



Summer 2019



Connecting Women in the Law

Message from the Chair

By Daria Batkin

With another successful Awards Gala out of the way, our relentless team is already looking ahead and planning our next move.

Next year, we will bring to B.C. a brand new program which we hope will create a positive effect on the retention and advancement of women lawyers in our community.

We have been preaching to the choir long enough. Women know better than anyone else that there are still significant systemic and institutional hurdles to our advancement in the legal profession. It is of course extremely important to have a forum for us to share our experiences, support each other and discuss solutions to the problems we face, but as history shows,ⁱ not a lot has changed over the past 25 years. We all heard the projections that, at present rates, parity between women and men in law firm partnerships is not expected until at least 2088ⁱⁱ. While some of our colleagues down south are taking the matter to court, as described in a recent ABA Weekly Journal Article by Debra Cassens Weiss, “Female Lawyers describe “fraternity culture” at Jones Day in \$200M sex-bias lawsuit”ⁱⁱⁱ...



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... we propose a less radical approach to resolving the issue.

In collaboration with the National Conference of the Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA), and with full support of CBABC President Margaret Mereigh, the BC WLF is bringing to you a new program entitled "GOOD Guys - Guys Overcoming Obstacles to Diversity." Originally developed by the NCWBA, GOOD Guys is a program designed to break the impasse in women's advancement by engaging people who have been missing from the conversation for too long – the guys.

We are planning an event at which we hope to educate our male colleagues on the tangible benefits of placing women in leadership positions, and we will celebrate those guys who are ahead of the curve and already capitalizing on the increased outcomes associated with advancing women to the top, not just at law firms, but in other industries as well. The GOOD Guys program has been met with a lot of enthusiasm in a number of states in the United States, including New York, California and D.C. It is time we bring it to Canada and who better than the BC WLF to do it!

Considering that the majority of leadership positions in the profession are currently held by men, it is a fact of life that, unless we get the men on board, meaningful change is unlikely to come. Admittedly, although this new program is not going to fix all problems overnight, I see it as the logical next step toward a future where gender parity in our profession is no longer an issue but is the norm.

Stay tuned for the official announcement of the GOOD Guys event, coming to Vancouver in 2019/2020 term.

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- i. See Message from the Chair comments on the "[Revisiting Touchstones for Change](#)" Report from the Fall 2018 Newsletter
 - ii. Law Society of British Columbia, The Business Case for Retaining and Advancing Women Lawyers in Private Practice (July, 2009) p. 4, citing Catalyst, Quick Takes: Women in Law (2009), p. 2.
 - iii. ABA Journal: "[Female lawyers describe 'fraternity culture' at Jones Day in \\$200M sex-bias lawsuit](#)"

WLF Newsletter Summer 2019 Edition

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2019 Women Lawyers Forum Awards Gala

By Sarah Lumsden

The guests at this year's WLF Awards Gala were greeted with a welcome cocktail upon entering the ballroom of the Terminal City Club for mingling and photos. The room was stunning, a testament to the hard work of Samantha Chan and the WLF Gala Committee who put on this wonderful event. Soon, everyone took their seats for the excellent dinner and speeches.

First up was the Debra Van Ginkel, QC Mentoring Award Recipient, Rita Andreone, QC. Rita was introduced by one of the many mentees on whom she had made a lasting impression. Rita is the immediate past chair of the executive committee at Lawson Lundell LLP, and a Corporate, Investment, and Governance Partner. Rita has a long history of guiding and mentoring. Notably, in 2015 she was one of a small group of women lawyers who participated in British Columbia's Justicia Project – a program aimed at retaining and advancing women lawyers. It was clear from the comments of her nominators and Rita's own acceptance speech that Rita takes pride in mentoring young women in law and was extremely deserving of this award.

