



THE ITL MANUAL

A Comprehensive Guide for Internationally Trained Lawyers



THE ITL NETWORK

SABA | South Asian Bar
Association of Toronto

PREFACE

From the Editor: The ITL Network

As internationally trained lawyers (ITLs) embark on the relicensing journey, success often hinges not only on their expertise but also on access to relevant information and resources. This access can be a formidable challenge, laden with uncertainty and complexity for ITLs. It is within this context that the ITL Manual emerges as a beacon of empowerment and guidance.

As an ITL, I have witnessed firsthand the struggles and aspirations of ITLs striving to establish themselves in Canada's legal arena. Time and again, the refrain echoes: the need for timely, comprehensive, and accessible information. It is this pressing need that has propelled us to embark on the journey of crafting the ITL Manual in partnership with the South Asian Bar Association of Toronto (SABA Toronto).

This Preface serves not only as an introduction but as a testament to our collective commitment to excellence and inclusivity in the legal profession. It is a testament to the tireless efforts of our team, the invaluable insights of our collaborators, and the unwavering support of organizations like SABA Toronto. I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge our ITL Network contributors:

**Cynthia Okafor | Govind Chaturvedi | Denise Addison | Funto Omotoso | Anjana Bhaskaran
| Miloni Rathore | Prithviraj Oberoi | Adana Fraser | Aishwerya Kansal**

Together, we stand at the precipice of a transformative endeavor – one that promises to redefine the trajectory of ITLs across Canada and make information accessible in a timely fashion.

Within the pages of this manual lie the distilled wisdom, practical guidance, and strategic insights garnered from years of collective experience. From navigating the National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) process to acclimating to provincial qualification requirements, each volume serves as a roadmap tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities encountered at every phase of an ITL's journey. But beyond the practicalities lies a deeper purpose – a commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal profession. Through the ITL Network and SABA Toronto's collaborative efforts, we aspire not only to bridge the information gap but to catalyze a cultural shift – one where the contributions of ITLs are celebrated, valued, and integral to the fabric of Canadian jurisprudence.



From the Editor: SABA Toronto

The South Asian Bar Association of Toronto (SABA Toronto) is pleased to see the ITL Manual finally come to fruition. We, along with the ITL Network, envisioned this manual a few years ago as a comprehensive resource for National Committee on Accreditation (“NCA”) candidates to navigate their way through the licensing process, from exams to post-qualification process.

As the largest diversity bar association in North America, we know firsthand the importance of reducing barriers for equity-seeking licensees. A large number of our members come from the NCA and Internationally Trained Lawyer (ITL) communities, and so we are acutely aware of the barriers as well as the gaps in information available for those navigating the ITL pathway.

We are grateful to the following SABA Toronto volunteer authors and contributors to this manual:

Devin Persaud | Anisha Bhardwaj | Tanysha Samal | Aman Kalra | Bhishm Khanna | Neti Jhatakia | Gurteg Singh | Ishani Saxena | Imran Kamal

On a personal note, it is particularly meaningful for me to see this manual come to life. Ten years ago, when I was navigating the NCA process, things were very different. Beyond a handful of sources, there was little to no information available for NCA candidates on how to navigate exams, the bar, their specific barriers. There were certainly no NCA networks or NCA specific advocacy communities. All of us going through the process had to find ways to either find each other or find out the information we needed to become licensed and find articling jobs.

There was also very little awareness of this process in general in the broader bar. I recall having to explain and spell out the process to several lawyers that I met in the course of networking and job-hunting. I was told repeatedly it would be much harder to get a job. I was asked why I had not gone to a Canadian law school. It took two years, a lot of networking, and a lot of tenacity before I ultimately completed my exams and secure an articling position. Ten years later, the NCA process remains a fundamental part of my journey, shaping who I am as a lawyer and member of this profession.

The NCA process in the early 2010s was in many ways an isolating experience. I can imagine it might have been even more so for those who completed it in the decades before me. I wish I had the information and resources back then that are now contained in this manual. I am pleased now that the NCA and ITL communities have come together to ensure, through this manual, that future generations of candidates will not face the same difficulties we did as a result of information gaps.



Richa Sandill
Secretary and Board Member, SABA Toronto

CURRENCY STATEMENT

The information provided in this ITL Manual (“Manual”) is accurate and up to date to the best of our knowledge as of June 26, 2024. However, laws, regulations, licensing requirements and industry standards are subject to change. Therefore, while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented herein, neither the ITL Network, SABA Toronto, the contributors nor the publishers of this Manual can be held responsible for any errors or omissions, or for any consequences arising from the use of the information provided. Readers are advised to consult with the relevant regulators, legal and professional experts in their jurisdiction to obtain the most current and relevant guidance on the various matters discussed in this manual.

Please note that the information in this manual may be out of date at the time of reading. For the most current version of the manual, please visit <https://www.itlnetwork.ca/itlmanual/>.

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1. VOLUME ONE: THE PRE-ARRIVAL STAGE

1.1 Introduction to Volume One

In this volume, we will explore the critical pre-arrival stage of your journey to practicing law in Canada. As an internationally trained lawyer (“**ITL**”) this stage lays the foundation for your transition, encompassing essential steps such as navigating the immigration process, engaging with pre-settlement programs, and building professional networks. By focusing on these key aspects early on, you can set yourself up for success as you embark on your Canadian legal career.

1.2 Immigration

The immigration process marks the first crucial step in your journey to practicing law in Canada. Understanding the available pathways, visa requirements, and procedures is essential for a smooth transition. Whether you are considering the skilled worker programs, provincial nominee programs, or other immigration streams, it is important to research and assess which option aligns best with your qualifications and goals. Consultation with immigration experts and thorough preparation of your application are vital to maximizing your chances of success.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the department of the Government of Canada with responsibility for matters dealing with immigration to Canada, refugees and Canadian citizenship. There are several ways you can immigrate to Canada, these includes:

- Express Entry/Permanent Residency
- Study Visa/Permit
- Provincial Nomination
- Atlantic Immigration program
- Start-Up Visa
- Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot
- Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway
- Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot
- Family Sponsorship
- Quebec-selected skilled workers
- Caregivers Program
- Pathway for Self-employed persons
- Agri-Food Pilot
- Permanent Residence Pathways for Hong Kong Residents
- Refugee Applications

Extensive information about any of these pathways can be found on IRCC's official website. Most ITLs typically choose the Express Entry pathway or study (Study Visa/Permit) to move to Canada and this will be the focus of this volume.

1.2.1 Express Entry - Permanent Residency Overview

The Express Entry system facilitates the application process for skilled immigrants seeking permanent settlement in Canada and participation in its economy. Utilized as an online platform, Express Entry efficiently manages immigration applications from skilled workers. Through this system, three distinct immigration programs are administered:

- ❖ Canadian Experience Class: for skilled workers who have Canadian work experience. Work experience must have been gained in the 3 years before you apply.
- ❖ Federal Skilled Worker Program: for skilled workers with foreign work experience. Applicants must meet criteria for education and other factors.
- ❖ Federal Skilled Trades Program: for skilled workers who are qualified in a skilled trade. Applicants must have a valid job offer or a certificate of qualification.

If you are eligible for one of the above programs, you can also apply through Express Entry for the Provincial Nominee Program. If you are nominated, you will get extra points so you can be invited to apply quickly. Generally, there are five (5) steps that you would need to go through in an express entry application.

Step 1: Find out if you are eligible

In order to find out if you are eligible for a program that is part of Express Entry, you will need to answer a few questions online at (www.canada.ca) to see if you meet the minimum requirements.

Step 2: Check your score

If you are eligible for one or more of the Express Entry programs and submit your profile, you will be ranked in the Express Entry pool using the Comprehensive Ranking System (**CRS**). The CRS is a points-based system used to assess and score your profile and rank it in the Express Entry pool. To be invited, you need to have a score above the minimum points score for your round of invitations. On IRCC's official website, there is a CRS tool that you can use to estimate your score.

Step 3: Get your documents ready

If you decide to fill out a profile, you will need documents, such as language test results, to show you are eligible for Express Entry. Some documents take a long time to get, so you should get them ready early and you will need certain documents at different stages of the Express Entry application process.

Step 4: Fill out and submit your profile

Your Express Entry profile is where you will give IRCC information about yourself. If you are eligible, you will be accepted into the “pool” of candidates and you will be given a CRS score.

Step 5: Get an invitation and apply

IRCC sends invitations to apply messages to the candidates with the highest scores in the pool. If you are invited to apply, you will have 60 days to submit your application.

1.2.2 Study Permits

To study in Canada, you must be enrolled at a Designated Learning Institution (DLI), demonstrate adequate funds to cover tuition fees, living expenses for yourself and any accompanying family members, as well as return transportation. Additionally, you must have a clean legal record, obtain a police certificate if necessary, maintain good health with a medical exam if required, and convince an officer of your intention to leave Canada upon the expiration of your study permit. Upon submitting our application, the IRCC may also require you to do a biometric scan. Other required documents for a study permit application include proof of acceptance and proof of identity.

❖ How to Apply for a Study Permit:

Generally, you must apply for a study permit before you come to Canada for studies. Some people can apply for a study permit from within Canada. In some cases, you can apply when you arrive in Canada at the port of entry. Make sure you understand which option is available to you.

When submitting your application, include a letter of acceptance from a DLI you intend to attend. It's crucial to provide as many necessary documents as possible to ensure a complete application, as IRCC cannot finalize your study permit without them, leading to processing delays. For those planning to study in Quebec, a valid Québec Acceptance Certificate (CAQ) or a letter of approval for your CAQ is required. Most study permit applicants may need to provide a Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL) from the Province or Territory where they plan to study. It is important to confirm whether your course of study requires a PAL to apply for study permit. If you're applying for a study permit, you must apply online, whether you are outside of Canada or already in Canada. You are only eligible to apply on paper if you have a disability that prevents you from applying online. After applying, the application will be processed by IRCC. Processing time varies by country.

Once your application is approved by IRCC, you'll receive your study permit either upon arrival at the port of entry in Canada or via mail if you're already within the country. If you applied from outside Canada, IRCC will issue a port of entry letter of introduction, indicating your permission to study in Canada. This letter is not your study permit but is essential for entry; present it to a border services officer upon arrival. Additionally, if required, IRCC will provide you with an electronic travel authorization (eTA) or a visitor visa (temporary resident visa) alongside the letter of introduction. The eTA, if applicable, will be linked to your passport and remains valid for five years or until your passport expires. Ensure you travel with the passport used during your study permit application. For those needing a visitor visa, it will be affixed to your passport, indicating

whether it allows single or multiple entries. Enter Canada before the visa's expiration date. If you're a lawful permanent resident of the United States, travel with a valid green card (or equivalent proof of status) along with your national passport or equivalent documentation.

❖ Preparing for your Trip

Before arriving in Canada, familiarize yourself with the pre-departure guide for valuable tips on student life in the country. Additionally, to facilitate a smooth entry, consult the Canadian Border Service Agency's information for international students and download their PDF pamphlet. There's no specific timeframe for arrival before commencing studies; just ensure you have adequate time to prepare. Remember, you're not permitted to work on or off-campus until your studies officially begin. If you need to change your DLI while outside Canada after your study permit approval, submit a new application along with all required documents and fees. Upon arrival, ensure you meet the basic requirements outlined by border services, including possessing a valid travel document, the port of entry letter of introduction, a valid acceptance letter from your school, required references or documents, and sufficient funds for your stay. Additionally, maintain good health, have no criminal convictions, and demonstrate intent to leave Canada after your studies. If you require proof of entry, ensure your passport is stamped by a border services officer before leaving customs.

❖ Studying in Canada

While studying in Canada as an international student, it's essential to adhere to the conditions outlined in your study permit and keep your profile information updated in your online account. Ensure you're making progress towards completing your program and comply with any specified conditions. If your study program is concluding soon, it's crucial to understand how long you can remain in Canada and what steps to take if you plan to extend your stay. Your study permit may include various conditions, such as permissions for working or traveling within Canada, specific departure dates, DLI, or the need for an immigration medical examination. If you need to modify any condition on your study permit, you must apply accordingly. Typically, a study permit is valid for the duration of your study program plus an additional 90 days, allowing time for preparation to leave Canada or to apply for an extension. The duration of your stay after completing your studies depends on factors like prerequisite courses, expiration dates of your study permit, and the completion date of your studies. If you're required to take prerequisite courses, your study permit will be valid for their duration plus one year. If your study permit expires before completing your courses, you must extend your stay as a student or cease studying and depart Canada. Conversely, if you complete your studies before your permit's expiration, it becomes invalid 90 days after completion, as confirmed by official notification from your school or relevant documentation. It's crucial to provide proof of completion to IRCC, or they may use the earliest issue date on the document and verify it with your school.

1.3 Pre-Settlement/Arrival Programs

Moving to a new country can be a daunting task, especially with getting your foreign experience and education assessed however, Canada has a number of pre-settlement programs. These programs range from helping with setting up yourself in Canada, education, and getting a job. Pre-settlement services encompass a broad spectrum of programs and resources aimed at addressing the diverse needs of newcomers before their arrival in Canada. These services are typically

provided through online platforms, workshops, informational sessions, and one-on-one consultations, offering personalized support tailored to individual circumstances. The Government of Canada collaborates with various organizations, including settlement agencies, educational institutions, and community partners, to deliver these services effectively.

❖ Information and Orientation:

Pre-arrival orientation sessions offer newcomers essential information about life in Canada, including the healthcare system, education, employment opportunities, housing, and legal rights. These sessions help individuals familiarize themselves with Canadian culture, values, and societal norms, empowering them to make informed decisions and prepare for their settlement journey.

❖ Employment Preparation:

Many pre-settlement services focus on helping newcomers navigate the Canadian job market and understand the requirements for employment in their chosen field. This may include guidance on credential recognition, resume writing, job search strategies, and professional networking opportunities. By equipping newcomers with the necessary skills and knowledge, these services enhance their prospects of finding meaningful employment upon arrival.

❖ Language Training:

Language proficiency is crucial for successful integration into Canadian society. Pre-settlement services often include language assessment and referral to language training programs tailored to individuals' proficiency levels and language goals. Access to language training resources helps newcomers improve their English or French language skills, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and participate fully in Canadian society.

❖ Settlement Planning:

Pre-arrival consultations with settlement professionals allow newcomers to develop personalized settlement plans based on their specific needs and circumstances. These plans may address housing arrangements, healthcare access, childcare services, financial management, and other essential aspects of settlement. By proactively addressing potential challenges and identifying available resources, newcomers can better navigate the settlement process and achieve their integration goals.

❖ Community Connections:

Building social networks and connecting with local communities are integral to successful settlement. Pre-settlement services facilitate introductions to community organizations, cultural groups, and peer support networks, providing newcomers with opportunities to engage with fellow immigrants, access community resources, and participate in social and recreational activities. These connections foster a sense of belonging and support newcomers' adjustment to their new environment.

❖ Accessing Pre-Settlement Services:

The Government of Canada offers pre-settlement services through various channels, including online platforms, virtual workshops, and in-person sessions conducted in partnership with overseas organizations and Canadian missions abroad. Prospective immigrants and refugees can access these services through the IRCC website, where they can find comprehensive information, resources, and tools to help them prepare for their arrival in Canada. Additionally, IRCC-funded service providers, such as settlement agencies and organizations, offer specialized pre-settlement services tailored to the needs of specific immigrant groups and regions.

1.3.1 Some Pre-Settlement/Arrival Services

❖ ACCES Employment:

ACCES Employment provides a wide range of effective job search programs and services. They have seven locations throughout the Greater Toronto Area to serve immigrants and they provide the convenience of online services that are available to jobseekers locally, nationally and internationally for approved pre-arrival immigrants. Their virtual service offerings include information sessions, webinars and online programs, as well as VERA, the Virtual Employment and Resource Attendant that is available at any time to answer questions. To access settlement services from ACCES, please visit <https://acesemployment.ca/how-to-find-a-job/programs>

❖ Achēv:

Achēv believes that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to build a better life and a successful future. With over 30 years of dedication, Achēv has been committed to assisting diverse Canadians and newcomers in achieving their full potential. As one of the largest providers of employment, newcomer, language, youth, women, and inclusion services in the Greater Toronto Area, Achēv boasts a dedicated team of nearly 400 staff members. They deliver a wide range of innovative, high-quality, and personalized programs and services aimed at empowering clients to prosper and communities to thrive. Please visit www.achev.ca for more details.

