

Connecting Women Lawyers



Remarks from the Chair

By Rose Keith, QC

2020 has been a crazy ride of a year. When Daria Batkin penned her final remarks from the Chair, we were just beginning our COVID-19 journey. We were all learning about the pandemic and adjusting our lives to accommodate, which meant for many of us, cocooning at home. By now, most of us have settled into a new normal. That new normal includes a lot of virtual meetings, working remotely, becoming adept at technology and finding our best Zoom angle. It also means finding new ways to connect and stay close while staying safe.



Continued on the following page



BC WLF Executive Contact Information

Chair

Rose Keith, Q.C.
rkeith@harpergrey.com
604.895.2911

Vice-Chair

J. Cherisse Friesen
Cherisse.Friesen@gov.bc.ca
604.660.6795

Treasurer

Melanie Magnusson
mmagnusson@onyxlaw.ca
604.900.2538

Secretary

Sara Li
sli@wt.ca
604.891.7283

Past Chair

Daria Batkin
dbatkin@iconlaw.ca
604.676.4448

Education Committee Co-Chair

Olena Gavrilova
ogavrilova@qalaw.com
604.601.3715

Education Committee Co-Chair

Emma Abdjalieva
ea@dhsmlaw.ca
236.521.5512

Mentoring Committee Co-Chair

Melissa VanderHouwen
melissavanderhouwen@mooreedgarlyster.com
604.689.4457

Mentoring Committee Co-Chair

Dana Turner-Ryan
dturnerryanWLF@gmail.com
604.669.3432

Continued from the previous page

As I write this column, I am watching day three of the US electoral returns. I am worried for our friends to the south, worried for the potential harm to democracy and the unrest that may develop. I am worried about the rising COVID-19 cases and growing political division. I am worried for what the next few months hold for the United States and what impact that will have on us in Canada.

Despite all of this, I am optimistic. What I have seen again and again and again this year is resilience. I have seen resilience in my teenage daughters' smiles of determination to make their grade 12 year special, despite the specter of no grad events and social restrictions. I have seen resilience in my colleagues in becoming proficient in technologies that allow them to virtually connect with clients, appear virtually in court hearings, and continue to mentor those newer to our profession. I have also seen resilience in my clients who have had to struggle through tremendous economic adversity and rather than giving up have found new ways of doing business. I have seen resiliency in my fellow WLF board members who, despite the pandemic, are focused on finding new ways to support women in the profession of law and using technology to make sure we are staying connected and supporting each other.

That resiliency gives me hope and makes me proud to be a part of the larger legal community. Recently, the WLF put out a call for volunteers. We were unsure whether we would get any during this odd year without in-person events. But instead of a lack of engagement, we had an overwhelming response to our invitation to get involved. That demonstrates to me the resiliency that is present in our community. Rather than isolating and withdrawing, our community is asking to get more involved. We cannot wait to get back to in-person events and get everyone who has expressed an interest more involved in the WLF.

The 2020/2021 year is going to look different in many ways. We will not be gathering together and enjoying food and drink the way we usually do at our events. However, what won't be different is the level of connecting. We will continue to support women in the legal profession, and we will continue to offer you our usual full slate of events although they'll mostly be virtual. For some, connecting virtually at our events may even be easier than having to travel downtown to attend.

Continued on the following page



Continued from the previous page

The WLF is committed to supporting our membership throughout this year and I am personally committed to doing all that I can to nurture your resiliency, to help you find ways to make this new normal work for you, both professionally and personally, and to support you in this most strangest of years. While we look forward to being able to connect in person again, we will not squander this special year.

My first remarks would not be complete without extending a heart-felt thank you to Daria Batkin, our past chair, for all of her hard work for the WLF, not just in the two years that she was chair but as well the many years prior when she served on the executive. Thankfully, she remains on our executive as past chair and I appreciate her ongoing counsel. A big thank you also goes out to our entire WLF executive for their commitment to supporting women in the profession and to the many hours that they put into making the WLF the amazing organization that it is. I am looking forward to a great “special” year! And remember, this too shall pass.

