



ACCESS JUSTICE

JUSTICE FOR ALL

A WORD FOR JUSTICE

We've Been Helping People in
Western Canada Since 1990.

Message from Executive Director Allan Parker

Welcome to the Summer 2007 edition of *A Word for Justice*. It was my privilege to be appointed Executive Director of Access Justice in May. Access Justice is about serving people and we are fortunate to have a dedicated team of board members, staff, volunteer lawyers and non-lawyer volunteers. Special acknowledgement is due to board members and staff who have maintained the operation over the past year.

For the past several months, our board and staff have been focusing on renewal. This has taken many forms ranging from developing a strategic plan to developing greater ties with other pro bono organizations. We were pleased to be part of a feature article in the July 2007 issue of the BC Law Society's *Benchers' Bulletin* (available online at: www.lawsociety.bc.ca). We continue to work on outreach and publicity projects – one example was the law booth at the Steve Nash event in July, done in cooperation with Lawson Lundell and the Law Courts Education Society.

We welcome feedback on this newsletter and on our services in general.



The Access Justice booth at the Steve Nash Event

Access Justice Shares Recent Law Foundation Grant

The Law Foundation of BC recently awarded a joint grant to Access Justice and Pro Bono Law of BC as part of a pro bono enhancement initiative. Access Justice and Pro Bono Law of BC (PBLBC) submitted the grant application with the support of the Salvation Army's Pro Bono Program. The grant provides funding for a new part time Intake Coordinator at Access Justice, a part time Roster Coordinator at PBLBC, and contracted services to assist the development and coordination of pro bono services throughout the province. One initiative that will be developed and administered jointly is a client survey. The grant will also allow the three groups to assess local areas of need for pro bono services around the province and to investigate the potential for a joint phone referral service.

Annual Report 2006 Now Available

The 2006 Annual Report for Access Justice is now available online at www.accessjustice.ca or in hard copy from the Access Justice office.

Some of the highlights are:

- Over 4,000 clients were served at over 60 clinics;
- Almost 350 lawyers attended one or more clinics;
- A number of clinic projects were initiated; and
- Several improvements were made to our phone and IT system.

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PEOPLE AT ACCESS JUSTICE

Raymond Drabik

For Raymond Drabik, helping people out is something he wanted to do before entering law school but it took him a while longer to fulfill that initial ambition.

"I got into law because I wanted to help people and although I know I have accomplished that in my practise, the economics of billable hours, office overhead and



family responsibilities seem to take precedence over the desire to help. But now, that has become less important than it once was. Helping people is tremendously satisfying. I am now in a situation where I am seeing some clients several times at successive clinics as they go through a legal process

which many find extremely frustrating. The little push I needed was a call from the late Dugald Christie, asking if I would volunteer. I will always be grateful for that call."

Raymond was both a captain and a volunteer lawyer with the Lower Mainland Community Housing Clinic, in New Westminster. Since that clinic's closure he has been dedicating his time at a new clinic helping cash-

strapped youth at Douglas College.

"Many (people) have to try to go through the system themselves because they don't have money and can't afford a lawyer," he says. Through Access Justice these people can get the help they need. "It all comes down to helping people," Raymond says.

A win-win situation for agencies and clients

By: Heidi Turner

Agencies that are willing to host clinics are vital for the access to justice model pioneered by Dugald Christie but for some, the pro bono client-lawyer sessions not only complement their commitment to social outreach but have also become fundamental in their approach to client care.

"I don't think we'd be able to meet the needs of our clients without Access Justice," said Maria Callagon, formerly a settlement counselor from the Multicultural Helping House Society, during an interview in 2006. The Multicultural Helping House Society is a Vancouver-based, non-profit charitable organiza-

tion that offers programs and settlement services to its clients. The first legal clinic took place in June 2005.



"Many of our clients need immigration advice. Often they are refugees who need to file claims for permanent residence," Callagon says. She stresses the need for help within communities, noting that this is the right kind

of outreach program.

"We've received really good feedback from clients," she says. "The clinics have been very, very successful. The lawyers are very helpful."

The clinics help with immigration, criminal and civil law.

Meet Our Newest Staff Person:

Ashley Arthur-Singh

Access Justice welcomes Ashley Arthur-Singh as our new Intake Coordinator. Ashley began her duties with Access Justice in mid-August. She recently graduated with her BA from Simon Fraser University. Ashley has an impressive community volunteer record including volunteering with the Community Policing Office in Maple Ridge and as a Clinic Assistant with Access Justice. People who phone Access Justice will generally be greeted by Ashley, since she is re-



sponsible for intake services on both our general phone line and our client-booking line. Ashley will also be responsible for general office duties and will provide assistance to Executive Director Allan Parker. Ashley's work will continue to be supported by our many Client Call Volunteers, who assist in booking clients into our clinics, and our Practicum Volunteers who provide additional assistance in our office operation.

Meet Our Newest Board Member: John Kleefeld

Access Justice welcomes John Kleefeld as our newest board member. John is currently a Lecturer and Director with the Legal Research & Writing Program at UBC; he is also a part



time mediator. John was in private practice with Lawson Lundell for a number of years, and has law degrees from UBC and Osgoode Hall. John volunteers at our Self-Help Resource Centre Clinic in Vancouver.

THE DUGALD CHRISTIE LEGACY

It was a year ago that Access Justice founder Dugald Christie was killed in a tragic cycling accident while travelling across Canada to publicize access to justice issues. We offer the following reminders of his legacy.

