



Connecting Women in the Law

BC WLF Winter 2012/2013 Newsletter

Upcoming Events

BC WLF Senior Women Lawyers Dinner

January 16, 2013
Frankie's Italian Kitchen, Vancouver

Mentoring Orientation Lunch

February 2013

BC WLF Awards Luncheon

February 20, 2013

BC WLF Province Wide Outreach Event in honour of International Women's Day

March 8, 2013

Education Day

April 26, 2013



THE CANADIAN
BAR ASSOCIATION
British Columbia Branch

Remarks of the Chair

by Nicole Byres

Nearly ten years ago, in June 2003, the CBABC Provincial Council approved the formation of the BC Women Lawyers Forum – the first in Canada. Since that time, women lawyers have dedicated countless hours developing programs, resources and events aimed at supporting women lawyers at all stages in their careers. Now, there are WLF's operating within the CBA in every province and territory in Canada, except Nunavut.



We are very proud of these accomplishments, and we know that such activities are valued by women lawyers. However the retention of women in the profession, and in particular, private practice, continues to be a challenge because hidden or unconscious biases remain which make it more difficult for women to advance to partnership and/or achieve leadership positions. The Law Society of BC estimates that at the current rate women are leaving the profession, it will take until 2088 before women will achieve parity with men in terms of partnership in law firms despite the fact that for at least 30 years, the numbers of men and women graduating from law schools have essentially been equal.

This paradox is eloquently explained by Arin Reeves in her book *The Next IQ: The Next Level of Intelligence for 21st Century Leaders*. Dr. Reeves states that if diversity is the presence of multiple perspectives, inclusion is the ability to solicit and allow



Upcoming Events Continued

Mentoring Potluck/ Networking Event

April 2013

Potluck Dinner/ Networking Event

May 2013

BC WLF AGM

June 18, 2013

Law Courts Inn

Further details to be announced

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those multiple views to be included, engaged, and integrated into the larger dialogue. Diversity can be created without inclusion, but it will not last because different voices will stop speaking up if they are not included. Thus, law firms will continue to have difficulty retaining women lawyers as long as their environment does not encourage or is not receptive to alternate perspectives or ways of doing things.

In late November 2012, I had the privilege of attending a meeting in Edmonton, Alberta with the WLF chairs from the other provinces and territories, and the executive of the National WLF. I was inspired by the passion and dedication of these women. Despite our differences in geography, type of law practice, and age, we share a common purpose: to support other women lawyers and to transform the legal profession so that both women and men have equal opportunities to thrive.

As we approach the 10 year anniversary of the CBA's first WLF, many of us are thinking about what more we can do to help ensure that the profession is more diverse and inclusive. One conclusion is that we need to keep offering programs that support other women. Our mentoring, education, networking and recognition events allow women lawyers to share common experiences, which in turn encourage all of us to continue pushing for change within our firms. As always, we welcome your input and ideas on how we can make WLF events more helpful and meaningful to you.

It is important to encourage dialogue on these issues within the profession. I urge you to find out what law firms, the Law Society, government, and other organizations are doing to create a diverse and inclusive legal profession. Most importantly, speak up and share your views – like you, I don't want to wait until 2088 for the legal profession to truly reflect the society we all serve.



Attendees at the WLF AGM



Interview with Kerry-Lynne Findlay, QC, MP Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Justice

by Linda Robertson

You were the first Chair of the WLF in our inaugural year 2003 – 2004. What was that first start-up year like?

Formation of the WLF:

Our intention in creating the WLF was to support women in the profession to increase job satisfaction and security through sharing our common experiences and wisdom.

We really hit the ground running in 2004. We already had a well-developed framework because we had spent all of the Fall 2002 to Spring 2003 year planning. The CBA wanted assurance that if they allowed the WLF to be formed that it had the support of a sufficient number of women and had well-thought-out goals. Among other things when we were seeking CBA approval for the Forum in June 2003, an eight person executive and four committees had already been arranged. All of this preparation convinced the CBA that we could be a successful forum and they gave their consent.

Goals:

1. Mentoring

In our planning year, one of our most ambitious goals was to establish a mentoring program. This was led by Debra Van Ginkel, QC. When it was launched in 2004, 130 women lawyers had signed up and matches were made in Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Hazelton, Golden, Vernon and Nelson.

2. Education

We chose to prioritize education on less substantive legal subjects such as leadership, resiliency, business development and recognition. Our first Ten Hot Tips From Ten Hot Mentors in 2004 was highly successful then and remains so now.