Women, Work, and the “Influencer”

By Arshdeep Sandhu

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has made life challenging for everyone. Unfortunately, women have been struggling especially hard during this time. British Columbia Finance Minister Carole James has indicated that the job losses amidst the pandemic affect youth and women the most. Women are disproportionately affected not only from job losses but also when working from home, as childcare duties predominantly fall on women as well. Even on a good day, working in the legal profession can be intellectually and emotionally taxing. Add in the stresses of a pandemic and it is certainly unsurprising that women are feeling even more of a daily struggle to get through their work.

Continued on the following page

BC WLF Executive Contact Information

Events Planning Co-Chair
Bronwen Black
bblack@wt.ca
604.891.7293

Events Planning Co-Chair
Nicole Chang
nchang@wt.ca
604.891.7246

Marketing & Communications Co-Chair
Grace Cleveland
graciecleveland@hotmail.com
604.404.2042

Marketing & Communications Co-Chair
Leah Seneviratne
lls@whclaw.ca
604.443.3672

Member at Large
Stephanie Markovich
markovich.stephanie@gmail.com

Member at Large
Silvana Herra
sherra@rhelaw.com
604.682.3771

Member at Large
Samantha Chang
samanthadchang@gmail.com
604.283.7864

Member at Large
Lauren Chu
l.chu@telus.net

WLF Newsletter Winter 2021 Edition

Editors Grace Cleveland, Leah Seneviratne

Editorial Board Rose Keith, Daria Batkin, and J. Cherisse Friesen



Continued from the previous page

Many women lawyers have needed extra support this year. A good friend of mine is going to school for counselling. We went on a walk and discussed the many supports for women, including many great platforms online that are free, educational and easy to access. How amazing, I thought, what could be better during these times? However, it can be difficult to navigate how to bring calmness, meditation or counselling into your life.



Although there are numerous individuals who women can turn to online, we must still be wary of who we seek advice from. As my friend said, “just because someone cuts their own bangs, doesn’t mean they are a hairstylist.” Use all the resources at your disposal but remember never to hesitate to ask for someone’s credentials, their teachings and areas of focus. As we try to make our lives a little more calm, it is clear that spending time doing research in advance is worth the investment.

Mentorship by Zoom: WLF Kamloops’ 1L Welcome Webinar

By Danielle Ching McNamee

On October 22, 2020, the WLF Kamloops hosted its annual 1L welcome meeting via Zoom, and by all accounts, the first-ever 1L Welcome Webinar was a great success. Members of the local bench, including the Honourable Judges Armstrong and Frame, J.P. Paul, and various female lawyers practicing in Kamloops also participated.

The Welcome Webinar began with the students being separated into various discussion groups. Through the breakout room function in Zoom, each group cycled through different lively discussion groups headed by one WLF executive member and other local practitioners or members of the local bench. In the ten to fifteen minutes provided to each discussion group, the students had a more intimate and structured conversation. Topics discussed ranged between general advice on the practice of law to the sharing of personal experiences as women and lawyers.

In any 1L student’s experience, the first face-to-face interaction with local judges and lawyers can be intimidating. However, there was something assuring and equalizing about all the 1L students, local judges and lawyers meeting for the first time together, as tiny grid pictures. If there was any trepidation on the part of the students, it did not show. The overall student feedback for this platform was positive. Most importantly, the students expressed the need for and the importance of mentorship, especially when there are so many restrictions to meeting in-person.

Overall, the first Zoom 1L Welcome Webinar was a COVID-19-compliant success. While COVID-19 may have limited everyone’s ability to meet in-person, it has not dampened a desire to foster meaningful mentorship relationships in the practice of law. Instead, as the student feedback suggests, coming together in these strange times as female members of the legal profession supporting each other, is more critical than ever.



Maintaining Business Momentum during the Pandemic

By Kara Hill

At the time of writing this, eight months into the pandemic, I'm tired of working from home on my computer at all hours, managing extra childcare demands, and just dealing with COVID-19 generally. With so much on my plate and so much "pivoting" already being done, I've largely avoided any additional personal marketing and business development efforts. But, with all of the uncertainty, changes and potential opportunities happening in our profession right now, these efforts are more important and impactful than ever.

Here are four quick and easy ways we can keep the momentum going with our personal marketing and business development efforts during the pandemic.

1. Pick up the phone

Phone your client to discuss your case rather than emailing them. Ask how they are, what their kids are up to or what sort of crazy online shopping they've been doing. It's not the most creative strategy but listening and being there for clients is one of the bedrocks of personal marketing. Calling and asking about them shows you care and gives you a chance to listen for any opportunities where you can help or relate. If you see a news story later that reminds you of something they said, send it to them.

