

LEAF *let*

The newsletter of West Coast LEAF
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By Alison Brewin

Polygamy, child abuse, cult-like theology, isolated communities of women in kerchiefs and long dresses with men who live on compounds, and a nearby town divided in its acceptance of it all; Bountiful has all the drama of a made-for-TV-movie. Unfortunately, the story is not fictional, nor is the complex web of issues that emerges for the 1,000 plus members of the Bountiful community. The recent attention that has been drawn to this group is in part because of the fascinating web of moral, religious, legal and social issues and contradictions that it represents.

West Coast LEAF has been receiving letters and emails about Bountiful from concerned British Columbians for many years. Our involvement as an organization has always been limited by our capacity to take on work – staff and financial resources have ebbed and flowed over the years – and the historical structure of LEAF's legal work. We intervene in cases that are already before the courts rather than become involved in test cases from the ground up.

However, while our financial resources are always in need of support (*call us about our new Themis club for monthly donors*), West Coast LEAF has taken a new approach to our work in making the promise of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* a reality for the women of BC. In addition to litigation work, West Coast LEAF is committed to using the tools of law reform and public legal education to achieve the goal of women's equality. So, as the requests for our involvement continued, we dedicated time to sifting through the myriad of issues relating to Bountiful, examining the legal tools at our disposal, and exploring our human and financial resources. What emerged was twofold: a plan for a national consul-

Navigating the complexities of women's equality & religious freedom

tation on women's equality and religious freedom, and a promise to take our educational program, *Transforming Our Future*, to the community of Cranbrook to help community members examine and develop legal strategies for change.

The consultation will take place on the weekend of December 3rd here in Vancouver. Funded by a grant from the Court Challenges Program, we have begun the early stages of planning for the event. We have invited a former member of Bountiful to participate so that our discussions can remain grounded in that reality. However, our goal is to look more generally at the boundaries and intersections of the freedom of religion and equality sections of the *Charter*. This raises issues other than Bountiful, such as the potential impact of applying religious law in the context of family law matters (particularly Shari'a law), the issue of access to abortion

Our goal is to look at the boundaries and intersections of the freedom of religion and equality sections of the Charter.

services in rural communities where anti-choice churches manage local hospitals, and the question of same-sex marriage and its implications for religious institutions. The goal of the planning committee will be to ensure a diverse group of participants, including many women of faith, and that with legal and theoretical expertise on the question of conflicting minority rights and multiculturalism.

We hope to emerge from the consultation with a legal and theoretical analysis that can be applied to the complex question of the criminalization of polygamy and the human rights complaint against the BC government on behalf of the women of Bountiful that has been presented to the BC Human Rights Tribunal by a group of representative women. In addition, this work has the potential to play a lasting role in the laws of the country by providing the beginning of a path that navigates the most complex of equality rights questions – when concepts of individual rights and choice interact with the reality of systemic discrimination.

Transforming Our Future Workshops in Victoria

Learn about legal strategies to address equality rights issues such as: violence against women, custody and access, poverty, workplace rights, and immigration policy. Participants will leave with concrete tools for developing realistic legal strategies.

It will take place October 27th and 28th, and costs \$100 (sliding scale available). BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas St., Victoria. Contact West Coast LEAF at 1-866-737-7716 or (604) 684-8772, or education@westcoastleaf.org for details or to register. Childcare and transportation subsidies are available.



We have a new home!

Canadian Construction Women volunteer renovation crew. L-R: Maggie Campbell, Shelley Neil, Gwen Williams, Marina Pratchett.

West Coast LEAF has settled into a new home. Having outgrown our office, and after a long search we were happy to find a space in the same building that perfectly met our needs. At the end of August we packed our belongings and moved downstairs to suite 555, with the help of numerous volunteers who generously contributed their time and talents to help us renovate, paint, secure donations of furniture and other sundry items. Thanks to them, we now have a comfortable, welcoming office. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of the many volunteers and businesses who made it all possible.

