

Connecting Women and the Law



SPRING 2010

Comments from the Chair



by Linda Robertson

I am pleased to introduce the CBABC Women Lawyers Forum (WLF) Newsletter. This newsletter, (which we hope to publish on a regular basis), is intended to inform our members of past and upcoming WLF activities, promote the objectives of the WLF, and otherwise communicate why your ongoing support of the WLF is so important to our ability to achieve those objectives.

The purpose of the WLF is to promote, support and advance the stature and influence of women in the legal profession. Key to achieving that mission is providing opportunities to develop, build, and promote networks for women lawyers – hence the WLF's mission statement "Connecting Women in the Law". WLF members include lawyers in all sizes of law firms from sole practitioners to national firms, in government, and in the private sector. We strive to offer something for lawyers at all stages of their professional careers, whether you are law or articling students, senior practitioners and everything in between including those lawyers who are looking to return to practice after some time away.

The WLF supports its mission through a number of events each year, organized around mentoring, education, networking and recognition. Last fall, we were particularly busy organizing eight events. We kicked off our program year in September 2009 with our annual "Ten Hot Tips From Ten Hot Mentors" evening at the Law Courts Inn, featuring presentations from an impressive line-up of senior practitioners. So far this year the WLF has sponsored four networking events – two potluck dinners held at the homes of Kerry-Lynne Findlay, QC (fall) and Diane Bell (spring), two outreach lunches held in Langley and Richmond, and two senior women lawyer dinners with retired Justice Mary Southin and May Brown as honoured guests.

In the Fall, we were pleased to be involved in an evening sponsored by the Law Society to hear from three members of the Law Society's Task Force about their Report on the Retention of Women in the Practice of Law, which was published earlier in the year. Finally, our Mentoring Committee has recently matched 178 lawyers - the highest number ever – for the WLF's 2010 Mentoring Program.

Event Calendar

CBABC Woman Lawyers Forum Senior Women Lawyers' Dinner

May 6, 2010 – 6:00pm

The Brock House Restaurant

Special dinner guest: May Brown

This is a good opportunity to meet in a casual environment with senior women lawyers who are in private practice, public practice or sole practice, not practising, or contract lawyers. A la carte menu and individual bills.

For further information contact Wendy Lee at dwl@kkbl.com.

CBABC Women Lawyers Forum Education Day: "Defining Moments – Leadership and Ethics"

May 14, 2010 – 8:30am to 1:30pm

Metropolitan Hotel, Vancouver

Come and enjoy some networking time with your colleagues while considering and discussing what have been, or what might be, the defining moments in your legal career within the context of leadership and ethics. Two (2) hours CPD credit will be available towards the ethics component of the CPD programme.

\$125 (CBA members only)

Space is limited so book early!

For further information go to cba.org/BC/Sections_Groups/sections/mtgdetail.aspx?ID=1778.

CBABC Women Lawyers Forum AGM and Reception

June 2, 2010 – 5:00pm to 7:30pm

The Law Courts Inn, Vancouver

"Jump Off to Summer" is the theme of this year's AGM. After the election of officers, we will hear the fascinating story from the legal team representing the women ski jumpers who took on the International Olympic Committee.



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I was particularly happy to be invited last year to work with the Law Society Education Committee to discuss whether mentoring should be eligible for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits. Drawing on the WLF's seven years of experience working with over 600 women in our Mentoring Program, I was able to discuss the value that lawyers, at all stages of their career, can receive from a colleague's guidance. Starting in January 2010, the Law Society has agreed that CPD credits can be earned for mentoring activities, including the WLF's Mentoring Program.

One of the highlights of 2009 was the WLF's second Awards Luncheon where Award of Excellence recipient Kathryn Berge, QC was recognized, and where we presented our first Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award to Brenda Edwards. This luncheon, attended by more than 180 lawyers, also featured an inspiring speech by Carole Taylor on the topic of success for women in business and politics.

None of these events and efforts would be possible without the many volunteer hours put in by the 16 lawyers who sit on the WLF Executive, or the many other lawyers who sit on one of our four committees. We encourage you to contact any of us on the executive, if you are interested in volunteering your time on our Mentoring, Public Relations, Education, or Events Planning committees.



Finally, the WLF is always looking for new ways to connect with women lawyers so we encourage you to contact any member of the Executive with your ideas regarding issues you believe the WLF should consider, or speakers or other resources that you recommend to support our mission. We continue to encourage the growth of our membership – your membership and support is key to the success of the WLF, and we would like to ask you to encourage other women lawyers at your firm or amongst your colleagues or friends to join the CBA and the WLF. The Women Lawyers Forum is one of the most dynamic and inspiring groups that you will ever join, and it has been my privilege to have been associated with the WLF over the past seven years.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our two up-coming events over the next three months. Come out and connect with other women lawyers - not only will you find this rewarding personally, but you will fulfill an important role in the promotion, support and advancement of women in the legal profession.