❖ Action for Healthy Communities (AHC):

AHC is dedicated to fostering active engagement and connectivity within communities. Serving a diverse array of individuals and groups, AHC extends support to newcomers in Alberta and Canada, encompassing immigrants, refugees, permanent residents, and beyond. Additionally, AHC collaborates with ethno-cultural organizations and addresses the needs of individuals and families from various socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. As a member of the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), AHC operates within a framework of community development and partnerships with numerous agencies and organizations across Alberta. Furthermore, AHC operates as a registered charitable organization, operating under the provincial Societies Act, reinforcing its commitment to serving and uplifting communities. Please visit <https://a4hc.ca/> for more details.

❖ Directions for Immigrants in Trades & Professional Careers:

Directions for Immigrants operates as a no-cost career service center aimed at assisting internationally educated professionals in securing professional employment and obtaining accreditation. Serving professionals across all occupations and industries, their services are entirely funded by the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada. Established in 2004, Directions for Immigrants offers comprehensive support through various channels. This includes furnishing clients with clear, accurate, and up-to-date information on job search strategies and accreditation processes. Additionally, they aid clients in developing personalized action plans tailored to their career goals and offer one-on-one career coaching, workshops, and licensing study groups to facilitate their professional advancement. They also offer free study classes for the NCA Exams facilitated by lawyers licensed to practice law in the Province of Alberta. Please visit <https://directionsforimmigrants.ca/services/study-groups> for more details.

❖ Altered Minds Inc:

Altered Minds Inc. offers online settlement and pre-arrival services to new immigrants. The dedicated online platform caters to pre-landed immigrants enroute to Canada, offering personalized employment support and vital guidance to facilitate a seamless transition. Their mission centers on providing complimentary online courses designed to enhance job search skills, refine workplace communication, and foster connections with settlement agencies prior to arrival in Canada. By engaging with Altered Minds Inc., individuals lay a robust foundation for their forthcoming journey, equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary for a successful transition to life in Canada. Please visit <https://alteredminds.ca/sopa/> for more details.

❖ Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC):

CRIEC offers settlement services to immigrant professionals including ITLs. CRIEC has an ongoing partnership with the ITL Network to deliver mentorship opportunities to ITLs to help them succeed in the Alberta legal community. Their mission is to connect newcomer professionals to strategies that will lead to successful employment outcomes. CRIEC designs, develops and implements various initiatives and strategies, such as mentoring programs, employment counseling sessions and competency (cultural and skill) workshops for both newcomer professionals and stakeholders. To learn more about CRIEC, please visit www.criec.ca

❖ Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC):

TRIEC is dedicated to tackling the persistent issue of immigrant underemployment, which sees highly skilled individuals arriving in Toronto from around the world only to find themselves in low-skilled positions. Their mission is to ensure that the Greater Toronto Area harnesses the

untapped potential of immigrants, leveraging their considerable skills and experience for the benefit of the region. TRIEC works to support organizations in becoming more inclusive while assisting newcomers in expanding their professional networks and gaining a deeper understanding of the local labor market. Through collaborative partnerships with organizations spanning all sectors in the GTA, TRIEC believes that a collective effort yields the most significant impact, driving positive change and fostering a more inclusive and prosperous community. To learn more about CRIEC, please visit www.triec.ca

❖ Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC):

ERIEC's mentorship and networking programs play a vital role in facilitating career and economic integration for new immigrants to Canada. Serving as a bridge between employers' labor needs and globally trained new residents, ERIEC strives to enable these newcomers to secure employment in their respective professions. Through their mentorship and networking initiatives, ERIEC provides a comprehensive suite of services and methodologies designed to assist immigrants in establishing their local networks and gaining insight into Canadian workplace culture. Additionally, ERIEC facilitates connections between Edmonton employers and global talent, helping them tap into diverse skill sets while fostering the development of intercultural and leadership competencies within their existing teams. By bridging the gap between skilled newcomers and employment opportunities, ERIEC contributes to the economic growth and cultural enrichment of the Edmonton community. To learn more about CRIEC, please visit www.eriec.ca

❖ Immigrant Services Calgary:

Immigrant Services Calgary offer many settlement services to immigrants in Calgary to help them integrate into the community. Their services relevant to ITLs include, resume workshops, employment search, free tax returns, English language testing, job support, citizenship classes etc. To learn more about their services, please visit www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca.

❖ Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS):

CCIS offers specialized support in areas such as job training, resume building, interview skills and bridging programs to empower newcomers with the tools they need to navigate the Canadian job market. Through tailored programs designed for newcomer professionals and job seekers, CCIS actively promotes the economic empowerment of newcomers and their integration into the local labour market, enriching both their lives and the broader Calgary community. Their services include pre-arrival services, arrival services, resettlement services, settlement services, employment and integration services. To learn more, please visit www.ccisab.ca.

❖ Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA):

CIWA serves as a culturally diverse settlement agency that prioritizes and addresses the distinct concerns and needs of immigrant and refugee women, girls, and their families. CIWA's comprehensive programs and services adopt a holistic approach to supporting clients across various domains, including settlement and integration, literacy and language training, employment support and bridging programs, family violence, parenting, individual counseling, in-home support, civic engagement, health, housing, and community development. Moreover, CIWA ensures that all clients have access to childcare and first-language support during group sessions and individual appointments, further enhancing accessibility and inclusivity within its service delivery framework. Through its multifaceted initiatives, CIWA remains dedicated to empowering immigrant and refugee women and girls, fostering their integration and well-being within the Calgary community. CIWA also offers internship opportunities to ITLs, and they often partner with some law firms for internship placements which may lead to articling opportunities for ITLs in the program. To learn more, please visit www.ciwa-online.com.

❖ Association for New Canadians:

The Association for New Canadians (ANC) is a non-profit, community-based organization delivering settlement and integration services to immigrants and refugees in Newfoundland and Labrador. The mission of the ANC is to settle and integrate immigrants, and to empower them with the skills, knowledge and information necessary to become independent, contributing members of the community and country. ANC services include, settlement and orientation, language training and assessment, career and employment services, community connections, etc. To learn more, please visit www.ancnl.ca.

❖ ASSIST Community Services (ASSIST):

ASSIST's primary mandate is to assist immigrants to facilitate their successful integration into mainstream society through support and practical settlement services. They strive to provide integrated and comprehensive programs to promote the health and well-being of immigrants of all ages, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Their services include, settlement services, language instruction, English programs, summer camps for kids, counselling, etc. To learn more, please visit www.assistcsc.org/settlement-services.

In conclusion, the availability of diverse settlement services plays a crucial role in supporting the successful integration of ITLs into Canadian society. From language training to employment assistance, from cultural orientation to counseling services, these programs cater to the multifaceted needs of ITLs, empowering them to thrive in their new home. By accessing these services, ITLs gain the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to navigate the challenges of resettlement and embark on a path toward prosperity and fulfillment. For more information on the

wide range of settlement services available, including eligibility criteria and how to access them, please visit the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants.html>.

1.4 Mentorship Overview

Mentorship stands as a cornerstone of successful integration for ITLs, offering invaluable support, guidance, and empowerment to individuals navigating the complexities of resettlement in a new legal jurisdiction. This chapter explores the profound impact of mentorship programs on the journey of ITLs, highlighting the benefits, best practices, and transformative outcomes that stem from mentorship relationships. Mentoring is essentially a relationship between two people and usually with the goal of bridging a knowledge gap. Mentoring in professional circles is usually designed to enable the mentee to develop by tapping into the experience of someone further along in their professional journey. The goal of every mentorship program is to connect an individual who needs mentorship with a mentor who has a lot of knowledge in the subject matter. Mentorship can define an ITL's journey and can be the difference between a frustrating and unrewarding licensing process and a successful and fulfilling journey to becoming a lawyer in Canada.

It's essential to clarify that while mentorship and networking are related, they serve distinct purposes in the journey of an ITL. While mentorship provides invaluable guidance and support throughout the ITL's journey, networking serves a separate but equally important role, which will be discussed in another section. The lifecycle of an ITL encompasses various stages, from applying to come to Canada to navigating the challenges of working in a law firm. Each stage demands careful and purposeful strategies for not only surviving but thriving. Given that ITLs are predominantly immigrants in Canada, having a mentor can significantly impact their journey, offering guidance and insight to help them succeed.

1.4.1 Mentorship Programs

❖ [The ITL Network:](#)

The ITL Network is a registered not-for-profit under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. They seek to advance diversity and inclusion within the Canadian legal market, with a specific focus on supporting ITLs throughout the licensing process. By cultivating a robust network for diversity and growth, the ITL Network endeavors to provide ITLs with opportunities for networking, professional development, and socialization. Functioning as a comprehensive resource for internationally trained legal professionals, the ITL Network also prioritizes the establishment of meaningful mentorship opportunities for individuals undergoing the licensing process in Canada. The ITL Network has a robust mentorship program in partnership with the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council, to apply please visit <https://www.itlnetwork.ca/mentorship/>.

❖ [ACCES Employment:](#)

ACCES Employment is a registered charity, registered as (A.C.C.E.S.) Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services. ACCES Employment assists job seekers from diverse backgrounds, who are facing barriers to employment, to integrate into the Canadian job market. They achieve this by providing employment services, linking employers to skilled people and building strong networks in collaboration with community partners. ACCESS has a speed mentoring program which is an innovative solution that creates the opportunity for new Canadians to meet face-to-face with professionals in their sector. Mentoring new Canadians can be a rewarding volunteer experience and a great team-building exercise. Events can be organized to accommodate any number of participants and professional backgrounds. ACCESS also has a mentor partnership program with the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), please see more details below. To apply, please visit www.accesemployment.ca.

❖ [Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council](#) (TRIEC):

TRIEC Mentoring Partnership is a collaboration between different organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. Newcomers bring talent, innovation, and international expertise to the Greater Toronto Area – but need information and networks to succeed. TRIEC Mentoring Partnership connects recent immigrants with mentors in their professional field. It is a collaboration between different organizations working together to make the most of this untapped talent. The mentoring partnership helps new immigrants with a professional background reconnect with their career through the support of a mentor who works in their field in Canada. By talking to a mentor who shares your professional background and knows how the local labour market works, you can get ahead start on your journey to success in Canada. To apply, please visit www.mentoringpartnership.ca.

❖ [Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council](#) (CRIEC):

The Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC) is a small, robust not-for-profit organization that seeks to effectively and efficiently connect newcomer professionals with strategies designed to lead to successful employment outcomes. CRIEC has a robust mentorship program and also has a partnership with the ITL Network specifically for mentoring ITLs. CRIEC designs, develops and implements various initiatives and strategies, such as mentoring programs, employment counseling sessions and competency (cultural and skill) workshops for both newcomer professionals and stakeholders. To apply for the mentoring program, please visit <https://www.criec.ca/internationally-trained-lawyers/>.

❖ [Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council](#) (ERIEC):

Established in 2008, Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC) is dedicated to ensuring immigrants are welcomed and participate in the Edmonton economy to their full

potential. ERIEC believes that mentorship programs for new immigrants can benefit the whole community. Mentorship can help smoothen the transition for immigrants to life in Edmonton. Businesses can tap into a new source of labour that brings international experience to their team. ERIEC's mentorship and networking programs support career and economic integration for new immigrants to Canada. ERIEC is the bridge between employers' labour needs and globally trained new residents so that these new residents can find work in their professions. To apply, please visit <https://www.eriec.ca/career-mentorship-program>.

❖ [ITL Observership Program Nova Scotia:](#)

The Observership Program is designed to expose ITLs to professional legal practice in Nova Scotia. The objective is to provide ITLs with a first-hand opportunity to learn about the legal profession by observing the practice of law in Canada and, more specifically, in Nova Scotia. The Observership Program is a partnership between an ITL and a supervising lawyer who is a practising lawyer in Nova Scotia. The supervising lawyer will provide the ITL with an opportunity to observe their legal practice for an agreed upon length of time. While this is not a direct mentorship program, but it seeks to achieve the same objectives. To apply, please fill out the application package here- <https://nsbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ITL-Observership-Package.pdf>.

❖ [The Career Foundation:](#)

The Career Foundation provides mentorship as a resource to job seekers during their job search. They develop mentoring partnerships by introducing and matching experienced professionals with individuals who are seeking a mentor. The mentor provides guidance, information and connections to the job seeker to help clarify and strengthen their career path. Please visit <https://careerfoundation.com/job/mentorship/> to learn more.

❖ [Canadian Bar Association \(CBA\):](#)

The Canadian Bar Association represents over 36,000 lawyers, judges, notaries, law teachers and law students from across Canada. The CBA has a mentorship program designed specifically for its members. The important question to answer here is whether or not an ITL is qualified to join the CBA. The CBA has different membership levels which also includes student membership. ITLs are eligible under the student membership to become CBA members only if they have been assessed by the National Committee on Accreditation and have either started their exams or about to start. Student membership is free in most Provinces while the others require a minimal fee to maintain membership. To join the CBA, please visit <https://www.cba.org/Membership/Join-Renew>.

1.5 Networking

The Canadian legal industry is a very collaborative community, and networking within this community is important for your legal career. It does not matter what phase of the relicensing journey you're at, or whether you are a practicing lawyer already called to bar, or whether you have chosen to embark on other law related alternative careers, networking in the legal industry pays off.

The primary aim of networking is not solely to secure immediate job opportunities, but rather to facilitate the establishment of new relationships and broaden your legal network. By cultivating these connections, you lay the groundwork for potential job referrals and opportunities in the future. Building trust and rapport with individuals within your network increases the likelihood of them confidently referring you to others when suitable opportunities arise.

1.5.1 Why Network?

- ❖ To increase your confidence
- ❖ To improve your communication skills
- ❖ Helps you learn more about the Canadian culture and understand the importance of casual/small talk
- ❖ Keeps you in touch with what's happening in the legal community – law firms, law society, legal issues and other legal news
- ❖ Opens opportunities for increasing your network
- ❖ Opportunities for mentorship and volunteering

1.5.2 Ways to Start Legal Networking

- ❖ Get Updated – First off, update your resumes, cover letters, social media accounts (most especially, LinkedIn account), to highlight who you are and what you bring to the table.
 - Follow law firms/companies and people that resonate with your interests
 - Reach out to people, and
 - Keep the conversations going and stay in touch. Get to know the people you are networking with.
- ❖ Have and use a business card – use a personal business card if you do not have an official business card.
- ❖ Prepare an elevator pitch – This is a quick synopsis of your background and experience. The reason it's called an elevator pitch is that it should be short and catchy (1 -2 minutes) as if you are presenting on an elevator ride. Practice and get comfortable with this pitch and be flexible with changing it to suit specific purposes.

- ❖ Get comfortable and in tune with interesting conversation starters and conversation builders on topics related to weather, adventure, travel experiences, hobbies, sports, lifestyle, social issues, etc. These could help you avoid awkward silence during discussions.
- ❖ Join the Canadian Bar Association (“CBA”) and be active within the association. Participate in events, and if possible, in CBA sections, communities and discussion boards. The CBA has branches in all 9 Canadian Provinces, and 3 Territories. Find your branch here - <https://www.cba.org/Who-We-Are/Branches>
- ❖ Attend law events – in person and virtual.
 - Before the event, do your research. Know more about the panelists, guest speakers or keynote speakers. You can get more information about them on their professional social media pages. This will help you narrow down information about these potential connections. Take a look at their experience, interests, papers or articles written, as this is helpful especially if you are trying to approach them for further information or guidance. Research enables you to be prepared with conversation ice breakers which make discussions fluid.
 - Arrive early at events, to give you the opportunity for introductions and casual chats.
 - Listen to what people have to say about themselves and ask them questions to know more about them.
 - After the events, follow up with people and keep in touch. Ask for coffee/tea meet-ups or chats on social network. Just stay in touch.
- ❖ Volunteer in organizations and offer to provide work *pro bono* services. Being a part of these organizations help you meet people in the legal industry, or people who can share career building tips and opportunities with you. Some of these include:
 - Pro Bono Canada (applicable in only AB, BC, SK, ON and QB): Contact your Province’s pro bono organization and offer to volunteer at <https://probonocanada.org/legalhelp>
 - Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) at <https://www.leaf.ca/volunteer>
 - Canadian Civil Liberties Association at <https://ccla.org/volunteer>
 - Access Pro Bono at <https://www.accessprobono.ca/volunteers/other-volunteer-opportunities>
 - Student Legal Services of Edmonton at <http://www.slsedmonton.com>
 - Ontario Justice Education Network at <http://www.ojen.ca>
 - Legal Aid Program at <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/gov-gouv/aid-aide.html> . Select your Province and contact the volunteer program applicable in your Province.
- ❖ Some other non-profit organizations to volunteer with, that focus on career growth, building relationships, offering guidance and resources for success in the Canadian legal industry include:
 - The ITL Network: www.itlnetwork.ca

- South Asian Bar Association of Toronto: www.sabatoronto.com
- Canadian Association of Black Lawyers: www.cabl.ca
- Black Female Lawyers' Network: www.bfln.ca
- ITLNCA Networks: www.itln.ca
- Global Lawyers of Canada: www.glcandada.org
- Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association: www.cmla-acam.ca
- NCA Network: www.ncanetwork.com

1.5.3 Where to Network

Networking opportunities are abundant and can arise unexpectedly, making it crucial to remain open to connections wherever they may occur. Engaging with lawyers and other professionals can happen in various settings, from formal events organized by the Law Society or legal education societies to informal gatherings within shared interest groups. Exploring opportunities beyond the legal sphere can also prove fruitful; joining clubs or associations aligned with personal interests can lead to valuable connections and unforeseen opportunities. Additionally, tapping into university alumni networks can provide access to insider tips and potential job leads. Leveraging social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, offers an intentional way to expand one's network, stay informed about industry updates, job postings, and events. While networking demands an investment of time, energy, and sometimes finances, the rewards in personal and professional growth are substantial. Throughout the networking journey, authenticity remains paramount; staying true to oneself fosters genuine connections and lays the foundation for meaningful relationships.