We extend a special thanks to Canadian Construction Women who answered our call for help with renovations. The CCW team was led by Shelley Neil, manager of special projects for PCL Constructors Westcoast and Marina Pratchett, lawyer with Fasken Martineau. Carpentry was performed by Gwen Williams with help from John Lavell, Max Chickite and Joel Hansen. Electrical and safety matters were handled by Maggie Campbell of Western Pacific Enterprises; and the drawings for the renovation were done by Valerie Sanguinetti of Orbis Architecture. Lisa Kerr, Janet Gartner and Alejandro Bustos of Fasken Mar-

tineau volunteered for the painting crew. Dave Husson of Artec Glazing donated and installed some internal glazing and Francois Naudi, Owner and Adam Coleman of Mainland Exterior Stucco Renovations pitched in to fix and install library shelving. Donna & Lane Oseen, owners of DLO Move Support Services donated furniture and delivered it – all for free. Volunteers and generous contributions from businesses greatly reduced our moving costs. Thank you!

Thanks also to the following volunteers, business and supporters: Aaron Callihoo; Natasha Kortez; Rebecca Montgomery; Niveria Oliveira; Amber Prince; Gwen Yang; Cloverdale Paint; Bull's Eye Moving; Heritage Home and Office Furnishings; Tintagel Information Solutions Inc. – Garreth Parkinson; VanCity Saving and Credit Union; Vancouver Status of Women; and Wavetek Communications Inc. – Elliot Pimental.

INSIDE West Coast LEAF



WELCOME TO NIVERIA OLIVEIRA who joined our staff team in July, assuming the position of Program Assistant. Niveria

is an experienced administrator having worked as an assistant to an MP and in various community organizations.

Thanks and best wishes to Aisha Syed, who left the position after being accepted into the education program at UBC a year earlier than expected.

Thanks to our summer students Azmina Latha, Amber Prince and Jake Tsz-nga Pang for the tremendous contributions they made to our work; and also to the funders who made it possible for us to host the students: the Vancouver Bar Association, The FRED Centre at SFU, HRDC Summer Career Placement Program, and JUMP Consulting & Training.

Volunteer painting crew. L-R: Lisa Kerr, Natasha Kortez, Rebecca Montgomery, Janet Gartner, Alejandro Bustos, Niveria Oliveira.



Thank you!

Special thanks to those donors who give to West Coast LEAF every month. Your contributions increase the sustainability of our work.

MONTHLY DONORS

Mary I. Atkins ♦ Christine Basque ♦ Barbara Britton ♦ Tracey Brown ♦ Lynn Copeland ♦ Pat Dewhurst ♦ Elizabeth Dunn ♦ Brenda Edwards ♦ Frances Gordon ♦ Audrey M. Johnson ♦ Sheila Keet ♦ Carolyn MacEachern ♦ Francesca Marzari ♦ Ruth Miller ♦ Karen Munro ♦ Alisa Noda ♦ Stephanie Reifferscheid ♦ Mary-Woo Sims ♦ Eloise Spitzer ♦ Veronica Strong-Boag ♦ Duff Waddell ♦ Alison Zimmerman.

Donors and members between May 10 – September 21, 2004

Deborah Acheson ♦ Deborah Armour ♦ Sharon Baker ♦ Gwen Boyd ♦ Joyce Bradley ♦ Peter Brown ♦ Georgina Brunette ♦ Beverley Burns ♦ Barbara Cullen ♦ Eileen Dailly ♦ Joan Downey ♦ Vilma Dube ♦ Kerry-Lynne Findlay ♦ Tami Friesen ♦ Sara Frisch ♦ Carole Gerson ♦ Valerie Gruson ♦ Lisa Heddema ♦ Joan Heriot ♦ Martha Jackman ♦ M. Audrey Johnson ♦ Jennifer Khor ♦ Robert Krell ♦ Donna Kydd ♦ Judith Lee ♦ Nicole Liddell ♦ Bonnie Long ♦ Karin Macauley ♦ Leslie MacLean ♦ Susan Mogar ♦ Alisa Noda ♦ Susan Penfold ♦ Roberta Rich ♦ Edith Schafer ♦ Theresa D. Stilling ♦ Skye Stuart ♦ Elizabeth Vogt ♦ Diane Watamanuk ♦ Janet Wiegand ♦ Allison Zimmerman ♦ BC Government and Service Employees's Union ♦ Telus ♦ The Law Society of BC ♦ University Women's Club ♦ Victory Square Law Office and donors who wish to remain anonymous.

