

Introducing Nicholas Smith: Legal Advocate



"Many community members are experiencing the double whammy of a housing affordability crisis and the pandemic, so I am grateful to have found a role within an organization that the community can lean upon in these difficult times." - Nicholas Smith

There have been lots of behind-the-scenes changes at NSCR over this past, tumultuous year, and we've had to change the ways we welcome new staff and say farewell to those who leave. We all miss the days when we could eat our lunches together and discuss whose turn it is to empty the dishwasher. NSCR provides a wide variety of services to our community. Sharing office space gave us glimpses in to the work everyone does, and reminded us daily of the value NSCR brings to the community. Getting to know our co-workers mostly happens now through emails and zoom meetings, and in some ways, it's even more inspiring to see the ways staff have pivoted to be able to continue providing support and resources to those in need.

Our new Legal Advocate, Nicholas Smith, would love to meet you in person. Since we can't arrange that right now, he sat down and answered some questions about what brought him to NSCR and why he loves working with Legal Services.

What brought you to NSCR?

I worked in private law practice for three years prior to joining NSCR, predominantly as a labour and employment lawyer. NSCR's legal advocacy program presented a fabulous opportunity to apply my experience and training as a lawyer in a broader, public-serving role. Many community members are experiencing the double whammy of a housing affordability crisis and the pandemic, so I am grateful to have found a role within an organization that the community can lean upon in these difficult times.

What do you do in your position?

As a legal advocate, my primary goal is to promote and improve access to justice for members of our community here in the North Shore. In many cases, this involves providing legal information and guidance to help individuals overcome issues pertaining to their employment, housing or receipt of income assistance. I am also able to represent and act on behalf of clients to resolve these issues, whether through negotiating settlements or by appearing at administrative tribunals such as the Residential Tenancy Branch and the Employment Standards Branch.

What do you like best about your role with NSCR so far?

The clients! We have such a diverse community on the North Shore and I have had many rewarding conversations with people of all ages, experiences and backgrounds in my brief tenure so far. I am constantly amazed by the gratitude, friendliness and warmth of my clients, even as they navigate some of the most turbulent moments in their own lives. This only reinforces my motivation to do great work here at NSCR.

What do you do for fun?

With spring around the corner, I am finding any excuse I can to get outside. These days I am busy getting to know the various bird and tree species of Stanley Park (and doing my best to avoid the coyotes!).

Is there anything you'd like the community to know about the services NSCR has to offer?

NSCR has a wide variety of programs and service areas and is incredibly well connected to other community service providers here on the North Shore. If you are looking for information or support but are unsure if NSCR is the right place for your particular circumstances, ask anyways! Chances are that we can either assist you or connect you with the person or organization that can!

Nick, can you give us a sense about the positive impact of your work?

Due to client confidentiality, I can't share exact details of cases with you but here is a scenario that is fictionalized and reflects the kind of work we do on a weekly basis. Our client, a senior citizen, was being terminated from membership with his housing Coop for having missed certain reporting deadlines on multiple occasions. This would result in his eviction after sixteen years of tenancy. He was distraught, as he was a long-term tenant in the building and had missed the deadlines as a result of his tendency to hoard his mail without reviewing its contents. We supported and advocated on behalf of our client at a hearing with the Housing Coop Board and were able to negotiate an agreement that would allow him to remain in the Coop, on the condition that we would assist him in meeting his deadline next year.

We hope you've enjoyed getting to know Nicholas Smith! If you, or someone you know, could benefit from accessing NSCR's Legal Services team, please call us at 604-985-7138.

If you have feedback about this or other articles in The Connector or the work of NSCR, please [let us know](#).

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