



Action Committee on
Access to Justice
in Civil and Family Matters

CANADA'S JUSTICE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2023 Highlights



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE JDGs



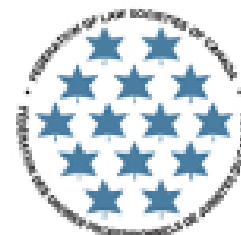
About this Report

The Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (Action Committee) adopted its nine Justice Development Goals (JDGs) after working collaboratively with people across Canada to examine how to advance access to justice (A2J). These nine goals map out a path to improve A2J that everyone, whatever they are working on, can use to align their work. Whether as individuals working to meet local needs, or as governments responsible for funding decisions, we can align our work — driving towards a more inclusive and accessible system.

This Report highlights A2J efforts across Canada in 2023. The 380 projects and data reported here were shared with the Action Committee by organizations across the country, building on their ongoing efforts and sustained commitment to improving A2J. There are many organizations advancing access to justice that are not yet connected with this collaborative effort. Other organizations may not have shared all of their new initiatives.

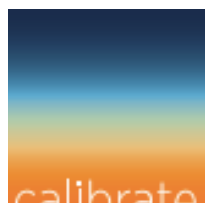
For more details about these 380 projects, please see the accompanying 2023 JDG Progress Report at: www.justicedevelopmentgoals.ca.

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Action Committee on
Access to Justice in
Civil and Family Matters

**Celebrating 10 years of
the roadmap for change** ★



2023 was the 10th anniversary of the Roadmap for Change - the report that led to the development of the JDGs. To mark this important milestone, the Action Committee undertook a broad virtual consultation process with A2J advocates across Canada. We learned about your A2J projects, the impact you are having and the ways you advance the JDGs through your work. We also heard your ideas about how the Action Committee can better support and promote these efforts.

The Listening Tour!

In late 2024, the Action Committee is embarking on an in-person Listening Tour! We will be visiting locations across Canada, taking part in A2J events and activities, and learning from local advocates.

Stay tuned for stops in your province or territory!



JDGs By the Numbers

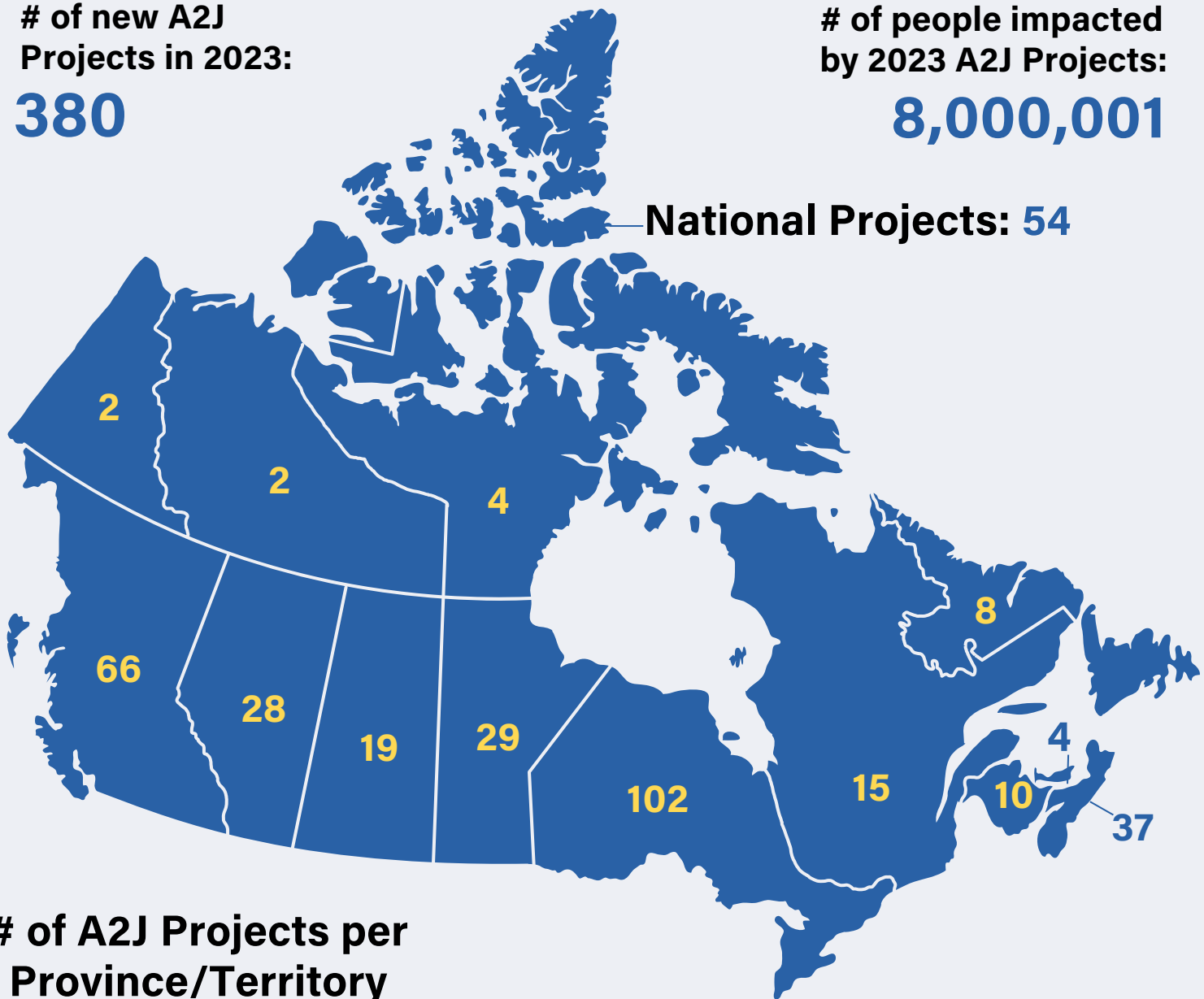
of new A2J
Projects in 2023:

380

of people impacted
by 2023 A2J Projects:

8,000,001

National Projects: 54



**# of A2J Projects per
Province/Territory**

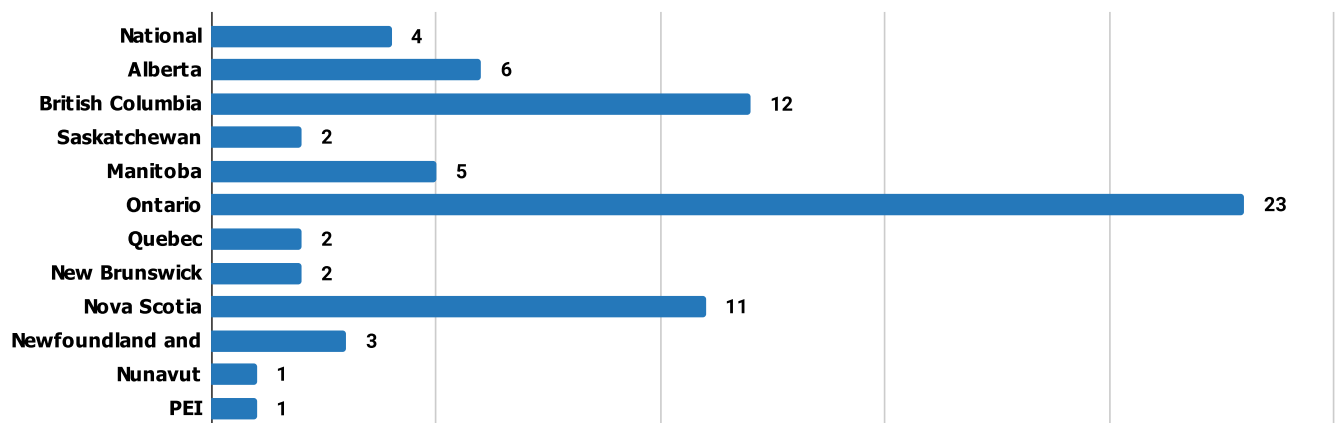
253 Organizations reported their 2023 activities that advance the JDGs:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 48 Non-profit organizations | 37 Legal Aid Clinics |
| 18 Public legal education organizations | 9 Law Student Clinics |
| 22 Professional Associations or Regulators of lawyers,
paralegals or notaries | 9 A2J Researchers |
| 16 Governments | 15 Courts (judiciary) |
| 11 Funders of A2J projects | 5 Provincial / Territorial A2J Collaboratives |
| 12 Law Schools or Law Professors | 2 Court Administrations |
| 2 Legal Aid Plans | 36 Advocacy Groups |
| | 11 Tribunals |

ADDRESS EVERYDAY LEGAL PROBLEMS

In 2023, A2J organizations expanded people-centred justice initiatives through projects focusing on the needs of linguistic minorities, sexual and gender-based violence survivors, people who use drugs, seniors, Indigenous and racialized communities, newcomers, youth, and tenants. Organizations supported individuals through public legal education materials, helplines, live chats, and updated websites.

JDG 1 Projects by Province/Territory



72 JDG 1 Projects Total

1.1 EDUCATE EARLY

Provide targeted, free, accessible public legal education about frequent legal issues, different types of solutions and the process of enforcing rights.

1.2 PREVENT

Foster legal capability so that people can spot legal issues early, get preventative or proactive help and anticipate, avoid or manage frequent legal issues.

1.3 OFFER A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

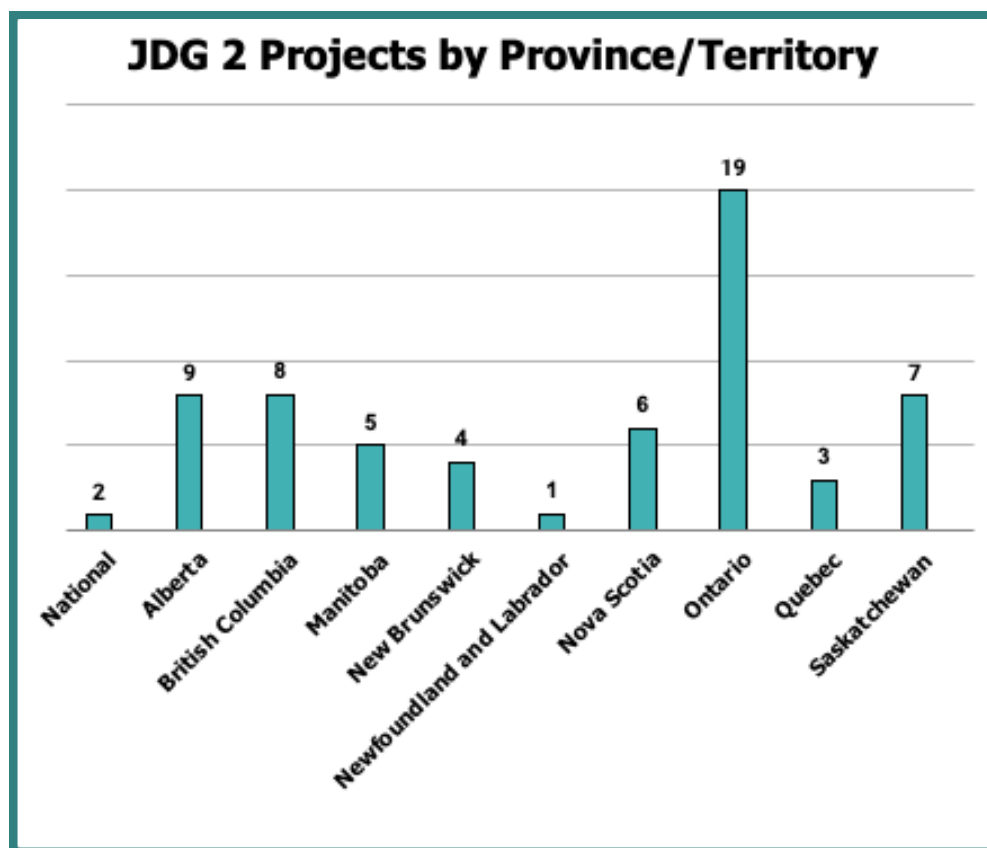
Develop and expand legal services to include the full continuum of information, advice, help lines, online services, in-person services, and partial or full representation.