2. Update your firm bio and LinkedIn profile

All lawyers, but especially more junior ones whose experience and skillsets change rapidly, should take a few minutes once or twice a year to remove any outdated information and add any new experience or skills gained.

3. Join a committee

Volunteer to join a CBABC committee or other lawyers' or professionals' group. Participating often only requires an hour or two of your time each month, and in addition to being able to give back to your professional community, it instantly allows you to meet new colleagues and widen your potential referral network with very little effort.

4. Get creative with small, unexpected acts of kindness

Think about ways you can offer kindness to clients, potential clients or referral sources in small but meaningful ways. For example, mail them a card or send a small gift like flowers or a Starbucks card (unless they have a corporate policy prohibiting it) to express your appreciation for their support. Such small, unexpected acts of kindness don't seem common in our profession, so they're likely to be memorable for the recipient.

When it comes to personal marketing during a pandemic, a little has the potential to go a long way.



Stay Connected!

BC WLF membership is open to all CBA members.

For membership information call the CBABC at 604.687.3404, toll free in BC at 1.888.687.3404, or visit: cbabc.org/sections/enroll for a Section enrolment form.

We hope you will join the Forum!

Get Social!

Follow us on:

Twitter: twitter.com/CBA_WLF

Instagram: [instagram.com/cba_wlf](https://www.instagram.com/cba_wlf)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/showcase/cba-wlf](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/cba-wlf) for all things WLF.

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 BC WLF Marketing and Communications Committee Co-Chair: [Leah Seneviratne](mailto:Leah.Seneviratne).

CBA National WLF Newsletter

CBA National WLF Newsletter - The Common Room is available at cba.org/Sections/Women-Lawyers/A-rticles

The CBA National WLF is seeking article for its newsletters. If you would like to contribute, please contact: cbawomenlawyers@cba.org.

Update from CBABC WLF – Vancouver Island

By Kathleen A. Butler and Monique W. Dull

Little did we know, back on March 13-15th, that our perfect ski and snowshoe weekend would be the last chance for us in 2020 to gather as section members. Lift lineups were short, our laughter was long and the sun shone clear and bright. Less cliché: snowshoe fondue tables were 2 metres apart. The world was about to shut down. We are grateful that we connected on the eve of a global pandemic.



Online gatherings were crucial in the first wave of restrictions. We swapped stories about our adapting homes and workplaces and played online games until better conditions this past summer let us all draw contact from our own circles again. The second wave of restrictions finds us all more fluent in ways to cope.

Now, the Vancouver Island WLF is coming up with ideas for explicit networking online: Zoom meetings are more convenient for senior lawyers and members of the bar but meeting online also deprives us of that warmth we all get from actual company. Parallel food or cooking and maybe a kaleidoscope of smaller break-out groups can echo the familiarity and excitement that we get from being together.

And in the spirit of looking forward, we want to know what our members actually want from our section. A thought exchange process could come in handy for this: think live (or delayed) input shared universally in anonymous form.

When we no longer have social restrictions, we'll know more about each other and a lot more about new technology. Most of all, we'll be very happy to see each other again – in person. WLF Vancouver Island sends their warm wishes to you for 2021!



Hot Tips from Top Mentors

By Puneet Klar

On October 29, 2020, we had the pleasure of hosting our virtual Fall Launch Event featuring Hot Tips from Top Mentors. The first few years of practice can be especially trying. However, it's comforting to know that a few simple strategies can help shape a rewarding career. We hope sharing these tips from well established women lawyers will help you write your own success story.



Find A Mentor and A Champion!

Alexandra Mitretodis highlighted the importance of finding both mentors and champions early on in your career. While the idea of mentorship is quite common, the role of a “champion” is discussed less frequently. They are, however, equally important. Mentors often act as sounding boards, offering feedback, guidance, and support. Whereas champions are people who are actively pushing you to take on new challenges and they often become your cheerleader even when you are not around. Take the time to recognize and build these important relationships.

Be Authentic!