1.6 Research

Conducting thorough research on Canada before making the decision to move is paramount for prospective immigrants. This research should encompass various aspects of Canadian life, including but not limited to, the job market, housing options, cost of living, healthcare system, education opportunities, and cultural norms. Understanding these factors beforehand can help individuals make informed decisions about where to settle, what career opportunities to pursue, and how to navigate daily life in Canada. Additionally, researching the specific Province or city of interest can provide insights into local amenities, community resources, and potential challenges. Ultimately, investing time and effort into researching the country beforehand lays a solid foundation for a smoother transition and enhances the chances of a successful and fulfilling experience in Canada. The following are some factors to consider:

1.6.1 Tax Rates

It's crucial to recognize that each Province in Canada has its own unique tax brackets, which can vary significantly from one region to another. To accurately assess your income tax obligations, it's essential to be aware of the specific tax rates applicable in the Province where you intend to reside. These tax rates are regularly updated, reflecting changes in policies and regulations. To

stay informed about current tax policies and rates, individuals are encouraged to visit the official website of the Government of Canada's Financial Consumer Agency, which provides comprehensive information on taxes in Canada. Additionally, the website of the Canada Revenue Agency offers resources to help individuals navigate income tax requirements, ensuring they remain up to date with any changes that may impact their financial obligations. Keeping abreast of these updates is essential for effective financial planning and decision-making before relocating to a new Province.

1.6.2 Crime Levels

In Canada, while overall crime levels remain relatively low, it's important to recognize that certain regions within Provinces may experience higher rates of criminal activity. Accessing information about crime incidents in specific neighborhoods is essential for making informed decisions about safety and security. Fortunately, many police departments across the country maintain active Twitter handles, providing regular updates on crime trends, safety tips, and community outreach efforts. For example, individuals can follow the Toronto Police Twitter handle (@TorontoPolice) or the Alberta Police Twitter handle (@RCMPAlberta) to stay informed about local crime-related news.

Additionally, several websites offer interactive crime maps and data for various cities, such as the Toronto Police Service's crime map (<https://data.torontopolice.on.ca/pages/maps>) and the Calgary Crime and Disorder Map (<https://data.calgary.ca/Health-and-Safety/Community-Crime-and-Disorder-Map-2012-2019-/hhjd-wzc2>). To access crime information for other cities, individuals can simply search for the city name followed by "crime website" or "crime map" to find relevant resources. By utilizing these platforms and resources, individuals can better understand the safety landscape of their chosen neighborhoods and take proactive measures to ensure their well-being.

1.6.3 Housing Costs

Housing affordability is a significant concern for many individuals, and it's crucial to assess housing options before making a move. One way to explore available listings and rental opportunities is by browsing online platforms such as websites dedicated to real estate listings or local marketplaces on Facebook. Additionally, the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) provides comprehensive data on housing costs across all Provinces of Canada. By accessing the CREA's housing market statistics, available at <https://www.crea.ca/housing-market-stats/canadian-housing-market-stats/national-price-map/>, individuals can gain valuable insights into current housing prices and trends, enabling them to make informed decisions about their accommodation needs. Whether purchasing or renting, having access to reliable housing information is essential for managing the cost of living and ensuring a comfortable living situation in Canada.

1.6.4 Transit System

Understanding the transit system is paramount for individuals considering a move to Canada, as it directly impacts both cost and accessibility to various destinations. While some Provinces boast well-maintained and efficient transit systems, others may lack the same level of service. Assessing the transit options available in a particular Province is essential for shaping one's career and lifestyle. By accessing the official websites of respective Provinces, individuals can obtain valuable information regarding transit costs, routes, schedules, and accessibility features. This proactive approach enables you to make informed decisions about transportation and ensures seamless integration into their new environment. Whether commuting to work, running errands, or exploring the local area, a comprehensive understanding of the transit system enhances convenience and facilitates a smooth transition to life in Canada.

1.6.5 Weather

Canada's climate exhibits significant variation from region to region, with the northern areas characterized by predominantly cold temperatures and shorter summers lasting less than two months. Conversely, the southern regions experience milder climates, with warmer temperatures prevailing. In cities like Vancouver, rainfall is common throughout the year. Understanding the local weather patterns is essential, as it can have a notable impact on various aspects of life, including job availability, economic activities, and transportation systems. By staying informed about the weather conditions in their chosen Province, individuals can better prepare for seasonal changes, plan their daily activities accordingly, and adapt to the local climate more effectively. This proactive approach ensures a smoother transition and enhances overall comfort and well-being in Canada.

In conclusion, conducting thorough research before moving to Canada is essential for a successful transition and integration into Canadian life for ITLs. By exploring various aspects such as taxation, crime rates, housing affordability, transit systems, and weather patterns, ITLs can make informed decisions about their relocation. Utilizing online resources, official government websites, and local data sources empowers ITLs to understand the unique characteristics of their chosen Province and anticipate potential challenges or opportunities. Armed with this knowledge, ITLs can navigate the complexities of Canadian society more confidently, ensuring a smoother transition and a more fulfilling experience in their new home.

1.7 Getting You NCA Documents Ready

The National Committee on Accreditation (“NCA”) is an organization in Canada responsible for assessing the legal education and training of individuals who obtained their law degrees from outside of Canada or from a non-Canadian jurisdiction. The NCA evaluates the academic and professional qualifications of these individuals to determine their eligibility to practice law in Canadian Provinces and territories. Upon successful completion of the NCA assessments, candidates may fulfill additional requirements set by the law society of the Province or territory

where they wish to practice, such as articling or bar exams, before being admitted to the bar and granted the right to practice law in that jurisdiction. No matter your career stage as a legal professional – whether you're a recent law school graduate or a seasoned practitioner – if you obtained your law degree outside of Canada, pursuing admission to practice law in any Canadian Province requires getting your credentials assessed by the NCA and completing the assessment requirements before being eligible for the bar admission process of the Province you choose to settle in.

1.7.1 About the NCA

The NCA operates as a standing committee under the jurisdiction of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC), which serves as the national coordinating body for all 14 law societies across Canadian Provinces and territories. These law societies are tasked with regulating the legal profession in the public interest, overseeing the activities of over 136,000 lawyers, 4,200 notaries in Quebec, and 10,600 licensed paralegals in Ontario, as mandated by provincial and territorial law. The NCA Committee comprises administrators from provincial and territorial law societies, representatives from the practicing bar, and members of the Council of Canadian Law Deans. As part of its mandate, the NCA ensures that ITLs and law graduates acquire the necessary knowledge of Canadian law comparable to that obtained from an approved Canadian common law degree program. This process ensures that these individuals meet the standards required to practice law in Canada, aligning with the overarching goal of protecting the public interest within the legal profession.

The NCA employs a comprehensive process to evaluate the academic training and professional experience of individuals seeking accreditation to practice law in Canada. Through this process, the NCA applies a uniform standard to assess the candidate's qualifications and determine any gaps in their legal knowledge. Based on the assessment results, the NCA identifies the specific examinations or studies required for the candidate to either address these knowledge gaps or demonstrate their proficiency in Canadian law. This standardized approach ensures consistency and fairness in the accreditation process, enabling ITLs and law graduates to meet the necessary requirements for practicing law in Canada.

1.7.2 The NCA Assessment Process

The NCA conducts assessments of the legal education and experience of individuals seeking admission to a law society in a Canadian jurisdiction. Candidates interested in practicing law in Canada must submit an application to the NCA to undergo an evaluation of their qualifications and legal background. This assessment process enables the NCA to determine the equivalency of the candidate's foreign legal education and experience with Canadian standards, ensuring that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the requirements for bar admission in Canadian common law jurisdictions.

The basic information required to complete your profile on the NCA website is as follows:

- Personal information
- Contact information
- Pre-law education
- Legal education
- License(s)
- Work experience
- Photograph
- Payment of assessment fees

Following the assessment, the NCA assigns specific requirements for candidates to fulfill, aiming to ensure that they attain a level of knowledge in Canadian law equivalent to that acquired through an approved Canadian law school program. These requirements may include additional examinations, courses, or practical training modules tailored to address any identified gaps in the candidate's legal education and experience. By completing these prescribed requirements, candidates can demonstrate their proficiency in Canadian law and readiness for admission to the bar in Canadian common law jurisdictions.

An NCA assessment includes five steps:

- Step 1: Submission of your documentation and application
- Step 2: Your assessment and your options
- Step 3: Satisfying NCA Requirements through Assignments
- Step 4: Your Certificate of Qualification
- Step 5: Apply for Entry into a Law Society Bar Admission Program (in the Province of your choice)

It should be noted that successful completion of the NCA process is a necessary prerequisite before being eligible to enter any bar admission program in any Province in Canada (except Quebec).

Moreover, similar to the dynamic nature of legal principles, the processes and requirements of the NCA undergo periodic updates. Therefore, as aspiring legal professionals in Canada, it is imperative to stay informed about recent developments by regularly accessing the NCA's official website. While this manual aims to provide a comprehensive overview and will be updated annually, candidates are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the current standards, processes, and requirements applicable at the time of their application to the NCA. The subsequent pages outline the five steps in the NCA Process, along with the documents that may be necessary for submission.

❖ Step 1: The Submission of your Application, Documentation and Payment

The NCA carefully reviews each application, with particular emphasis on the applicant's educational and professional background, in accordance with its policies. Employing a standardized evaluation approach nationwide, the NCA streamlines the process for individuals holding legal qualifications from other countries. Through a single application submitted via the NCA's online portal/website, accompanied by a payment of the assessment fee, applicants can qualify for law society bar admissions in any Canadian common law jurisdiction.

Upon receipt of the completed application form and payment, the NCA promptly acknowledges the submission within ten business days via email, providing instructions on accessing the NCA portal. Additional information or documentation may be requested by the NCA at this stage. Once all necessary documents are received, the assessment process commences. Applicants can typically expect to receive their assessment via email within six to eight weeks following the initiation of the process.

Who can apply?

All internationally trained legal graduates can apply, whether you are:

- a newcomer to Canada with a law degree
- a Canadian citizen who got a legal education in another country
- a legal graduate considering moving to Canada
- a Canadian civil law graduate

You can apply from anywhere in the world – citizenship¹, nationality and where you live do not matter in the assessment process.

The NCA *does not* assess the legal education and experience of people who want to practice civil law in Canada, or who want to become members of the [Barreau du Québec](#) or the [Chambre des notaires du Québec](#). They each have their own evaluation process.

Required Documents for the NCA Application:

- Original pre-law university transcripts – if applicable (sent directly from the university)
- Original law university/law school transcripts (sent directly from the university)
- Updated résumé or Curriculum vitae
- If you have been admitted to practice law in any jurisdiction/country, an official letter or certificate of good standing from the bar association or bar council
- If you studied by way of ‘distance learning’ (for e.g. through the University of London) but did attend ‘in person’ classes in your country, a letter from the school/institution where you attended those classes confirming that you attended classes in person and the curriculum taught.

¹ While citizenship is not a requirement for the NCA process, note that there may be citizenship, residency, or other status requirements (for e.g. a work permit) in order to be eligible to be called to the Bar in the Province where you intend to practice law

How to get the documents to NCA:

- You may mail your original or official pre-law university transcripts or arrange for your university to send the NCA official pre-law university transcripts (if applicable)
- Arrange to have sent, by the school that issued them, official transcripts (detailed mark sheets) for your legal education. **DO NOT** mail your original law school transcripts or degree certificates to the NCA. The NCA does not accept these original documents directly from applicants and are not responsible if they are lost or damaged during shipment.
- You need to upload an updated outline of your education and work experience (résumé or Curriculum vitae) in the application form

And, if you are a lawyer, arrange to have sent, an

- Official letter or certificate of good standing from the bar association or bar council (This must outline the date you were called to the bar and your status as a member in good standing.)

Delivery of documents by secure share services:

If your law school is unable to send official transcripts for your legal education via traditional mail or courier services, they may utilize secure document sharing services to transmit them to Transcripts@flsc.ca. The NCA accepts documents through various secure platforms, including but not limited to:

- Digitary CORE
- eScript-Safe
- ETranscript (Michigan State University)
- ETX-NG
- Grad Intel
- HEAR
- MyCreds (<https://mycreds.ca/>)
- My eQuals
- National Student Clearing House: Electronic Transcript Exchange
- OpenCerts™
- Parchment: Digital Credential Service
- PremierCert
- TranscriptsNetwork by Credentials Solutions

Translation required for documents in languages other than English or French

If any of your documents are in a language other than English or French, they must be sent to the NCA with an exact English or French translation that has been completed by:

- a Canadian certified translator, or
- a non-certified translator or translator recognized outside Canada, with an affidavit of the translator indicating the translator's qualifications and that the translation is of the original document.

❖ Step 2: Your Assessment and Your Options

The National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) conducts comprehensive evaluations of individuals' legal education and experience, aligning them with the National Requirement, which serves as the standard for bar admissions in Canada. Their policies, outlined in the NCA Policy Manual, guide the assessment and appeal processes, ensuring compliance with the standards set by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC). While subject to periodic updates, these policies prioritize fairness and transparency, aiming to assist applicants throughout the accreditation process.

Following assessment, the NCA provides clear directives, referred to as "assignments," outlining the steps necessary for qualification for law society bar admission. These assignments may entail writing NCA exams or undertaking courses at a Canadian law school to fulfill the requirements. Should applicants have concerns regarding the accuracy or completeness of their assessment, they are afforded recourse options.

Option 1: Applicants have the opportunity to request a file review if they believe there are additional documents or information that could alter their assessment decision. This option allows for the submission of materials related to legal education, licensure, or professional experience that may not have been initially considered. To initiate a file review, applicants must send a formal email request to the NCA within four weeks of receiving their assessment decision. Any relevant law degrees or licenses not included in the initial assessment should be arranged to be sent directly from the applicant's law school or licensing body. File reviews incur no additional costs.

Option 2: Individuals who have completed further legal studies following their NCA assessment decision may request a reconsideration of their file. This option allows for the inclusion of newly obtained qualifications that may fulfill certain requirements. To request file reconsideration, applicants must send an email to the NCA, accompanied by any relevant law degrees or licenses not previously submitted. There are no fees associated with filing a reconsideration request.

Option 3: Applicants have the right to appeal their assessment decision, although this process entails strict time limits and associated costs. Before initiating an appeal, it is recommended to thoroughly review the NCA Assessment Appeal Policy outlined in the NCA Policy Manual. All pertinent details regarding the appeal process, including timelines and fees, are provided within the policy document.

❖ Step 3: Satisfying NCA Requirements through Assignments

Once you get your assessment results, you must complete your assignments (the things you must do to qualify for law society bar admission) within five (5) years of the date your assessment was issued. If you do not complete your assignments within that time, you may request an extension

The NCA will send you a letter that describes the legal education you need (your assignments) to make sure your knowledge of Canadian law is similar to the knowledge of someone who got their law degree from an approved Canadian common law program. Please note that the legal tradition you studied (that is, whether you studied in a common law, civil law or mixed law jurisdiction) will affect your assessment.

You will usually be required to follow one of three paths for meeting your assignments:

1. Option 1: Write and pass your [NCA exams](#);
2. Option 2: Complete assigned subjects at a [Canadian law school](#); or
3. Option 3: Complete a combination of 1 and 2 – that is, you may meet some requirements by writing NCA exams and the rest by completing related courses at a Canadian law school.

In general, the NCA assigns five core common law subject areas to all applicants, which include Canadian Administrative Law, Canadian Constitutional Law, Canadian Criminal Law, Canadian Professional Responsibility, and Foundations of Canadian Law. Additionally, depending on individual qualifications, the NCA may assign supplementary subjects as necessary. In certain instances, applicants may be required to fulfill their assignments by undertaking courses at a Canadian law school.