1.4 REFLECT CANADIAN SOCIETY

Put the services people need in the communities where they live with the resources to address the barriers they face.

MEET LEGAL NEEDS

In 2023, legal clinics across the country continued to provide support in the areas of housing, employment law, family law, immigration and refugee law, criminal law, and small claims issues. Innovative initiatives included the creation of a mental health legal systems navigator position, medico-legal partnerships housed in hospitals, and ID clinics to assist transgender individuals with updating their identification documents.



64 JDG 2 Projects Total

2.1 FOCUS ON LEGAL NEEDS FOR EVERYONE

Focus on addressing service gaps for basic, essential legal services including family law, wills, employment, housing and consumer issues.

2.2 ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

Develop and expand alternative ways to get legal help including different kinds of professionals, partnerships or ways of doing business.

2.3 EXPAND SCOPE OF LEGAL AID

Make legal aid available to more people and for a wider range of legal problems.

2.4 FOCUS ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Emphasize the responsibility of lawyers and paralegals to fill access to justice gaps.

JDGS By the Numbers

The statistics shared by organizations demonstrate the impact of A2J initiatives. One example from each JDG gives a snapshot of how many people are being helped. More details are available in the full 2023 JDG Progress report.



Éducaloi - Website

1,500 pieces of online, bilingual legal education content

8 million visitors per year to website

13 million page views

100,000 views on most articles each year



Edmonton Community Legal Centre - Clinic operations

38,000 intake calls in 2023

2,100 legal advice clinics in 2023



BC Ministry of Attorney General - Family Law Online Forms Service

20,236 forms completed in 2023

409 packages e-filed



Law Society of Saskatchewan - Find Legal Assistance Directory

26,151 directory visitors in 2023



Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Prison Law Support Worker assisted 831 people in custody

47% increase in client referrals since African Nova Scotian social worker started in 2019





University of Calgary Faculty of Law - Student Legal Assistance Clinic

Served over 600 low-
income clients in 2023

100 law students
volunteered



Community Advocacy & Legal Centre - Justice & Health Partnership Project

Served 1,300
people to date

Trained nearly
1,000 healthcare
professionals



NWAC - National Survey of Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender and Gender-Diverse people

Surveyed 326
Indigenous Women,
Two-Spirit,
Transgender and
Gender-Diverse
people about
housing



Law Foundations across Canada

\$68,431,664 in
A2J project
funding

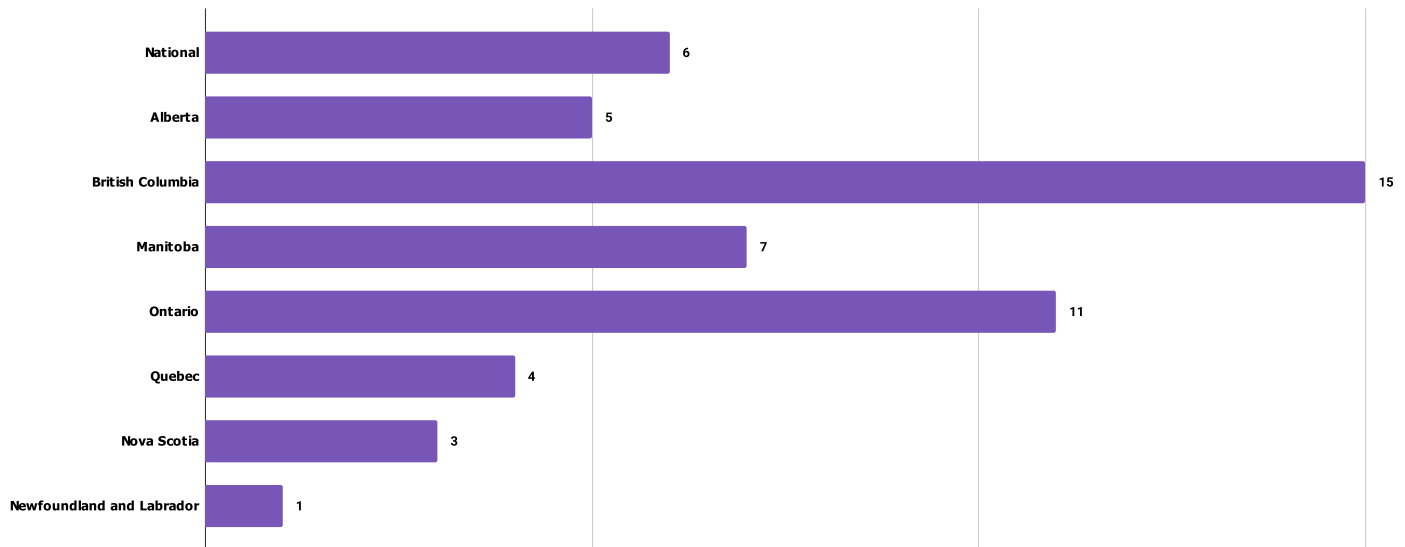


380 Access to Justice Initiatives in 2023

In 2023, courts improved their digital case management, filing procedures, and virtual scheduling and hearing procedures. Several courts also took steps to increase access to their online decisions through upgraded websites and search portals.