3. Communication

We also focused on communication by putting together an online Listserve¹ and a newsletter to keep women lawyers informed.

4. Recognition

Increasing recognition of women lawyers' accomplishments was a goal that we identified from the beginning.

5. Networking

Encouraging networking between women lawyers was also a goal of the WLF.

Committee Chairs Continued...

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Cover Photo: Attendees at the CBABC Women Lawyers Forum reception at the CLC, August 2012, L-R: Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay, QC, MP, Stella Frame, Linda Robertson, Carol Anne Finch-Noyes, Margaret Ostrowski, QC and Nicole Byres.

WLF Newsletter Winter 2012/2013 Edition

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Janine F. Jones
Carol Cash

Editorial Board

Carol Anne Finch-Noyes
Deborah Taylor
Nicole Byres
Janine F. Jones
Vanessa Gauthier





WLF Members: Recognition and Achievements

- Earlier this year, Valli Chettiar received the Canadian Bar Association's 2012 Touchstone Award for her outstanding accomplishments in promoting equality in the Canadian legal community.
- In August 2012, Caroline Nevin, the executive director at the CBA's BC Branch, received the 2011 CBA Jack Innes Achievement Award, which recognizes a staff member's exceptional contribution to the Association.
- In December 2012, Margaret Ostrowski, QC was honoured with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for "Exceptional work and community service as a lawyer to promote equity and diversity, including promotion of women in the legal profession". Margaret was one of 30 recipients in the Vancouver Quadra area.
- Alexander Holburn Partner Barbara Devlin, a senior ICBC defence lawyer and member of the BC WLF Executive, was one of a team of 11 hikers to reach the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro (at 19,340 feet Mount Kilimanjaro is Africa's highest mountain) in Tanzania on October 1, 2012 and collectively, the group raised more than \$214,000 for Alzheimer's in the process! While the act of climbing Kilimanjaro is a feat in itself, Barbara's group



Attendees at the WLF Reception at the CBA Conference, August 11, 2012, L-R: Nicole Byres, Linda Robertson, Trinda Ernst, QC and Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay, QC, MP.

How did you attract women lawyers to join the WLF?

In our first year we had 200 women sign up. Action creates excitement. The executive and WLF members were enthusiastic and actively recruited people. This continues to be the case.

Women lawyers have been entering the profession in increasing numbers since the late 1970's. Why do you think it took so long for a group like the WLF to be formed?

I think it's because we were few in number until after 2000. Prior to then not many women stayed in the practice of law and many continue to leave. I was called at the age of 24 and had two children in my late 20's then two more in my late 30's. This was at a time when there were no maternity leave policies, top-ups or EI. There was little support for women taking maternity leave. We were fighting to make sure we had jobs to come back to after our maternity leave. We also had to prove to a largely male profession that we could be good lawyers. Like me, many women were too busy fighting for recognition and issues like maternity leave to have any energy left for anything else. It was just survival.

What are you most proud of from that first year?

We gave shape to a vision and created a legacy that we were then able to take across the country. We accomplished our goals to network, to support each other and to educate women. I have met so many women over the past 10 years who have said they would have left law but have stayed and prospered as a result of someone in the WLF. We showed that sharing support and sharing wisdom works – it inspires, it supports and it informs.



Hot Tips from Hot Mentors

by *Vanessa Gauthier*

On September 20, 2012, the BC WLF again kicked off the new season with the WLF Fall Launch and our popular Hot Tips from Hot Mentors event. The event featured a panel of outstanding mentors, Kathryn Berge, QC, Trudi Brown, QC, Barbara Buchanan, Laura Bakin, QC, Judy Rost, Eve Munro and Natasha Dookie, who shared their experiences and advice to the women lawyers and students who attended. Here are some of the highlights of their “hot tips”:

Know your Purpose - It’s a long life. Evaluate new opportunities and discard those that don’t inspire you.

There is no Perfect - Obsession with perfection will drive you crazy. Doing your best is okay. Learn to let go. By doing so, a longer and happier life will follow.

Laughter is the Best Medicine - Seek out friends who make you laugh and encourage you to take risks. Laughter is transformative. It engages and grounds you.

Surround yourself with People you Admire and who Inspire - Work with people you want to work with. Maintain relationships at all levels. Trust your gut. Be true to yourself.

Billing is Beautiful - You need to get paid for the work you do. When you undervalue what you do, others will undervalue you. Premium rates attract premium work.

Be the Master of your Domain - Develop your own practice. Select the work that you want to do. By having your own book of business, you will have more control over your day to day life. Happy clients make you happy – so keep them happy. Communicate with your clients, they will appreciate you more.

