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Photo: Bill Reid Gallery

Save the Date

On Friday, June 17, 2011 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm we will again host a reception as the celebratory part of the National Aboriginal Day fundraiser event. The reception will be held at the beautiful Bill Reid Gallery in downtown Vancouver. We will once again be featuring talent from the Aboriginal community. Stay tuned for the details.

CBABC Aboriginal Lawyers Forum

ALF Executive Update

by Christina J. Cook, CBABC ALF Chair

On February 25, 2011 the CBABC Aboriginal Lawyers Forum (ALF) and the UBC Indigenous Law Students Association (ILSA) hosted a speed mentoring event which paired senior lawyer mentors with junior lawyer/student mentees for eight minute mentoring sessions. In each session, the mentors introduced themselves and their practice, offered tips and advice, and answered questions from the mentees. At the conclusion of each session, a CBABC ALF representative beat a traditional Aboriginal drum to alert the participants that it was time to switch and move on to the next session. After all the mentors made the rounds, the group was invited to enjoy delicious appetizers and network in a relaxed environment. The CBABC ALF would like to thank the UBC ILSA for co-hosting the event, as well the volunteer mentors who made this event possible: Barbara Buckman, Janelle Dwyer, Alixe Cormick, Isabel Jackson, Judith Kenacan, Shawn Bob, Katrina Harry, Lee Robin Schmidt, and Bertha Joseph. This event was the seventh ALF event and the first event CBABC ALF has hosted since becoming a CBABC Forum in December 2010. The Executive have been working diligently with the CBABC to facilitate the Forum's inclusion in the CBABC.

On March 12, 2011, the CBABC ALF Executive Representative attended its first CBABC Provincial Council meeting. The CBABC Provincial Council is a quarterly meeting attended by all CBABC Executive, Section Chairs, Forum Chairs and Elected Representatives from each county. The focus of this meeting was access to justice, as there was a presentation by Leonard Doust, QC, commissioner for the Public Commission on Legal Aid in British Columbia, and a panel discussion on this topic by The Honourable Chief Justice Lance Finch, The Honourable Chief Justice Robert Bauman and The Honourable Chief Judge Thomas Crabtree. The Law Society of British Columbia (Law Society) provided a brief update and spoke of its three year strategic plan which is focused on enhancing access to legal services, enhancing public confidence and enhancing professional development and continuing education (there was no specific mention of Aboriginal issues). The CBABC invited Koren Lighting-Earle of the Indigenous Bar Association (IBA) to the meeting. Ms. Lighting-Earle noted that the IBA is looking to expand into the area of mentorship.

On April 29, 2011, the Forum hosted a PLTC Information Session for law students at the Salmon+Bannock Restaurant. At this session Lynn Burns of the Law Society made a presentation, as well as a CBABC ALF presentation of "Top Tips and Tricks." The PLTC Information Session was followed by a three course traditional First Nations dinner with venison, bannock and salmon.

For more information on the CBABC ALF or any of our upcoming events, please email ALF@bccba.org.



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Mentor Lunches

Following on the success of the CBABC ALF's Speed Networking event on February 25, 2011 we will be auctioning "Mentor Lunches," at the National Aboriginal Day Auction on June 17, 2011.

Experienced lawyers from a variety of practice and non-practice situations will take their winning bidder out for lunch for a time of sustenance in the form of food for the body as well as the mind and hopefully for the soul too!

If you would like to serve in this way or can suggest someone, please email isabel.jackson@justice.gc.ca. These mentor lunches are sure to yield a unique, fun and satisfying experience for all involved.

Legal Excellence at the Department of Justice

Canada's largest legal offices offer exciting opportunities for articling students

by Danielle Vlemmiks, Communications Advisor, Justice Canada, BC Region

Naomi Wright walked into the orientation room at the Department of Justice (Justice Canada) in the summer of 2002, marking the end of three years of intense study and the beginning of a new challenge.

Naomi is Dene (Slavey), born in Hay River, NWT. She began her career at Justice Canada through the Legal Excellence Program (LEP). She had worked at Justice Canada as a summer student the previous year with Business and Regulatory Litigation Services, where she was exposed to a wide range of litigation files involving issues such as administrative law, contracts, torts, maritime law, construction and tender issues, employment and labour law. "I was hooked!" She says. "This was the main reason I wanted to article with Justice Canada."

The LEP is a three-year program of professional and career development. During the articling year, students complete the Professional Legal Training Course and five of seven possible rotations – Tax Litigation; Public Safety, Defence and Immigration; Business and Regulatory Law (B&R); Aboriginal Law; Solicitor Rotation (B&R Advisory or Aboriginal Advisory); Criminal Law International Assistance Group; and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

"Having worked as a summer student with Justice Canada," Naomi says, "I knew that I would get hands on litigation experience and would not be researching and writing memos the whole year I articulated, which turned out to be true!"

Professional Development

Professional development forms a large component of the articling year, in which students receive training in many areas, including Federal Court practice, introduction to Crown law, ethics and written and oral advocacy. Students are assigned mentors to provide professional guidance and support.

"During my summer experience, all through my articles and as a lawyer I have received exceptional mentoring from more experienced counsel at Justice Canada," says Naomi. "As a student I never felt like I was taking time away from lawyers' 'billable hours' when I approached them with questions."

Naomi was called to the Bar in 2003 and spent two years working in the Business and Regulatory Litigation Section, which gave her a solid litigation



Naomi Wright, LLB, Graduate of the Legal Excellence Program and Counsel with Aboriginal Litigation and Dispute Resolution Services



base. During this time she appeared in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the Federal Court of Canada and on behalf of Canada at various administrative tribunals.

