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As part of this project, West Coast LEAF gathered rich insights from members of our community. Their expertise and vision are at the heart of this project.

**HOW CAN WE FACILITATE LEARNING ABOUT THE LAW** in a way that is grounded in the vision of community and supports efforts to end oppression? How can we equip people with honest information about the legal system so that they can choose the path that is best for them? These are central questions of the Re-Envisioning Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) project.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

As part of this project, West Coast LEAF staff discussed these questions with members of our community. We gathered rich insights from youth workshop facilitator volunteers, workshop participants, teachers, youth-serving professionals, former West Coast LEAF staff members, and fellow PLEI practitioners and social justice educators. Their expertise and vision are at the heart of this project.

Additionally, the West Coast LEAF staff team reviewed archival materials documenting the history of our organization's PLEI work, as well as literature on critical, decolonizing, feminist, and trauma-informed approaches to PLEI.

The following learnings from the Re-Envisioning PLEI project will inform West Coast LEAF's re-imagining of our work for the years to come.

## **A STRONG GROUNDING IN VALUES IS CRUCIAL FOR PLEI THAT ADVANCES SOCIAL JUSTICE.**

Important social justice values for PLEI include:

- A politics of care (as described by feminist scholar Carrie Rentschler);
- Reflection, curiosity, and learning;
- Humility, cultural humility, and cultural safety;
- Accountability, mutuality, and solidarity;
- Dismantling structural barriers to participation;
- An emphasis on flexible and imperfect processes;
- System-level, long-term change;
- Honesty about power and injustice;
- Critical hope and respect for the resistance of oppressed communities; and
- Honouring the diversity and complexity of communities and cultures.

## **WORLDVIEW MATTERS FOR PLEI.**

PLEI that is accountable to community must pay attention to deeply held assumptions and challenge the dominance of colonial worldviews.

## **PLEI SHOULD BE PLANNED AND ASSESSED WITH A FOCUS ON GOALS AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS — BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.**

PLEI has great potential to:

- Contribute to community-led movements for social change;
- Reduce power imbalances based on access to information;
- Support self-determination through informed decision-making;
- Prompt critical reflection about what justice can look like; and
- Build community connections and capacity.

At the same time, there is a risk that PLEI can:

- Reinforce power imbalances;
- Expose marginalized communities to violent backlash; and
- Be framed as an alternative to legal representation and a justification for devastating cuts to legal services.

The path forward for PLEI is based on accountable relationships and community leadership. Wise practices for PLEI centre learners, their needs, and their self-determination.


## WISE AND ETHICAL PRACTICES CAN HELP ENSURE THAT PLEI ADVANCES SOCIAL JUSTICE RATHER THAN UNDERMINING IT.

These practices include:

- Talking to community and asking meaningful questions when planning PLEI;
- Building evaluation into every phase of PLEI work;
- Holding relationships at the centre;
- Creating space for many kinds of communication, including conflict and challenge;
- Navigating power dynamics with awareness and care;
- Engaging learners, their life experiences, and their knowledge;
- Prioritizing cultural safety and relevance;
- Offering an honest and critical perspective on the law;
- Recognizing the power of feeling, thinking, and acting (not just thinking);
- Dismantling barriers to learning and participation; and
- Using trauma-informed practices.

The path forward for PLEI is based on accountable relationships and community leadership. Wise practices for PLEI centre learners, their needs, and their self-determination.

PLEI must address injustice frankly to avoid deepening it—including injustice within the legal system. Honest information about the law may lead learners to choose non-legal or legal strategies. It may also inspire them to work to realize new visions for justice.

A photograph showing two men in a meeting. One man, with dark hair and a light blue shirt, is leaning over a table and pointing at a laptop screen. The other man, with light hair and a plaid shirt, is sitting at the table, looking at the screen. The background shows a whiteboard with various sticky notes and a lamp.

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