JDG 3 Projects by Province/Territory



52 JDG 3 Projects Total

3.1 ENSURE ACCESS TO COURTS

Courts must be adequately staffed and located where people live to make sure people can get access to a judge when needed, especially when fundamental and constitutional rights are at stake.

3.2 PROMOTE MULTI SERVICE CENTRES

Courthouses should offer mediation, dispute resolution, and informal or non-legal services to make it easy for people to access cheaper and simpler options at any stage of the process.

3.3 HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE REPRESENTING THEMSELVES

Courts should offer services, including early resolution and information services, for people who are navigating the legal system alone.

3.4 MANAGE CASES EFFECTIVELY

Timelines, simplified procedures, shared experts, and limited number of witnesses should be agreed to, or insisted on by judges, to make better use of court time and encourage early settlement.

3.5 BE ACCESSIBLE AND USER-FOCUSED

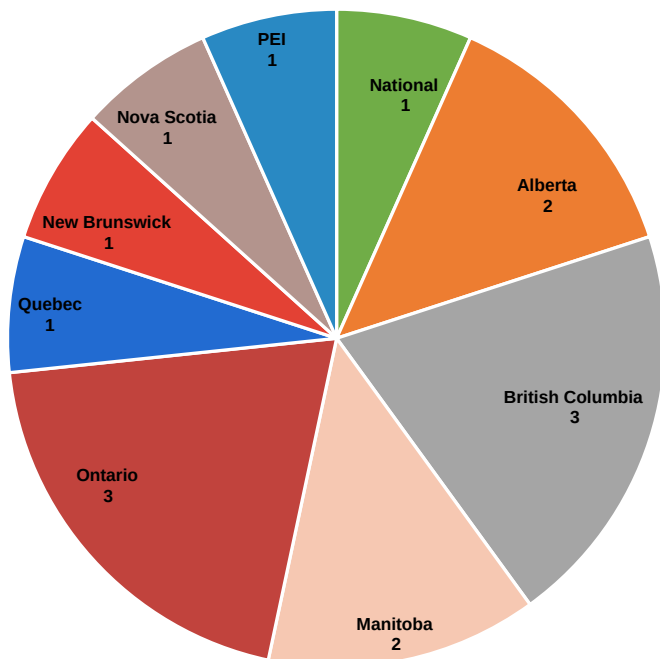
Courts and procedures need to be modernized to reflect people's needs, including better use of technology where it can make the process faster or easier without ignoring the needs of vulnerable people.

3.6 PROTECT JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Ensure system improvements do not interfere with a judge's ability to make independent, ethical decisions to protect people's rights.

In 2023, family justice efforts included innovative family law pilot projects and family justice strategies, public legal education resources on various family law issues, and supports for individuals experiencing intimate partner violence.

JDG 4 Projects by Province/Territory



15 JDG 4 Projects Total

4.1 OFFER A BROAD RANGE OF SERVICES

Make family law services easier to find, including triage, early intervention, integrated and collaborative processes, parenting and financial services.

4.2 PROMOTE CONSENSUAL RESOLUTION

Develop and expand proactive management of family issues and more consensual approaches and services, maintaining a focus on safety.

4.3 INNOVATE

Educate people about less adversarial approaches and experiment with new services and processes to create opportunities for consensus resolution.

4.4 RESTRUCTURE FAMILY COURTS

Locate all of the aspects of family law in the same place, including separation, custody and access, and divorce, ideally under one judge.

What action or initiative your organization has undertaken in 2023 to advance A2J has had the biggest impact?

Pro Bono Ontario: In 2023, the Free Legal Advice hotline answered 31,187 calls from low-income Ontarians who had nowhere else to turn for their civil legal problems. 86% reported that the hotline was the first place they could speak with a lawyer. 83% reported being satisfied with the service and 67% indicated they could resolve their legal problems with the help of a few hotline consultations alone.

Law Society of Manitoba: Development of a pre-law program in partnership with University College of the North, Robson Hall/University of Manitoba, the Law Society of Manitoba and Legal Aid Manitoba to recruit and train northern and rural lawyers, particularly from the Indigenous community and particularly focussed on fostering Reconciliation of laws and courts from within.

Québec Ministry of Justice: The adoption of an Act to improve the efficiency and accessibility of justice, notably by promoting mediation and arbitration and by simplifying civil procedure in the Court of Québec. This law will reduce delays in the Small Claims Division of the Court of Québec and promote the use of dispute prevention and resolution methods.

People's Law School: Creation of a generative AI chatbot (using ChatGPT4) that enables people to ask - in their own words- a law-related question and receive information in clear language that addresses their question and/or points them to additional sources of help/services.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid: Pilot project that included enhanced eligibility and centralized intake that included enhanced eligibility for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian clients with the goals of having a system that was fair, transparent, inclusive, responsive and sustainable.