Photo L-R: Kathryn Berge, QC, Carole Taylor, OC and Brenda Edwards.

CBABC Women Lawyers Forum – Program and Events

We offer programs designed to encourage and support women lawyers in the areas of practice enhancement and professional and personal development. The Forum offers members a variety of mentoring, education, leadership and network events. See CBABC Women Lawyers Forum in Professional Development at cba.org/BC for event updates.





We welcome and encourage women lawyers into our membership. Please contact:

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Mentoring Committee

January 2010 marked the start of this year's Mentoring Program. Proof that the awareness and understanding of the importance of mentoring to career success, is the fact that the WLF's mentoring committee received an overwhelming number of applications from prospective 'mentees'. This then resulted in the mentoring committee making a targeted plea to senior women lawyers around BC to stand as mentors. Senior women lawyers responded to our call in numbers that exceeded our need, thereby allowing the Committee to match 86 mentor-mentee pairs (the "Pairs") in January.

After the matches were made, the first Mentoring event – an Orientation Luncheon – took place on February 10, 2010. The Pairs met for the first time to get to know each other, review and sign the mentoring contract, and to learn how mentors and mentees can qualify and apply for CPD credits with the Law Society. Note: If Pairs were not able to attend, the Orientation program can be viewed from your computer by going to the Women Lawyers Forum part of the CBABC website (under Mentoring).

The mentoring committee then hosted an event called the *Art of Communication*, on April 14, 2010 at the Law Courts Inn. This interactive event provided a great opportunity for the Pairs to spend time together and engage in real exercises learning practical skills for communication and mentoring, and otherwise getting the most out of their year in the program.

The mentoring committee also sponsors the annual *Ten Hot Tips from Ten Hot Mentors*, held in September of each year. This event has proven to be one of the WLF's most popular events, and last September's event was no exception. The popularity of this annual event is in large part due to the quality of the presentations from the many senior women lawyers who have so generously shared their experiences. If you have questions about the Mentoring Program, please feel free to contact the committee co-Chairs Deborah Taylor or Julie Fisher at the contact information located in this newsletter. For further information on CPD credits for mentoring, visit the Law Society of British Columbia website lawsociety.bc.ca/licensing_membership/profdev/mentor.html.

Events Planning Committee

In case you missed one or more of these events, the following is a summary of some of the numerous networking, educational and celebratory events that were organized since September, together with a sample of comments received from our members.

September 2009- Launch and Ten Hot Tips

An informal appetizer buffet and mixer was held with presentations from ten senior women lawyers each presenting a top practice or practice/career management tip.

"A great opportunity to meet with WLF members and pick up some excellent tips relating to the practice of law, life and everything!!"





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October 2009- Fall Potluck Dinner

"One of the Women Lawyers Forum's most popular events is the complimentary WLF potluck dinner. The WLF potlucks provide women lawyers an opportunity to meet in a casual social environment. This year's Fall Potluck was well-attended as usual, and was held at the home of Kerry-Lynne Findlay, QC in Vancouver."

November 2009 – Senior Women Lawyers Dinner

"The Senior Women Lawyers Dinner was held at the Dockside Restaurant with special dinner guest, The Honourable Mary Southin, retired Court of Appeal Justice. Full capacity for the event (25 persons) was reached within just a few days of the notice being first circulated, proving this to be another popular WLF event."

November 2009 – Law Society Retention of Women Report Presentation

The CBABC WLF and the Law Society of British Columbia presented a panel to discuss the Law Society's recent report on the *Retention and Advancement of Women Lawyers in Private Practice*.

"It was great to hear from the individuals who were instrumental in creating 'The Business Case' for retention of women in the legal profession. Not only did the presentation help me understand the report substantively, but it also raised our awareness of the time, effort and energy that went into this incredibly important project." –Vista Pourbahrami, CBABC WLF Member

November 2009 CBABC Women Lawyers Forum Award of Excellence and Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award Lunch

Lunch with special guest speaker Carole Taylor, OC. Presentation of the CBABC WLF Award of Excellence to recipient Kathryn Berge, QC and presentation of the first Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award to recipient Brenda Edwards.

"The Awards lunch is always one of the highlights of the year because of the inspiring speakers. All of the speeches were amazing: the nominees' remarkable introductions; the award recipients' emotional acceptance; and Carole Taylor's inspiring speech on women in business. It was another wonderful event showcasing what women lawyers can achieve." – Linda Robertson, CBABC WLF Chair



Photo L-R: Carole Taylor, OC, Brenda Edwards, Kathryn Berge, QC and Linda Robertson.