It's important to set aside time to reflect on the kind of career you want for yourself. This includes, as Morgan Camley pointed out, figuring out and sticking by your authentic lawyer voice. Morgan suggests reaching out to lawyers you admire and studying their techniques. Ask them how they found their voice. What you will learn is that each lawyer has a distinct style and it's important that you build one that is uniquely your own.

Take Risks!

Be open to exploring different career paths as Amanda Demner has done and establish a career that speaks to your interests. Your career aspirations will change over time and that is okay. Maybe you want to downsize to a smaller firm, go in-house, or work for a non-profit. Ask yourself what you value and don't be afraid to take risks.

Get Involved!

Cheryl D'sa, an LSBC bencher, found fulfillment in her career by volunteering within our ever-expanding legal community. Her message is to take the time to leave your desks and get involved. There are many opportunities to engage with your colleagues including attending CBA Section meetings, volunteering with a pro-bono clinic, or simply attending networking events. With many events currently hosted online, it's more convenient than ever to get involved – so, get out there.

A huge thank you to all those who attended and especially our expert panel of women who continue to set a remarkable example for young lawyers. Thank you to Cheryl D'Sa of Narwal Litigation, Morgan Camley of Dentons, Alexandra Mitretodis of Faskens, Amanda Demner of Vancouver Airport Authority, and to Rose Keith Q.C. of Harper Grey LLP and Chair of the BC CBA Women Lawyers Forum for her opening remarks, as well as Samantha Chang for mediating the event.



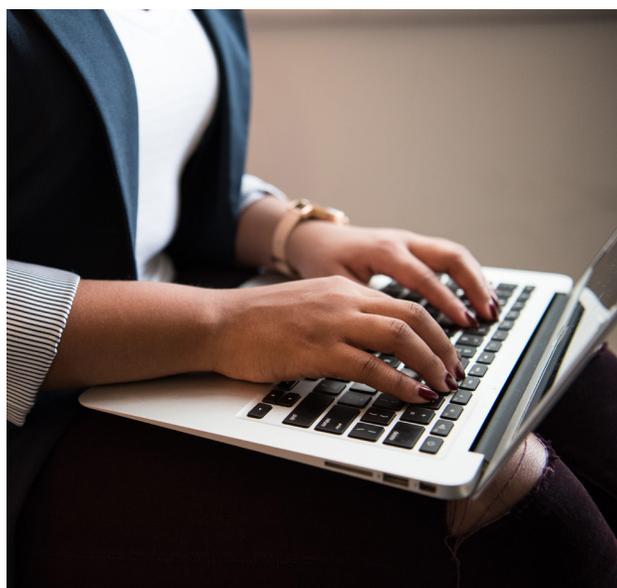
Two COVID-19 Takeaways: *One Sole Practitioner's Perspective*

By: Kathleen Pinno

March 13, 2020 is a date of great personal significance: it was my transfer call ceremony at the Vancouver Law Courts, it was the official opening date of my new legal research and writing firm, and it was when COVID-19 lockdown measures were beginning in earnest. While this intersection brought a few struggles, it also brought a few hidden benefits. Through my discussions with other lawyers, I have recognized two lessons that we 'smalls and solos' would like the whole profession to take away from 2020.

#1: Please continue championing virtual opportunities.

We yearn for when we can meet again in person, however we need to keep the virtual connection options plentiful. Many lawyers practicing in small firm or solo settings operate outside of large cities. I practice in geographically isolated Powell River, and it has been surprisingly refreshing to find so many virtual ways to connect with other lawyers. Another Vancouver lawyer I spoke with agreed that for any sole practitioner, the time constraints of managing a practice alone mean that it is often easier to engage without physical attendance. By continuing to offer virtual participation for as many legal events as possible, you are helping smalls and solos stay connected to people and information. This is key to a healthy legal practice and facilitates access to justice for those lawyers' clients.



#2: Please continue making personal connections from afar.

The shine of working from home has largely worn off by now. Remember and have mercy on those who do not physically interact with many coworkers in their 'normal' workdays. We all have renewed empathy for loneliness at work.

Zoom presentations do not easily facilitate small talk with your neighbour. This underscores the importance of forging genuine relationships from afar. Certain types of virtual events can foster personal connections. For example, the CBA Young Lawyers' "Coffee in Times of COVID-19" sessions allow for small groups of people to meet. On a simpler note, try to schedule an occasional phone call 'coffee' with a small firm or sole practitioner, and be open to making personal connections from afar.

