

Dr. Shirin Ebadi: Women's Rights are Human Rights

West Coast LEAF is excited to welcome Dr. Shirin Ebadi as our keynote speaker for the Equality Breakfast on February 29, 2008. Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iranian human rights lawyer and author of *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope*, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on October 10, 2003. She is the first Muslim woman and first Iranian to receive the prize.

“**TO DISREGARD WOMEN and bar them from active participation in political, social, economic and cultural life would in fact be tantamount to depriving the entire population of every society of half its capability.**” *Shirin Ebadi*

Nobel Lecture, 2003


the rights of women and children. She has also been recognized by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International for her fight for human rights and democracy in Iran. In 2004, during Dr. Ebadi's most recent visit to Vancouver, she received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of British Columbia.



Dr. Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her significant and pioneering efforts in democracy and human rights, especially for

of incarcerated student activists.

Most recently Dr. Ebadi's focus has turned to the role of women and faith communities in the struggle for human rights. Dr. Ebadi, along with a growing movement of women in Iran, believes that the inequalities faced by women are not rooted in Islam but in patriarchy. This theme links closely with West Coast LEAF's ongoing Women's Equality and Religious Freedom project.

Dr. Ebadi is married and has two daughters in their early 20's. She works as a lawyer and teaches law at the University of Tehran. 

EQUALITY BREAKFAST 2008

We invite you to join us and **Dr. Shirin Ebadi**, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Women's Rights Activist

at West Coast LEAF's **Equality Breakfast**
on Friday, February 29, 2007, at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver

Early Bird ticket pricing available until January 10, 2008

First Nations to Learn No Means No

By Kelly Roulette, Legal Director

Expansion is under way for our **No Means No** workshop to accommodate a First Nations perspective. The workshop, based on the legal concept of “consent” to sexual activity stemming from the Ewanchuk case, is being adapted to accommodate First Nations youth.



In order to get community input, a **No Means No** workshop was delivered to Native youth attending an alternative school in Vancouver called Cedar Walk, which teaches grades 8 through 10.

The workshop was held over two days and was co-facilitated by Legal Director Kelly Roulette and Tasha Riley. Tasha has facilitated **No Means No** workshops for West Coast LEAF on numerous occasions.

The eventual goal will be to offer the adapted **No Means No** curriculum to First Nations communities in Northern B.C. 🌲

YOUTH PROGRAMS

We are recruiting youth between the ages of 18–24 to be trained as facilitators for **No Means No** and **Youth in the Workplace** workshops. West Coast LEAF will be offering training in facilitating our Youth Programs and work with youth to develop leadership skills around equality rights issues.

If you know of a youth who would be interested in this volunteer opportunity please ask them to contact our office at education@westcoastleaf.org

PLE COMMITTEE

West Coast LEAF’s Public Legal Education committee is recruiting some more members. We are searching for two to three members with skills in marketing, curriculum development, and education. If you are interested in taking on this type of leadership role please see the full posting on our website and contact education@westcoastleaf.org

Transforming Our Future

By Niveria Oliveira, Education Manager

Our fantastic group of Transforming Our Future volunteer facilitators celebrate their success!

This public legal education program has been strengthened throughout this last year due in large part to the efforts of our volunteers and West Coast LEAF staff. The lawyers who comprise our facilitation team and the development of program resources have allowed us to deliver the course throughout the province more frequently. As a result of everyone’s dedication to West Coast LEAF, the program has been delivered in the communities of Victoria and Kelowna this year and the feedback from the course participants has been very positive.

Thank you to our volunteers! **Roz Currie, Jessica Burke, Bev Gallagher, Monica Monroy, Catalina Rodriguez, Linda Thiessen, Kathryn Sainty, and Karin Yeung.**

Thank you to the Notary Foundation and BC Gaming for providing us with the funding to develop the facilitation team and the resources to support them!



From L. R. front to back: Alison Brewin, Kathryn Sainty, Bev Gallagher, Kelly Roulette, Linda Thiessen, and Monica Monroy.

Missing from this photo are Jessica Burke and Catalina Rodriguez who also attended our Transforming our Future volunteer appreciation event.

DONOR PROFILE: DOMINIQUE ROELANTS

By Fiona York, Fund Development Manager

Dominique Roelants is a teacher of computer science at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo, and is active in his union, the Federation of Post Secondary Educators, currently serving as Second Vice President. Dominique says that particular union is quite active in the area of human rights.

