

LEAFlet

RAISING OUR VOICES FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

2015 CEDAW REPORT CARD	
HOW IS BC MEASURING UP IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS?	
WOMEN & ACCESS TO JUSTICE	D-
POVERTY & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	D
WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT	C
ACCESS TO CHILDCARE	C-
MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN	F
WOMEN & HOUSING	D-
WOMEN & GIRLS IN PRISON	F
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS	B-
WOMEN & HEALTHCARE	B-

THE 7TH ANNUAL CEDAW REPORT CARD IS OUT

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555 – 409 Granville Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2
t: 604.684.8772
t: 1.866.737.7716
e: info@westcoastleaf.org

westcoastleaf.org

2016 EQUALITY BREAKFAST KEYNOTE: MICHELE LANDSBERG & ILANA LANDSBERG-LEWIS

LIFE-LONG CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

We are thrilled to host mother-daughter dynamos Michele Landsberg and Ilana Landsberg-Lewis as our 2016 Equality Breakfast keynote speakers!

Michele is a trailblazing and iconic Canadian journalist, author, speaker and social activist, who has published more than 3,000 columns and features since 1962. She is an outspoken advocate for women and children, human rights and social justice. A multiple award-winning journalist, she is also the author of four bestselling books, *Writing the Revolution*, *Women and Children First*, *This is New York, Honey!*, and *Michele Landsberg's Guide to Children's Books*.

Michele began her career with the *Globe and Mail* in the 1960s and went on to join *Chatelaine* in the 1970s, before joining the *Toronto Star*, where she wrote a column for 25 years. Michele is one of the first journalists in Canada to provide a feminist interpretation of the news, chronicling the lives of women, their struggles and achievements, while addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, racial discrimination in education and employment opportunities, and a lack of gender equality in divorce and custodial legal proceedings.

In 2005, the Canadian Women's Foundation established the Michele Landsberg Award to recognize outstanding young women and their accomplishments in media and activism. In 2006, Michele was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. A mother of three and a grandmother, she has been married since 1963 to Stephen Lewis, a former UN Secretary General Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa and co-founder of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. A feminist hero and an unflinching activist, Michele is an inspiration to the women who read her columns, and to a new generation fighting to see that the revolution continues.

Ilana is a tireless labour and human rights lawyer who is devoted to global grassroots social justice as the Executive Director of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. In 2003, she



Michele Landsberg and Ilana Landsberg-Lewis

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STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN WITH KIDS IN FAMILY LAW COURTS

BC's *Family Law Act*, introduced in 2013, recognizes a wide range of forms family violence can take and requires that judges consider family violence in determining the best interests of children. Feminists and anti-violence activists fought long and hard for family violence to be acknowledged in family law at all. Yet all too often, women who are dealing with legal issues around parenting after separation from an abusive former partner still find that the family law system doesn't fully recognize the impacts of violence or adequately protect the safety of women and children.

That's why West Coast LEAF's saw a need for legal education to enhance supports for these women and their children. When we traveled around BC to deliver our *Financials in Family Law* workshop, we heard from frontline service providers province-wide about the need for legal information and strategies to better assist women survivors of violence to navigate family law challenges relating to parenting.

Based on this input, West Coast LEAF developed *Parenting and Family Law*, a three-hour training aimed at frontline responders who assist women fleeing abuse — including transition house workers, settlement workers, advocates, victim services workers, sexual assault support workers, and others. Our interactive, scenario-based workshop provides an overview of recent changes to family law in BC and their impacts on the parenting experiences of women with

abusive or harassing former partners. Our goal is to help participants identify legal strategies to address the most common family law challenges facing mothers who have left abusive relationships.

A pilot version of our *Parenting and Family Law* training has already been offered in Richmond (at the Legal Services Society Provincial Training Conference), Smithers (at the Northern Society for Domestic Peace), and Burnaby (at Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society). After several more pilot workshops in the Lower Mainland, we'll be taking the piloting on the road in early 2016, with sessions planned in Bella Coola, Prince Rupert, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, and Grand Forks.

We are grateful to the community leaders, experts, and allies of West Coast LEAF who helped us develop the first versions of the pilot: our Family Law Advisory Committee, who offered insights about emerging trends and strategies in family law; Jane Doe Legal Advice Clinic lawyer Salima Samnani, who helped us prepare and facilitate a training session in Burnaby; and the host organizations and participants from each of the pilots, who provided invaluable feedback. West Coast LEAF is proud to develop this legal education resource in consultation with diverse communities and in response to community needs.

Funding for this project has been generously provided by the BC Ministry of Justice. 


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joined with her father, Stephen Lewis, to establish a foundation that would work directly with grassroots organizations in sub-Saharan Africa in their struggle to turn the tide of the AIDS pandemic. The Stephen Lewis Foundation has funded more than 1,100 initiatives, partnering with more than 300 community-based organizations in 15 African countries.

As a labour and human rights lawyer, Ilana spent eight years at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), working to strengthen the UN's implementation of the Convention to Eliminate All

Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Ilana was instrumental in launching the United Nation's Trust Fund on Violence against Women.

In 2009, Ilana received the YWCA Women of Distinction Award for International Development, and was named one of the Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada in 2012.

BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW for the *Equality Breakfast* at 2016equalitybreakfast.eventbrite.ca. *Early-bird tickets on sale until January 31, 2016.* 

VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS ARE MAKING HEADLINES AND ARE READY TO DELIVER: West Coast LEAF's Kamloops volunteer facilitators are ready to head out into the community to deliver No Means No and TrendShift workshops in classrooms and community centres. Kamloops Youth Coordinator Magalie Knopf was recently interviewed by *Kamloops BC Now* about the recent training of our youth facilitators from Thompson Rivers University. She explained why our work talking with young people about their rights under the law is so powerful: "It creates a safe space for open discussion. We use highly trained peer facilitators that encourage participants to think critically about how these issues impact their own lives." About the diverse backgrounds of the TRU volunteers, she added, "Some of them are law students, some are social work students, we have nursing students, art and education students, so it's a good wide range of skills and experiences to implement these workshops."