The second award - the Women Lawyers Forum Award of Excellence - was awarded to Kasari Govender. Kasari is the Executive Director of West Coast LEAF ("Legal Education and Action Fund"). During her time at LEAF, Kasari has appeared as counsel at every level of court in BC and at the Supreme Court of Canada on a variety of equality cases. Kasari regularly speaks on gender equality, access to justice and legal responses to gender-based violence. Recently, Kasari was one of the founders of the Rise Women's Legal Centre of which she is now the president. Kasari's achievements are numerous and impressive and she certainly earned this Award of Excellence. Her accomplishments have proven to be ongoing as she has recently been appointed as Commissioner for the Human Rights Commission, which is being re-established in British Columbia.

The keynote speaker was especially inspiring. Chief Justice (Alberta) Catherine Fraser graced us with her humour, wit and humility. Chief Justice Fraser spoke about how she is the first female, the youngest and the longest serving Chief Justice of a Canadian province. She was also one of the first women to become partner at a law firm in Canada.

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Report from WLF Vancouver Island

The WLF Vancouver Island held another successful Women Judges' Dinner at the Victoria Golf Course on March 5, 2019. The evening started out with the Judges being given creative licence to introduce each other. Judge Jennifer Barrett and Judge Christine Lowe distinguished themselves by teaming up for innovative introductions of each other by making a statement starting with "which one of us..." and then inviting participants to vote on which one of the judges the statement referred to. Much laughter ensued, although there were a few questions that no one was brave enough to vote on! Then, under a strict cone of silence, the executive tried out an icebreaker game called "Sit Down If" which required participants to be truthful and sit down if they answered yes to any one of a list of hilarious and sometimes bizarre questions. The last woman standing won a prize. The questions were so entertaining that the group kept on playing until all the questions were exhausted, just for the fun of it!

On a more serious note after dinner, Judge Carmen Rogers spoke on the importance of reaching out to colleagues in times of stress and reiterated her understanding, echoed by everyone at the dinner, that any one of the women present at the dinner or indeed in the wider legal community is glad to lend an "ear of support" to any person and that we should all be encouraged to reach out and not feel that we are struggling alone.

The WLF Vancouver Island executive wishes to thank the judges and the participants for attending and making this another successful event. We are already looking forward to next year's dinner!

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Chief Justice Fraser credited her grandmother, her mother and the rest of her family for teaching her to have strong principles and to not tolerate intolerance.

The title of Chief Justice Fraser's speech was "Truth be told: Lessons learned from my Life in the Law." Before leaving the stage, Chief Justice Fraser left us with her "top ten" lessons. Among these lessons, she sprinkled sage advice such as "embrace change," "to survive and thrive you need to know yourself" and "remember to be brave." Chief Justice Fraser left us with a call to action. She said, "Women in law are not here by license, we are here by right and we are here to stay."

The WEB Alliance of Women's Business Networks

By Janine Jones

The CBABC Women Lawyers Forum ("WLF BC") is a member of the WEB Alliance of Women's Business Networks (the "WEB Alliance") and we would like to take this opportunity to share details regarding this organization with our membership. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of speaking with the co-chairs of the WEB Alliance, Lisa Niemetscheck and Kerrilee Auger, to understand more about the WEB Alliance, what the WEB Alliance does and how our WLF BC members can become involved. Below is a summary of that discussion:

What is the WEB Alliance?

The WEB Alliance is a consortium of women's business networks in BC that serves as a resource for professional women's groups and women in business and

the trades to connect, elevate and educate the business community. The members of the WEB Alliance collaborate to create change towards better business, stronger communities and an enhanced business culture for women.

The WEB Alliance is a place for members to come together to serve the women of BC by: collaborating and supporting each other; sharing resources and knowledge; and celebrating each other's successes.

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What does the WEB Alliance do?

The WEB Alliance:

- Provides a space to promote, connect and support member organizations;
- Is a voice for organizations in BC that support women in business and the trades;
- Advocates and raises awareness for issues that can impact women in business and the trades; and
- Is a place for member organizations to promote their events and coordinate events with other members.