Photo L-R: Vivian Yuen, Carol Anne Finch-Noyes, Linda Robertson, Janine Jones, Carole Taylor, OC, Vivienne Stewart, Deborah Taylor, Anne Chopra, Lana Li, Wendy Lee and Jennifer Chow.

December 2009 – WLF Outreach Lunch (aka “Lady Lawyers Who Lunch”), Langley

The WLF regularly organizes networking lunches in areas more readily accessible to lawyers who do not practice in Vancouver. These events are also open to non-WLF members as a way of introducing them to the WLF and encouraging membership in the WLF.

“It was a lot of fun to meet with other women lawyers in the Langley area and to share a bit of Christmas cheer. I am really glad that the WLF held this event outside of Vancouver. I learned about the Forum and have now signed up as a member. I am looking forward to going to other Forum events.”

April 2010 Spring Potluck

Another successful potluck event occurred recently, this time in the home of Diane Bell in Burnaby.

April 2010 – WLF Outreach Lunch, Richmond

This was WLF’s first outreach lunch held in Richmond. Thirty women lawyers attended this outreach lunch and many expressed appreciation for an opportunity to network with other women lawyers without having to travel to downtown Vancouver.

The **Events Planning Committee** is always interested in hearing your views regarding WLF events and also in hearing from WLF members who may be interested in assisting the Events Planning Committee. Please contact the co-chairs of the Events Planning Committee: Wendy Lee or Vivian Yuen at the contact information noted in this newsletter.

Marketing and Communications Committee

As noted in Linda Robertson’s article, *Connecting Women in the Law* is key to achieving the WLF’s mandate, to promote, support and advance the stature and influence of women in the legal profession. The Marketing and Communications Committee supports this mandate by striving to keep you **informed** (by marketing and communicating news of WLF events and committee activities) and **connected** (through this newsletter, email updates and the WLF section of the CBABC website).





Program and Events

We offer programs that are designed to encourage and support women lawyers in the areas of practice enhancement and professional and personal development. The Forum offers members a large variety of mentoring, education, leadership and network events.

See the CBABC Sections Calendar at cba.org/BC for event updates.



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 cba.org/BC for a Section enrolment form.

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

This electronic newsletter, (created and sponsored by the WLF, this Committee and the CBABC), is an important initiative that we hope you agree, supports all of those objectives. The newsletter is intended to be more than a collection of reports of events, past and future. We hope it will provide all WLF members the opportunity to understand the importance of the work that, through your membership and support, the WLF engages in. To the extent that electronic newsletters can easily be forwarded to others, we hope you will also spread the news – thereby increasing the ‘connections’.

The newsletter is also your newsletter, and we invite you to submit ideas for articles, and to give us your feedback. Our membership is talented and diverse so we want to enlist your help to ensure that the articles published in the newsletter reflect your issues and ideas. So, please contact the committee co-chairs, Janine Jones or Nicole Byres, using the contact information noted in this newsletter and **tell us what you think**.

Education Committee

The Education Committee is responsible for organizing an annual Education Day for WLF and CBA members. The WLF and its Education Committee chose the topics of leadership and ethics as their theme for this year’s Education Day, on May 14, 2010. We know that you have many other opportunities to spend time and money on other CLE activities, so for those of you who are still considering whether or not to attend on May 14th, the following sets out in more detail, why we believe the topic is relevant and will add value to your practice and firms.

Research shows that there is a direct relationship between effective leadership and employee satisfaction & retention, client satisfaction, and bottom-line results. ‘Leadership’ is an action, not a position, and effective leaders create superior results for themselves, their clients, and their firms. Most great leaders are not born that way—they will usually tell you that leadership is learned by watching other leaders in action, through education, and by trial and error.

Ethics and ethical behaviour is at the core of how we as lawyers conduct ourselves and advance our clients’ interests. Understanding your own values, and learning to trust your instincts is as important as knowing the Professional Code of Conduct and Law Society Rules. As lawyers, we are often faced with decisions on how best to advance our clients’ interests while still conducting ourselves ethically and professionally.

We have brought together a group of outstanding women who are well qualified to discuss both topics. By sharing their stories of experiences (both good and bad), and allowing for group discussion of the panel presentations, with time for the all important Q & A, we expect the Education Day will provide an exceptional learning opportunity for attendees.

There is still time to register for this event. Click to the following link (www.cba.org/BC/pdf/meetings/wlf_education_day_05_14_10.pdf) to see registration details. We hope to see you there!