Mandatory legal research requirement: If your qualifications are assessed after January 1, 2022, you will also need to complete a course in legal research and writing offered either by an approved Canadian common law program or through the [NCA legal research and writing module with the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education \(CPLED\)](#).

❖ Step 4: Your Certificate of Qualification (“CQ”)

Once you have successfully completed your NCA assignments, whether through exams or law school courses, you can request a CQ via your online NCA portal. It's important to note that while the CQ does not equate to a Canadian law degree, it serves as evidence that you have fulfilled the NCA's requirements. Additionally, it indicates that your understanding of Canadian law is comparable to that of an individual who obtained their law degree from an accredited Canadian law school program.

❖ Step 5: Apply for Entry into a Law Society Bar Admission Program (in the Province of your choice)

Canadian law societies in common law Provinces and territories mandate the submission of the NCA CQ as part of their bar admission process. To ascertain the specific requirements for admission to the bar in the Province of your choice, it is advisable to visit the website of the respective Law Society. Each Province may have distinct criteria and procedures for admission, so reviewing the specific requirements outlined on the Law Society's website is essential.

1.8 Relevant Groups/Organizations

Landing in a new country can be an overwhelming experience, especially for ITLs. From securing accommodation to meeting the requirements of the NCA and finding articling positions, a myriad of challenges can occupy our thoughts. Additionally, as legal professionals, the significance of networking in shaping our career trajectory cannot be overstated. However, putting theory into practice is often easier said than done, and it's natural to encounter obstacles along the way. But amidst these challenges, it's crucial to remember that help is readily available. In the following section, we highlight a non-exhaustive list of organizations dedicated to supporting individuals like us in navigating the hurdles we encounter.

❖ The ITL Network

The ITL Network seeks to advance diversity and inclusion within the Canadian legal market, with a specific focus on supporting ITLs throughout the licensing process. By cultivating a robust network for diversity and growth, the ITL Network endeavors to provide ITLs with opportunities for networking, professional development, and socialization. Functioning as a comprehensive resource for internationally trained legal professionals, the ITL Network also prioritizes the establishment of meaningful mentorship opportunities for individuals undergoing the licensing process in Canada. More information can be found at www.itlnetwork.ca

❖ South Asian Bar Association (SABA)

SABA is GTA's premier legal organization dedicated to promoting the objectives of South Asian members of the legal profession. Their members include lawyers, sole practitioners, government agencies, non-profit organizations and corporations. Essentially, SABA is a networking forum, advocacy group and an employment resource. They have many events throughout the year and an annual gala award. More information can be found at <https://sabatoronto.com/>

❖ Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL)

CABL serves as a national network dedicated to fostering connections among legal professionals and community members, with a focus on supporting and promoting the interests of Black professionals in Canada. Within CABL, the Young Lawyers Division provides a platform for young Black lawyers to unite and amplify their voices within the community. The organization hosts a range of events throughout the year, including a golf tournament, an annual gala, and prominent celebrations during Black History Month, often held in collaboration with the Law Society of Upper Canada. To discover more about CABL and its initiatives, visit their website at <https://cabl.ca/>.

❖ Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (FACL)

FACL represents a diverse collective of legal professionals from Asian Canadian backgrounds, united in their mission to advance justice, equity, and opportunities within their community. Among their notable initiatives is "Bridge the Gap," which focuses on improving access to justice for Asian Canadians and newcomers who encounter language barriers. Through this initiative, FACL produces educational videos offering guidance on accessing legal resources across different areas of law. For more information or to connect with FACL, visit their website at <https://on.facl.ca/>.

❖ The National LGBTQ+ Bar Association and Foundation

The LGBTQ+ Bar is a national association of lawyers, judges, students and activists which promotes justice in and through the legal profession for the LGBTQ+ community. A very interesting initiative is the 'Nuts and Bolts Academy for Judicial Candidates', which seeks to provide interested legal professionals the tools they need to end up on the other side of the bench. To learn more about their initiatives, please visit <https://lgbtqbar.org/>

❖ The CBA Women Lawyers Forum

The CBA Women Lawyers Forum is dedicated to advancing the status and impact of women in the Canadian legal profession. Through a range of programs and networking opportunities, they provide support for women lawyers to connect, share experiences, and develop skills. This inclusive forum serves as a platform for advocating gender equality and addressing intersectional issues within the legal profession and Canadian society. To learn more and participate, visit <https://www.cba.org/Sections/Women-Lawyers>.

2. VOLUME TWO: GETTING YOUR CERTIFICATE OF QUALIFICATION

2.1 Introduction to Volume Two

In the previous volume, we briefly explored the role of the NCA in the licensing journey of an ITL. In this volume, we will explore how to obtain your CQ from the NCA. The NCA assesses the legal education and experience of people who want to be admitted to the Bar in Canadian Common Law jurisdictions. A standing committee of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, the NCA has been designated as the national credential assessment institution. The NCA confirms that lawyers with foreign training who are applying to be admitted into the Canadian Bar and practice in Canada's legal system have received education on par with a Canadian law degree (common law). The accreditation process can take anywhere from one to five years to complete, so it is best to start the process prior to landing in Canada. The applicant's location of legal education, availability of required documentation, and time allocated by the candidate for exam preparation are only a few of the many variables that affect how long the procedure takes.

2.2 A Recap of the NCA Process

The NCA Process involves five distinct steps. First, candidates submit their applications to the NCA along with the requisite supporting documentation and fees, which can be conveniently paid via credit card. Next, the NCA meticulously assesses the candidate's legal education and professional experience, evaluating them against the National Requirement and its own policies. Subsequently, the NCA communicates the specific requirements necessary for qualification for law society bar admission, termed "assignments," which may entail writing NCA examinations or enrolling in courses at a Canadian law school. Should candidates be dissatisfied with the assessment, avenues such as requesting an assessment review, reconsideration, or appealing the assessment decision are available. Once all assignments are completed, candidates undertake the necessary courses or examinations to fulfill the requirements. Finally, upon meeting all criteria, the NCA issues a CQ, certifying the candidate's eligibility.

2.3 How the Assessment Process Work

Each application is evaluated individually in accordance with the NCA Assessment Policy, taking into account any special circumstances. The NCA will take into account prior employment as a licensed attorney (or barrister, solicitor, etc.) in a common law jurisdiction during the evaluation process. The NCA takes into account various factors when assessing the compatibility of an applicant's legal education and work experience with the Canadian legal system. These considerations include the country and jurisdiction where the applicant received their education, as well as the recognition of the law school or program attended by the relevant legal authority in that jurisdiction. Additionally, factors such as the duration of the degree, areas of study, course content, academic performance, and the age of the legal degree are considered. The NCA also evaluates the duration and nature of the applicant's professional legal experience, their standing

with their current law society, the type and level of legal practice, and any continuing legal education and professional development activities undertaken.

2.4 Documents Required

Each application The NCA requires certain documents when submitting an application for assessment. Applicants should contact their university(ies) and law society (the body that oversees the legal profession) to prepare these documents, it is advisable that this is done prior to landing in Canada. These supporting documents are academic records such as transcripts, certificate of admission, good standing letter, and a thorough CV or resume. These are expounded on below:

- ❖ **Academic Records:** These include undergraduate transcript and transcript of courses or exams completed for call to the Bar/Council/Law Society. Applicants may forward their original transcripts for pre-legal education but all documents related to legal education must be official and sent directly to the NCA from the university. Please see the NCA website and application form for more information on the difference between “original” and “official” documentation.
- ❖ **Certificate of Admission to Bar/Council/Law Society:** This must be an official document sent directly from the Law Society, as proof of a candidate’s membership to the Law society of the foreign jurisdiction.
- ❖ **Letter of Good Standing from Bar/Council/Law Society:** This is a letter from the law society an applicant is registered with, asserting that the applicant is of good behaviour and stand and has not committed any acts that would bring disrepute to the profession.
- ❖ **Detailed CV/résumé of legal work and professional experience:** This is a document detailing the skills gained and activities engaged in over the course of an applicant’s legal career. It is best to include lots of detail and information on exposure to common law systems and related undergraduate law subjects.

2.5 Recommendations

Recommendations are the results of the assessment of an application. The NCA will set out what, if any, additional assessments or education the applicant will require before their legal education is comparable to a Canadian law degree (common law).

❖ How to interpret the Results and Recommendation of Assessment

There are three categories of NCA recommendations:

- Specific number of exams
- Combination of exams and in-class instruction at a Canadian Common Law School
- Requirement to complete a law degree at a Canadian Common Law School

In making its recommendation, the NCA focuses on nine core common law subjects including five mandatory Canadian subjects, in which applicants must demonstrate an understanding:

- Foundations of Canadian Law - Mandatory requirement
- Canadian Criminal Law - Mandatory requirement
- Canadian Constitutional Law - Mandatory requirement
- Canadian Administrative Law - Mandatory requirement
- Canadian Professional Responsibility - Mandatory requirement
- Contracts - Optional Requirement
- Torts - Optional requirement
- Property - Optional requirement
- Business Organization - Optional requirement

The determination of these recommendations is generally based on the legal jurisdiction of the applicant. Below are some general recommendations from the NCA based on where an applicant is from:

- ❖ Common Law (e.g., England, Australia, United States, India)
 - All applicants are required to complete the five Canadian-specific common law subjects.
 - Applicants may be required to take additional courses depending on experience, education and academic standing.
 - In-class participation is typically recommended only for applicants who obtained a significant portion of their education through distance learning.
- ❖ Mixed (e.g., Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Israel, Scotland)
 - Assessments are based on the categorization of the country's legal system.
 - Typically, five to nine exams are assigned.
 - In-class participation is typically recommended only for applicants who obtained a significant portion of their education through distance learning.
- ❖ Non common law (e.g., China, Columbia, Iran, Mexico)
 - These are legal jurisdictions with very little or no exposure to common law. Considering the significant differences in interpretation and application of legal principles, the NCA requires these applicants to obtain substantial exposure to the common law typically by attending a Canadian or other common law law school.
 - Also relevant is licensure as a lawyer in a common law jurisdiction when the licensure process included substantive exams or courses.

2.6 Review or Appeal of Assessment Outcome

If the NCA recommends a combination of examinations and in-class instruction at a Canadian Common Law School or requires the completion of a law degree at such a school, it may be due to factors such as the applicant's origin from a country with limited exposure to substantive common law or a lack of familiarity with common law legal systems. Before registering with any institution, applicants are advised to contact the NCA to ensure that the courses they plan to take meet the NCA's requirements or to confirm if additional Canadian educational requirements are needed. Following this criterion, the NCA assesses the applicant's application and either accepts or rejects it based on the provided information.

Although rejections of an application for assessment are rare, the NCA has provided an avenue for an assessment review.

❖ Request for an Assessment Review

If a candidate believes that additional information not included in their initial application could alter the assessment decision, or if they feel the decision does not accurately reflect their education or experience, they can request a file review. This review may include relevant documents related to legal education, licensure, or professional experience. Candidates should email the NCA at nca@flsc.ca within four weeks of receiving the assessment decision, arranging for their law school or licensing body to send any missing credentials. Assessment reviews are conducted at no cost.

❖ Request for an Assessment Reconsideration

Candidates who have completed additional legal studies since the assessment decision and believe they may fulfill certain requirements can request the NCA to reconsider their file. This can be initiated by emailing the NCA, and, like assessment reviews, reconsideration requests are free of charge. Appeal the assessment decision

❖ Appeal the Assessment Decision

The NCA Assessment Appeal Policy outlines a structured appeal process, requiring candidates to send a notice of intention to appeal within 30 days of the assessment decision. Following a review by the NCA Executive Director, candidates can confirm their intention to proceed with the appeal within 14 days. The appeal process involves an online submission, requiring a fee of \$280.00 CDN, plus taxes, and the submission of a letter outlining the grounds for appeal and relevant exhibits. An appeal panel evaluates the appeal and may dismiss it, grant it, or modify the original assessment requirements. For more detailed information, candidates are directed to refer to the NCA assessment and appeal policy updates.

2.7 Completing your Assessment Requirements

The NCA requires the candidate to complete all the requirements and assignments assigned, whether it is exams, classes and /or courses. There are various ways to complete these requirements.

2.7.1 Self Study

The Self Study option for preparing for the NCA Examinations is complemented by various initiatives, some of which are government-funded while others are peer study groups facilitated through social media platforms like Facebook. An example of a government-sponsored initiative is the Directions for Immigrants Law Group Study at Bow Valley College, where individuals with similar goals gather to discuss upcoming exams, review case law, and exchange ideas. Participants enroll in a 10-week program and receive guidance from experienced professionals to help them prepare effectively for the examinations. For more details, see **Volume One**.

2.7.2 Tutoring Services

Utilizing tutoring services like NCA Guides can significantly enhance the preparation process for completing NCA exams. These services offer tailored guidance, study materials, and expert instruction specifically designed to help ITLs navigate the complexities of Canadian legal qualifications. By providing comprehensive support, including targeted study plans, practice exams, and one-on-one tutoring sessions, NCA Guides empower candidates to strengthen their understanding of key legal concepts and effectively prepare for exam success. With their specialized expertise and resources, tutoring services like NCA Guides play a crucial role in assisting candidates as they work towards achieving their goals of licensure in Canada. For more information, please visit www.ncaguides.com.

2.7.3 Law School Programs

To meet the requirements set by the NCA, candidates have the option to pursue various educational pathways, including programs offered by approved Canadian law schools or recognized law schools in other countries. For candidates seeking to study at Canadian law schools, several institutions offer specialized programs tailored to help meet the NCA's educational requirements. Osgoode Hall Law School provides an opportunity for non-degree students to complete a full year of upper-year JD courses, while the University of Alberta offers an ITL Program designed specifically to assist candidates in demonstrating competency in subjects commonly required by the NCA. Similarly, the University of British Columbia's Distance Learning Program allows flexibility for candidates to take courses remotely, although it's important to note that distance education courses may not fulfill the in-class requirement for certain NCA applicants. Additionally, programs such as the Foreign Trained-Lawyers Program at the University of Calgary and the Professional Development Programs at York University offer specialized training to help candidates meet NCA requirements. It's crucial for candidates to ensure that their chosen courses are approved by the NCA before enrollment. Alternatively, candidates may also explore programs offered by approved law schools in other countries, such as those recognized by organizations like

the Solicitors Regulation Authority in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, or the American Bar Association in the United States. These pathways provide candidates with diverse options to fulfill their NCA educational requirements and advance their legal careers.

❖ University of Toronto Global Professional Master of Laws Program

The Global Professional Master of Law (GPLLM) in Canadian Law in a Global Context is a 12-month executive-style Master of Laws (LLM) program that enables participants to work full-time while earning their degree. The GPLLM program includes nine (9) courses designed to meet the NCA's Requirements for ITLs, including the core subject areas (Foundations of Canadian Law, Professional Responsibility, Canadian Administrative Law, Canadian Criminal Law, Canadian Constitutional Law), and many others. Courses are taught by full-time faculty, distinguished visiting faculty, and senior members of the bench and bar. Candidates can learn more about the program, including the resources, support, and non-credit co-curricular activities offered in the program by visiting the GPLLM website. Please note this is a voluntary program, not required by the NCA or provincial law societies, nor endorsed by the NCA. NCA applicants are reminded that they must have NCA approval of all courses they wish to take at law school prior to starting the course.

❖ Osgoode Professional Development

Osgoode Professional Development is the life-long learning arm of Osgoode Hall Law School. Osgoode is Canada's oldest and most diverse law school offering the broadest range of programs for internationally trained lawyers.

- Canadian Common Law LLM: The LLM in Canadian Common Law is designed for ITLs who aim to practice law in Canada. This program provides a comprehensive understanding of Canadian common law, designed to fulfil the NCA requirements. Full-time students complete the program over one-year (3 terms) and part-time students complete the program over two-years (6 terms) with intakes in both Fall and Winter.
- International Business Law LLM: The LLM in International Business Law specialization offers an in-depth examination of Canadian and comparative private law concepts. Students have 12 credits of outside electives where they can choose to take courses from another specialization. NCA students may choose to take their electives in Canadian Common Law courses to meet some of their requirements. The LLM in International Business Law can be completed either full-time or part-time.
- Graduate Diploma in Foundations of Canadian Law: The Graduate Diploma in Foundations of Canadian Law is designed to provide a deep understanding of Canadian Law in key areas of private and public law. Students in this program have space for 6 credits of outside electives at the end of their program, where they may complete 1-2 courses towards their NCA

requirements. The Graduate Diploma in Foundations of Canadian Law can be completed either part-time or full-time.