Conclusion

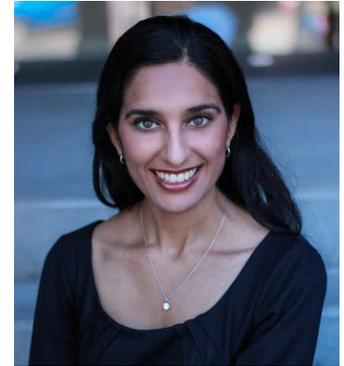
My takeaways from 2020 revolve around making connections. So I appeal to women in law, who (pardon the stereotype) are often superior connectors. Thank you for continuing to help small firm and sole practitioners feel connected to their profession!



Book Review for CBABC Women Lawyers’ Forum

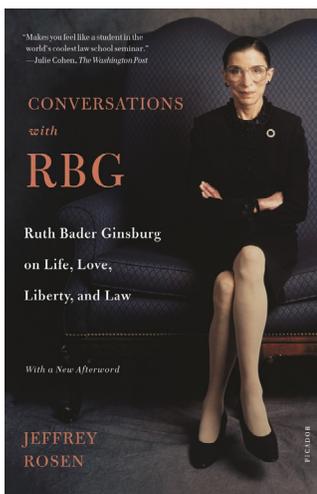
By Tina Parbhakar

A busy practice can make a reading routine difficult. Admittedly, I’ve had months where I opted for iPhone games instead of a book, so I hope to now excite your curiosity. I note that I am woman of Punjabi descent raised on the unceded Indigenous territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. For me, decolonization is an ongoing process, which includes understanding who you are and who you want to be for future generations. If you want to chat about a book, EDI, your trajectory or have any questions or comments, I’d love to hear from you.



Conversations with RBG, by Jeffrey Rosen, November 2019.

These ‘Q&A’ style conversations over the course of 20 years with Jeffrey Rosen, a friend and legal scholar, provide key insights into Justice Bader-Ginsburg’s life and work. While opinions may differ about her positions, this book provides meaningful context to her jurisprudential contributions. Further, her character and ethic are truly inspiring. I found all of the anecdotes both informative and enjoyable.



Justice Bader-Ginsburg’s strategic approach and view of the American Constitution as a document that is to be interpreted in light of societal changes (and that this is ‘originalist’, given what the Founders intended) stands out. I considered her similarities to judicial leaders in Canada and how the ‘living tree doctrine’ has been applied to our Constitution. I also note that the book delves into her criticism of *Roe v. Wade*, her dissent in *Shelby County v. Holder* and other landmark cases.

Themes that emerge are her minimalism and self-discipline, her ability to synthesize information and provide a sharp analysis, her assiduousness with words and dedication to writing as a craft, her caring and collegial relationships, particularly with her partner, and “the most helpful big sister” Justice O’Connor. Justice Bader-Ginsburg also expands upon her push for more judicial diversity and acceptance of concepts like ‘unconscious bias’, her compassion for and ongoing connection with clients, her love of opera and the arts, and her sense of humour. I particularly appreciated her candidness on US Supreme Court judicial deliberations (with a nod to the powers of persuasion and foulard fashion).

Justice Bader-Ginsburg also shares about her transition to celebrity, the increasing shift towards writing ‘fiery’ dissents, the #metoo movement and meeting Margaret Atwood in the late 2000s. Overall, her life-long humility alongside her pragmatic assessment of the progress reminds me to stay both optimistic and realistic. On a lighter note, I was also intrigued by reference to the ‘Canadian Air Force’ exercises - Justice Bader-Ginsburg shares that she has done these routinely since her late 20s!

Justice Bader Ginsburg’s self-described journey and her recent passing reminds me that challenging equality work is ongoing and cannot be done in a vacuum – many perspectives are needed. If you have not already, consider such work as a part of your career. Based on the legacy of “RBG”, it’s well worth it.



Upcoming Events

Junior Women Lawyers event

February 11, 2021, 5:00 pm - 6:30pm

Join us for a fun night featuring a panel of speakers and virtual networking via zoom! Registration is encouraged especially for those with 0-5 years of call.

Mentoring Orientation

March 3, 2021

Kick off the year with some tips and tricks for making the most of your mentorship team!