From this solid foundation, she decided to follow her passion and joined the Aboriginal Law Group. "I decided to choose Aboriginal law because I was interested in working in a team environment and to improve my examination for discovery and negotiation skills," says Naomi. "I have mainly worked in the area of Indian Residential Schools (IRS), at first in the litigation context and now in the dispute resolution context (IRS Independent Assessment Process). This work is extremely challenging, both professionally and personally. I am grateful to have had this experience and to have a better understanding of the residential school history and the impact it has had on the Aboriginal population in Canada."

Culture and Benefits

The tradition of the Department of Justice is embodied in its culture, which values inclusiveness, fairness, excellence and respect for Canada's legal system. Employing lawyers from all over Canada, the Department is committed to workplace policies such as employment equity, flexible work hours, job sharing and teleworking, thereby enabling employees to make choices about their working conditions and to reach a proper balance between their professional and personal lives.

"I get into the office before 7:30 every morning and leave by 4:30pm. This schedule allows me to get my work done, get a workout in and have dinner with my husband and children every night. Of course there are times I have to work during the evening and on weekends, but this is the exception and not the rule for me." The Legal Excellence Program at the Department of Justice builds career excellence while making people a priority.

Naomi urges new lawyers to take an active role in their career goals. "Don't be shy to ask to work on files that interest you," she advises. "Take advantage of all the professional development opportunities while you article and get to know your colleagues and your fellow articling students. Above all, continue to evaluate and keep your eye on your professional and personal goals. It is easy to get lost in the details and lose sight of the big picture when you are articling and practising."

Event Recap - Speed Mentoring

On February 25, 2011 the CBABC ALF and UBC ILSA hosted a speed mentoring event that paired senior lawyer mentors with junior lawyer/student mentees for eight minute mentoring sessions. This popular event brought lawyers of all practices together, for support, networking and mentorship.



L-R: Rosalind Campbell, Isabel Jackson, Christina J. Cook and Katrina Harry

CBABC ALF Newsletter Summer 2011

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David Wells, Isabel Jackson and
Danielle Vlemmiks

Contact Us!

Are you interested in writing an article for the ALF Newsletter or have any comments or feedback? Send your comments and feedback to Christina J. Cook at ALF@bccba.org.



Aboriginal Law Grad Success Story

by David Wells, Academic Dean, Native Education College

Since February I have been the Academic Dean of the Native Education College (NEC) in Vancouver. When I finished my Articles and was called to the Bar in May of 2010, I found myself without employment as was the case with many other recent calls. Over the ensuing months I took a much broader view of what I was interested in doing, going forward. In my case this perspective incorporated my past career experiences in managing non-government organizations as well as policy and development work in the post-secondary and vocational sectors. After many months and more than 200 applications I was fortunate to come across this opportunity which, has turned out to be a great marriage of my past experiences and my legal education and experience.

As the Academic Dean, I am responsible for all of the educational programs offered by NEC. The NEC is a private post-secondary that has been providing Aboriginal Adult Basic Education and Post-Secondary programming in some form since 1967. Currently located in the Longhouse at East Fifth and Scotia, I oversee several Certificate and Diploma programs, in addition to the Aboriginal Adult Basic Education, serving approximately 300 students each year. Our student body is primarily the Urban Aboriginal community, and many of our students take their Certificate and Diplomas and transfer into the second and third year of many public colleges and universities. Recently we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Simon Fraser University (SFU) that will result in a seamless transition of our Aboriginal Justice Studies graduates into the School of Criminology at SFU.

My role as Academic Dean of the College includes a not-insignificant amount of legal related work including drafting service agreements and contracts with First Nations communities throughout the province, drafting curriculum licensing agreements, adjudicating academic disputes and overseeing labour and employment matters within a collective bargaining agreement. As a result I have maintained my status as a practicing member of the Bar, and look forward to continuing my involvement in the Aboriginal Lawyers Forum.

Fourth Annual National Aboriginal Day Online Auction and Reception

by Isabel Jackson, CBABC ALF Vice Chair

Plans for this year's Fourth Annual National Aboriginal Day Online Auction and Reception that will be held on June 21, 2011 are well under way. To date Isabel Jackson (Department of Justice Canada, BC Region) and Jennifer Duncan (McDonald and Company) have spearheaded the organization of this event. This year we are happy to be joined by the new CBABC Aboriginal Lawyers Forum (ALF). It is entirely appropriate for the CBABC ALF to join us as we continue to raise money toward endowing the CBABC Aboriginal Law Student Scholarship Trust (Trust). We are grateful for the Forum's support in helping to organize and promote this annual event.

Last year's Third Annual 2010 Auction raised more than the first two years combined! If we remain on that track the Fourth Annual Auction in 2011 is set to raise more than \$14,500, for a grand total of about \$30,000 toward the CBABC's Aboriginal Law Student Scholarship Trust! As in previous years the online auction will run the week of National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2011.

What can you do?

Please join the CBABC ALF Executive who have each committed to support this year's auction by soliciting or directly donating an item for auction. Auction items include original works such as books, photography, paintings, limited edition prints and jewellery. Tickets, passes, gift certificates and cards, etc. are other popular items. Solicit a donation from your favourite restaurant, spa or other business that you patronize. Opportunities for corporate promotions are provided on the auction website as well as at the reception event. There is also an "other" category for select pre-owned items that remain suitable for recycling/re-gifting. As with the addition of mentor lunches this year, be creative when considering what you can donate that will attract a bid!

Contact Us!

To donate an item for the auction or to volunteer your time, or for more information, please contact Isabel Jackson at isabel.jackson@justice.gc.ca or Jennifer Duncan at jduncan@mcdonaldandco.com.