AGM 2004

West Coast LEAF held its 19th Annual General Meeting on June 18, 2004. About fifty members and friends attended to hear about activities of the organization over the past year and to help us recognize over sixty volunteers who contributed to our work.

Guests also heard from Lawyer Frances Kelly and community activist, Junie Desil who talked about the challenges facing single mothers as result of cuts to social programs, and the legal arguments West Coast LEAF is preparing for a human rights challenge on their behalf.

Members voted in the following new board of directors for 2004/5: Maryam Abbasi; Sabrina Ali; Rosalind Currie (Chair); Amy Frances; Stephanie Fraser; Tami Friesen; Lizabeth Hall; Carolyn MacEachern; Ritu Mahil; Francesca Marzari; Mary Salaysay; Eloise Spitzer; Mary-Woo Sims; Lindsay Waddell.



West Coast LEAF Board of Directors: Front Row, L-R: Mary Salaysay, Francesca Marzari, Carolyn MacEachern, Jennifer Johnstone (outgoing), Stephanie Fraser, Eloise Spitzer. Back Row, L-R: Alisa Noda (outgoing), Rosalind Currie, Maryam Abbasi, Mary-Woo Sims, Lindsay Waddell, Sabrina Ali, Tami Friesen. Missing: Amy Francis, Lizabeth Hall, Ritu Mahil.

We extend a special thanks to outgoing board members who ended their terms: Gina Arsens, Cleta Brown, Elaine Herbert, Jennifer Johnstone, Alisa Noda.

Thanks also to Out to Lunch Catering and New York Grill for their contributions to the AGM.

IN VICTORIA

Join us at the 10th Annual Victoria Person's Day Breakfast on Thursday, October 21, 7-9am, at the Princess Mary Restaurant, (358 Harbour Road, Victoria). Tickets: \$30

FEATURING: Daphne Bramham, *Vancouver Sun* columnist. For tickets, sponsorships and information contact: Ramona Reynolds at (250) 383-2356, 8am-4pm or email ramona@woodwardandcompany.com or info@westcoastleaf.org.



Daphne Bramham has been a journalist for nearly 25 years and since last September, she has been writing a twice-weekly column for *The Vancouver Sun*. She

has held a variety of positions at the *Sun* including associate editor in charge of the opinion section and Asia-Pacific reporter. As a reporter, she covered everything from politics to economics to forest fires and has reported from

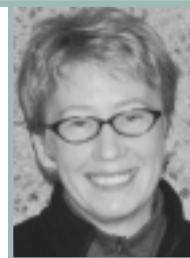
West Coast LEAF Person's Day Events

nine countries in Asia, covering two Indian elections and the handover of Hong Kong to China. That wide range of interests continues to be reflected in her columns. Daphne will speak about her recent work covering the polygamous community of Bountiful and myriad of issues related to it.

IN LANGLEY

Join us at West Coast LEAF's Langley Person's Day Reception on Thursday October 14, 6-8pm. Location TBA.

FEATURING: Susan Boyd, Professor of Law at UBC, Chair of the Centre for Feminist Legal Studies. Suggested donation \$10-\$25. To RSVP or for information contact info@westcoastleaf.org, or call (604) 684-8772.



Susan B. Boyd joined the UBC Faculty of Law in 1992. She holds the Chair in Feminist Legal Studies, and is Director of the Centre for Feminist Legal Studies.

