

Notice of Intent:

A Consortium for Advancing Community Engagement on Issues Related to Dalits in Canada (Rev.2)

Chetna Association of Canada

Feb. 6, 2025

Introduction:

Over the past thirty years, Chetna Association of Canada (“Chetna”) and its partners have invested in community building and developing partnerships. The Chetna has now built a solid foundation for community engagement related to Dalit History & Presence in Canada.

After the success of the [Dr. Ambedkar Symposium on Emancipation of 2022](#), Chetna decided, in consultation with its partners, to create a consortium of academic and community partners to plan academic and community activities that stimulate research and engagement on the issues that affect Canadians of Dalit ancestry.

This **Notice of Intent** (NOI):

- *Describes the Consortium, and roles and responsibilities of its members.*
- *Describes the scope of the Consortium, which includes developing strategies and plans that sustain and strengthen partnerships; encouraging academic courses in support of Dalit Studies; supporting research and community engagement; preparing evidence-based papers or submissions; hosting events, and, creating momentum for developing an emancipation center along the vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a scholar, activist, and chair of India’s Constitution drafting committee, and,*
- *Provides brief background on initiatives undertaken by Chetna and its partners to enhance awareness of the history, challenges, and contributions made by Dalits in Canada.*

The Chetna invites organizations and scholars interested in supporting the Consortium to contact Jai Birdi, Executive Director, Chetna Association of Canada, at jbirdi@gmail.com.

Roles:

- *Plan, execute, and evaluate the activities of the Consortium.*
- *Provide input and feedback on strategies, actions, or research findings.*
- *Suggest actions or activities for consideration.*
- *Participate in all events and activities if they are available.*

- Advocate and champion the goals of the Consortium.
- *Receive, review, and respond to requests for support letters from partner organizations or other organizations.*
- *Working collaboratively to raise funds for Consortium activities.*

The Consortium will acknowledge contributions of its members in the published material(s).

The Consortium will offer membership to both department or organization representatives as well as scholars committed to advocating and championing the goals of the Consortium.

Governance:

The Consortium will select a member organization to function as an **Executive Sponsor** whose role may include to chair meetings; and lead the planning, coordination, and execution of the strategies and actions of the consortium.

Decision-making will be by consensus. Under urgent situations, the Executive Sponsor will make a decision by a majority vote.

The consortium may appoint task force or action groups to conduct specific, time-limited, functions.

For the first year, Chetna offers to serve as an “Executive Sponsor” and support the development of a Consortium and its strategic plan.

Budget:

The consortium will develop an annual operating budget. The consortium will develop budgets specific for the triennial symposium, and other extraordinary events, separately.

Subject to availability of funds, the Consortium will fund relevant meeting expenses, staffing expenses, and any other costs related costs.

The budget will include both in-kind and financial contributions received.

The Consortium will offer sponsorship opportunities to academic, community, and inclusive corporations.

Evaluation:

Consortium will develop surveys and other tools to gather feedback from its members and stakeholders to support its Continuous Quality Improvement Framework.

Term:

Membership for the consortium is for a term of up-to 3 years, starting as of May 1, 2025.

Frequency of Meetings:

The Consortium will facilitate a minimum of one meeting a year for its members to attend and provide feedback on the overall progress or activities.

The meeting may be virtual or in-person, depending on the agenda and members ability to travel and participate.

Background:

In 1996, GRD Youth Association collaborated with the Indian Consulate Office (Vancouver) and made plans to gift the collected works of Dr. Ambedkar (*Speeches and Writings*, published by the Government of Maharashtra) to the following university libraries:

- *UBC - University of British Columbia (Center for India and South Asia Research)*
- *SFU - Simon Fraser University (WAC Bennett Library in collaboration with Institute for the Humanities)*
- *UVic. - University of Victoria.*

GRD Youth Association gifted a photo of Dr. Ambedkar to Center for India and South Asia Research in 1996. In 2023, Chetna Association of Canada gifted another portrait to the Center for India and South Asia Research.

By 1999, the GRD Youth Association decided to dissolve itself and evolve into a new organization, Chetna Association of Canada ("Chetna").

Chetna continued to build the foundation laid by GRD Youth Association and strengthened the partnership and collaborative efforts. These efforts further resulted in:

- *Coordinating and hosting the International Dalit Conference in Vancouver in 2003.*
- *Gifted and installing the bronze Bust of Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar in the WAC Bennett Library of SFU (Burnaby) in 2004.*
- *Gifted the Dr. Ambedkar Portrait to the City of Burnaby in 2005.*
- *Supported [Dalit Poetics and Politics](#) Conference at UFV in 2013 (led by Dr. Prabhjot Parmar)*
- *Entering into an agreement with the Surrey Libraries to name one of the multi-purpose rooms in honor of Dr. Ambedkar in 2012. The arrangement was for a term of ten years. In 2022, Chetna and Surrey Libraries renewed the agreement to 2032.*
- *Hosting annual memorial lectures in partnership with the various academic departments and community organizations (in 2016). Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lectures in Canada started when the leaders of the Gursharan Singh Memorial Lecture Committee invited the Chetna Association of Canada to be a partner in hosting Dr. Anand Teltumbde and deliver a lecture titled "Red, Blue, and Saffron: Can the left and Dalits in India unite against Hindutva? The partnership was successful and led to the creation of the Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture Planning Committee- represented by the Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation, Chetna Association of Canada, Institute for the Humanities at Simon Fraser University, Center for India and South Asia Research at University of British Columbia, and The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhism and Contemporary Society at the University of British Columbia.*
- *Building on the above referenced partnerships that resulted in the Dr. Ambedkar Memorial lecture in 2016, a [Caste in Canada](#) project was started in 2021 at the University of British Columbia (Principal Investigators - Dr. Anne Murphy and Dr. Suraj*

