

# LEAFlet

RAISING OUR VOICES FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

**THANK YOU** for supporting the 2018 Equality Breakfast / page 4



Executive Director Kasari Govender, left, with keynote speaker Robyn Doolittle.



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## LITIGATING FOR EQUALITY

Each year, West Coast LEAF is involved in a number of cases that have the potential to further equality and justice for all women and those who experience gender discrimination. In the last few months, rulings have been made in two cases in which we intervened: a constitutional challenge to solitary confinement, and a human rights complaint filed on behalf of people who are homeless.

**ON APRIL 11, 2018**, the BC Court of Appeal (BCCA) released its long-awaited judgment in the *VANDU v DVIBIA* case, which began as a human rights complaint filed with the BC Human Rights Tribunal on behalf of Vancouver's street homeless population. The complaint was filed against the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association for its use of the Downtown Ambassadors, a private security program that carried out "removals" of homeless people from the downtown core.

The Tribunal dismissed the complaint in 2012. Eventually the case was heard by the BCCA in 2016. Unfortunately, in its April 11, 2018, ruling, the Court unanimously upheld the Tribunal's decision to dismiss VANDU's human rights complaint.

The Court held that the Ambassadors' practices were not discriminatory, notwithstanding its acknowledgement that the actions of the Ambassadors had negatively impacted homeless people, and that Indigenous and disabled people are vastly over-represented in Vancouver's street homeless population. The Court said that more evidence was required in this case to make a claim of discrimination under the *BC Human Rights Code*.

West Coast LEAF and Community Legal Assistance Society jointly intervened to argue that a flexible approach is required to assess all the available evidence to ensure access to justice for marginalized people.

**ON JANUARY 17, 2018**, the BC Supreme Court released a landmark judgment in *BCCLA and JHSC v Canada*, ruling that solitary confinement violates the *Charter* by harming prisoners' life, liberty,

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## IS THAT LEGAL? NOW IN TRANSLATION

West Coast LEAF's popular legal guide to youth rights and responsibilities on the internet, called *Is That Legal?*, is now available online and in print in five languages other than English. With assistance from Legal Aid BC, the guide is now available in Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Punjabi, and Spanish.

We consulted with several community partners who provided input to help us decide on which languages would be most useful. Thank you to MOSAIC; Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society; Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC; Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (Our City Our Home Program); Fresh Voices Program (Vancouver Foundation); Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House; S.U.C.C.E.S.S.; and Sexual Health Educator for Mill Bay, BC.

To download or to find out how to order print copies, visit [westcoastleaf.org](http://westcoastleaf.org).

## WELCOME

This spring, West Coast LEAF said goodbye to Shahnaz Rahman who served as Manager of Community Outreach for nearly a decade and has gone on to become the Executive Director of Surrey Women's Centre. Congratulations, Shahnaz!

We are very pleased to welcome Sharnelle Jenkins-Thompson as our new Manager of Community Outreach. Sharnelle is a proud mixed woman raised by a Welsh-Jewish immigrant mum and a Metis-Cree father. She is passionate about addressing the impacts of colonialism and injustice through the power of meaningful relationships. Sharnelle grew up in Nanaimo (Snuneymuxw Nation) but now calls Vancouver home. She is a student at the University of Victoria in the Masters of Indigenous Social Work program. She often can be found hanging out with her

tortoise and cat, and enjoying this beautiful unceded Coast Salish Territory. Sharnelle is pictured here with a pig named Brad Pitt.



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and security of the person, and by discriminating against Indigenous prisoners and prisoners experiencing mental illness. This historic constitutional challenge to solitary confinement in federal prisons was brought by the BC Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society.

Solitary confinement impacts women in uniquely harmful ways by aggravating trauma arising from violence experienced outside prison walls. This is especially true for Indigenous women who make up nearly 35% of the women incarcerated in federal prisons, while representing only about five percent of the Canadian female population. The effects of solitary confinement on Indigenous women is part and parcel of the colonial legacy of targeting, warehousing, and isolating Indigenous people. West Coast LEAF intervened in the

nine-week trial to bring the unique experiences of incarcerated Indigenous women and incarcerated women with disabilities to the Court's attention.

Disappointingly, the federal government has filed an appeal of Justice Leask's ruling. West Coast LEAF will seek to intervene at the BC Court of Appeal to push for our laws to recognize the multiple, intersecting harms that are experienced by women behind bars. The experience of Indigenous women and women with mental illness informs an essential context for understanding how prolonged, indefinite solitary confinement violates the *Charter* rights of all prisoners. 🌱

# DONOR PROFILE

In the Winter 2017 issue, we shared an interview with Isaac Brown, West Coast LEAF's youngest donor and a student at St. George's School. Earlier this year, Isaac's Grade 6 class chose West Coast LEAF as a beneficiary of their charitable donations made as part of a partnership project with CHIMP, which promotes charitable giving with an aim to teach and encourage patterns of giving at an early age.