- Single Course Enrolment: NCA students have the option to enroll in up to 12 credits (between 2-3 courses) to fulfil their NCA requirements as non-degree students. These courses may be applied towards a future professional LLM degree.

❖ University of British Columbia (Peter A. Allard School of Law) Distance Learning Program

The Distance Learning Program at the Peter A. Allard School of Law at the University of British Columbia consists of online, graduate-level law courses in Property Law, Canadian Public Law (Foundations of Canadian Law and Canadian Constitutional Law), Business Organizations, Canadian Criminal Law & Procedure and Torts. Designed to meet the needs of foreign-trained lawyers and law students completing their NCA requirements, these courses permit students to take University of British Columbia's Law courses outside of a formal degree program and from anywhere in the world. Find program details and registration information on the Distance Learning Program's web site.

❖ University of Calgary - Foreign Trained Lawyers Program

The Foreign Trained-Lawyers Program (FTLP) is a one-year Post-bachelor's Certificate which will help candidates complete the educational requirements of the NCA. Required courses include Foundations of Canadian Law, Professional Development, Constitutional Law, Crime: Law & Procedure, Administrative Law, and Ethical Lawyering. The program includes a unique one-year course in professional development training (including professional writing and oral communication skills, writing resumes for articling positions, interviewing skills, marketing and promotion, networking events, and mentoring), student support and mentorship, and articling and career placement assistance, in order to provide a comprehensive pathway for candidates to integrate into the legal services market in Canada. Visit law.ucalgary.ca/FTLP for more information.

❖ University of Alberta Internationally Trained Lawyer Program

The University of Alberta's ITL Program is designed with the NCA to help students demonstrate competency in those subjects where the NCA commonly requires additional training. The NCA program at the University of Alberta offers courses taught by leading faculty, law practitioners and judges, and academic training in all core NCA subject areas, including but not limited to Canadian Constitutional Law, Canadian Administrative Law, Canadian Criminal Law, Foundations of Canadian Law, and Canadian Professional Responsibility.

❖ Ashton College, Vancouver, British Columbia

Ashton College is a private, post-secondary educational institution, with campus located in Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. The NCA Challenge Exam Preparation program is designed to assist ITLs in their preparation for nine of the NCA Examinations. This program is offered in a live online format through face-to-face instructor-led webinars using Adobe Connect and Google Apps. Students can register for each course individually.

❖ Canadian Career Education College Toronto , Ontario (C.C.E.C.)

C.C.E.C is dedicated to preparing and helping ITLs and law students understand the licensing and NCA accreditation process in Canada. C.C.E.C. offers various training and preparation-based professional and educational development legal courses, via a designated professional team consisting of lawyers and senior educators with years of experience. C.C.E.C. professional courses provide students with the training they need to successfully pass their NCA and/or Bar exams. C.C.E.C. students come from various parts of the globe, with diverse backgrounds in various areas of law.

2.8 How to Obtain the Certificate of Qualification

Passing the NCA exams is a momentous achievement in the journey of an ITL. It signifies the culmination of months, if not years, of dedicated study and preparation. The joy and relief that accompany the news of passing the exams are indescribable, marking a significant milestone on the path to practicing law in Canada. However, this accomplishment is just the beginning of the next phase in the ITL's journey. With the exams successfully behind them, the next crucial step is to obtain the CQ from the National Committee on Accreditation. This certificate is essential for gaining entry into the bar admission process in common law Provinces and territories, further solidifying the ITL's progress towards their goal of practicing law in Canada.

Here's a streamlined guide to acquiring your CQ through the NCA Portal:

- ❖ Log in to the NCA Portal and navigate to the "Manage Yourself" section.
- ❖ Locate the "Request Certificate" heading and click on it.
- ❖ Fill out the provided form with the necessary details.

Once the form is complete, hit the "Submit" button to finalize your request. It's important to note that the CQ is a mandatory requirement for admission to the bar admission process in common law Provinces and territories.

In conclusion, the journey of an ITL through the NCA process is one marked by perseverance, dedication, and significant milestones. From the initial application to the rigorous preparation for exams and the eventual joy of passing, each step brings the ITL closer to their goal of practicing law in Canada. The NCA process serves as a bridge, ensuring that ITLs possess the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the Canadian legal system competently. With the exams successfully completed, the CQ obtained, the next step is to begin the bar admission process in

various Provinces and territories. While the journey may present challenges, the determination and resilience of ITLs propel them forward, paving the way for a fulfilling legal career in Canada.

2.9 LLM v. NCA Examinations: Optimizing Your Career Trajectory

As ITLs, there are broadly four steps to getting qualified in the Canadian common law jurisdiction. Firstly, candidates have to apply for and receive an assessment from the NCA, the second step is to fulfil the NCA requirements through a law school program, an LLM program or self-study. The third step is to complete the experiential training component by completing an articling program (varies by Province/territory) or through the Law Practice Program. Lastly, candidates have to take the licensing examinations or the bar admission program in their particular Province to be admitted to the bar by the law society of that Province. The last two steps have been provided solely for informational purposes, with our primary focus in this section focused on the second step.

The NCA assesses the legal education and professional experience of ITLs. Once candidates have received their NCA assessment, they can meet the assigned requirements in two ways. Individuals have the option to undertake the NCA examinations through self-study or alternatively, they may choose to pursue a Canadian LLM. The LLM program deals with NCA courses without specializing in any particular subject matter. The choice between the two depends on the time and cost involved in each. On one hand, opting to take the NCA exams appears to be a cost-effective choice. The cost of applying for an NCA assessment is \$400 CAD plus tax and registration for each exam costs \$475 CAD plus tax. Applicants are usually assigned anywhere between 5 to 7 subjects, but this is not a definitive number, and the result may vary based on individual circumstances. On the other hand, an LLM may approximately cost \$35,000 CAD for domestic students and \$60,000 to \$75,000 CAD for international students. The decision depends upon the number of subjects that the candidates are required to complete and the associated costs they are willing to assume.

If time is of the essence, then taking the NCA exams would seem like the more prudent option. The exams are conducted multiple times throughout the year and the schedule for the entire year is posted in advance by the NCA on their website. An LLM can be of two types, a specialisation in any particular area of law or a specialisation in Canadian common law. Pursuing the former allows students to specialise in their preferred area of law, but they will have to complete the NCA exams on their own as well. This means that they will have to bear the cost of the LLM and the individual NCA exams. The latter of the two LLM options grants students the opportunity to complete their LLM in Canadian common law and fulfil their NCA requirements at the same time. The global professional LLM in Canadian Law at the University of Toronto, the professional LLM in Canadian Common Law at Osgoode Hall Law School, LLM in Common Law at Peter A. Allard School of Law and the Internationally Trained Lawyer Pathway at University of Alberta are some LLM programs which allow ITLs to complete their NCA requirements. The candidates will have to assume the cost of the LLM program only.

From the perspective of an individual who has recently completed the global professional LLM program at the University of Toronto, it is evident that pursuing an LLM to fulfill NCA requirements can greatly optimize one's career trajectory. Firstly, the LLM program offers a unique focus on Canadian law, allowing students to select subjects beyond the assigned NCA courses based on their interests. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for students undecided about their preferred area of law, enabling them to explore various legal fields and keep their options open. Additionally, the program facilitates valuable networking opportunities, as students interact with classmates and learn from professors who are practicing lawyers in Canada. The university also organizes events and panels where students can connect with professionals in the legal industry, laying a strong foundation for building relationships early in their careers. Lastly, students have access to comprehensive career development resources provided by their respective universities, aiding in their integration into the Canadian legal market.

While pursuing an LLM is a personal decision that entails financial considerations and dedicating a year to learning and networking, it offers significant benefits. By completing NCA requirements and engaging in networking opportunities simultaneously, students are better positioned to leverage their past experiences when seeking articling positions. This approach provides candidates with a distinct advantage, setting them on a solid path and empowering them to make meaningful progress in both their academic and professional pursuits.

3. VOLUME THREE: THE PROVINCIAL LICENSING PROCESS

3.1 Introduction to Volume Three

In this volume, we will explore the intricate licensing processes of the various Provinces and territories across Canada, providing invaluable insights for ITLs seeking to practice law in Canada. As ITLs progress through their journey, understanding the nuances of each jurisdiction's licensing requirements is paramount to their success. From British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador, this volume offers a detailed exploration of the unique pathways, examinations, and prerequisites set forth by regulatory bodies in each region. Whether navigating through the articling process, fulfilling experiential training requirements, or preparing for bar examinations, this volume serves as an indispensable resource for ITLs striving to achieve their professional aspirations in Canada.

3.2 The Prairies – Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan & Nova Scotia

The licensing process in the prairie Provinces follows a similar trajectory. Initially, ITLs need to secure a CQ from the NCA, typically by completing any necessary examinations or coursework. Subsequently, they can pursue articling positions in the Province, which involves practical training under the guidance of a qualified lawyer and is a prerequisite for bar admission.

- ❖ In Alberta, the process involves completing two electronic applications: one for admission as a student-at-law and another for the articling agreement. Note that securing an articling position at a law firm is necessary before applying for admission as a student-at-law. Alternatively, you have the option to complete the Practice Readiness Education Program (PREP) before articling. PREP, administered by the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED), is the Bar admissions program in Alberta. Information about registering for PREP, tuition fees subsidy, scheduling, course content, and admission requirements can be found on the CPLED website. Upon completing articling and PREP, you can then apply for enrollment as a member of the Law Society of Alberta. While there is no cost for enrollment, membership fees and/or indemnity levies may apply depending on your status as an active member. For the most updated fee schedule, refer to the Law Society of Alberta's website.
- ❖ In Manitoba, you'll need to submit an application along with various required documents, including transcripts, a CQ, criminal record check, and certificates of standing and character. The application must be sent to the Law Society of Manitoba, and upon approval, you'll receive confirmation of your articling start date. During articling, you'll need to complete 52 weeks of full-time articles and participate in the PREP program administered by CPLED. Upon successful completion of articling and PREP, you'll be eligible for admission as a solicitor in Manitoba. This involves submitting an application and petition for call and admission, remitting the call to the bar fee, and fulfilling other requirements outlined by the Law Society of Manitoba. Once admitted, you can commence active practice as a lawyer in Manitoba.

- ❖ In Saskatchewan, the process entails completing the required application form and submitting supporting documentation along with the application fee. Once approved as a Student-at-law, secure an articling position and submit proof of entry into articles. Articling options include traditional articles, joint articles, part-time articles, and supervision by the courts, each with its own requirements and guidelines. After completing articling, enroll in and successfully complete the PREP Bar admission course administered by CPLED. Finally, apply for admission as a lawyer, meeting all criteria outlined by the Law Society of Saskatchewan, paying the necessary fees, and signing the Roll at the Law Society office. Upon completion of these steps and approval by the Law Society, newly admitted lawyers are entitled to practice law in Saskatchewan, with formal presentation ceremonies conducted by the local bar association to welcome them to the legal profession.

- ❖ In Nova Scotia, once you have your CQ, you can proceed with the application process for admission to the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society. This process involves completing and submitting the Application for Admission on Transfer along with the required documentation, including a notarized copy of a government-issued photo ID, statements of good character, certificates of standing from all jurisdictions where you are or have been licensed, a criminal record check, and payment of the transfer fee. The application package should be emailed to the Society's Education & Credentials Advisor. After submitting your application and processing the application fee, your application will be considered by the Executive Director. If approved, you will need to complete the articling process and PREP. The articling process involves completing two Articling Application forms, an articling agreement, and fulfilling the articling requirements set by the Executive Director. Upon successful completion of these requirements, you will be eligible for admission to the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society. Bar Admission ceremonies are held throughout the year, with a major ceremony in June in Halifax. After the ceremony, you will sign the Roll of Lawyers and be allowed to practice law in Nova Scotia.

- ❖ PREP is a comprehensive bar admission program for prospective lawyers in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan, designed to equip them with essential skills for legal practice. Divided into four phases, PREP begins with online foundation modules that establish core competencies before progressing to interactive workshops, where students engage in role-playing and receive feedback. Subsequently, participants work in a simulated legal environment in the Virtual Law Firm phase, managing various legal matters under coaching and mentorship. The program culminates in a capstone assessment, evaluating students' application of knowledge and professionalism in simulated real-world scenarios. Admission requirements include proof of the NCA CQ or confirmation, with subsidies available for confirmed law society members. Additionally, CPLED introduced Accelerated PREP, an intensive 14-week online program, while articling exemptions vary by jurisdiction, with some Provinces allowing partial exemptions based on experience.

3.3 British Columbia

The licensing process for ITLs seeking admission to the British Columbia bar is governed by the Law Society Admission Program (LSAP), a comprehensive training program supervised and administered by the Credentials Committee of the Law Society of British Columbia. To be eligible for enrollment in the LSAP, ITL applicants must have completed the NCA requirements and obtained the CQ. Additionally, they must secure a commitment of articles before applying for enrollment in the LSAP. An eligible principal, who must have engaged in full-time practice of law in Canada for at least five of the eight years immediately preceding the articling start date, is required to supervise the nine-month articling term. The articling term is a key component of the LSAP, along with the successful completion of a 10-week full-time Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC).

❖ Articling Requirements

ITLs must complete a 12-month training program, which includes:

- Nine months of articles supervised by an eligible principal.
- Successful completion of a 10-week full-time Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC).

❖ Enrollment Process

To enroll in the LSAP, ITLs must:

- Submit a completed LSAP application package and fees to the Law Society at least 30 days before the proposed enrollment start date.
- Provide necessary documentation, including transcripts and enrollment fee.
- Obtain a commitment of articles before the enrollment deadline.

❖ Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC)

The PLTC is a 10-week intensive legal procedure and skills course designed to bridge the gap between law school and practice. It covers substantive legal areas, practical skills, and ethical considerations essential for legal practice in British Columbia. ITLs must register for a PLTC session as part of the LSAP. Registration requires obtaining the principal's consent, submitting a completed application, and meeting enrollment deadlines. Students are advised to plan their PLTC attendance carefully to ensure full participation and completion.

❖ Call and Admission to the Bar

Upon successful completion of the articling term and PLTC, ITLs are eligible for call and admission to the British Columbia bar. The process involves submitting necessary documentation, taking examinations, and participating in a call ceremony.

Navigating the licensing process for ITLs in British Columbia requires careful planning and adherence to LSAP requirements. By meeting eligibility criteria, enrolling in the LSAP, and successfully completing the articling term and PLTC, ITLs can achieve their goal of practicing law in British Columbia.

For additional details and inquiries, please visit the Law Society of British Columbia's website or contact Registration & Licensee Services.

3.4 Ontario

To qualify for legal practice in Ontario, individuals must follow a structured process. Firstly, they must possess a JD degree or equivalent and have it assessed by the NCA. Upon qualification through the NCA, candidates proceed to articling, where they work with a lawyer to gain practical experience. Alternatively, candidates can seek exemptions from articling or enroll in a Legal Practice program. Additionally, candidates must pass two bar exams: the Solicitor exam and the Barrister exam. The licensing examinations evaluate competencies crucial for entry-level practice, such as ethical responsibilities, legal knowledge, and practice management. Candidates must register, prepare, and schedule these exams by specific deadlines. Exemption applications from experiential training programs are available to eligible candidates who meet certain criteria. The application process involves submitting supporting documents, including letters of reference and certificates of standing.

❖ The Law Practice Program

The Law Practice Program offers an alternative to traditional articling, providing candidates with experiential training to succeed in the legal profession. These programs, offered by institutions like the University of Ottawa and Toronto Metropolitan University, aim to bridge the gap between academic learning and legal practice, preparing candidates for successful careers as lawyers in Ontario.

❖ Exemption from Articling Requirements

Only candidates who meet the relevant eligibility requirements and are competent along with being fully registered in the Lawyer Licensing Process may apply and procure an exemption from the experiential training program requirement. The general process for exemption applications is as follows:

- The candidate submits the exemption application along with all of the candidate's supporting documents and certificates.
- Third parties submit supporting documents that aid in the process.
- The Law Society reviews and accesses the application and supporting documents.

- As appropriate, the Law Society sends questions or requests for additional documentation to be submitted by the candidate or the candidate's referee(s).
- Once the application is submitted in full and the review process has commenced, the Law Society issues an invoice to the candidate for the application fee.
- The exemption application is subject to a detailed review.
- A decision regarding the requested exemption is sent to the candidate. If a candidate is not eligible for an exemption, the candidate may submit a request for abridgement based on prior legal experience.