Law Society of Nunavut: Collaborating with the Government of Nunavut to develop a toolkit for Community Justice Outreach Workers to use when advising clients on proceedings for emergency protection orders. These are primarily Inuit employees in each of the communities, and so empowering them to deliver better quality services as well as streamline the application process for EPOs will have a large impact. This project has also involved collaboration between multiple sectors including the judiciary, legal aid, court services, community justice workers in the department of justice, and the law society.

CREATE Justice: Publishing a report on and aligning a group of stakeholders around establishing a Justice Data Commons in Saskatchewan. The Legal Data Scan report "scans existing justice data being collected by legal and non-legal organizations in Saskatchewan to determine the usability of that data to identify gaps in the justice system, inform service delivery, improve access to justice, and establish a data commons.

BC First Nations Justice Council: The expansion of Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) in five locations: Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Surrey, and Nanaimo. IJCs provide culturally appropriate justice services to support Indigenous peoples with their interactions in the colonial legal system. The IJCs are designed collaboratively with Rights and Titleholders and meet the needs of local Indigenous populations, addressing everyday legal problems, meeting legal needs, and improving family justice.

The Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal: Introduced Navigation Services for self-represented workers. This initiative provides information to self-represented workers to enable them to participate more meaningfully in the appeal process.

Canadian Forum on Civil Justice: The final outputs for the CFCJ's Community-Based Justice Research Project were published in 2023. This multi-country initiative compares the costs, benefits, challenges and opportunities for providing and scaling access to community-based justice services in Canada, Sierra Leone, Kenya and South Africa.

In 2023, the annual National Access to Justice Week featured a robust schedule of programs for legal professionals and community and justice sector workers across the country. 2023 saw organizations and sectors collaborating on issues relating to sexual and gender-based violence, disability and inclusion, and the over-representation of Indigenous persons in the criminal justice system.

5.1 ESTABLISH COORDINATED EFFORTS

Bring all of the organizations involved in access to justice in each province or territory together to focus on local solutions.

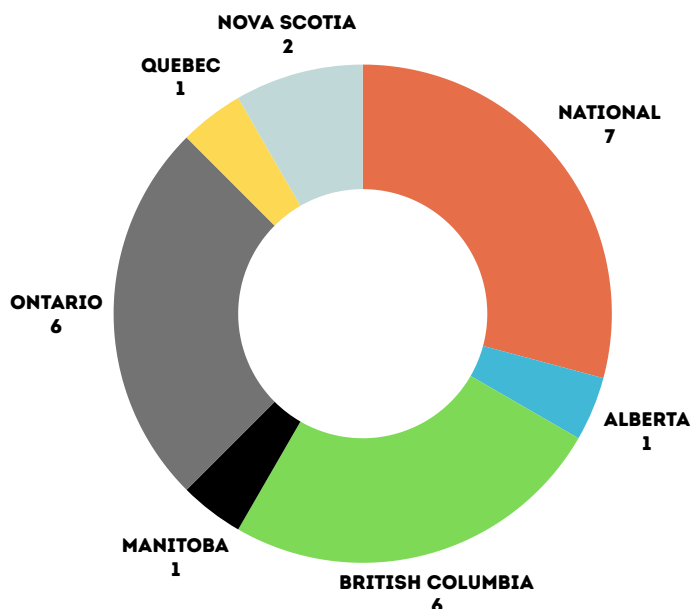
5.2 INCLUDE EVERYONE

Involve the major institutions (courts, governments), professional groups (lawyers' associations), community groups and non-profits (clinics, PLE providers), academics and individuals to find new creative approaches.

5.3 BE BOLD; TAKE ACTION

Local and national coordination must lead, take action and inspire others to tackle access to justice.

JDG 5 Projects by Province/Territory



5.4 WORK WITH INSTITUTIONS

In addition to coordinating across the justice system, access to justice should be a serious focus within judges' organizations, lawyers' and paralegals' associations, courts and institutions.

5.5 COORDINATE ACROSS CANADA

Keep momentum and sustained attention to these issues across the country to complement local and regional activity.