You can Manage Change without Losing your Sanity - Take care of yourself. Resilience enables us to cope with change. Be optimistic – Glass is always half full! Maintain perspective. Accept that things may not always go as planned. Recognize when you need change. Look for and embrace life’s lessons.



Speakers at the Hot Tips for Hot Mentors Event, September 2012

was special for another reason: two of its members, Martin and Esther Kafer, aged 85 and 84 respectively, are now headed for the record books as the oldest man and woman ever to complete the climb!

- Diane Tupper, retired lawyer, has published her debut novel called *Balancing Act*. *Balancing Act* shares a humorous, heartfelt glimpse into a single mother’s struggle to balance the needs of her family with the demands of her career. For more information see www.dianetupper.ca.

We encourage you to send us information regarding what WLF members in British Columbia have been up to lately. If you or a colleague you know has recently accepted a new position, appointment or award or has achieved something exceptional outside of the practice of law that should be recognized, please send it to the CBA BC WLF M & C Committee Co-Chairs Janine F. Jones and Vanessa Gauthier.



Alexander Holburn Partner Barbara Devlin conquers Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Alzheimer’s!



Report from the Kamloops Women Lawyers Forum

The Kamloops Women Lawyers Forum started our “new year” at the annual June BBQ held at the Honourable Judge Frame’s residence where we enjoyed a tasty array of dishes and refreshments on a warm summer Kamloops evening. We elected nine executive members, which increased our executive membership with many new faces to the CBA. This event was well attended by both lawyers and TRU law students.

On October 29th, we hosted our 2nd annual dinner for the women law students from Thompson Rivers University. The “Fall Harvest” theme dinner was held at the residence of member at large, Michelle Stanford. It was a fabulous opportunity for students to meet with practicing lawyers in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. We were certainly impressed with the enthusiasm and energy of these law students!

Our fall retreat was postponed to the spring – so watch for a notice. We expect it will include “spa” activities as well as CPD credits. In December we hosted our annual “Christmas” luncheon at the Courthouse Library. We collected donations to the Kamloops Food Bank.

Our executive meets once a month, and is currently planning events for 2013.

Linda D. Thomas and Kerri Priddle, Co-Chairs, Kamloops Women Lawyers Forum.

CBABC President Kerry Simmons

by Sharon Matthews

Kerry Simmons is the 10th woman President of the CBABC which is apt since this year is the 10th anniversary of the WLF. Kerry’s leadership style is a product of both her action-oriented philosophy and her gender. She knows how to start the hard conversations and when to move the conversation into a plan.



Kerry Simmons

Why is this a product of her gender? Kerry is a person in whom others feel safe confiding their views because she gives nonjudgmental, straight feedback. She is a person who cares and knows how to help a person help herself. Hopefully we all knew someone like this when we were growing up - mother, favourite aunt, friend’s mother, teacher, grandmother. What a treat to find this person leading the CBABC!

Kerry has been exposed to terrific lawyer role models since she was a teenager. She spent her university summers working at MacCarthy Ridgway McCutcheon & Lawson in Duncan where she saw that a career in the law provides great opportunities to do good. She emulates the Honourable Judge Anne Wallace’s ability to combine intelligence, legal acumen and a sense of fun. Kerry adheres to the belief that you don’t have to take yourself too seriously to be respected. Or perhaps Glen Ridgway taught her that those who take themselves too seriously lose respect and have no fun!

It’s a question of balance. Kerry takes the lawyer’s role to do good and to help people seriously. She does not take for granted that people in conflict will continue to have a place to be heard by an independent decision-maker with an advocate to assist them. Kerry appeared before the BC Standing Committee on Finance and delivered a powerful message on access to justice which was quoted by the Committee in its recommendations to the Government for the next budget. It is her favourite experience as President so far because she had the opportunity to deliver that message to people who are in a position to make change.

It is not surprising that her message resonated. Kerry is a powerful and talented communicator. As President, she has found the sweet spot of communicating at the right time in the right amount to those she works with and to the membership. She plans to leave the role having increased the profession’s awareness of what the CBABC does, leading to increased respect for the work of the CBABC. There is no doubt she will succeed.