❖ Eligibility Requirements for Exemption from Articling

- Only Applicants must be fully registered in the Lawyer Licensing Process to proceed with this application.
- A candidate is eligible to apply for an exemption from the experiential training program requirement where the candidate has been licensed to practice the field of law in a common-law jurisdiction.
- A candidate must have had at least 10 months of legal practice and experience after being called to the bar in that particular common-law jurisdiction.
- Candidates who do not meet these criteria should not apply for an exemption but may consider applying for an abridgment based on prior legal experience.

The following factors will be considered when evaluating a request for an exemption:

- The length, recency, nature, scope, and diversity also the years of experience and type of cases dealt with during the candidate's common-law practice experience;
- The relevance of the common-law practice experience to the experiential training competencies and requirements for candidates established by the Law Society;
- Candidates must currently be in good standing in the jurisdictions where they are licensed to practice law or must have chosen to relinquish their license to practice law in those jurisdictions for reasons other than disciplinary/regulatory allegations or action; and
- Application requirements and supporting documents.

❖ Documents Required

To apply for an exemption from the experiential training requirement, the following documents are required:

- an original letter from the candidate, in the candidate's own words, that sets out each of the candidate's periods of common-law practice experience and a description of the associated practice setting. The letter must be in PDF or Word format. The letter must describe the relevance and reason of the candidate's common-law practice experience to the skills, practices, and systems ordinarily experienced during an articling placement, make reference

to the applicable experiential training competencies for candidates, and provide detailed examples of the candidate's common-law practice experience;

- an original letter of reference from one or more lawyer or judge referees, sent directly from the referees to articling@lso.ca. The letter must be in PDF or Word format. Reference letters in support of exemption applications must be prepared in compliance with the relevant sections of the Licensing Process Policies and should explain how the candidate's common-law practice experience is relevant to the experiential training competencies as set out on the Law Society's website;
- provide at least two specific examples from the candidate's common-law practice experience that reflect the candidate's demonstration of one or more of the experiential training competencies;
- contain a high level of detail about (1) the nature of each specific experience being cited; (2) the legal or procedural complexity of each experience; (3) the candidate's role, responsibilities, and accomplishments during each experience; and (4) the timeframe within which each experience was obtained (start and end dates);
- indicate the specific dates between which the candidate obtained common-law practice experience under the referee's observation; and
- an original Certificate of Standing from the governing body of the legal profession of each common-law jurisdiction in which the candidate has been licensed to practice law. The certificate must be sent directly from that governing body to the Law Society.

3.5 Prince Edward Island

The bar admission process in Prince Edward Island entails several steps. First, individuals must complete a year as an articled clerk and fulfill all requirements of the Bar Admission Course, including 12 months of articling and completion of a six-week course within the Province. Applicants must also demonstrate good moral character and submit required documents such as the Articling Checklist and Certificate of Principal and Clerk, along with payment of applicable fees. Following this, applicants participate in a court ceremony where they take oaths of allegiance and office before a Justice of the Supreme Court, marking their transition to practicing lawyers in the Province. Additionally, all practicing lawyers must obtain minimum professional liability insurance coverage through the Law Society's Insurance Program, unless granted an exemption upon approval of a submitted Statutory Declaration for Exemption. Detailed information about professional liability insurance can be found on the Errors & Omission page of the Law Society's website.

The Bar Course in Prince Edward Island, held annually in Charlottetown during the fall, serves as a crucial step in the bar admission process. This intensive, in-person program focuses on both

substantive law and practical skills essential for aspiring lawyers, with particular emphasis on the Province's legal framework. Attendance is mandatory, and clerks must achieve a minimum mark of 60% in each subject to successfully complete the course. Materials, provided one to two weeks before the start date, cover course topics and serve as valuable references for future practice. To enroll, clerks must pay the tuition fee in advance. The comprehensive curriculum includes subjects such as Supreme Court Practice, Legislation, Commercial & Corporate Law, and Ethics, equipping participants with the knowledge and skills needed for legal practice in Prince Edward Island.

3.6 New Brunswick

To become a lawyer in New Brunswick, an applicant must satisfy the law society that he or she is of good character and repute and has acquired the CQ from the NCA. Candidates who have completed the admissions program, mobility and transfer candidates (licenced in other Canadian jurisdiction), and members of an approved faculty of law may be eligible for admission. Generally, admission to the Law Society of New Brunswick follows completion of the admissions program. For some candidates however, including lawyers transferring from within Canada, completing the admissions program may not be required.

The admission ceremony occurs annually in June in Fredericton at the Court of Appeal in New Brunswick, with additional ceremonies scheduled as necessary throughout the year. To participate in the June ceremony, students-at-law must commence their articling term no later than June 1st. Those who begin articles after this date will be admitted at a subsequent ceremony. Should a student-at-law be unable to complete their articling term by June, alternative arrangements can be made by contacting the Director of Admissions. During the admissions ceremony, all new lawyers are required to take the Barristers and Solicitors' oath or affirmation, with the option to also take the oath or affirmation of Allegiance to the King. These pledges may be conducted in either French or English.

3.7 Newfoundland & Labrador

In Newfoundland & Labrador, after obtaining the CQ from the NCA, the next step in the process is to participate in the law society's bar admission course. The course generally commences on the first Monday of October and runs for a period of six weeks. The time spent at the BAC is counted toward a student's 52-week articling term. The goal of the bar admission course is to (i) provide a comprehensive overview of Newfoundland and Labrador and federal law/procedure, and (ii) ensure that lawyers called to the bar in this Province have demonstrated an entry-level degree of competence in the profession. The bar admission course is intensive, practical, and relevant to what a new lawyer will see in practice. The Law Society endeavours to make the course an enjoyable experience for the students as well as the judges, lawyers, and other professionals whose contributions make the course a success.

To pass the bar admission course, students must obtain a mark of at least 60% in each of the three bar admission examinations and a cumulative average of at least 65%. The bar admissions

examinations are 3.5 hours long and cover the following subjects: family law, commercial law, civil procedure, criminal law, administrative law, and real estate/wills.

A comprehensive application for admission as a student to the law society must include several key documents and fulfill specific criteria. These include the completed application for admission as a student, along with a CQ from the NCA. Additionally, applicants must arrange for their original law school transcript to be sent directly to the director of admissions and education, demonstrating completion of all graduation prerequisites. Other essential components comprise a notarized copy of a government issued photo ID, criminal record screening certificate, and vulnerable sector check, as well as proof of legal name and articles of clerkship. Furthermore, applicants must submit an articling skills and experience checklist and pay the application. Deadlines for submission vary: the second Monday in May for articling terms commencing on June 1st and the second Monday in December for terms beginning on January 30th. However, applicants aiming to start articling on June 1st can provide their transcript by June 30th of the same year. Admissions adhere to the regulations outlined in the *Law Society Act*, 1999, and the *Law Society Rules*, with applicants responsible for understanding and fulfilling all requirements. Any queries regarding these criteria should be directed to the director of admissions and education.

3.8 Quebec

In Quebec, section 35 of the *Charter of the French Language*, requires that professional orders only issue permits to persons who have adequate knowledge of the official language to practice the profession. This includes (i) Special Authorization to Practice in Quebec, (ii) Temporary Restrictive Permit and (iii) Permanent Mobility. Special authorization is valid for a specific file until a final decision is rendered, for a maximum of 12 months. If necessary, it can be renewed. Holders of a special authorization do not become members of the Barreau du Québec. A temporary restrictive permit allows lawyers to perform certain acts for a period of one year and may be renewed.

Three types of permanent permits are available to foreign lawyers or jurists: full permits for foreign lawyers or jurists, special corporate legal advisor permits and special foreign legal consultant permits. As a holder of one of these types of permits, you must register with the Barreau du Québec every year. In any case, to apply for any of these permits as an ITL, you need to apply for equivalence first. The NCA CQ does not apply in Quebec, rather the Province has its own equivalency process. To apply for this equivalence, an ITL must complete the Application for Equivalence Recognition by a Foreign Lawyer or Jurist (in French only) and return it to the Barreau together with the relevant documents.

As part of the bar admission process, applicants are required to undergo the professional training program at the École du Barreau, available exclusively in French, at one of the four professional training centers in Montréal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, or Gatineau. Assignment to a specific training center is determined by the university that conferred the undergraduate law degree. The

mission of the École du Barreau is to furnish professional training ensuring aspiring lawyers possess requisite skills while upholding professional values, particularly in ethics and public protection. The curriculum encompasses various aspects including rules of professional conduct, drafting pleadings, negotiation, oral argumentation, office management, and more. Since the 2023-2024 academic year, a revamped program emphasizing experiential learning has been implemented, allowing students to apply acquired skills and knowledge, including participation in legal clinics. Following completion of the professional training, students must undertake a six-month articling period, during which they engage in most professional activities reserved for lawyers under supervision. Subsequently, their application for membership with the Barreau du Québec undergoes review by the Examining Committee, as mandated by the Act respecting the Barreau du Québec. As of April 2022, the steps of taking the oath and being entered on the Roll of the Order have been consolidated. To await the swearing-in ceremony, individuals must have submitted requisite information concerning payment of membership dues and, if applicable, professional liability insurance premiums.

3.9 Northwest Territories, Nunavut & Yukon

❖ Northwest Territories

The bar admission process in the Northwest Territories depends on whether or not an ITL was already a member of a foreign bar at the time of application. For ITLs who are members of a bar in a Commonwealth country, specific provisions exist regarding membership in the Northwest Territories. If you have actively practiced law for at least three of the five years preceding your application and hold membership in a Commonwealth bar, you may be eligible for membership without the requirement of articling in the Northwest Territories, subsequent to obtaining your CQ from the NCA.

Each application from Commonwealth bar members is assessed individually by the Law Society Executive, considering its merits and supporting documentation. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to the Law Society and provide their CQ along with a comprehensive history of their legal practice, including confirmation of their standing from the respective bar associations. Based on this information, the Law Society will advise on any additional documentation required. However, it is important to note that some applicants may still be required to complete a period of articling, depending on the assessment by the Law Society Executive.

For ITLs who are not members of any bar, the process differs. Upon receiving their CQ from the NCA, they become eligible to apply for admission as students-at-law. However, to proceed further, they must secure an articling position with a resident lawyer in the Northwest Territories. This lawyer must have actively practiced law for a minimum of five years, with at least two years of active practice specifically in the Northwest Territories.

These pathways aim to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and qualifications of ITLs, ensuring fair and equitable access to membership and practice opportunities within the legal profession in the Northwest Territories. Applicants are encouraged to engage with the Law Society for guidance and support throughout the application process. In addition to completing the required period of articling, applicants must also undertake an examination to demonstrate their understanding of the Rules of Court, the Laws of the Northwest Territories, and the Law Society of the Northwest Territories Code of Professional Conduct. This examination is conducted on an "open book" basis, allowing applicants to refer to relevant resources during the test.

Upon successful completion of the articling period and the bar admission examination, applicants become eligible to apply for admission as members of the Law Society. It is important for all applicants to familiarize themselves with the Legal Profession Act, the Rules of the Law Society of the Northwest Territories, and the Policy Manual of the Law Society of the Northwest Territories to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the requirements and procedures involved in the admission process. These documents provide detailed information and guidelines essential for navigating the admission process effectively.

❖ Nunavut

In order to lawfully engage in the practice of law in Nunavut, you need to either get called to the Nunavut Bar in Nunavut (Regular Membership) or obtain a Restricted Appearance Certificate (RAC) from the Law Society of Nunavut. After obtaining the CQ from the NCA, the process in Nunavut entails applying for a student at law status after securing an articling position and completing the Nunavut Statutes Examination as well as the Bar Admission Course. The Law Society of Nunavut has a collaboration in place with the Law Society of Manitoba to offer the Manitoba PREP Bar Admission Course to all Nunavut students-at-law. As of August 2022, the requirement to complete the Statutes Examination has been waived until further notice leaving just the requirement to complete the Bar Admission Course (PREP through Manitoba).

❖ Yukon

The Yukon Territory has specific requirements and processes for individuals applying as students-at-law. Prospective applicants are advised to carefully review Part 2, Membership and Enrollment in Law Society, of the *Legal Profession Act* along with *Rules 60 - 87*. These documents are accessible on the Law Society's website at www.lawsocietyyukon.com.

To ensure a complete application, candidates must submit the following to the Law Society office:

- Completed Form 6 (Application for Admission – Student).
- Completed Form 7 (Articling Agreement) along with the attached Articling Skills and Practice Checklist.
- An official transcript of marks from the attended University.

- Membership fees

Applicants are reminded that if a final transcript is unavailable at the time of application, they must specify the anticipated submission date on Form 6, question #1. As part of the articling process, attendance at a bar admission course approved by the Executive is mandatory. The British Columbia Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC) is among the approved options, and the Yukon maintains a standing arrangement with British Columbia, entailing reduced fees for students enrolled in joint articles.

It is advisable to submit all required materials to the Law Society office at least four weeks before the intended commencement of articling in the Yukon. This allows the Executive adequate time to review the application thoroughly. Failure to adhere to this timeline may result in delays in the proposed start date of the articling term. However, the Law Society acknowledges that unforeseen and urgent circumstances may arise. In such cases, applicants may request expedited consideration of their application. The Executive will require a written explanation outlining the reasons necessitating expedited processing. For any inquiries or clarifications regarding the application process, applicants are encouraged to contact the Law Society office directly.

4. VOLUME FOUR: SECURING AN ARTICLING POSITION

4.1 Introduction to Volume Four

Securing an articling position is a pivotal step in the journey of becoming a licensed lawyer in Canada. This volume is dedicated to providing comprehensive guidance and practical advice to ITLs seeking to secure articling positions in Canada. Articling not only offers invaluable hands-on experience but also serves as a crucial pathway to fulfilling the licensing requirements set by provincial law societies. In this volume, we will explore various strategies, resources, and best practices to help ITLs navigate the competitive articling market effectively. From crafting standout resumes and cover letters to leveraging job search engines and networking opportunities, we will cover essential aspects of the articling application process. Additionally, we will delve into alternative avenues for gaining legal experience and enhancing competitiveness in the job market. Whether you are a recent law school graduate or an experienced legal professional transitioning to the Canadian legal landscape, this volume aims to empower you with the knowledge and tools needed to secure a rewarding articling position. By following the guidance provided herein and leveraging available resources, you can position yourself for success in your pursuit of articling opportunities in Canada.

4.2 Networking for Articling: An Introvert's Perspective

If you're a professional in the Canadian legal industry, experienced or new, then you're no stranger to the concept of networking. The strong sense of collegiality is one of the defining features of this industry, where professionals are generous with their time and often willing to help young lawyers. As ITLs networking at first may seem daunting for a multitude of reasons. However, over time, you may come to appreciate its importance and even enjoy it.

As ITLs, we often lack opportunities such as summer positions in Canadian law firms, attending OCIs (On Campus Interviews), constant guidance from university career counselling officers, industry networking events, and similar benefits enjoyed by law students in Canada. What we do have though, are diverse educational and professional experiences, and a strong desire to carve out a name in the profession. This is where networking can prove to be an immensely helpful tool. Something as simple as a brief phone call conversation or a coffee-meet might lead to a long-lasting professional connection. Keep in mind, not every meeting is going to translate into a job offer or result in enhancing your career goals. That said, with a little preparation and research before networking, you can ensure you reach out to the right individuals and learn to manage expectations. Not all advice will be applicable to you, but networking helps gain perspective stemming from personal experiences, and this makes the process unique.

To make the most out of these meetings, try to learn as much as you can about the lawyer you seek to network with – what about their experience speaks to you? This could be a common field of interest, similar background, or someone you aspire to be. It helps to always be open and honest about what you seek and any concerns you hold. One of the most underrated pieces of advice is

“be yourself.” Basing your outreach on this nugget of wisdom will help you define your goals better and take away the stress attached to networking. Lastly, do not shy away from being part of associations and relevant ITL organizations (e.g., Toronto Lawyers Association, SABA, The ITL Network, Ontario Bar Association, Calgary Bar Association, Association of Women Lawyers, Calgary Black Chambers, etc.) and keep an eye out for social events which are regularly hosted by firms and universities.

4.3 Preparing Your Resume & Cover Letter

Securing an articling position in Canada is a competitive endeavor, especially for ITLs navigating the unique challenges of the Canadian legal landscape. A well-crafted resume and cover letter are essential tools for ITLs to showcase their qualifications, experiences, and suitability for articling roles. Before delving into the specifics of resume and cover letter writing, it's crucial to understand their purpose in the articling application process. Your resume serves as a concise summary of your education, work experience, skills, and accomplishments, while your cover letter provides an opportunity to personalize your application and articulate why you are the ideal candidate for the position.