Left to right: Members of the Kamloops Volunteer Youth Facilitator Team include Sarah Falk, Karis Bergsma, Ghuntaz Bhullar, Ruby Lau, Iqra Azhar, Christina Postnikoff, Magalie Knopf, Katelyn Hawker and Allison Curley. Additional volunteers not in the photo are Alejandro Henao and Kyra White. PHOTO: ALANA PROCHUK

REPORT CARD FINDS THAT BC IS FAILING TO MAKE THE GRADE IN WOMEN'S EQUALITY

West Coast LEAF recently released its seventh annual report card on women's rights in BC. While the situation for BC women has seen minor improvements this year, unfortunately for many women, BC continues to fail to deliver on its responsibilities. In particular, the province has not taken action to address the ongoing violence against Indigenous women and girls, the basic human rights of many incarcerated women and girls are overlooked, many women do not have access to secure housing, women continue to be more economically insecure than men, and women remain unable to enforce their legal rights because of inadequate legal aid.

West Coast LEAF's CEDAW Report Card is an annual assessment of how well BC is complying with the obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Canada in 1981. The report card grades BC's progress in nine key areas in

women's rights, including access to justice, economic security, affordable housing and childcare, and safety, the foundations of a society where everyone can participate equally regardless of their gender.

To download the report, visit westcoastleaf.org 

2015 CEDAW REPORT CARD	
HOW IS BC MEASURING UP IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS?	
WOMEN & ACCESS TO JUSTICE	D- Chronic underfunding of legal aid continues to leave many women unable to access justice, but the implementation of new pilot projects led to some improvements.
POVERTY & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	D BC introduced new supports for single mother and families, but social assistance rates remain inadequate, and BC is now the only province that has not committed to a poverty reduction plan.
WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT	C Despite high workforce participation, BC has made little progress in closing the earning gap between men and women or to address gendered job segregation.
ACCESS TO CHILDCARE	C- While BC has introduced new programs that recognize the inaccessibility of childcare, services remain unaffordable and inadequate, resulting in significant economic consequences for women.
MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN	F Despite ongoing international criticism, BC has made little progress to end violence against Indigenous women, and has indicated that it does not intend to report publicly on future progress.
WOMEN & HOUSING	D- For the fourth year in a row, BC has failed to take steps to ensure that women have secure housing, instead offloading the responsibility to non-profits and municipalities.
WOMEN & GIRLS IN PRISON	F BC has failed to take steps to eliminate the increasing over-representation of Indigenous women in provincial jails or uphold many of the rights of prisoners.
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS	B- Despite two provincial plans aimed at addressing violence against women, progress remains stagnant and the focus on systemic factors that increase women's risk of violence.
WOMEN & HEALTHCARE	B- Access to abortion services is relatively good, but BC has failed to eliminate barriers to public healthcare, and services for older women are in crisis.

“This is one of the highlights of the women lawyers’ year.” — anonymous respondent, 2015 Equality Breakfast survey

SPONSOR THE 2016 EQUALITY BREAKFAST

Attended by nearly 800 participants each year, this eagerly anticipated signature event celebrates International Women’s Day and West Coast LEAF’s work to advance the full participation of women and girls in social, economic and political life. Becoming an Equality Breakfast sponsor is an excellent way to demonstrate that you value having women in leadership positions, are committed to corporate social responsibility, and support access to justice for all.



For information on the benefits of sponsorship or to learn more about the event, visit westcoastleaf.org or contact Basya Laye, development@westcoastleaf.org or 604-684-8772, ext. 114.

LITIGATION UPDATE

What we’ve been up to in the courts

Ensuring that BC’s legal profession remains discrimination-free and equally accessible to all

In August, West Coast LEAF intervened in *Trinity Western University v Law Society of BC* to argue that the Law Society’s decision to refuse accreditation to the proposed law school at TWU is consistent with the equality protections in the *Charter* because TWU’s Community Covenant excludes prospective students and staff on the basis of sexual orientation, marital status, and sex. We are awaiting the BC Supreme Court’s decision in the case.

Advocating for a human rights systemic that provides justice to marginalized people

West Coast LEAF, in coalition with the Community Legal Assistance Society, was granted leave to intervene in *Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users v. Downtown Vancouver Ambassadors Business Improvement Association*. We will argue that decision-makers must take a flexible approach to discrimination claims in order for the human rights system to provide justice to marginalized people. The case is set for hearing at the BC Court of Appeal in March 2016.

Ensuring women have safe healthcare free from stereotypes

In November, West Coast LEAF was granted leave to intervene in *College of Massage Therapists v Scott*. We will argue that allegations of sexual misconduct require urgent action in order protect the safety of women accessing healthcare, and any assessment of whether there is a risk to public safety must not be based on discriminatory myths and stereotypes about women. The case is set for hearing at the BC Court of Appeal in January 2016.

Challenging mandatory minimum sentences for women

Finally, also in November, West Coast LEAF was granted leave to intervene in *Lloyd v R*. We intend to argue that mandatory jail terms for drug trafficking in certain situations have a disproportionate impact on women and are unconstitutional because they separate mothers and children and remove women from their communities. The case is set for hearing at the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2016.

INVESTING IN WOMEN’S EQUALITY

West Coast LEAF is grateful for the ongoing support we receive from our donors, our members, and the Law Foundation of BC. We also thank the following project funders.