He also studied law, completing law school in 2004 and subsequently being called to the bar in 2005. He practices part time and specializes in “shit disturber law”, including employment and labour law, and constitutional challenges of federal laws. For example, he is working on the social assistance bar to immigration. Since 2002, the immigration regulations have prohibited anyone in receipt of social assistance from sponsoring a spouse. In contrast, someone with no income and no assets can sponsor a spouse.

Dominique was introduced to West Coast LEAF six or seven years ago by a fellow Malaspina University staff member and West Coast LEAF supporter.

His main motivation for supporting West Coast LEAF is the work that the organization does in the area of rights, and the Conservative government’s decision to cut the Court Challenges program in September 2006. “The Charter of Rights is not worth much unless you have money to get a lawyer or you can find some agency that will help you. Court Challenges used to be that agency, and West Coast LEAF was and obviously continues to be.”

What changes would he like to see in British Columbia to create equality? “A legal aid system that recognizes the individuals’ need to be protected even if they’re poor and can’t afford a lawyer.”

West Coast LEAF thanks Dominique for his generous support and vision for equality. 🌱

What We’ve Been Up To

In Brief:

West Coast LEAF executive director Alison Brewin was a guest speaker and panelist on the CBC 690 AM radio program “Almanac” on Monday, September 10 from 1-2 pm. The show featured a discussion on violence against women in the context of the recent Oak Bay case.

In September West Coast LEAF joined LEAF National in expressing tremendous sadness that the National Association of Women and the Law NAWL was forced to close its doors. NAWL and West Coast LEAF together continually examined the application of charter rights to ensure access to equality legislation for BC women. The closure of NAWL undermines this work in a concrete way. It also makes a statement to those working for justice and equality that these concerns are not being honoured on national level.

On behalf of the West Coast LEAF, Farnaz Riahi-Nejad (West Coast LEAF Treasurer) and Alison Brewin attended the LEAF National AGM that took place in Toronto from September 28th to 29th. Zara Suleman also attended and delivered a presentation on the Family Law Project.

Both Kelly Roulette, Legal Director, and Zara Suleman, Family Law Project Director, presented at the Legal Services Society Conference for legal advocates which took place this October. Presentations were made on our Single Mother’s Human Rights Project and the Family Law Project.

Alison Brewin, Executive Director, traveled to Manitoba to deliver our Transforming Our Future – Train the Trainers workshop to the folks at Manitoba LEAF. We look forward to seeing Transforming our Future workshops being delivered across Manitoba in the New Year! 🌱

Persons Day Events a Success



From L. R: Stephanie Mayor, Patricia Webber, Sarah Sharp, Professor Gillian Calder, Joana Thackerary, Lindsay McLeod, volunteers at the Victoria Equality Celebration on Friday, October 26th, 2007 at the Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Hotel in recognition of Persons Day. The event, featuring Fall on Your Knees and Where the Crow Flies author and actor Ann Marie MacDonald, was a success. Anne Marie MacDonald also spoke in Nanaimo on Saturday, November 27 at the Nanaimo Gold Club. In total, the two events raised over 5,000 for West Coast LEAF. Thank you to Ramona Reynolds, the Victoria Organizing Committee, Signy Madden and the Nanaimo Organizing Committee.

Investing in Women's Equality...

West Coast LEAF is grateful for the support that we receive from our donors and members. Your valued support ensures that we can fulfill our mission to advance women's equality in the law. Thank you for your investment in West Coast LEAF that makes our litigation, law reform and education work possible.

CONTACT INFORMATION

We're trying to ensure that we have current, up-to-date information for all of our donors and members. If you have new contact information, please take a minute to go to our new website and update your information online www.westcoastleaf.org, and click on *Contact Us*. **Thank you for your help!**

SPECIAL THANKS



West Coast LEAF is supported by the Law Foundation of BC and we are grateful for their generous ongoing core funding and financial support for our Family Law Project and First Nations No Means No educational program.

OTHER SUPPORTERS



Thank you to the Ethical Bean Coffee Company for their support in generously providing our office with coffee. Please visit www.ethicalbean.com.



We appreciate the support of Status of Women Canada, who provided multi-year funding for our ongoing Family Law Project.



We'd like to thank the Notary Foundation for supporting the Transforming Our Future training workshop earlier this year.



Heritage Canada is generously supporting our Aboriginal No Means No youth workshop project.



We'd like to thank the Health Sciences Association for their support of our Speakers Bureau.



We would like to acknowledge BC Gaming for providing valuable funding to our education programs.



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LEAFlet is the newsletter of the BC Branch of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

Editing & Writing:
West Coast LEAF staff



West Coast LEAF is a provincial organization committed to promoting women's equality rights before Canadian lawmakers and ensuring that the promise of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms becomes a reality for the women of British Columbia.

Thank You!

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