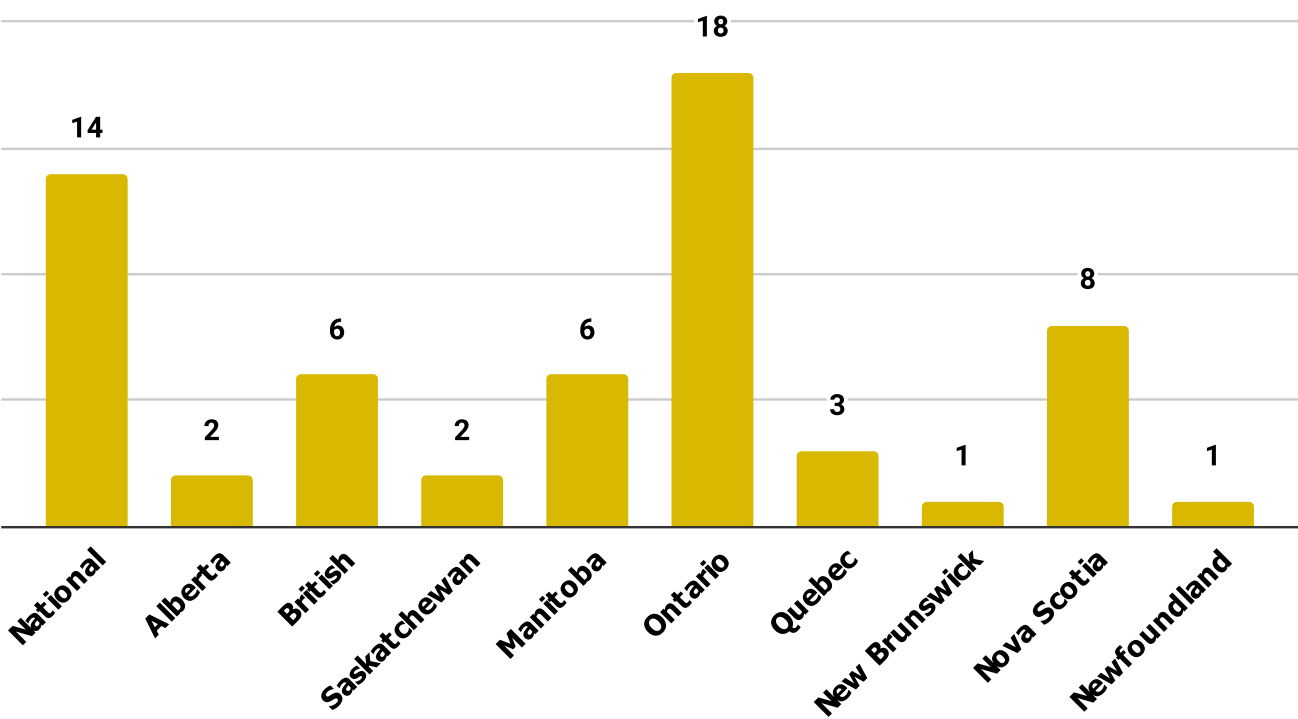
24 JDG 5 Projects Total



BUILD CAPABILITY

2023 saw a higher than usual number of legal capability initiatives. Several law societies and government ministries introduced Indigenous competency trainings. Organizations also provided trainings and created capacity-building resources relating to supporting victims of violence, LGBTQI+ individuals, newcomers, youth, and minorities experiencing intersectional racism.

JDG 6 Projects by Province/Territory



6.1 EDUCATE LAW STUDENTS AND LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Offer training on access to justice, emerging approaches, changing social situations and the skills to meet people’s needs, both at the start of and throughout legal careers.

6.2 EXPAND JUSTICE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Introduce legal capability into elementary and secondary schools to prepare people for legal issues in their lives; Offer training about access to justice issues in post-secondary programs to integrate legal, health, social and education services.



61 JDG 6 Projects Total

Expanding our Understanding of A2J

Over the past 10 years of the JDGs, organizations have demonstrated a broad and evolving understanding of A2J. While the need for access to lawyers, courts, and other legal services remains as relevant as ever, A2J has begun to encompass broader understandings of reconciliation, access to education and information, and concepts of wellness and the ability to live a good life. An evolving concept of A2J requires an intersectional understanding of people's needs.



This selection of 2023 projects highlights the intersectional and expanded interpretations of A2J. Read about all 380 A2J initiatives in the full JDG Progress Report available at www.justicedevelopmentgoals.ca

Unique Tools and Practices: Access to Information and Education

● **Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission - Broadband Fund**

The CRTC is taking action to bring high-speed satellite Internet service to all communities in Nunavut for the first time. Through its Broadband Fund, the CRTC is providing funding to SSi Micro Ltd. to upgrade its satellite Internet service, which is a milestone in supporting improved telecommunications in the territory. The CRTC is also providing funding to maintain satellite Internet connectivity in two First Nations communities in Northern Ontario.

● **EPIC Society - After-school programming**

In 2023, the EPIC Society continued to offer after-school and specialized programs for youth in conflict with the law, alongside support for their parents. Aimed at reducing recidivism among at-risk youth, EPIC Society is committed to creating and administering innovative educational programs for both youth and adults in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Their mission is to advance marginalized learners through innovation, empathy, volunteerism, diversity, and partnerships.

● **COMPASS Refugee Centre - Canada-US Virtual Border Clinic Pilot**

COMPASS Refugee Centre is piloting a virtual Canada-US border clinic based in Ontario. Partners include the Canada-US Border Network and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. This initiative will benefit border crossers seeking protection in Canada, potential relatives in Canada, NGOs in Ontario and the United States, and Canadian immigration lawyers. The objective of the project is to provide quality legal information and advice for border crossers and those who serve them.

● **Canadian National Institute for the Blind Foundation - CNIB Guide Dog Handlers and Police Training**

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind created and delivered workshops for guide dog handlers and produced a training video for Police Services in Ontario. This project provides guide dog handlers with information about legal recourse options in the event of discrimination, particularly access denial. Police Services will benefit from increased knowledge about provincial legislation specific to guide dogs and enforcement procedures.

Wellness

● **WISH Drop-In Centre Society - Centering the Leadership of Indigenous and Black Women and Gender-Diverse Street-Based Sex Workers in Shaping Systemic Change**

This project aimed to improve the health, safety, and well-being of women involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade. The vision was for every woman to have access to opportunities to make free, healthy, and positive choices. This initiative focused on empowering Indigenous and Black women and gender-diverse individuals, enabling them to lead efforts in shaping systemic change.

● **Government of Yukon - Land-based Healing Fund**

Funded by the Government of Yukon and administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), the Land-Based Healing Fund is aimed at enhancing healing and wellness by connecting to traditional practices on the land. Land-based healing reconnects individuals to traditional teachings, culture, and the land. These approaches empower individuals to heal and grow, and support emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Intersectionality

● **Battered Women's Support Services - The Colour of Violence: Legal & Social Justice Responses to Gender-based Violence**

The 2023 Report aims to better understand and raise awareness on the experiences of Indigenous, Black, newcomer immigrant/refugee, and racialized survivors accessing formal, institutional responses to gender-based violence. This report focuses on the accessibility and adequacy of gender-based violence services in British Columbia for Indigenous, Black, newcomer immigrant/refugee, and racialized women and gender diverse survivors.