Attendees at the WLF Fall Potluck

Report from the WLF - Vancouver Island

The WLF-Vancouver Island began this season with a highly successful event on September 26 recognizing and honouring one of Victoria’s legal pioneers: Constance Isherwood, QC, who at 92 years of age continues to practice law in Victoria. Madam Justice Dorgan spoke of Connie’s extensive achievements and accomplishments, and Connie reminded us that the first woman lawyer in British Columbia, Mabel Penery French, was admitted to the bar only a century ago, in 1912, where previously there had been heavy opposition to “Blackstones in petticoats” being admitted to the practice of law. There have been many firsts for women lawyers in the century that followed.

On November 7, Madam Justice Huddart, Jane Henderson, QC, Deborah Acheson, QC, Professor Mary Anne Waldron, QC, Roxanne Helme, Carmen Rogers, QC, Julie Ackeroyd, and Kismet Bhandar presented tips and advice for thriving and surviving on various legal paths—private, government, in-house, academic, and judicial—and in various legal settings, such as examinations for discovery. Each speaker provided a wealth of information and experience, and the candor with which they spoke was much appreciated. Common threads throughout the presentations included: finding what you enjoy, and doing it even if that involves making a change; being flexible; acting with integrity, respect and civility; and being mindful of your reputation.

International Women’s Day – A Global Day for Recognition and Celebration



by Janine F. Jones

Origins

The origins of International Women’s Day (IWD) span back to the early 1900’s. The first National Women’s Day was observed in the United States on February 28, 1909, followed by the first International Women’s Day held in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19, 1911. The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. IWD has continued to grow since then and is now a designated national holiday in many countries, commemorated by the United Nations and marked by women’s groups across the world each year on March 8th.

International Women’s Day Today

The origins of IWD were in socialist movements; early IWD’s concentrated on advocating for women’s rights, and ending inequality and oppression of women. Today, IWD in North America is no longer a reminder of the negatives but instead is a celebration of positive achievements. IWD now represents: an opportunity to reflect on progress made, to celebrate acts of courage and determination by women



In December 2012, a potluck at Vice Chair Christine Murray's home was held.

We have created an Awards Committee to determine terms of reference for an annual award to recognize a woman lawyer of excellence on Vancouver Island. By recognizing those who have made important contributions to women in law, we hope to inspire others to become involved in mentoring and leadership roles in the legal profession, and to effect positive change.

As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much."

Krystle Gill, Chair, WLF - Vancouver Island

Get Connected!

Forum membership is open to CBA members only. For membership information call the BC Branch of the Canadian Bar Association at (604) 687-3404, toll free in BC at 1 888 687-3404, or visit <http://cba.org/BC/PD/main/sections.aspx> for a Section enrolment form.

We hope you will make the Forum your meeting place of choice.

Write Us

Are you interested in writing an article for the WLF BC Newsletter or do you have any comments or feedback?

If so, please contact the CBA BC WLF Marketing and Communications Committee Co-Chairs: Janine F. Jones or Vanessa Gauthier.

in history who have created the opportunities for women today, and to recognize and honour women's advancements and achievements. As well, IWD provides an opportunity for women to come together across provinces and countries to support one another.

CBA BC WLF Celebration Event

In celebration of IWD and the achievements of women lawyers in BC and across Canada, the CBA BC WLF plans to hold an IWD Celebration Event. The event will encourage women lawyers in BC to come together, network, and generally celebrate the achievements of women and women lawyers in BC. We are hoping that this event will be the first annual BC WLF event and we look forward to reporting back on how the BC WLF and other forums across Canada honoured IWD. Save the date (March 8, 2013) and look out for further details regarding this event.

WLF Awards Announced

The CBABC Women Lawyers Forum is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2013 BC WLF Award of Excellence, and the Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award.

The BC WLF Award of Excellence was established to highlight and celebrate the accomplishments of women lawyers who have succeeded in breaking new ground for women in the legal profession in British Columbia. This award recognizes lawyers who have taken risks, fostered change, and ultimately opened doors for women lawyers. The recipient of the 2013 BC WLF Award of Excellence is **Jan Lindsay, QC**.



Jan Lindsay, QC

The Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award is named in honour of the woman who championed the establishment of the WLF Mentoring Program. The recipient of the 2013 Mentoring Award, is **Danine Griffin**.

We are pleased to honour Jan and Danine on February 20, 2013 at an Awards Luncheon to be held at Sutton Place Hotel, Vancouver, BC. Special guest speaker will be retired BC Supreme Court Justice, The Honourable Lynn Smith.

Please join us in celebrating outstanding women leaders at this WLF Awards Luncheon. We expect this event to sell out quickly, so please reserve tables and individual tickets as soon as possible. More information about the WLF Award recipients and the WLF Awards Luncheon can be found at www.cba.org/BC



Danine Griffin

