At the annual election meeting, all present members of the Chapter will be able to vote for a candidate for each position. The majority vote will determine who is elected.
 - a. In the event of a tie, the current President, under consultation with the current Executive, shall schedule a date for a run-off vote to take place between the two tied candidates, within five days of the announcement of the original election results.

3. The Executive may vote to add new positions to the Executive. Adding a new Executive position would require a two-thirds majority vote from the Executive. They will then be required to amend the constitution within two days of the vote, to reflect the changes in positions and have an election to fill the new position(s). New position(s) will be assumed until the next scheduled election is held.
4. All elected Executives, particularly the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Vice President Communications, will be required to thoroughly transition with the incoming Executive by the Transition Date.

ARTICLE XII

FINANCE

The financial affairs of BLSA-Lakehead University shall be conducted in accordance with the following in mind:

1. Sources of funding for BLSA-Lakehead University will include BLSA events and other contributions.
2. BLSA-Lakehead University is to carry on its operations without financial gain to its members and any profits or other accretions to the BLSA are to be used in promoting its objectives.
3. The official signatures of the Chapter for all financial transactions shall be any two of the three signing officers, namely the President and the Treasurer or the Designated Signing Officer.
4. In all cases, the President and the Treasurer must be notified and give approval prior to any financial transaction being carried out.
5. The books of the Chapter will be transferred from the Past Treasurer to the Treasurer elected at the end of the year meeting.
6. BLSA Canada Chapters are unincorporated and should not be entering into any contracts. Chapters should speak directly to their Faculty Advisor and/or Student Law Society to discuss entering into contracts.

ARTICLE XIII

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The Constitution shall be updated and reviewed when necessary.

2. All members of the Chapter are required and encouraged to guard against the misuse of the Association's name and/or its programs.
3. No correspondence shall be sent out in the name of the Chapter without the knowledge and consent of the Executive.

ARTICLE XIV

EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES

4. All members of the Executive are responsible to the members of the Chapter for all actions relating to their role as elected Executive Officers. At no time should major commitments be made or programs initiated without the knowledge and consent of the members. Major commitments means anything which the Chapter believes to be something substantial.

1. Removal/Replacement

- (a) There are three grounds on which LU-BLSA Executive Members may be removed from office and replaced. Those grounds are as follows:
 - i. Lack of attendance at meetings of the executive;
 - ii. Failure to complete assigned tasks within a reasonable time; and
 - iii. Acting in a manner contrary to the mandate, purpose, objects or best interests of the organization.
- (b) Whenever removal is contemplated, written notice will be sent to that member from the President, and they will be given an opportunity to respond.
- (c) Unless otherwise noted, removal will be effective on agreement of a majority of the executive.
- (d) Upon removal of an executive member, the vacant position will be filled according to constitutional provisions.
- (e) The Chapter should immediately notify BLSA Canada's Chapter Representative that the executive has been removed from their position and is no longer in good standing within the Chapter.

2. Assigning Vacant Position

- (a) Should a vacancy need to be filled, the Executive shall be empowered to appoint members to fill the unexpired term.
- (b) The vacant position shall be filled by the Executive appointing the first runner-up of the most recent Election. In the event that the first runner-up cannot, or refuses to fill

said position, the option shall be given to the second runner-up, and so forth, until such time as the position is filled, or the list of runners-up is exhausted.

- (c) If no member can be appointed from the most recent Election, a by-election will take place to fill the vacant position.

3. Attendance

- (a) Unless a reasonable excuse is provided for their absence, each Executive member is required to attend all Executive Meetings.
- (b) Where an Executive member is not able to attend a meeting, they are required to give notice to the rest of the executive.

4. Assigned Tasks

- (a) Executive members will take on and/or be assigned various tasks. They will be expected to provide a deadline within which each task will be completed.
- (b) Executive members will be provided with a list of all the tasks that they have committed themselves to accomplish soon after the meeting at which the undertaking was given.
- (c) If any member had not completed or made reasonable efforts to complete the task by the next meeting after the set deadline, they are subject to removal from the executive.
- (d) On agreement of the majority of executive members, the failure of the member to complete assigned tasks may be excused where there are extenuating circumstances.