A reflection on the loss of a great friend: Dugald Christie

By: Jane Dyson

A year ago we were deeply saddened by the tragic death of Dugald Christie. BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, through our Advocacy Access program, has worked for a number of years with Dugald's Western Canada Society to Access Justice.

Through Access Justice, we coordinate pro bono legal clinics where people with disabilities can access free legal advice at our office. We had been holding one two-hour clinic every Wednesday until early in 2006, when Dugald approached us to see if we would be willing to coordinate an additional weekly clinic specifically for people with mental health disabilities. To be honest, I was a little tentative at first: doubling the number of clinics seemed a little overwhelming in our already extremely busy office. However, I should have known that I didn't stand a chance when Dugald

said he would come and see us about his proposal. With his indomitable



charm, he quickly convinced us that it was something that would really help the community, that we should be part of it, and that together we should do it. Now.

Over the next few months, Dugald visited us often as we set up the mental health consumer clinics. At first, while he was still scouting lawyers for the new clinics, Dugald would conduct

the clinics himself. Appearing in his bicycle gear and asking only for a cup of hot water with milk, he would provide legal advice to clients, usually going way over the scheduled time slot.

Dugald never forgot to thank us for our work. "You do beautiful work," he would always say when he visited us or we talked on the phone. This simple thank you would make our day.

Dugald served the community tirelessly and unselfishly. He left behind a legacy of care, respect and generosity. Countless people have benefited from his work and countless more will do so. Dugald did beautiful work and for that we can never thank him enough.

CBA Resolution on Access to Justice

Dugald's goal for his bicycle journey across Canada in the summer of 2006 had been to attend the annual meeting of the Canadian Bar Association in St John's to present a resolution on access to justice for the disadvantaged. While Dugald never made it to St John's his resolution was presented by Vancouver lawyer Darrell Roberts, QC, who had acted in the PST court challenge case. The resolution was tabled that year but was brought forward at the August 2007 annual meeting in Calgary. Robin Bajer and Bibhas Vaze presented the motion and Executive Director Allan Parker attended to speak on behalf of AJ in support of the motion. The motion passed.

For more details on the resolution, see our information release at the Access Justice website: www.accessjustice.ca.

Law Review Honours Dugald Christie

The U.B.C. Law Review is publishing a special edition in autumn 2007 celebrating Access Justice's founder Dugald Christie and his quest for access to justice. The issue includes an introduction by The Hon. Madam Claire L'Heureux-Dube, and papers and comments by The Hon. Chief Justice Donald Brenner of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, Deputy Attorney-General Allan Seckel, Arthur Close, Q.C., UNB Law Dean Philip Bryden, Prof. Lorne Sossin, Prof. Anthony Sheppard, Dugald Christie and many others. Copies of the special issue can be ordered separately or an annual subscription to the journal is \$50.

For more information visit www.ubclawreview.org or email lawrev@interchange.ubc.ca.

Christie v. Attorney General of British Columbia

Perhaps the highest profile activity that Dugald was most recently associated with was his court challenge against the BC social service tax on legal bills. This has been a source of concern to the profession since it was introduced in the early 90s. Dugald's case argued that the tax was unconstitutional because it hampered access to justice particularly for the many low income clients that he served in his private practice. He was successful before the BC Supreme Court and the BC Court of Appeal. In May 2007 the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the BC court decisions, on the broader basis that there was not a general constitutional right to counsel. The outcome was a disappointment to Access Justice but we will continue to advocate for the removal of the tax from legal bills.

Access Justice Staff

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Jason Liang
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Access Justice is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing legal advice to low-income clients. For clinic information call 604-878-7400, toll free 1-877-762-6664 or visit www.accessjustice.ca.

A Word About Donations

Every year, thousands of people on low and moderate income attend Access Justice's pro bono legal clinics. They receive legal advice from qualified lawyers on various matters including speeding tickets, assault charges, custody and access, maintenance, immigration, contracts, and insurance. From 2004 through 2006, approximately 9,500 people used an Access Justice Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic because they were not able to afford a lawyer.

Please forward your donation to: Access Justice, 1440 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6H 1M8. Donations can also be made online by visiting www.accessjustice.ca and clicking on "Donate Now."

Please Volunteer!

Access Justice needs lawyers for several of its clinics and non-lawyer volunteers for several positions. Please see our "Volunteer" link at www.accessjustice.ca and join us.

With Thanks

Access Justice would like to express its deepest gratitude to the Law Foundation of British Columbia, the Ministry of the Attorney General, social agencies, lawyers, volunteers, and law firms for your continued and generous support.



THE  **LAW**
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Other Organizations And Resources

Pro Bono Law of B.C.

Provides information and resources to help clients find free legal advice and assistance.

* <http://www.probononet.bc.ca>

* 604-893-8932

B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities

Provides advocacy assistance to people with mental, physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities regarding BC Employment, CPP Disability benefits applications, appeals and review tribunals.

* <http://www.bccpd.bc.ca/>

* 604-872-1278 (Lower Mainland)

* 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

BC Family Justice Services Information Line

Provides free information on child support.

* 604-660-2192 (Lower Mainland)

* 1-888-216-2211

Does not provide legal advice to parents or guardians who decide to separate or divorce.

Legal Services Society of B.C.

Provides subsidized legal services, ranging from legal information and advice to legal representation, in the areas of criminal, family and immigration law for clients who qualify under financial eligibility guidelines.

* http://www.lss.bc.ca/legal_aid/what_is.asp

* 604-408-2172 (Lower Mainland)

* 1-866-577-2525

An Intake Worker will be able to calculate clients' net monthly household income (according to household size) when they call.