- ❖ A well-structured resume should include the following:
 - **Contact Information:** Your full name, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn profile (if available) should be prominently displayed at the top of the page.
 - **Professional Summary/Objective:** A brief statement highlighting your career objectives, key skills, and qualifications.
 - **Education:** List your academic credentials, including degrees, diplomas, and relevant coursework, in reverse chronological order. Remember to interpret the class of your grades so the recruiter understands the equivalence of this in Canada.
 - **Work Experience:** Detail your relevant work experience, including internships, clerkships, and any legal or non-legal roles that demonstrate your skills and expertise.
 - **Skills:** Highlight your relevant skills, such as legal research, writing, negotiation, and language proficiency.
 - **Achievements:** Include any notable achievements or awards that showcase your capabilities and accomplishments.
 - **Professional Affiliations:** Mention any memberships in professional associations or organizations relevant to the legal field.
 - **References:** Optionally, you may include references or indicate that they are available upon request.

- ❖ A well written cover letter should complement your resume and provide additional context for your application. Customize your resume and cover letter for each application to align with the requirements and preferences of the employer. Research the firm or organization, understand their practice areas, values, and culture, and tailor your application to demonstrate how you can contribute to their team and fit into their organization. Here are some tips for crafting an effective cover letter:
 - **Personalization:** Address the letter to the hiring manager or recruiter by name, if possible. Customize the letter for each application by mentioning the specific role and employer.
 - **Introduction:** Start with a strong opening paragraph that grabs the reader's attention and explains why you are interested in the position.
 - **Skills & Experience:** Highlight your relevant skills, experiences, and accomplishments that make you a strong candidate for the role. Provide specific examples to illustrate your qualifications.
 - **Fit with the Firm/Organization:** Demonstrate your knowledge of the firm or organization and explain why you are excited about the opportunity to contribute to their team. This is also your opportunity to discuss other relevant experiences in Canada including volunteer experiences and how this makes you a good fit for the firm.
 - **Closing:** Conclude the letter with a polite and confident closing statement, expressing your enthusiasm for the role and your readiness to discuss further in an interview.

Before submitting your application, carefully proofread and edit your resume and cover letter to ensure accuracy, clarity, and professionalism. Look for spelling and grammar errors, formatting inconsistencies, and any information that may need clarification or improvement. Take the time to tailor your application, highlight your strengths, and present yourself in the best possible light to prospective employers. With a well-crafted resume and cover letter, you can stand out from the crowd and position yourself for success in your articling journey.

4.4 Job Search Engines

Once the NCA Examinations are completed, research is done, and the resume is polished, the next question arises: Where can one find job opportunities to apply to?

For many NCA candidates, the reality is that they lack regular access to law schools' career offices, which typically provide Canadian law school students with advance notice of available jobs and On-Campus Interview cycles. Consequently, it becomes imperative for candidates to familiarize themselves with where the best law jobs will be posted and when they will be available.

- ❖ **viLawPortal:** <https://recruitedn.viglobalcloud.com/>

For anyone interested in “Big Law” and in trying to get to the same summer and articling job competition cycles as Canadian law students, the viLawPortal website is crucial to sign up for. Many of the larger firms and government departments will post their articling and summer jobs on this website. Our friends at the ITLNCA Network have created a really helpful and detailed guide on how to make an account and search for jobs on this portal, which can be found here: <https://itln.ca/vilawportal-instructions-1>.

❖ **NALP Canadian Directory of Legal Employers:** <https://www.nalpcanada.com/>

The NALP Directory is an excellent resource for finding employers who tend to hire for summer and articling level positions. This directory is updated frequently and allows you to set up mail alerts for when specific employers are hiring.

❖ **Law Job Exchange Facebook Group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lawstudentjobs/>

This Facebook group started a few years ago to post and share information about Canadian legal jobs. Since then, it has grown into a very active and supportive online community where not only are jobs posted, but there are also loads of members (including ITLs) to ask questions about job application processes and issues. The Law Job Exchange in particular is a great place to find postings for non-Bay Street, “non-traditional” articling and legal career opportunities. Regularly you will find postings for places such as legal clinics, sole practitioner firms, and in-house counsel positions.

❖ **Ontario Reports:** <https://digital.ontarioreports.ca/>

While the classified section of the Ontario Reports, or ORs as many lawyers call it, are more a hub for post-articling level positions, this is still a very good job-hunting resource to be aware of. Many big and small firms, and even government organisations, post their jobs in the Ontario Reports. Their job postings are updated in their classified “careers” section very frequently. Even if there are no articling positions in a given edition of the ORs, it will provide insights into the firms hiring at the time.

❖ **Ontario Public Services (OPS)’s GO Jobs Website:** <https://www.gojobs.gov.on.ca>

While many OPS provincial summer and articling jobs will be posted to viLawPortal, they often also get posted on the GO Jobs website. As well, the OPS’s job boards are a great source for those that are looking for meaningful law-adjacent employment while they finish their NCA examinations. They regularly post for part and full-time court administrative positions, such as counter services and court reporters.

❖ **Federal Department of Justice’s Legal Excellence Program:** <https://www.justice.gc.ca>

While this is less a job board and more information on a specific opportunity, the above website is worth mentioning for anyone interested in a federal government job. There are opportunities to article with the federal Department of Justice in different parts of the country through its “Legal Excellence” program. Jobs and opportunities can be found through the above link.

❖ **Indeed Job Board:** [Indeed.ca](https://www.indeed.ca)

With millions of job postings across various industries, Indeed is a go-to platform for job seekers worldwide. ITLs can use Indeed's advanced search filters to find articling opportunities in their desired location and practice area.

❖ **LinkedIn Job Board:** [LinkedIn.ca](https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/)

As a professional networking platform, LinkedIn offers a wealth of job postings tailored to candidates' qualifications and career interests. ITLs can leverage LinkedIn's job search feature to identify articling positions and connect with legal professionals in their network.

4.5 Articling Positions (Regulating Compensation)

The issue of employers seeking articling candidates without compensation raises significant concerns within the legal community. While articling is an essential step in the path to licensure for aspiring lawyers, it often involves long hours of work and significant contributions to the firm or organization. Expecting articling candidates to work without compensation not only undervalues their skills and contributions but also perpetuates inequities within the legal profession. It can create barriers to entry for candidates from underprivileged backgrounds who may not have the financial means to support themselves while working for free. Additionally, unpaid articling positions may disproportionately impact ITLs who may already face challenges in navigating the Canadian legal landscape. Addressing this issue requires a collective effort from legal regulators, employers, and stakeholders to ensure fair and equitable treatment of articling candidates and promote diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

In the last several years, mandating and regulating pay for articling position has been a topic of debate across Canada’s provincial law societies. Positions on this issue vary between the different Provinces. In Ontario, as of October 27, 2022, the Law Society of Ontario (“LSO”) has made it mandatory for lawyer licensing candidates to be paid a minimum wage of \$620.00 per week starting in the 2023-2024 licensing cycle. Whereas previously, due to exemptions in provincial employment standards for lawyers, it was commonplace to see ads in Ontario for unpaid articling placements, it is now no longer permissible to article for free.

In British Columbia, lawyer licensing candidates are similarly excluded from the Province’s *Employment Standards Act*. The governing board of the Law Society of British Columbia recently

endorsed in principle establishing minimum levels of financial compensation and maximum hours of work for licensing candidates. It is currently engaging with the legal profession in British Columbia on what these “minimum levels of compensation” and “maximum hours of work” should look like. For more information, see their May 2022 consultation document here: <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/becoming/consultation-students.pdf>

Alberta on the other hand stands out from other jurisdictions due to its provincial employment laws. Unlike Ontario and British Columbia, the Alberta *Employment Standards Code* does not exclude lawyers and articling students from its provisions. This means that articling students are entitled to at least minimum wage in Alberta as enumerated in its employment legislation. It is therefore illegal for legal employers to hire an unpaid articling student in Alberta. For more information, visit the Law Society of Alberta’s website. ITLs in other provinces should contact their provincial law societies for clarification on pay requirements.

ITLs are advised to think carefully before accepting an unpaid articling position even where it is permissible under provincial employment standards’ laws. In the hunt for experience and the desire to get your foot in the door for the first time in a new country, it may be tempting to think that an unpaid articling position or “internship” is a good opportunity, even if it sets you back financially. However, it is important to balance this desire with not being taken undue advantage of as a newcomer. ITLs deserve, and indeed in some provinces, are entitled to, proper compensation for the work and experience they bring to their placements and articling positions. Beware of employers that try to convince you otherwise.

4.6 Getting Your Articles Abridged

Abridgement is the reduction of the length of the articling duration to become a licensed lawyer. It is only available to candidates who choose to article, and in Ontario, the LSO does not accept applications to abridge the entire articling term. If you choose Law Practice Program instead of articling, the duration of the Law Practice Program cannot be reduced. The Law Society of Alberta also offers abridgement of articles to ITLs with relevant experience however, the focus of this section will be on the process in Ontario. If you are undergoing the process in another Province, we encourage you to reach out to the relevant law society to find more about the process in your Province.

There are two possible measures that one can take to abridge the articling duration:

- ❖ An abridgement on compassionate grounds; or
- ❖ An abridgement based on prior legal experience.

Abridgement on compassionate grounds is a three-step process:

- completing the application based on compassionate grounds;

- attaching any supporting documentation; and
- sending a completed application to articling@lso.ca.

Under this category, granting of an abridgement is discretionary and assessed on a case-by-case basis. **The articling duration can only be abridged for a period of up to 6 weeks.**

Some compassionate grounds that the law society may consider are family responsibility, prolonged illness or any other ground that may be deemed compassionate by the Law Society. As a part of the application, one must include a letter from their principal which entails the date of commencement of the articling term and the amount of time by which the articles are proposed to be reduced. **This letter must be sent by the principal directly to the law society at articling@lso.ca**

On the other hand, the LSO may approve an abridgement of a candidate's articling term based on prior legal experience where the Candidate has been licensed to practice law in another Province, territory or foreign jurisdiction and has practised as a lawyer in another jurisdiction or has had other legal experience. The general process for an abridgement of the articling term based on prior legal experience is as follows:

- the candidate submits the abridgement application and all of the candidate's supporting documents;
- third parties submit supporting documents;
- the LSO reviews the application and supporting documents;
- as appropriate, the LSO sends questions or requests for additional documentation to the candidate or the candidate's referee(s);
- once the application is submitted in full and the review process has commenced, the LSO issues an invoice to the candidate for the application fee;
- the abridgement application is subject to a detailed review; and
- a decision regarding the requested abridgement is sent to the candidate.

Candidates eligible for an abridgement based on prior legal experience must meet specific criteria outlined by the LSO. This includes being licensed to practice law in another Province, territory, or foreign jurisdiction, and having practiced as a lawyer in that jurisdiction, or having other legal experience post-completion of a law degree. However, experience obtained before completing a Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree is not considered prior legal experience, including experiences during enrollment in a law program. When evaluating abridgement requests, the LSO considers factors such as the length, recency, nature, scope, and diversity of the candidate's legal experience, as well as its relevance to the experiential training competencies established by the Law Society. Candidates must provide an original letter detailing their legal experience, including descriptions of practice settings and how the experience aligns with the competencies. Additionally, a letter of reference from lawyer or judge referees is required, outlining specific examples of the candidate's demonstration of the competencies. Candidates licensed in another

jurisdiction must provide an original Certificate of Standing from each governing body where they were licensed. If the candidate has already begun articling, a letter from their articling principal or firm acknowledging the abridgement request and detailing time off taken is also required. All documents must be submitted in PDF or Word format to articling@lso.ca.

4.7 LinkedIn for Networking

Networking is perhaps the most popular tool when it comes to building your legal career in Canada, especially as an ITL. While old school in-person networking has a charm of its own, LinkedIn is a platform which has garnered popularity in helping professionals reach out to a wider yet targeted audience. Like any other tool, it is important to know how to use it to maximise your output and put out your best foot forward. Whether it is to make some professional connections, be on the radar of recruiters, stay in touch with other professionals, or understand the trends in legal market - LinkedIn is indispensable.

❖ Laying the groundwork

Before you reach out to anyone on LinkedIn, make sure your profile is updated. A professional profile picture, updated professional experience and educational qualifications and a short and crisp headline goes a long way in building your credibility and leaves a lasting impression. Providing a brief synopsis about your experience and interests in the 'About' section is a great way to introduce yourself to others. It is advisable to keep this portion concise and limit it only to the key aspects of your experience. If you know the area of law you're interested in or what type of opportunity you are looking for, including this demonstrates your interest for potential employers.

❖ Connection requests with context

Sending a personalized message with your connection request is a recommended practice. [People are more likely to accept the connection request if it is accompanied by a message.](#) There is a limit of 300 characters for the message, therefore, the message needs to be brief and succinct. Your message may include the reasons behind connecting, interest and/or curiosity in their area of practice, common grounds of interest or research, or general inquiry about work culture and practices. A personal message will make your request stand out amongst the numerous messages that lawyers receive on a daily basis, especially if you have met the person at an event and are following up! After connecting, reaching out to set up a coffee chat is another excellent way to network and find out more about that specific area of law.

❖ Connect with organisations and associations

A number of organisations and associations regularly post information that is beneficial as an ITL. You will find updates on the various networking events and meetups that they organise. Some of the organisations that you can consider following are listed below –

- [SABA Toronto](#)
- [The ITL Network](#)
- [JOY – Just One Yes](#)
- [NCA Network](#)
- [Global Lawyers of Canada](#)
- [ITLNCA NetworkS](#)
- [FACL](#)
- [Canadian Association of Black Lawyers](#)
- [Ontario Bar Association](#)
- [Toronto Lawyers Association](#)
- [Calgary Black Chambers](#)
- [Association of Women Lawyers](#)

A number of law firms and universities in Ontario also organise events catered to law students and junior professionals. These events are an excellent opportunity build connections in the legal market. Remember to follow these pages to see posts about various events and if time permits, sign up for these events!

❖ Meaningful engagement

Posting interesting developments in the legal field, writing op-eds, or sharing any new professional experience can lead to more engagement on LinkedIn. LinkedIn also provides the option of publishing articles, videos or creating polls. Lawyers love to keep themselves updated with the latest developments in the industry and discover new perspectives. So, don't be hesitant to be a part of this dialogue – and where there is none, create one! When sharing someone else's post, make sure you add your perspective to it as well. You would want your connections to know 'you' through the posts that you share.

❖ Terms of engagement

Commenting and liking posts is perhaps the most common way to engage. Some key tenets to remember in this regard are avoiding questions which can be easily researched and asking questions which invites further fruitful engagement. If it is an article or case law focusing on a key legal development which intersects your area of interest, then this can be a perfect segue to connect and establish long lasting connections! Building a healthy network on LinkedIn requires time and effort. However, with the right approach it can smoothen your process of finding the right job, with the right work culture and the right people.

5. VOLUME FIVE: THRIVING AS AN ITL IN CANADA

5.1 Introduction to Volume Five

In this volume, we shift our focus beyond the journey of becoming a licensed lawyer in Canada to explore what happens next - how ITLs can navigate and excel in their legal careers after achieving licensure. Becoming a licensed lawyer in Canada is a significant accomplishment, marking the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. However, the journey does not end there. For ITLs, transitioning into the professional realm and establishing oneself in the Canadian legal landscape present new challenges and opportunities.

5.2 Mental Health

The licensing process, in itself, can be stressful. That stress is often compounded by the stress of paying off student debt, looking for job opportunities, networking, and major transitions in life. It's crucial to prioritise and care for your mental health, especially when navigating through challenging times like the NCA process. Stress can take a toll on your emotional and physical well-being, but with the right strategies, you can build resilience and maintain a healthy mental state. Here are some tips to help you take care of your mental health:

❖ Reach Out for Support

You don't have to face stress alone – and we are here to help! Reach out to friends, family members, or a mental health professional for support. Communities like the ITL Network and SABA Toronto, through their mentorship programs and services, are here to help students and junior lawyers navigate the profession with support – remember, you are not alone. Talking about your feelings and concerns can provide relief and perspective. Social connections are a powerful buffer against stress, so don't hesitate to lean on your support network.

❖ Acknowledge Your Feelings

Acknowledging your feelings is an important part of managing stress. It is acceptable to be stressed and anxious – in fact, we've all been there! Don't dismiss or suppress your emotions; instead, allow yourself to feel them. It's okay to be sad, anxious, or frustrated during tough times. Recognizing and accepting your emotions is the first step toward healing.

❖ Practice Self-Care

Self-care is a vital component of maintaining good mental health. Make time for activities that bring you joy and relaxation, whether it's reading a book, taking a walk, or practising meditation. Prioritise getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, and engaging in regular physical activity to support your overall well-being.

❖ Manage Stressors

Create coping mechanisms for the unique pressures in your life by identifying them. Prioritise your to-do list, break up big projects into smaller, achievable steps, and create attainable objectives. It is possible to feel more in control of stressful situations by learning to handle your stressors.