5. Conduct Unbecoming LU-BLSA

- (a) All executive members are expected to act in keeping with the mandate, purpose, objectives and best interests of BLSA, and not to bring the organization into disrepute.
- (b) Where 2/3 of the remainder of the executive finds that an executive member has acted in a manner contrary to the mandate, purpose, objectives or best interests of the BLSA, they may remove that member from their position.
- (c) The mandate, purpose, objectives and best interests of LU-BLSA will be determined with reference to this Constitution, the mandate and priorities set by the Executive at the beginning of their term, and to the BLSAC mandates and Constitution.

ARTICLE XV

AMENDMENTS

1. Any motion to amend the Constitution must be submitted to the President of the LU-BLSA and the Executive members.
2. In any vote, all eligible members of the Chapter will be allowed to take part.
3. A two-thirds majority vote of those voting members present will be the deciding factor on motions to amend the Constitution.

BY-LAW I

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE REPRESENTATIVES

1. The President shall:
 - (a) Be held by a Black Law Student. Where a Black Student is unable to hold the position of President, the Vice President shall temporarily be assigned the duties of the President, until a Black Law Student can be appointed to the role of President through a by-election;
 - (b) Be charged with the final responsibility for carrying out legislation, policies, Constitution and By-Laws of the Chapter;
 - (c) Act as the liaison between the BLSA and the Faculty of Law Administration, Staff and Faculty Members;
 - (d) Ensure that the mandates of the Chapter are complied with at all times by all members;
 - (e) Call and preside over meetings;
 - (f) Act as the representative of the Chapter at all official functions as required and designate an appropriate representative of the Chapter when more than one representative is required for such functions and occasions;
 - (g) Maintain contact with the Executives of the various Chapters and must attend all Executive and General Meetings, unless responsibility had been deferred to another executive member prior to the meeting;
 - (h) Be present at all official meetings and functions as the representative of the Chapter as required;

- (i) Be responsible for managing and overseeing events hosted by the Chapter;
- (j) Be one of the two signing officers, as required for the endorsement of all cheques and other financial instruments;
- (k) Discharge any additional duties as set out in the By-Laws;
- (l) Be assigned other duties if agreed to by all members of the Executive; and (m) Be required to participate in the transition process when a new President is elected.

2. The Vice President shall:

- (a) Perform the operations and functions of the Chapter as set out by the President;
- (b) Report to and work directly with the President to assist with any such duties that are assigned;
- (c) Exercise the powers of and be charged with the duties of the President in the absence of the President;
- (d) In cooperation with the President, be responsible for activities of boards, commissions, and committees established by the Executive;
- (e) Be responsible to participate in the transition process when a new Vice President is elected; and
- (f) Discharge any additional duties as set out in the By-Laws.

3. The Vice President of Communications shall:

- (a) Be responsible for keeping the Chapter active in the community and act as a liaison between the Chapter and the Community;
- (b) Coordinate social media outreach initiatives;
- (c) Be responsible for spearheading all internal and external communications for the Chapter, promoting all BLSA events, and communicating the respective duties to members and coordination of any volunteers during each event;
- (d) Be responsible for all media communications and manage social networks;
- (e) Participate in the transition process when a new Vice President of Communications is elected; and

(f) Discharge any additional duties as set out in the By-Laws.

4. The Secretary shall:

(a) Maintain a current, authoritative copy of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Chapter and any amendments thereto;

(b) Be responsible for matters concerning the Chapter excepting those matters specifically made the responsibility of another member of the Executive;

(c) Keep meeting minutes of the Chapter in a form approved by the Executive;

(d) Participate in the transition process when a new Secretary is elected; and (e)

Discharge any additional duties as set out in the By-Laws.

5. The Treasurer shall:

(a) Ensure the keeping of a permanent and accurate record of all financial transactions of the Chapter;

(b) Be responsible for payment of outstanding bills of the Chapter, direct collection for receipts, and manage the administration of the Chapter's funds;

(c) Be one of two signing officers, required for the endorsement of all cheques and other financial instruments;

(d) Advise the Executive on financial matters; and

(e) Discharge any additional duties as set out in the By-Laws.

BY-LAW II

CLUBS

The club constitution, mandate, events and individuals representing the club must not violate the freedoms and rights of other persons as outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Namely:

1. Freedom of conscience and religion;

2. Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media communication; 3. Freedom of peaceful assembly; and

4. Freedom of association.