

Summer 2024 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the guidance of a mentor from the partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region. These opportunities are paid. The pay rate for the summer 2024 program is \$27.50/hour or \$6,875 for a 250-hour project.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday January 28, 2024.

Project title: Exploring legal mechanisms for the transfer of land to Indigenous governing bodies in BC

Project Background & Overview:

The British Columbia Law Institute (BCLI) is a not-for-profit law reform agency based in Vancouver. We engage in scholarly research and analysis of existing laws to determine pathways for law reform. Our goal is to provide clear and actionable insight for the purpose of improving laws in BC. In 2021, the BCLI launched its Reconciling Crown Legal Frameworks Program (RCLF Program) to support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in BC and the alignment of BC's Crown legal frameworks with Indigenous jurisdiction. This work presents new legal issues and research opportunities to support reconciliation at a structural level within Crown legal frameworks.

This project falls within the larger umbrella of the RCLF Program. The BCLI plans to explore recommendations for bringing the BC *Escheat Act* into alignment with UNDRIP. The legal doctrine of escheat is grounded in the notion that land title ultimately derives from the Crown. It is a doctrine that exists at common law and is supported by provincial legislation, in particular, the *Escheat Act*.

When there is a lapse in ownership of land, the doctrine of escheat allows for the land to revert back to the Crown, which in BC means the Attorney General has the authority to manage or dispose of the land. This legal framework perpetuates the Crown's assumptions of title over unceded land and does not reflect the rights and redress relating to dispossessed Indigenous lands affirmed in UNDRIP.

In some circumstances where land escheats to the Crown, attempts are made to engage First Nations. These attempts are not currently supported by a framework that supports consistency in approach or facilitates a clear and sustainable plan for land redistribution or compensation. The BCLI, together with a project committee of subject matter experts will develop recommendations for law reform to support mechanisms for property rights or compensation to be transferred to Indigenous governing bodies when ownership falls.

Project description

Within Canada and abroad, there are existing mechanisms, such as trusts and allocation protocols for the sustainable distribution of property and monies within Indigenous communities. These existing mechanisms can provide insight into frameworks for supporting the transfer of rights to manage or dispose of land to Indigenous governing bodies in situations where there is a lapse in ownership.

The purpose of this project would be to research existing frameworks for the distribution of property to and by Indigenous governing bodies in a sustainable way. It will also involve an evaluation of suitability of these frameworks to the context of dealing with land that escheats in BC. This research will be shared with the BCLI *Escheat Act* Project Committee to inform their evaluation of possible mechanisms for the transfer of property and recognition of Indigenous property rights. Ultimately, it will inform some of the recommendations for law reform in relation to the *Escheat Act*.

The work of the BCLI *Escheat Act* Project Committee is anticipated to take place over 2024 and 2025. This project will provide valuable foundational information to inform this broader work. This work will also inform the report developed by the BCLI *Escheat Act* Project Committee proposing recommendations for law reform in BC to the framework for the law of escheat.

Project scope

The Scholar will undertake the following:

- a literature review of existing best practices, policies, and protocols supporting the distribution of property and goods to and by Indigenous governing bodies both within Canada and abroad.
- interviews with subject matter experts to gather information about existing frameworks to inform an assessment of their effectiveness.
- analysis and assessment of the application of the current legal framework within BC and an assessment of best practices and protocols applied in other contexts.

Deliverables

- Deliver monthly progress reports over the term of the project to the BCLI *Escheat Act* project committee.
- A final report containing a summary of the work completed and the findings to be shared with the BCLI *Escheat Act* Project Committee
- A public facing report on the frameworks analyzed.
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 15, 2024

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

- The Scholar is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Project management and organizational skills
- Demonstrated experience conducting legal research or policy research
- Demonstrated experience analysing legal frameworks is an asset
- Experience or familiarity with Indigenous property rights in BC, an asset
- Familiarity with UNDRIP and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
- Familiarity with property rights and ownership in the BC context

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 28, 2024**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 23, 2024. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>