IWD Event

Early March, exact date TBD

We're planning a unique way to celebrate International Women's Day this year – stay tuned!

Senior Women Lawyers event

March, exact date TBD

Network with fellow senior lawyers over a virtual happy hour after hearing from a prestigious speaker. Registration is limited to those who identify as a "senior lawyer" in age, time at the bar, number of cases argued, or any other reason.

"Dear LiL" Blog Event

By Nicola Virk

On November 18, 2020, more than 55 attendees gathered virtually to hear Kim Jakeman and Una Radoja, both partners at Harper Grey LLP, discuss their "Dear LiL" blog. This blog is a foundational piece of their recently launched Life in



Law ("LiL") initiative. LiL is an anonymous resource for women lawyers across Canada that offers support through their phonenumber, online chat and blog. Allison Wolf, lawyer coach, led the hour-long discussion in a Q&A format. Kim and Una's passion for this initiative was clear, as was how proud they are of everyone who has helped bring the project to life.

The LiL blog invites women lawyers to submit questions in an "ask-the-author" format. Whether you are having a bad day or there is an issue that you have been grappling with for years, Kim and Una encourage you to use the blog for any issue, big or small.

The submitted questions are answered by one of eight LiL advisors. The advisors are a diverse group of female associates and partners at Harper Grey. To add to their depth of expertise, LiL often poses user-submitted questions to guest bloggers from across the country.

During this event, Kim and Una fostered an honest discussion about what the blog means to them and what it has taught them. Kim explained that her involvement has shown her that she still has a lot to learn. In particular, she was recently introduced to the concept of "reverse learning", meaning learning from the younger generation, and she says that readers can expect to see more of this concept in the future of LiL.

To Una, one of the best parts of the Dear LiL blog is the community it builds. The blog allows women to be vulnerable about their shortcomings and sheds light on common struggles. Una has found that the blog brings attention to the shared experiences of women and humanizes the profession. Her involvement has allowed her to appreciate the mentorship she has experienced throughout her career. She hopes she can pay this forward to the legal community through the LiL initiative.

Allison ended the event by challenging attendees to interact with the blog and LiL resources over the next months. It really is a fantastic resource, and I challenge those reading this article to do the same! The blog can be found at: LifeinLaw.ca.



WLF Mentoring Program Year-End Celebration

By Grace Cleveland

The pandemic has changed the way we do a lot of things, and mentoring is one them. On September 17, 2020, participants from the 2019-2020 WLF Mentoring Program came together via Zoom to discuss what worked, what didn't, and what stood out in their mentoring relationships over the past year.



After opening remarks from Mentoring Committee Co-Chair Dana Turner-Ryan, attendees left the larger group to join smaller breakout rooms, each with a mix of mentors and mentees as well as veteran participants and newbies. The conversation included tips and tricks to strengthen mentorship relationships such as scheduling specific and regular

meeting days and times at the beginning of the term, considering breakfast meetings instead of busy evenings, trying videoconferencing options instead of in-person or telephone, and considering having a set agenda if you are worried about taking up too much of one another's time.

When the larger group came back together, the discussion turned to the possibilities that exist in a virtual mentoring relationship. For example, if meeting via Zoom, there is no reason that lawyers in Prince George, Victoria, Kelowna, or Vancouver couldn't be matched up. These potential cross-province connections only add to the appeal of the already hugely popular Mentoring Program.

Prizes were awarded at the end of the evening for some skill-testing questions, before closing remarks were offered by Mentoring Committee Co-Chair Melissa VanderHouwen.

Overall, it was a wonderful way to mark the end of last year's Mentoring Program and set the stage for 2020-2021. Thank you so much to the Mentoring Committee (especially organizers Deanna Fedio and Rhonda Bender) for making this happen.

Upcoming Events cont'

SOGIC Event

March 30-31, 2021, exact date TBD
A new event co-hosted with the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Community is on its way – find out more in 2021!

Book Club Event

April, 2021, exact date TBD
Calling all bibliophiles! Save the date for the spring book club meeting where we will discuss our latest book.

Spring Outreach Event

May, 2021, exact date TBD
The indomitable Sara Forte is planning another can't-miss event for Fraser Valley women lawyers.

AGM

June, 2021, exact date TBD
Join us for an inspiring evening featuring a networking reception, our annual general meeting, and a thought-provoking speaker.