❖ Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

It might feel like you should not take time to relax at this point in your journey but that is far from the truth. Not only should you relax – you need to relax to build a sustainable and successful career. Stress reduction methods such as mindfulness and relaxation can be quite powerful. Progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, and deep breathing techniques can all be used to relax the body and mind. You can apply these techniques to your everyday routine to gradually increase your resilience.

❖ Limit Information Overload

Continuously being exposed to stressful information and situations might make stress levels worse. Limit the amount of time you spend reading the news, and make sure the sources you select are trustworthy and fair. Disconnect as you need. Although it's important to stay abreast of current affairs, too much negative information might be bad for your mental health. Also, avoid going down rabbit holes of research into career paths.

❖ Be aware of resources

We are fortunate to have an abundance of resources within our profession and in various communities. For starters, the Law Society of Ontario's Member Assistance Program (which is available to students) and Assist in Alberta are excellent resources to confidently speak to someone about mental health who has experience in the legal profession. Similarly, there are numerous services in various communities.

❖ Seek Professional Help

Don't be afraid to seek expert assistance if stress starts to overtake you and persists. A therapist or mental health counsellor can offer direction and support catered to your requirements. There is no shame in asking for assistance when you need it and making a conscious effort to look after your mental health is a sign of strength.

In conclusion, an important part of overall well-being is taking care of your mental health when things are uncertain, in transition and stressful – like the licensing process. You may increase your resilience and handle difficult situations more easily by identifying your feelings, getting support, taking care of yourself, managing stress, and adding relaxing techniques to your daily routine.

Keep in mind that it's acceptable to seek assistance when necessary and that your mental health deserves the same priority as your physical health. By doing this, you can go through difficult circumstances stronger and more resiliently. And most importantly, remember, you are not alone – many of us have been in your shoes and we are on this journey with you!

5.3 Life Post-Licensing: An ITL's Perspective

The NCA process can indeed be lengthy, isolating, and bewildering. It may seem like an endless journey without a clear endpoint while you're immersed in it. However, it's essential to remember that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Many professionals have successfully navigated through the NCA process and emerged on the other side. It may be challenging, but it is achievable, and there are supportive communities and resources available to help you along the way. The following information was shared from the perspective of a fellow ITL.

I went through the NCA process between 2013 to 2015. Having done an LLB in England without a prior undergraduate degree, I had to take ten exams. I also had to build my connections in the profession from scratch. This meant that I was forced to overcome my anxiety around networking and threw myself instead into getting involved with legal associations. At the time, I remember feeling overwhelmed and unsure if I would actually end up becoming the kind of lawyer I wanted to become. The “tag” of being an NCA candidate as opposed to a Canadian law school graduate seemed to follow me around everywhere, making me feel as if I was a less desirable candidate for an articling position.

It was through networking and involvement that I landed my articling position in an employment law boutique, where I was eventually hired back as an associate. By the time I left private practice to move to the legal clinics in 2019, the NCA process that once felt so attached to my professional identity had long ceased to matter for job applications. When I applied for jobs and made lateral moves, what mattered to employers was my experience, skill, and aptitude since becoming a lawyer. Where I went to law school came up more as a conversation topic in networking than a selection criterion for jobs.

At the time of writing this, it will have been almost a decade since I finished the NCA process and became a lawyer. Time has flown by and I feel privileged to have had the career opportunities I have had. At this point, I can confidently look back and say to any other NCA candidates that with some perseverance, you can and will make it through the process to build a meaningful career path for yourself. I say this not just from my own experience. Through my involvement in the profession, I have met several other former NCA candidates who have gone on to have successful, fulfilling careers in the Canadian legal profession. They work in private practice, in government, in legal clinics, and in-house. Some own their own firms that might employ other NCA candidates. They are leaders in bar associations and community groups. They give back and mentor other NCA

candidates. Some, such as Justice Akhtar of the Ontario Court of Justice, have even become members of the judiciary decades after doing the NCA process.

The NCA process also brings a unique perspective and appreciation for the role you can play in the legal profession. All these years later, I look back to my time as an NCA candidate with pride and gratitude. Had I not been forced to put myself out there, I would not have found the mentors and friends in the profession that I have today. Had I not become involved in organisations like the South Asian Bar Association and the Ontario Bar Association, I would not have had the opportunity to be part of so many amazing initiatives on equity, diversity and inclusion. Had I not had to enter the profession as an “outsider”, I may have taken my spot here for granted. The sense of social justice that I practise as a lawyer today can be directly traced to my time as an NCA candidate.

Years later, I am in fact grateful for the lessons I learned in having gone through the process I did. When you find your own way through the NCA process, I promise you will feel the same.

5.4 Building Your Clientele

ITLs who have successfully completed the NCA process and are qualified to practise law in Canada possess a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Unlike Canadian-trained lawyers, ITLs face distinct obstacles in building a clientele. However, their international experiences can be transformed into invaluable assets, offering multi-jurisdictional expertise that can set them apart and help them thrive in the Canadian legal landscape. In this section, will explore the challenges faced by ITLs in Canada and how they can leverage their international experiences to build a thriving clientele.

Navigating the Canadian legal landscape poses unique challenges for ITLs, from the absence of a local professional network and unfamiliarity with legal practices to limited knowledge of local culture, all affecting perceptions and trust.

5.4.1 Challenges

One significant hurdle that ITLs encounter is the lack of a local professional network, unlike their Canadian-educated counterparts who benefit from alumni connections and established relationships within the legal community. Moreover, unfamiliarity with Canadian legal practices, procedures, and local laws poses additional obstacles, making it challenging to navigate the legal system effectively. Understanding and adapting to the local culture, norms, and social dynamics is crucial for building trust and rapport with clients, yet this may prove difficult for ITLs. Additionally, there may be a perception among some clients about the competency and trustworthiness of lawyers educated and trained abroad, further complicating the process of building credibility and securing clients. Addressing these challenges requires ITLs to proactively

engage in networking, continuous learning, and cultural adaptation to establish themselves successfully in the Canadian legal profession.

5.4.2 Opportunities

ITLs possess a distinctive array of advantages that set them apart in the Canadian legal landscape. These advantages stem from their multi-jurisdictional expertise, diverse language skills, niche specializations, and heightened cultural sensitivity, collectively empowering them to excel in their legal careers.

- ❖ Firstly, their multi-jurisdictional expertise equips them with invaluable insights into international legal matters, offering clients unique perspectives and solutions. This breadth of experience allows them to navigate complex cross-border issues with ease, making them invaluable assets in an increasingly globalized legal environment.
- ❖ Secondly, many ITLs boast diverse language skills, enabling them to communicate effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds. In a multicultural country like Canada, this linguistic versatility enhances their ability to connect with a broader client base, fostering trust and understanding.
- ❖ Moreover, their specialization in niche areas of law further distinguishes them in the legal profession. ITLs often bring expertise in specialized fields relevant to their home countries or international practice, positioning them as sought-after authorities in these areas.
- ❖ Lastly, their exposure to diverse cultures and legal systems instils them with a heightened level of cultural sensitivity. This sensitivity enables them to navigate diverse cultural contexts with finesse, fostering meaningful connections and relationships with clients from different backgrounds.

In essence, the unique advantages possessed by ITLs empower them to thrive in the Canadian legal landscape, offering unparalleled insights, expertise, and cultural competence to clients and colleagues alike.

5.4.3 Strategies

There are many strategies for ITLs to build clientele. This can be achieved by actively networking, staying updated on local laws through courses or mentorship, establishing a strong online presence, educating clients on their expertise, and leveraging language skills for wider reach.

- ❖ Networking

ITLs should actively engage in networking events, conferences, and legal associations. Building a professional network within the Canadian legal community can help overcome the initial lack of local connections.

❖ Continuous Learning:

Staying updated with Canadian laws and legal practices is crucial. ITLs should consider taking courses, attending workshops, or seeking mentorship from experienced Canadian lawyers.

❖ Marketing and Branding:

Developing a strong online presence through a professional website and active social media profiles can help establish credibility and reach potential clients. Sharing insights on international legal matters can also showcase their expertise.

❖ Client Education:

Educating potential clients about the value of their multi-jurisdictional experience and specialisation can help build trust. Offering seminars or webinars on international legal topics can demonstrate their expertise.

❖ Language Services:

Leveraging language skills to offer services to clients who prefer communication in their native language can be a unique selling point. This can expand the client base significantly.

While ITLs in Canada face distinct challenges in building a clientele, they possess unique advantages that can set them apart in a competitive legal landscape. By actively addressing their challenges, leveraging their international experiences, and demonstrating their expertise, these lawyers can establish successful legal careers and build thriving client bases. With dedication, continuous learning, and effective marketing, they can turn their diverse backgrounds into powerful assets in the Canadian legal field.

5.5 Giving Back to the Legal Community

In the legal profession, giving back to the community comes in various forms, contributing to a just legal landscape. Pro bono work is a noble way for lawyers to provide expertise, ensuring legal representation isn't limited to the privileged. From aiding in bankruptcy to handling criminal cases, pro bono work fulfils by extending aid to those in need. Mentorship lets seasoned lawyers guide newcomers through their careers. Volunteering at non-profits or legal clinics lets lawyers leverage their skills for positive social change. Participation in bar associations and providing continuing

legal education shapes the legal profession, fostering collective responsibility. For those eager to make a difference, identifying skills, researching local opportunities, attending events, offering services, and committing to ongoing learning are pivotal steps. Lawyers thus contribute to a more accessible and equitable legal system.

Here are some ways that you as an NCA candidate can think of giving back before or after your call to the Bar:

❖ Pro Bono Work

Providing pro bono legal services is an excellent way for lawyers to give back to their community. This involves volunteering their time to provide legal services to individuals or organisations who cannot afford to pay for legal representation. Pro bono work can include anything from helping someone file for bankruptcy to representing a client in a criminal case. Many lawyers find pro bono work to be extremely rewarding because they can help those who would otherwise not have access to legal services.

❖ Mentorship

Becoming a mentor to law students or new lawyers is another great way for lawyers to give back to their community. Mentoring can involve offering advice, sharing experiences, and providing guidance on how to navigate the legal profession. This can be especially helpful for those who are just starting in their careers or who may be facing challenges in their current roles. Lawyers who have had successful careers can pass on their knowledge and expertise to the next generation of legal professionals.

❖ Volunteer Work

ITLs can also give back to their community by volunteering their time to non-profit organisations, community legal clinics, or legal aid societies. This could involve helping with legal research, providing legal advice, or even serving on the board of a non-profit organisation. By volunteering their time and expertise, lawyers can help these organisations make a positive impact on their communities.

❖ Continuing Legal Education

ITLs can help their legal community by offering to give seminars or presentations on topics related to their area of expertise. This can help other lawyers stay up-to-date on changes in the law and improve their skills. By sharing their knowledge with others in the legal profession, lawyers can help raise the bar for the entire profession.

❖ Participate in Bar Associations

Joining local or national bar associations can provide opportunities for ITLs to give back to their legal community. They can serve on committees, participate in events, or contribute to legal publications. By getting involved in these organisations, lawyers can help shape the direction of the legal profession and make a positive impact on their community.

If you are interested in giving back to the legal community, here are some steps you can take to get started:

❖ Identify Your Skills and Interests

Think about your skills, interests, and areas of expertise. This will help you determine how you can best contribute to the legal community. For example, if you are a litigator, you may want to consider providing pro bono legal services to low-income clients. If you are a legal technology expert, you may want to consider participating in legal hackathons or writing legal blogs on emerging legal technologies.

❖ Research Local Legal Organizations

Research local legal organisations in your area to find out about volunteer opportunities, mentoring programs, or other ways to get involved. This could include legal aid societies, bar associations, or non-profit organisations that provide legal services.

❖ Attend Legal Events and Conferences

Attend legal events and conferences to network with other legal professionals and learn about new developments in the legal profession. This can help you stay up-to-date on changes in the law and make connections with other lawyers who are interested in giving back to the legal community.

❖ Offer Your Services

Once you have identified an organisation or opportunity that aligns with your skills and interests, reach out and offer your services. This could involve volunteering your time, serving as a mentor, or providing pro bono legal services.

❖ Keep Learning

Continue to learn and grow in your area of expertise. Attend continuing legal education courses, read legal publications, and stay informed about changes in the law. This will help you stay up to date on important legal issues and make a greater impact on the legal community.

Overall, there are many ways that ITLs can give back to their legal community. By doing so, they can help make a positive impact on the legal profession and help those in need of legal services.

Whether it's through pro bono work, mentorship, volunteering, continuing education, or participation in bar associations, there are many opportunities for lawyers to make a difference in their community.

6. VOLUME SIX: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

6.1 Introduction to Volume Six

Welcome to the final volume of the ITL Manual, dedicated to addressing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) encountered by ITLs navigating the Canadian licensing process. In this volume, we aim to provide clarity and guidance on common inquiries that arise throughout the journey of becoming licensed and establishing a legal career in Canada. From inquiries about the NCA process to questions about articling positions, alternative career paths, and job opportunities, this volume serves as a valuable resource for ITLs seeking answers and insights to support their professional endeavors. Whether you're just beginning your journey or looking to enhance your understanding of the Canadian legal system, this is designed to provide informative responses to the questions you may encounter along the way.

6.2 Some FAQs

❖ What is the general process for becoming a licensed lawyer?

Becoming a licensed lawyer typically involves completing the necessary legal education, fulfilling experiential training requirements, and passing licensing examinations.

❖ What are the experiential training requirements?

Experiential training entails completing practical legal training through articling positions or alternative programs designed to provide hands-on experience in legal practice.

❖ Can I apply for licensing while still completing experiential training?

In certain jurisdictions, it is possible to apply for licensing while still undergoing experiential training, allowing candidates to begin their legal careers while completing their training requirements. Please contact the law society of the specific Province you are interested in for more information.

❖ Are there any exemptions for the licensing process?

Exemptions from certain licensing requirements may be available for candidates with qualifying experience or those who have completed equivalent programs recognized by the relevant law societies. The Law Society of Ontario offers exemption to ITLs who qualify based on its requirements. See 3.4 – The Provincial Licensing Process – Ontario.

❖ What is the Legal Research and Writing Course?

The legal research and writing course is an 8-week-long, online course which offers useful tips and best practices to improve writing skills. It was designed to help law students educated outside Canada learn how to conduct research and write as they prepare for bar admission and practise in the Canadian legal system. The online course consists of two modules. Each module includes an assignment with a research and writing component, followed by a multiple-choice quiz. Students in the course may also receive direct feedback from trained assessors.

❖ Are there alternative career paths instead of becoming a lawyer?

Yes, there are other alternatives if you decide not to complete the licensing process. This includes, Legal Consulting, Contract Management, Paralegal and Legal Assistant Roles, Policy Development, Legal Ops, Legal Technology, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Academia, etc.

❖ How can I access funding opportunities for the licensing process?

There are several organizations that offer funding, grants and loans for ITLs. This includes Windmill Micro-Lending, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Factors etc. Please note that we are not affiliated with Windmill Micro-lending or the Foreign Credential Recognition Loan Project, and the inclusion of their information in this manual should not be construed as an endorsement of their products or services. If you have any questions, please contact the organizations directly.

❖ Can I complete my Articling Program In-House

There are several companies and organizations that hire ITLs as articling students. In addition, it is possible to transition from a paralegal role or contract management role in-house to legal counsel role. The best approach will be to consider your circumstances and discuss with other ITLs who have done this before and decide the best way forward but articling in-house is definitely a possibility.

RELEVANT LINKS

- ❖ National Committee on Accreditation – www.nca.legal
- ❖ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship.html>
- ❖ Law Society of Ontario - <https://www.lso.ca/home>
- ❖ Law Society of Alberta - <https://www.lawsociety.ab.ca/>
- ❖ Law Society of British Columbia - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/>
- ❖ Law Society of Manitoba – <https://www.lawsociety.mb.ca/>
- ❖ Law Society of Prince Edward Island - <https://lawsocietypei.ca/>
- ❖ Law Society of New Brunswick – <https://lawsociety-barreau.nb.ca/en>
- ❖ Barreau du Québec - <https://www.barreau.qc.ca/fr/>
- ❖ Law Society of Newfoundland & Labrador - <https://lsnl.ca/>
- ❖ Law Society of Saskatchewan - <https://www.lawsociety.sk.ca/>
- ❖ Nova Scotia Barristers' Society - <https://nsbs.org/>
- ❖ Law Society of the Northwest Territories - <https://lawsociety.nt.ca/>
- ❖ The law Society of Yukon - www.lawsocietyyukon.com
- ❖ Law Society of Nunavut - <https://www.lawsociety.nu.ca/>