



Winter 2020



Connecting Women Lawyers

Remarks from the Chair

By Daria Batkin

Earlier this fall I had the privilege of representing the BC Women Lawyers Forum at the two-day National WLF Leadership Conference in Halifax. I always look forward to these Conferences, not only as an opportunity to enhance leadership skills, but also to connect with the community of women lawyers outside of my “natural habitat.”



The keynote speech was delivered by Eleanor Beaton, an internationally recognized expert in women’s leadership. She invited us to shift the conversation from needing more self-confidence to succeed, to accepting your demonstrated self-confidence and getting comfortable with your power. Many women are raised to be uncomfortable with seeking power. We are raised to believe that it is somehow shameful, selfish and not lady-like. Beaton invited us to step away from this defeatist conditioning and have an honest conversation with ourselves about our demonstrated abilities, influence, values and our ultimate goals. She urged us to be brave, unapologetic and authentic in our pursuit.

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Putting bravery over perfection, Allowing your loyalty to rest with yourself, Showing up as you are - were just some of the takeaways from this powerful presentation.

The Conference continued with a joint session with the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, focused on the importance of recognizing women of color in leadership. On the second day, the Honorable Laurel Halfpenny-MacQuarrie of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court, spoke about women leaders in the Indigenous communities. Later, our own WLF Past Chair Kathy Sainty, Q.C, moderated a panel entitled, "Entrepreneurship 101: Tips from Women who Made it Happen."

The closing keynote was delivered by Robyn Doolittle, a Canadian best-selling author and investigative reporter. Doolittle spoke about her investigation into the #MeToo movement examined in her most recent book "Had it Coming."

Lastly, I would be amiss if I did not pay tribute to the recipient of this year's Cecilia I. Johnstone Award, Daphne Dumont, Q.C. Dumont is a former National CBA President, a revered mentor, and an excellent jurist. The Cecilia I. Johnstone Award was created to celebrate women who have attained high levels of leadership in their community while supporting and opening doors for other women. Dumont's acceptance speech was funny yet touching and demonstrated yet again her dedication to her community and the future of our profession. I would highly recommend attending a WLF National Leadership Conference to learn and get motivated among women lawyers from all backgrounds.

WLF Newsletter Winter 2020 Edition

Editors Grace Cleveland, Leah Seneviratne

Editorial Board Daria Batkin, Rose Keith, & Kathy Sainty





Domestic or Sexual Violence Leave

By Leah Seneviratne

Thanks to a recent amendment of the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA), British Columbia currently provides up to 15 weeks of unpaid leave per calendar year for those governed by the ESA who are in need of time away from work after facing domestic or sexual violence. The rationale underlying the ESA amendment is that survivors of domestic or sexual abuse who work full time hours often do not have the time needed to speak to the police and access the resources needed to ensure they and their family are safe. This leave allows people to take time away from work to recover and begin to rebuild their lives without fear of losing their jobs.

One of the issues that remain is that this leave under the ESA is currently unpaid. For many people, losing even a day's worth of wages and sacrificing the economic security of themselves and their family is not an option. In the summer of 2019, the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) wrote to the Ministry of Labour, Harry Bains, calling on the province to amend the ESA to include paid leave for people who have recently experienced domestic or sexual violence.

In the Fall of 2019, the BC government launched a consultation wherein the public could provide feedback on how the proposed amendments to the ESA could affect employers, employees, family members, and victims of domestic or sexual abuse. The Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity, Mitzi Dean, launched the consultation with the Ministry of Labour in order to explore options for meeting the needs of domestic or sexual violence survivors while ensuring that employers can continue to meet the requirements of their business.

Organizations such as the WAVAW Crisis Centre (Women Against Violence Against Women) provided formal submissions on the potential impact of paid domestic or sexual violence leave. According to the Victims Services Manager at WAVAW, a lack of paid leave is often the reason why many either delay leaving an abusive relationship, or ultimately remain in these relationships. WAVAW stressed how important it is for people to have the financial security to be able to get their bearings after leaving because, "no one is immune from these type of relationships."

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The office of Parliamentary Secretary Mitzi Dean reports that more than 5,900 people participated in the online consultation. In-person meetings were also held with a number of stakeholders, and this feedback is currently being evaluated by the BC government.

Whether or not BC will join the majority of the country in offering paid domestic or sexual violence leave remains to be seen, but a decision can be expected in the near future.

Providing Support at Atira Women's Resource Society

By Arshdeep Sandhu

There's a buzz that fills a small waiting area in the Vancouver's downtown east end right around the time when offices should be winding down for the day. Every Monday at 5:00 pm, Atira Women's Resource Society opens its doors to a diverse group of women. Some are Pro-Bono law students and lawyers, while others are seeking advice for a myriad of legal issues.

Atira is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to supporting women and children affected by violence and poverty by delivering safe and supporting housing, education and advocacy.

The Atira drop-in clinic assists women seeking legal services in many different areas of the law including tenancy, personal injury, criminal, poverty law and indigenous law. The legal services can involve providing options or writing letters for the women, to larger files that require research and follow up. It is up to the women to decide how to proceed with their options.

Not only are there lawyers available for summary advice, students from UBC's Peter A. Allard School of Law are given the opportunity to attend meetings, complete research and conduct client meetings all with the support of supervising lawyers. The learning opportunities are truly endless, not just from the breadth of legal issues that appear, but also in learning how to help clients get where they want to go.

I have been fortunate to have volunteered at Atira for nearly two years and counting. The camaraderie between these women is so uplifting that even at the end of a long day of hearing tough stories, the support between women prevails as a steadfast reminder of how strong we truly are. More importantly, it's a reminder of how we all become stronger when we support one another.





Working In-House: Thoughts from a Solicitor and a Barrister

Sonia Athwal

It's often said that law students learn the law, but don't really learn how to be a lawyer. We learn even less about how to be an in-house lawyer, so I did not expect to land a junior in-house position right out of my articling year. Fortunately, the legal market is changing and there are now plenty of these positions out there. As a junior solicitor I was also looking for mentorship, so I did plenty of research to find out which positions were part of a legal team with other lawyers.

Knowing your limits is a crucial part of being a successful in-house lawyer. I quickly learned that one of the biggest challenges can be managing the high expectations of business units that may not know the difference between a 1-year call and a 10-year call. I took a hard look at my own skills in order to find the edges of my legal comfort zone, and I learned how to ask my colleagues for help when I needed it.

Despite what you've been told (or what you haven't been told), be reassured that finding an in-house position straight out of articling is possible, and it can be a great option for you if private practice isn't your thing. All the same rules apply – work hard, apply broadly and know your limits!

Desiree Lee

As a litigator, my path to in-house looked a little different. After graduating from law school, I received an offer to article with a personal injury litigation firm. Working at a personal injury firm familiarized me with the rules of court and gave me great trial exposure early on in my career. I also found the work to be very rewarding. Though I stayed with the firm for a few years, I was concerned about limiting my practice so early on and ultimately decided to look for in-house opportunities that would broaden my experience.

It quickly became clear that the market for in-house litigators is much smaller than that for solicitors. However, these positions were still out there and I eventually managed to find the right one for me.

In my new role as an in-house litigator I work with many types of clients to achieve the goals of a large organization. My job involves the day to day management of litigation matters as well as communicating any potential risks upstream. I confer with stakeholders in different departments and have learned about the more hands-on aspects of workplace safety. I assist the organization to not only maintain control in defending legal matters, but also to proactively pursue issues that are important to the organization.

There are many differences between what I do now and a traditional private practice, and the road to in-house litigation can take many routes, however once there, it can offer the flexibility to shape and grow your legal practice.





Gaining Hot Tips from Top Mentors

By Stephanie Hu

On September 19, 2019, the Women Lawyers Forum celebrated their Fall launch with a networking and speaker event, “Hot Tips from Top Mentors.” Attendees were welcomed by BC WLF Chair Daria Batkin, who spoke about past and upcoming events for the WLF. Batkin also touted the benefits of participating in the WLF Mentoring program and highlighted the WLF’s continued support for the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope, before members Samantha Chang and Ainsley Reimer introduced the event’s speakers.



Lana Li from Kornfeld LLP shared tips on finding our own voice as women lawyers and emphasized the importance of owning our abilities, despite any labels we may be assigned in our profession. Being nice does not mean we cannot stand up for ourselves, and expressing femininity does not mean we are not strong and effective lawyers.

Lilac Bosma from HSBC Bank Canada spoke about the importance of peer management and engaging in peer conflict in a healthy way. By being open to feedback, we can turn peer conflict into something that is healthy and productive. While this requires humility and practice, it is an excellent strategy for learning and building a strong support network.

Shannon Salter from the Civil Resolution Tribunal shared her tips on overcoming imposter syndrome and perfectionism. These two issues overwhelmingly affect women and prevent us from applying for opportunities and promotions. Salter’s tips are to take risks and apply for everything, such as speaking opportunities, board positions, and quasi-judicial positions.

Mary Buttery from Cassels Brock LLP spoke about the myth of having it all. Buttery’s key tip is to focus on finding your balance, not perfection. Ms. Buttery sets five-day goals for herself, without worrying about the next week. By talking to our peers and those we admire, we will find that we all struggle and have vulnerabilities. Though we may be able to eventually have it all, it is okay not have it all at the same time.

Jean Whittow, Q.C., from Sugden McFee Roos LLP shared her tips on taking the lead and putting ourselves out there, even when we are afraid or feeling anxious. We can do this by keeping the big picture in mind and remembering what we are trying to advance. Although we are problem solvers, we do not have to have the solution to every problem. Instead, we can consider how a problem or solution may fit into our strategy.

Thank you to all of our speakers for their excellent tips!





Education Committee Hosts Successful “Speed Coaching” Event

By Ruby Lau

The WLF Education Committee organized a Speed Coaching Event on November 12, 2019. Attendees gathered at the Law Courts Inn to listen to speakers discuss salary negotiation, marketing, and dealing with high conflict opposing counsel.

“What would Michelle Obama do?” is a question Kelly Slade-Kerr, the managing partner of HHBG Lawyers’ Surrey office, asks herself when she deals with high conflict opposing counsel. She advised attendees to take a deep breath before responding and not to react right away. De-escalate the tension by articulating what has happened back to opposing counsel. Kill them with kindness and try to view the situation with empathy while being firm and methodical at the same time.



When asking yourself, “How do I negotiate a higher salary?” Lindsay Petherwick, founder of Edge Legal Recruitment advised attendees to focus on the following considerations. Think about what you need to feel valued if you feel undervalued. Ask yourself: Have you been given more responsibility? Have you billed much higher than expectations? Have you been asked to mentor a more junior lawyer? Polish your achievements before you have your meeting. If the meeting does not go well, take the feedback, digest it, and then schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss ways you can improve or to challenge the feedback if you think it is not accurate. At all times, be positive and polite, humble and inquiring.

Heather L. Jones, a partner at Miller Thomson LLP, discussed the importance of internal marketing for lawyers. Talk to the lawyers in your firm who focus on the kind of work you are interested in doing. When a senior lawyer refers a client to you internally, that lawyer is also your client. Keep them up to date on how things are going on the file. Maintain and develop a good relationship with the client for yourself but also for your senior lawyer.

Elisabeth A. Sadowski, a lawyer at Richards Buell Sutton LLP, spoke on the topic of external marketing. Be genuine, realistic and don’t over-commit and under-deliver. Look for volunteer experiences and write for publications on topics that you are knowledgeable about. When networking, think about developing the relationship with that other person, not what that other person can do for you.

All of the speakers provided many more useful tips which resulted in a lively and engaging night for the attendees.



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!

Get Social!

Follow us on:

Twitter: twitter.com/CBA_WLF and LinkedIn linkedin.com/showcase/cba-wlf for all thngs 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 CBABC 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/Articles

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

Ovarian Cancer Canada's Walk of Hope

By Grace Cleveland

The BC WLF started the 2019-2020 term off on the right (and left) foot by participating in the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope at Queen Elizabeth Park in Vancouver on September 8, 2019.

As explained in a recent article written by Rose Keith (bit.ly/WLF_WOH), ovarian cancer is something that hits close to home. Rose's story, and others like it, show the necessity of working to change the future of this seriously under-funded and under-researched disease.

This year, the BC WLF and Onyx Law Group came together, not only to walk, but to raise funds. Led by Janine Jones, our WLF team raised an impressive \$3,155. Onyx Law Group contributed a further \$3,000, resulting in a total amount raised of \$6,155! Every dollar raised will be used to provide support, increase awareness, and fund research relating to ovarian cancer.

Thank you to everyone who walked with us and donated to our team. Together, we were able to exceed our fundraising goals and meaningfully contribute to this important cause.

Next year's walk will take place on September 13, 2020. We'll see you there!





Upcoming Events

March 3, 2020 – International Women’s Day Social

What better way to celebrate International Women’s Day than to socialize with other women lawyers while enjoying some delicious food and wine?

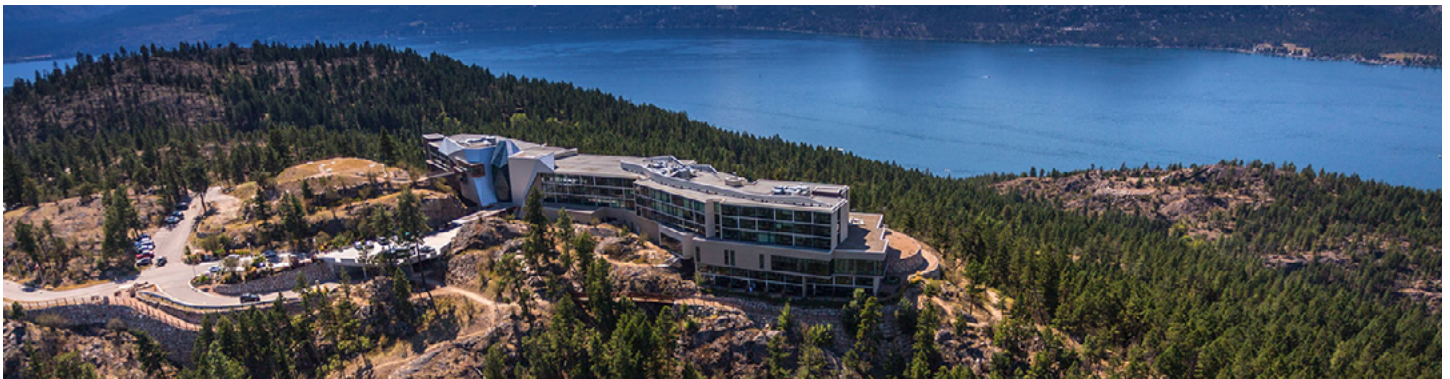
April 3-5, 2020 – Women Lawyers Forum Conference & Retreat

This year’s WLF Conference will be held at the beautiful Sparkling Hill Resort and Spa in Vernon, BC and involves various panels and discussions on the topic of “Breaking Barriers.” Certified Professional Lawyer Coach, Allison Wolf, will kick off the weekend with an interactive discussion on Breaking “Self” Barriers.

On Saturday, Madam Justice Sheri Ann Donegan, The Honourable Judge Stella Frame, and Master Jennifer Kiem will discuss Breaking Barriers in the Judicial Profession. On Sunday, there will be an interactive session on Breaking Barriers in business and marketing.

Our Keynote Speaker is the inspiring Madam Justice Palbinder Kaur Shergill of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, who will be speaking about some of the personal and professional barriers she has encountered on her journey to becoming a BC Supreme Court judge.

Explore the WLF Conference & Retreat 2020 website: cbabc.org/WLFRetreat.



May 6, 2020 – Good Guys Event

Join us in conversation with the GOOD Guys (Guys Overcoming Obstacles to Diversity) in our profession who are ahead of the curve when it comes to supporting women lawyers. Hear our keynote speaker Sheryl Axelrod present on the tangible returns on diversity at the leadership table.

May 14, 2020 – WLF Spring Book Club

Calling all bibliophiles! Save the date for the Spring Book Club meeting where we will discuss our latest book over light appetizers.