● **Universities of Alberta and Saskatchewan- Building Indigenous Legal Lodges: Restoring Access to Justice and Preventing Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans, and Two-Spirit+**

Access to justice for Indigenous WGT2S+ persons in Canada requires expansion and bold reimagining to be meaningful and effective in preventing gender-based violence. Over the next four years, this project will reimagine establishing a replicable model of Indigenous legal lodges, built alongside the project's community partners and interdisciplinary team.

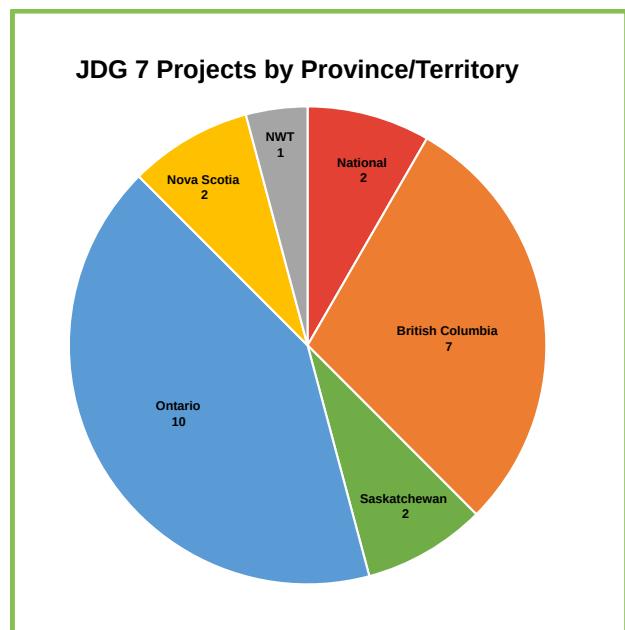
● **Cassidy Centre for Educational Justice, Simon Fraser University - Advancing Intersectional Racial Justice in Schools**

Through a partnership between CCEJ and the Youth Alliance for Intersectional Justice (YAIJ), this project will audit a pilot youth racial justice program to assess the feasibility of expanding within other schools and designing systems of accountability and action across four stakeholder groups: youth, teachers, non-profit community advocates, and university-based education researchers.

● **Black Femme Legal - Understanding Transmisogynoir (Lawyers Edition)**

Black Femme Legal offered training on transmisogynoir for lawyers and legal professionals in Ontario. This project is delivered in partnership with The 519 and builds on Black Femme Legal's transmisogynoir toolkit and pro bono clinic. This initiative will benefit legal professionals and the Black 2SLGBTQI+ community by providing legal education on the experiences at the intersection of misogyny, transphobia, and anti-Blackness. The objective is to increase the quality of legal services for members of the Black 2SLGBTQI+ community.

In 2023, innovation initiatives focused on fostering systemic and cultural change. Several projects also explored innovative technologies to help increase A2J, including chatbots, A2J apps, research engines, and virtual clinics.



24 JDG 7 Projects Total



7.1 KEEP TRACK OF WHAT IS WORKING

Create a culture of innovation in the justice system by focusing on new ideas and learning about successes and failures.

7.2 SHARE GOOD IDEAS

Promote the sharing of new models, ideas and successes to expand the impact of innovation.

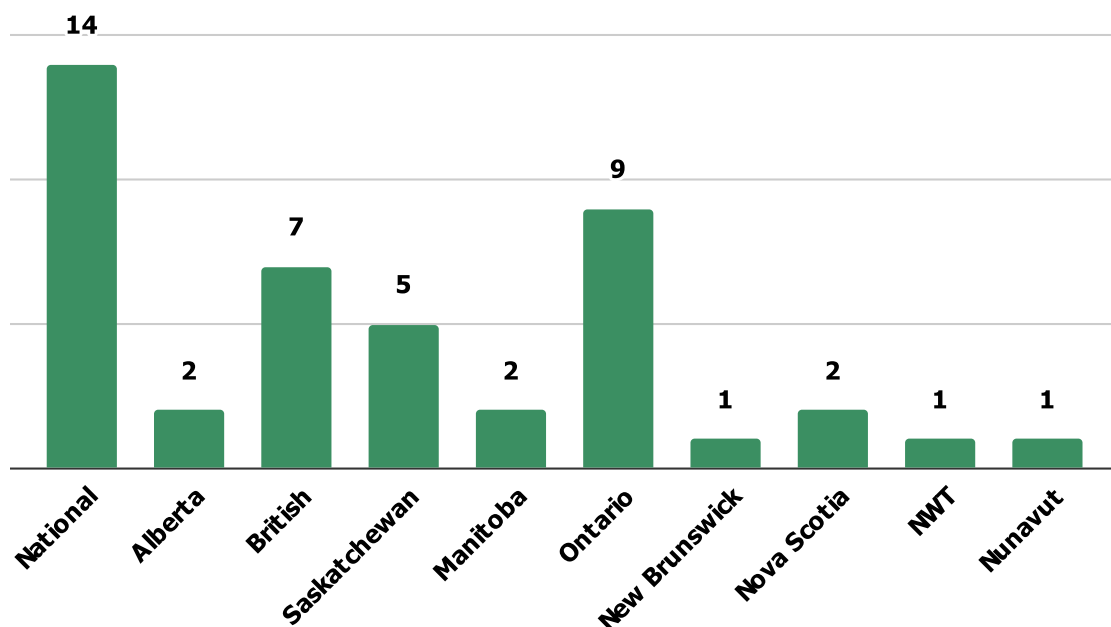
Access to Justice Week 2023

The annual Access to Justice Week took place across the country from October 23rd to 27th, 2023. The Week was a collaboration with nationally available online events organized by justice sector partners across the country. The theme of the week was "10th Year Anniversary of Canada's Justice Development Goals."