How can members of the BC WLF become involved?

The best way for individual members to become involved with the WEB Alliance is to visit our website. From there, members can learn more about the organizations represented in WEB Alliance, reach out to any organizations you have an interest in, and refer any organizations that may benefit from WEB Alliance membership.

Members of the BC WLF Executive regularly attend WEB Alliance meetings, and in turn, inform members of the BC WLF of any upcoming events or volunteer opportunities that may be of interest. One such upcoming event, to be hosted by the WEB Alliance in November, 2019, will be the “Embracing Awards” event. This event will focus on discovering ways an awards nomination can benefit your business and identifying ways you can write a winning nomination. The WEB Alliance is currently seeking volunteers to speak as panelists or act as panel facilitators for this event. If you are interested in volunteering for this event please contact WLF BC Executive members Janine F. Jones or Daria Batkin. Further details regarding this event will be published on the WEB Alliance online calendar, where you can also find other upcoming events of WEB Alliance member organizations that may be of interest to you.

Connecting Women Lawyers in the North

WLF – BC North plays an important role in fostering relationships amongst the female lawyers in our area. It is easy to become isolated practising as a female lawyer in the North, especially for those in solo practice. WLF – BC North provides female lawyers with the opportunity to connect over casual social events and thereby serve as supports for one another.

This past year, we have held three successful events. In the fall of 2018, we held a dinner for female lawyers, judges, and judicial case managers, which was very well-attended. In the winter, we held a financial planning event, hosted by Edward Jones with speaker, Murray Hawse. The seminar was interactive and attendees were engaged and asked questions.

On March 29, 2019, we held a post-work pub night at a local brewery, a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere.

The focus of our section is to continue to offer members opportunities to socialize and stay connected with our colleagues.





The Importance of an Artistic Outlet

By Danielle Lemon

Growing up, I spent most of my spare time singing in choirs, acting, singing and dancing in school musicals and community theatre productions, and okay, yes, belting show tunes in my bedroom alone with a hair-brush microphone. I also drew and wrote prolifically, churning out pictures, stories and poems with gusto. I always assumed that my career, when I settled on one, would be in the arts. I told my parents that I felt destined for showbiz. They told me to get a good backup career, and so I did – I became a lawyer.

In my first few years of practice, I focused entirely on my career as a corporate solicitor focused on technology, corporate finance and intellectual property. Artistic pursuits were not a priority. Free time? What is that? Hobbies? I don't know her. I was too tired from writing all day at work to write for fun when I got home. My unpredictable hours made it difficult to commit to a theatre production, or even to a dance class. But after several years, I started feeling the lack of art in my life. I made changes to my professional life that allowed me to begin singing again, participating in choirs and in community theatre productions. I joined the cast of the Lawyer Show, an annual all-lawyer theatre production that raises funds for Touchstone Theatre and Carousel Theatre for Young People. I took writing and dance classes. I even opted to work as a sole practitioner for several years so that I could pursue professional theatre and freelance writing opportunities alongside my legal career.

At first, I thought this need to bring more art into my life was simply for selfish reasons – that I needed to have this artistic avenue in order for the practice of law to remain “bearable” for me. However, I've now realized that a continued connection to my artistic interests is vital to my success. Here are some of the reasons I encourage any lawyer to pursue an artistic outlet, regardless of their skill or talent level, starting with the obvious:

You'll relieve your stress.

You need something to let go of the stress of your job, to physically release it from your body and help you get out of your own brain. Some folks enjoy running or yoga. Me? I like a tap class. I sweat, laugh and nurture my inner Broadway diva. Ever felt like screaming after a tough day at the office? Well, belting out a show-tune or two or harmonizing with other voices in a choir is what I'd call “socially acceptable yelling.” If you're not the type to get up on a stage and perform, think about how molding a piece of clay on a potter's wheel could feel meditative. Or how peaceful it might be to focus on completing a cross-stitch (or, alternatively, the satisfaction of stabbing a sharp needle into something again and again, if you've had a bad day). If you don't find a way to get that stress out, it will come out at work – at your staff, your colleagues and your clients.

You'll be able to find creative solutions to your clients' problems.

As lawyers we can begin to rely too much on precedent, on how “things have always been done,” and live too comfortably in the left side of our brain where logic, order and rules win the day. The more you exercise the right side of your brain in the act of imagination - writing a poem, painting a landscape, improving a scene - the more you may be able to think outside of the box for solutions that may not have been tried before, but may help your client at the end of the day.

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You'll let go of perfectionism.

I recently tried glassblowing for the first time and was terrible at it. I managed to clumsily create a lopsided, heart-shaped paperweight that no one will be admiring, much less paying money for, any time soon. But I love what I made and love the lesson it taught me: that perfection does not have to be the goal in everything. I'm not saying that we should abandon standards of quality and excellence in our work, but there is a difference between excellence and perfection. One is in your control, the other is often not. Focus on excellence, and what is achievable, and you will save yourself (and your client) a lot of heartache.

You'll be more patient.

The creation of art takes time, through rehearsal, practice, revision and skill development. Practicing the art of patience can never be a bad thing. It will help you work through complex legal problems, tough settlement negotiations, or revision 66 of that contract you've been working on for the better part of a year.

You'll understand how people outside of the world of your office or the courtroom think.

I know that my social life has tended to be dominated by other lawyers. It makes sense: you want to hang around people that understand the life you lead and speak the same professional language. But taking on a new hobby that takes you out of the safety zone of the legal community will help you to meet new people and gain perspective on the thoughts and opinions of folks out there in the "real world" that lawyers can become so easily detached from. Understanding people better means that you can more easily understand where your client is coming from and give better advice.

You'll gain perspective.

Literature, music and art all share the artist's particular view of some aspect of the human experience. The more you are exposed to art that shares diverse perspectives, the more experience you have hearing the voices of others different to you, the more open you will be in a case conference, discovery, or business negotiation to actually hearing and understanding what's at stake for the other side. You'll be able to focus on areas of agreement and understanding, rather than on the topics that divide you.

You'll remember why you wanted to be a lawyer in the first place.

We all became lawyers for a reason. For most of us, that reason was not "money," "billable hours" or "untold stress and fatigue." Art is the expression of emotion, the embodiment of imagination, and it can help us reconnect to our core values. Cultivating your emotional health through art will help you reconnect to why you wanted to be a lawyer in the first place. Was it to make the world a better place? To be of service to others? To help save the environment? Whatever your reason was, expressing it in a poem, a painting, a song, a novel – even a lopsided heart shaped paperweight – will help you connect those values that took you down this path, with the work you are currently engaged in, which I hope will bring you more purpose and satisfaction every day of your career.





Recent Past Event: WLF AGM 2019

Our AGM was held on June 12, 2019 at the Metropolitan Hotel with guest speaker Madam Justice Carla Forth of the British Columbia Supreme Court. Madam Justice Forth gave a refreshing and valuable speech about overcoming challenges and stepping outside your comfort zone. It was a rewarding evening, and we celebrated another successful year for the WLF!

Upcoming Events:

Ovarian Cancer Walk 2019

The BC Women Lawyers Forum participates in the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope at Queen Elizabeth Park every year. The walk raises awareness and vital funds to provide support for women with ovarian cancer and for much-needed research into prevention and improved treatments. Ultimately, we hope the funds we raise will help find a cure for ovarian cancer.

The Walk of Hope will be held on September 8, 2019 at 9:00am at Queen Elizabeth Park. Please invite your colleagues and friends to join our WLF team! More details will be provided soon.



Fall Launch September 2019

Stay tuned for more details on our annual "Hot Tips from Top Mentors" event!

Junior Women Lawyers' Networking Event

By Leah Seneviratne

The WLF held their annual Junior Women Lawyers Networking Event on Wednesday, February 6th at the charming Shebeen in Gastown. The time passed very quickly, and there were many meaningful conversations about practice experiences and career advice. This year, there were many women in attendance who had not yet been to a WLF event, and had their first opportunity to learn more about the section and its values. We also received great feedback about the gorgeous gastropub location and appetizers. After everyone had arrived, the Secretary of the WLF, Sara Li, gave a short-speech about the purpose of the WLF and the exciting, upcoming events to note.

The WLF has always provided ample opportunity to connect with fellow women lawyers, but their networking events are especially valuable for junior women lawyers who may not have had a lot of experience or opportunity to brush up on valuable networking skills. Looking to connect with other women in your profession while visiting exciting new bars and restaurants? These networking events are always great opportunity to connect with fellow junior women lawyers both on a professional and personal level.

International Women's Day Potluck

By Grace Cleveland

International Women's Day didn't gain mainstream attention until 1975, when it was celebrated by the United Nations for the first time, following the first World Conference on Women that same year. Since then, this day has become synonymous with celebrating the achievements of women and contemplating the challenges still being faced.

The WLF held its second annual International Women's Day Potluck in Vancouver on March 7, 2019, at Teresa Mitchell-Banks's lovely residence. Veteran WLF members, articulated and law students, and women practicing in a variety of areas of law came together to network, bond and reflect upon what it means to be a woman in law in 2019.

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Although there was snow on the ground outside, our hearts were warm from the conversation and kinship inside.

Guests were greeted at the door by two friendly dogs and immediately made to feel welcome. The dining room contained a diverse array of tasty treats. It was difficult to decide between the pierogis, dolmades, creamy Bries and sharp cheddars, cucumber tea sandwiches, mini cheesecake cups, and those iconic Venus symbol cupcakes.

After dinner, current Chair Daria Batkin shared some highlights from the WLF's year to date, as well as some exciting events on the horizon, including the upcoming WLF Leadership Conference in October. She congratulated us all on the roles we play in shaping a more equitable future, and reminded us that while International Women's Day officially occurs once each year, there's nothing stopping us from bearing the same sentiments in mind year-round!

When the time came for the evening to end, attendees were filled with a feeling of community that is hard to come by in such a big city. I personally could not think of a better way to have spent International Women's Day.

The WLF would like to thank our incredible organizers: Nicole Chang, Stephanie Markovich, and Claudia Arrieta for planning this event, as well as our generous host, Teresa Mitchell-Banks. See you all next year!



- i. The WLF has held a number of IWD events but this year, for the second year in a row, the format for the event was a potluck.

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 make the Forum!

WLF is now on LinkedIn!

Please visit [our page](#) and follow us for updates!

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

CBA National WLF Newsletter

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

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





Senior Women Lawyers' Dinner

By Leah Seneviratne

This year's Senior Women Lawyers Dinner was an especially sought-after event due to our speaker being the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and published novelist. Her Ladyship was the highlight of the event. She spoke at length about her life after the bench, including how much she enjoyed writing her recently-published novel and developing its characters. A sold-out group of 48 women attended the event, which was held in an intimate private dining room at the Water Street Café in Gastown.

The event provided attendees with ample time to network and socialize with other women lawyers who identified as "senior," whether due to age or years of practice. At dinner, WLF Chair Daria Batkin spoke about the upcoming Gala and other WLF events. The annual Senior Women Lawyers Dinner is a great opportunity for self-identifying "senior" women lawyers to network together and listen to amazing speakers who can provide attendees with valuable insight. The Senior Women Lawyers Dinner is the brain child of one of the founders of the WLF, Margaret Ostrowski, Q.C., who is instrumental in ensuring that the WLF has a networking dinner for senior women lawyers each year.



L-R: Margaret Ostrowski, Q.C., Suzanne Anton, Q.C., The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, P.C., C.C.