Professor Boyd teaches courses in the fields of Feminist Legal Studies and Family Law. Her book, *Child Custody, Law, and Women's Work*, was published by Oxford University Press Canada in 2002. She has also published on feminist legal theory. *Challenging the Public/Private Divide: Feminism, Law, and Public Policy*, was published in 1997 and *Canadian Feminist Literature on Law: An Annotated Bibliography* in 1999. Professor Boyd is a long-standing member of the editorial board of the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*. She also works for law reform in the family law field and is a member of organizations that work for social change, such as the National Association of Women and the Law and West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund.

Why do you donate to West Coast LEAF in particular?

I donate to West Coast LEAF because I think it is a relevant organization serving the needs of women. Of course, I can't avoid the fact that my daughter Lindsay, who is now a vice-president of WCL, introduced me. She took considerable pains to explain to me why it was important that I support WCL. She discussed with me some of the legal cases argued by WCL. She never failed to raise the work of WCL whenever we discussed legal matters. So my first impetus to make a donation was as a result of following my daughter's instructions.

Society will only be made stronger if men and women work together to promote equality.

Lindsay invited me to the 2003 Equality Breakfast ... I then joined and started to read the *LEAFlet*. As I have no spare time ... I concluded ... I could make a monetary donation. I know it takes a lot of time for volunteers to chase down donors on an annual basis and concluded the most effective method of making a donation was by a monthly automatic bank debit.

What do you value about our work?

I value the fact that WCL has accomplished a great deal for women and continues to work hard for equality. I realize the need for legal, political, social and educational action to ensure women are treated fairly in our society and that their rights are recognized and enforced. I understand efforts in this regard must be sustained. An organization such as WCL is essential to ensure this work continues.

I listened with interest to [former Supreme Court Justice] the Honourable Claire L'Heureux-Dubé at the 2004 Equality Breakfast outline the progress made in the area of women's equality through changes in the law and in the interpretation of the law. I am aware of

DONOR PROFILE

Duff Waddell



Duff Waddell is a lawyer with Kaplan and Waddell and a monthly donor to West Coast LEAF. We asked him to share his thoughts on why he chooses to support this work.

difficulties faced by women in their every day lives – in their homes and in their careers. Unfortunately, there are many people who still do not consider that women should be treated with fairness and respect and afforded the same protection and opportunities as men. This is so not just in “backward third-world countries” where poverty and lack of education prevail, but also here in British Columbia. Provincial funding has been drastically cut which has had a devastating effect on women especially those who are poor. WCL works to ensure women's rights are protected and to advance the cause of women's equality. WCL is an effective organization.

What do you think are the three most important issues facing women today?

I think the three most important issues facing women today are economic disadvantage including poverty, legal inequality as a result of lack of political power and the inability to enforce laws, and lack of education both to gain economic advantage and to learn how to protect and enforce rights. These issues transcend the social mosaic in British Columbia. Women on welfare deal with poverty while women in the work place deal with economic inequalities. Women are faced

with systemic and social disregard. In order to deal with these issues I believe men need to be involved in organizations such as WCL. There are many men who have attitudinal difficulties dealing with women who are achievers. They do not understand the positive results of treating women equally and fairly. Society will only be made stronger if men and women work together to promote equal-

Many men do not understand the positive results of treating women equally and fairly.

ity. This requires political, legal, educational, religious, and social changes. I think WCL is on the right path. I do not think it is a short path. I do not think there are any quick and easy solutions. WCL understands the important issues facing women and takes effective measures to deal with them.

Thank you Duff, for demonstrating your support for West Coast LEAF and women's equality. We invite others to consider monthly giving as a way to contribute to the continued success of West Coast LEAF's work.

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LEAF is a national organization committed to promoting women's equality before Canadian courts, government agencies and human rights commissions; and to providing public legal education on the issue of equality rights for women. West Coast LEAF is supported by:

