

## INVESTING IN WOMEN'S EQUALITY...

West Coast LEAF is grateful for the ongoing support we receive from our donors, members and the Law Foundation of British Columbia. We also receive project support from our public funders. Thank you to Ethical Bean for kindly supplying our office with coffee & tea.



## EQUALITY RIGHTS LIBRARY

The West Coast LEAF Equality Rights Library is generously supported by Nathanson, Schachter & Thompson LLP.

Our legal and equality rights library includes current and historical material and information tracing human rights and equality legislation in Canada. It contains case histories, facts, biographical material and studies that apply to women's issues, equality issues and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

For information about sponsoring the Equality Rights Library, please contact West Coast LEAF at [info@westcoastleaf.org](mailto:info@westcoastleaf.org).

## LEGACY GIVING

Leaving a Legacy Gift to West Coast LEAF transforms the lives of women for future generations.

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For more information about planned giving, please contact West Coast LEAF at [info@westcoastleaf.org](mailto:info@westcoastleaf.org).

## WEST COAST LEAF JOINS IMAGINE CANADA ETHICAL CODE



West Coast LEAF believes that transparency and accountability to our donors and funders are essential to our success. With this in mind, we have recently joined Imagine Canada's Ethical Fundraising Code Program. By adhering to this Code, we are complying with generally accepted practices for managing donations. West Coast LEAF must follow a detailed protocol and indicate its compliance annually in order to use the Ethical Code logo.

If you have any questions about our adherence to the Ethical Code, please feel free to contact West Coast LEAF at 604-684-8772 or visit our website. You can also download the Ethical Code itself by going to [www.imaginecanada.ca](http://www.imaginecanada.ca).

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Monthly Giving is the best way to support West Coast LEAF. It provides sustainable revenue, reduces administrative costs, and helps us plan for the future. Please call Fiona York at 604.684.8772 ext. 113 for more details.

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## LEAFlet

*Newsletter of the Women's Legal  
Education & Action Fund, BC branch*

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## West Coast LEAF Victoria Persons Day Breakfast

Wednesday Oct. 15, 2008  
Laurel Point Inn, Victoria

*Speaker: Beverley Jacobs,  
President of the Native  
Women's Association of  
Canada*



## ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT VICTORIA PERSONS DAY EVENT Beverley Jacobs to speak on October 15th

On June 11, 2008, many Canadians watching Prime Minister Stephen Harper's residential schools apology were impressed by an Aboriginal woman whose response following the apology balanced recognition for the gesture with questions about the future. With respect and humour, she acknowledged that there is still work to be done to heal the Aboriginal community in Canada.

Beverley Jacobs is currently completing her fifth year as President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and has worked tirelessly towards empowering Aboriginal women in Canada.

Raised on the Six Nations Reserve in Southern Ontario, Beverley experienced first hand the effects of abuse and violence within her community. She attended Mohawk College as a young single mother, and worked as a legal secretary for Hamilton Law Offices before deciding to attain a law degree herself at the University of Windsor. Beverley was the only Aboriginal student in her first year law class and founded the Windsor First Nations Law Students Society. After graduating, she obtained her Masters Degree in Law from the University of Saskatchewan in 2000.

Beverley proceeded to found Bear Clan Consulting, teach as a professor in Saskatchewan and Ontario and work as the sole practitioner at a law office in Six Nations Grand Territory. In 2004, she put her consulting and law practice on hold to serve as the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada. Beverley has been extremely influential in raising awareness of the alarming discrimination Aboriginal women face in Canada. She was the lead researcher for the 2004 Amnesty International report "Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada." The report estimates that 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing or have been murdered in Canada in the last 20 years. Beverley has highlighted the fact that five to ten names are added to that list every month. Also in 2004, NWAC launched the national "Sisters in Spirit Campaign", which seeks to not only raise public awareness of these issues but to increase the safety and security of Aboriginal women.

Beverley Jacobs has assumed the daunting task of reforming Canadian policies and attitudes to help create a society that does not discriminate against Aboriginal women. West Coast LEAF is thrilled that she will speak at the Victoria Persons Day Breakfast on October 15, 2008.

*"What is it that this government is going to do in the future to help our people? Because we are dealing with major human rights violations that have occurred to many generations: my language, my culture and my spirituality. What is going to be provided? That is my question. I know that is the question from all of us. That is what we would like to continue to work on, in partnership."*

Beverley Jacobs, June 11, 2008

## THE TROUBLE WITH FAMILY LAW

### Student survey identifies obstacles

This year, the West Coast LEAF Family Law Project organized a survey to understand some perceptions law students have about the practice of family law. The Family Law Student Survey report will be released this fall. Here is a glimpse into some of the concerns students highlighted.

The majority of survey participants were in their second year of law (36.5%). Of those responding to the survey, 40.5% were aged 20-25 years old and 71.4% female. Only 13% of survey participants indicated that they intended to practice family law. (126 student s completed the survey - please note some of these were incomplete surveys)

Some major themes have emerged as obstacles and reasons why students would not choose to enter the practice of family law:

- **Stress and work/life balance** – Most students indicated that the emotional and stressful nature of what they hear about family law practice is more difficult than other areas of law. Students indicated that having a balance between work and life would be most challenging if they chose to practice family law. As one student indicated: “Generally, when I say I am thinking of practicing family law, the reaction is very negative. People see it as an emotionally draining practice area with little by way of compensation for the time and energy that goes into the practice.”
- **Lack of compensation** – Students repeatedly mentioned that other areas of law provide more financial compensation than family law practice. There was also a general sense that outside of material compensation, the area of family law practice was undervalued by the legal profession and within legal education. One student commented: “Unfortunately, it also seems that family law has a bad reputation within law schools, and that without knowing very much about the practice of family law, students write it off. I think that family law is known as the ‘touchy-feely’ type of law, and that it is not popular amongst those who wanted to practice black letter law.”
- **Absence of mentorship and failure to promote family law** – Students identified that having mentors would encourage them to consider the practice of family law, as well as knowing more about the actual practice of family law and how to enter it. As one student noted: “Opportunities, flexibility, and encouragement. Every single lawyer I have told I am considering practicing family [law] has urged me not to practice family law. Doesn’t really make me feel good about going into that area.”

*Another student highlighted the difficulty in finding work in family law: “More articling opportunities, information and recruitment sessions. Family law firms rarely ‘market’ themselves or advertise like ‘big law firms’. Thus, it seems like most of the student body (myself included) doesn’t know much about family law and available job opportunities – there isn’t much ‘buzz’ about it.”*

*Watch for the release of the full report of our findings from the Family Law Student Survey. The report will be posted on our website.*

## DONOR PROFILE

### Faye Cooper supporter since 1991

Faye Cooper will never forget what her boss at Sheridan College in Ontario in the 1960’s said when she asked for a raise: “No woman should earn more than \$3,000 a year.” Faye went on to be an active feminist for 40 years, with a Masters in women’s studies, and a founding member of the North Shore Women’s Centre, celebrating its 35th anniversary this year.

While living in Toronto in 1967 and working at Sheridan College, she met a woman who was a member of Toronto’s New Feminists. The woman lent her some books – Betty Friedan, *Radical Writings, Why I Want a Wife*, Valerie Solaris. “I sat down to read one night and was still sitting there at 4:00 in the morning. Things I’d been thinking all my life... there it was. That was me.”

She went on to be part of a women’s committee at Sheridan. “It was very pioneering. There was lots of foment at the time. I remember being on stage of Brampton Theatre with a friend trying to explain to a hostile audience the difference between ‘equal’ and ‘the same’. They all felt sorry for my husband. I don’t remember anybody being supportive except other feminists.”

### Always Involved With Women’s Issues

She arrived in BC in the summer of 1975 and “went looking for some feminists”. “I was an all-fired feminist coming from a hot-bed of activity”. She found a group who had grown out of a women’s program at Capilano College. The group founded the North Shore Women’s Centre and later a transition house formerly known as Emily Murphy House and now known as Sage House.

She worked at Vancouver General Hospital in public relations starting in 1976 and had her own company for a while. She also worked at the Pacific Vocational Institute, the St. Paul’s Hospital therapy department and the inaugural UN-HABITAT conference which took place in Vancouver in 1976. Later, she completed a Masters in women’s studies at Simon Fraser University.

“I was always involved with women’s issues. You take it with you wherever you go.” She was a representative with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, lobbied for daycare and was president of the board of the North Shore Women’s Centre. She was also appointed by the province to the North Shore Health Board for six years

### Keep Moving, Stay Vigilant

Over 40 years of feminism, she hasn’t seen a lot of dramatic changes. “In past 30 years, advances are miniscule. It’s two steps forward, five back. The young girls who say, ‘we can do whatever we want; we have it all’ – that’s fine until they go looking for work, until they can’t get their assets out of a marriage.”

There’s still a need for activism. “The issues you notice are ones that don’t change”. She mentions the \$.76 on the dollar that women earn, domestic violence and ineffectual restraining orders, the level of participation of women in government, child care, and the debate on prostitution. “There’s lots of room for upcoming feminists. I hate to see the pendulum swing back. We have to keep moving at it, stay vigilant.”

### Thank God For LEAF

Her involvement with West Coast LEAF goes back “years and years”. “Thank God LEAF is there. I don’t think there’s a home free for women at any point yet. Eternal vigilance is necessary.”

She credits her mother, Evelyn Fingarson, with helping to inspire her feminism. “She was a ‘maternal feminist’ but didn’t know it. She was a community activist for lots of years and one of the strong feminists of the time.” Evelyn was involved with the National Council of Women, a 150-year-old group that lobbies on behalf of families and children, and with the coalition of women that formed as a result of the 1981 march on Ottawa to demand that gender equality be included in the new *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

“She talked about the formation of LEAF and I remember that. I knew that since we had to do a march to get sex included [in the *Charter*], we were going to have to fight it all the way. LEAF’s been doing it all these years. And hopefully will keep on doing it.”



Alison Brewin and Nitya Iyer celebrate the British Columbia Court of Appeal upholding the provision of safe access to abortion services in BC by dismissing the appeal *R v Watson and Spratt*.

### Watson and Spratt

Watson and Spratt challenged the *Access to Abortion Services Act*, which creates a no-protest (“bubble”) zone around abortion clinics to allow women access to clinic services free of unwanted approaches by anti-abortion protesters.

Counsel Nitya Iyer of Heenan Blaikie (and West Coast LEAF Board member) represented the Access Coalition, a coalition of pro-choice groups in BC.



### Rick v Brandsema

Some of the research compiled by West Coast LEAF for *Rick v Brandsema*.

West Coast LEAF and LEAF National will be appearing at the Supreme Court in Ottawa as an intervenor in *Rick v Brandsema* on October 14 2008.

*Rick v. Brandsema* is a family law case dealing with the issue of equality in separation agreements and division of assets. West Coast LEAF argues that a

separation agreement may be impacted by various vulnerabilities such as mental illness, spousal violence, differing levels of financial knowledge and different attitudes about negotiation and settlement, and urges the court to include considerations of substantive sex equality (s. 15(1) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*\*) in the development of common law principles around separation agreements.



Long-time LEAF and West Coast LEAF volunteer Eloise Spitzer has been honoured with the first-ever LEAF Lifetime Achievement Award. Eloise was presented with the award at the LEAF national annual general meeting in Toronto and she was also acknowledged at the West Coast LEAF Annual General Meeting on June 26.