Grade 6 teacher Gemma Galbraith told West Coast LEAF, "At St. George's, we are huge advocates of global mindedness, developing perspective, responsibility, and showing empathy for others, and therefore we encourage our students to be difference makers in their local and global community. As a result, we are fortunate enough to witness these budding social justice advocates in the making!" The students shared how and why they chose West Coast LEAF as a beneficiary organization and how they felt about supporting gender equality with their charitable dollars. In the boys' own words:

PHOTO COURTESY ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL



## HOW WE CHOOSE ORGANIZATIONS

"I choose the charities with my class. We get different charities and write them down on the board. Then we vote for the ones on the board. We voted for the ones that have good expenditures and revenues." – Justin

"I choose organizations that I feel are going to make a change in society and are using the money wisely." – Charlie

"I find the problem that I want to help with and then look for a charity that supports that." – Ryan

## WHY WE VOTED FOR WEST COAST LEAF

"I voted for West Coast LEAF because women don't always have the same opportunity as men, and legal advice can help a lot." – Isaac

"I voted for West Coast LEAF because I think that it is important for women to get legal support in this time and age." – Charlie

"I think it's important to have equal rights for everybody, and I think West Coast LEAF can do that." – Oliver

"I voted for West Coast LEAF because I feel like women's rights are important and women need a voice." – Eric

## HOW DONATING/BEING A PART OF THIS PROJECT MAKES US FEEL

"It feels like an achievement, even if it is a small one... it can still have an impact." – Jason

"Donating money makes me feel like I'm adding worth to the world, makes me feel helpful, and makes me feel good about myself." – Keaton

"It makes me feel good when I donate because I know I am doing something good for somebody." – George

"I feel good donating money to an organization like this because it's a great cause and I can't wait to see what happens in the future." – Charlie

We are grateful for the support we receive from our donors, funders, and members. Thank you to our current project funders:



We are grateful for the continuing support of the Law Foundation of BC.



Standing L-R: Gregor Robertson, Kasari Govender, Theresa Lalonde, Gloria Macarenko, Stephanie Smith, Adriane Carr, and Darlene Marzari. Seated L-R: Joel Wass, baby Wren, and keynote speaker Robyn Doolittle.



Guests who donated donned pink ribbons to show their support. PHOTOS: JOHNNY LIU PHOTOGRAPHY AND WEST COAST LEAF.

## Thanks for joining us at our record-breaking breakfast

We were thrilled to join with our friends, supporters, and allies to celebrate International Women's Day and to raise nearly \$110,000 to support equality at this year's Equality Breakfast. Thank you to those who attended, our sponsors and silent auction donors, and to those who became sustaining monthly donors and gave generously. We are grateful to emcee Gloria Macarenko of CBC, and to keynote Robyn Doolittle for sharing her insights into the handling of sexual assault cases by the criminal justice system and her award-winning *Unfounded* investigative series for the *Globe and Mail*. If you haven't already, make sure to visit our website for the gallery featuring more than 200 photos by Johnny Liu Photography.

**SILENT AUCTION DONORS:** Absolute Spa, Adhesif Clothing, Alison Brewin Consulting, Amber Prince, BC Sports Hall of Fame, Baaad Anna's Yarn Store, Ballet BC, Banyen Books & Sound, Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, Blue Ruby Jewellery, Burrowing Owl Estate Winery, Capilano Suspension Bridge, Catherine Russell, Charlie's Chocolate Factory, Commercial Street Cafe, Crystal Lodge and Suites, DAVIDs TEA Richmond Centre, Deep Cove Outdoors, Della Optique, Delta Hotels by Marriott Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort, Dorothy Grant, Douglas & McIntyre Ltd. (on behalf of Nightwood Editions), Duff Waddell, Elektra Women's Choir, Eterna Studios, Ethical Bean Coffee, Fairmount Lake Louise Alberta, Furry Creek Golf & Country Club, Gallery Café & Catering, Goodbye Clutter! and Sense of Order, Granville Island Brewing, Greystone Books Ltd, Hands on Publications, Harbour Dance Centre, Indian Art from the Edge, Inn at Laurel Point, Innovative Fitness Kitsilano, Julie Flett, LACAR, LAT Multilingual, The Learnary, LeBeau Law Corp, Le Crocodile, Little Sister's Book & Art Emporium, Luppolo Brewing Company, Maggie Bernet, Moksha Yoga Vancouver, Momentum Fitness, Nita Lake Lodge, Ocean Village Beach Resort, Pace Performance Enhancement/Pace Accounting, Pacific Law & Business Institute, Penticton Lakeside Resort, Plum Clothing, Prestige Hotels & Resorts, Richard Edgar, Richmond Olympic Oval, RKC Law, Royal BC Museum, Sandpiper Resort (Pretty Estates Resort), Sea to Sky, Semperviva Yoga, Shahnaz Rahman, Sikora's Classical Records, Skoah, Spa Utopia, Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre, Susan Point – Coast Salish Arts, Talon Books, Tantalus Vineyards, Ten Thousand Villages, Terra International Foods Inc., The Cinematheque, The Naam Restaurant, Three Bags Full Knit Shop, Trees Organic Coffee, UBC Botanical Garden, UBC Museum of Anthropology, UFCW1518, Vancouver Aquarium, Vida Spa, West Coast LEAF board, YWCA Health + Fitness.

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