Highlights of the week included discussions around systemic racism and marginalization in the legal sector, how to develop and implement cultural humility and empathy in practice, the ongoing challenges faced by women in the legal professions, the impact of virtual hearings post-pandemic, and the use of AI and technology to advance A2J.

2023 was a busy year for A2J research, evaluation, and measurement projects. Initiatives included several legal needs surveys, gender-based violence research projects, and toolkits and resources developed in consultation with grassroots communities and individuals with lived experience.

JDG 8 Projects by Province/Territory



8.1 DEVELOP METRICS

Establish benchmarks and standardized metrics to build a shared understanding of legal services, models and needs.

8.2 WORK WITH RESEARCHERS IN ALL FIELDS

Coordinate research between institutions and universities, and between social scientists, economists, system users, and legal institutions to better understand the issues.

44 JDG 8 Projects Total

National Access to Justice
Week 2024 is October 28th-
November 1st, 2024



IMPROVE FUNDING STRATEGIES

In 2023, governments, Law Foundations and other institutions invested millions in access to justice initiatives. Several initiatives provided scholarships, grants, and other funding to students, racialized and Indigenous communities, and underserved communities.

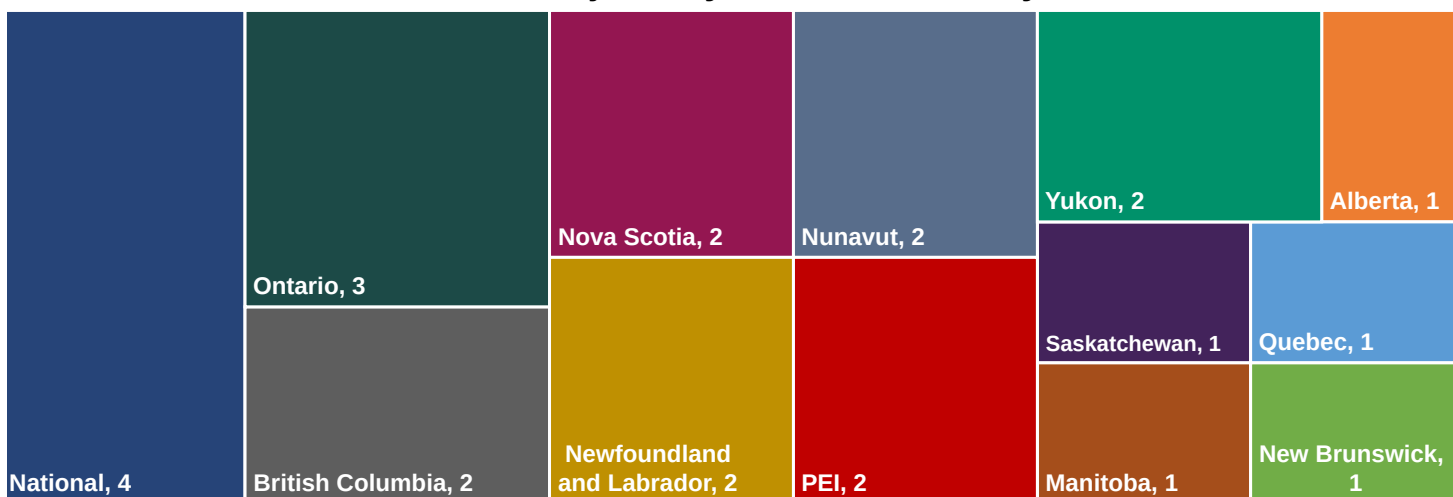
Announcements in 2023 of new funding devoted specifically to A2J totalled:

\$257, 092, 353

Grants by Law Foundations to A2J projects in 2023 as reported in published Annual Reports:

\$68, 431, 664

JDG 9 Projects by Province/Territory



9.1 KEEP TRACK OF WHAT IS WORKING

Learn what the real costs of legal issues are and divert funding to prevent legal issues and minimize the demand on other social services.

9.2 BETTER FUNDING FOR LEGAL AID

Increase funding of legal aid, to make more people eligible and to expand the types of legal problems that are eligible.

9.3 MAKE SURE THE MONEY LASTS

Maintain the focus on access to justice to ensure that improvements can be sustained and changes are funded indefinitely.

24 JDG 9 Projects Total



We asked how organizations are using the JDG data. This is what we learned:



We consider the JDG Report and its data in decisions around new projects to pursue, and how best to collaborate and communicate with other justice system stakeholders.

We use it to see what other provinces are doing and brainstorming on similar initiatives to have in our province.



We share with management to assist in their work and share with the organization as a whole.

To identify potential projects or collaborations.



Used for internal discussion with the sector and in some (but limited) funding applications.

To analyze what's being done elsewhere in Canada to see if there are any overlaps and partnerships.



To see what is new and how we can use such information for law student practical experiential learning within our Clinic. It reminds us of the need to review our data collection and regularly measure impact of what we are doing.

It helps to see trends and what other agencies are doing across the country that might help us start new initiatives or improve the programming we already operate.

