



## ***Be-LEAF in Equality! ... News from the frontline ...***

The Bi-monthly Email Update of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund

December  
2005

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### **Hello LEAF Supporters!**

Season's greetings from the LEAF National Office!

Happy Holidays

From Everyone at LEAF!

### *Persons Day Events*

LEAF Persons Day Breakfasts and events took place in Langley, Victoria, Nanaimo, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Sudbury, Owen Sound, Kitchener/Waterloo and Ottawa between October and December 2005. We thank all those who attended in support of LEAF and all those who volunteered their time to make the events a success. Here are the highlights from a sampling of this year's Persons Day Breakfasts:

#### ***Regina***

On December 1, 2005, approximately 200 people gathered for the LEAF Regina Persons Day Breakfast. The following excerpts are taken from an article written by Erin Morrison for the Regina Leader- Post.

"Seventy-six years of achievements for women's rights were recognized by the Regina Chapter of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) on Thursday morning.

"In her address to the crowd, journalist and author Sally Armstrong said, "Women need

to be vigilant about our rights". Afterwards, she complimented LEAF on its work of keeping Canadian women at the front lines of the battle for women's rights. "I would doubt very much there's a country in the world with women who have accomplished more than Canadian women," she said. "American women still don't have an equal rights amendment. Not only that, Canadian women have a particular style. They respond, they take action, they make changes."

Armstrong's address focused on injustices that are encouraged by fundamentalist approaches to religion, recounting her experiences working as a journalist in conflict-plagued and often chauvinistic places.

### **Sudbury**

The 16th annual Sudbury LEAF Persons Day Breakfast was held on Friday October 21st, 2005. A crowd of over 450 persons gathered at Laurentian University's Great Hall to listen to Dr. Nancy Olivieri, a founding member of *Doctors for Research Integrity*, an organization dedicated to scientific integrity. Dr. Olivieri spoke of her fight to ensure that drug trials and research are conducted in an open and transparent way that will represent the best interest of the patients, rather than the drug companies. Her speech was heartfelt and empowering for all in attendance.

Over \$10,000 was raised again this year, with a portion of the proceeds staying in Sudbury to furnish the City of Greater Sudbury Public Library system with resource materials for women and girls. The success of this event is shared not only by the hard working committee, but also by the generous local sponsors who numbered close to 50. "We are again indebted to our local sponsors, who continue to provide unwavering support for not only this event year after year, but the continuing work of LEAF National," states Tannys Laughren, 2005 Breakfast Committee Co-Chair.

### **Owen Sound**

The Zonta Club of Owen Sound and Area sponsored a Persons Day event to raise funds for LEAF. Guests were pleased to hear the comedic and musical performance of Sandra Shamas, a Gemini and Governor General's Award nominee. In an article for the *Sun Times*, Shamas noted her affinity for LEAF: "this is an organization that does tremendous work on behalf of women and I'm really pleased that they exist." This year's event was the fifth Persons Day fundraiser hosted by the Zonta Club for LEAF.



*Legal Update*

### **DBS v. SRG**

LEAF has applied for leave to intervene in *DBS v. SRG*, a case originating from Alberta. At issue is the interpretation and application of the federal child support Guidelines dealing with retroactive child support. Inherent in the issue of retroactive child support, as in much of family law, are fundamental sex equality issues. In the majority of retroactive child support cases women are owed child support by men and when they do not receive it, or receive less than they are entitled to, women and children are disadvantaged.

LEAF will argue in this case that the economic disadvantage that is overwhelmingly experienced by women upon relationship breakdown is a sex equality issue. The federal Child Support Guidelines were intended to reduce conflict and tension between parents – this cannot be achieved if they are applied in a way that contributes towards the perpetuation of sex inequality. The Guidelines must be interpreted and applied in a way that is consistent with s.15 equality values.

Work on this case has begun in earnest and partial funding from the Court Challenges Programs has been approved. The case will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada in February 2006.

### **Bill 29**

LEAF was disappointed to learn that it has been denied leave to intervene in *Health Services and Support-Facilities Subsector Bargaining Assn. v. British Columbia (Bill 29)*. As reported in the October email update, the case relates to equality provisions of existing collective agreements of the female dominated health care sector in B.C., and whether or not the B.C. government's legislation voiding those provisions violates s.15 of the *Charter*.

Only four of eleven applications for leave to intervene were allowed (all four are unions or federations of labour). LEAF will be examining ways to use the argument developed for *Bill 29* in upcoming cases or for other educational purposes.



### *Holiday Campaign*

Many of you will have received LEAF's direct mail appeal seeking funds to support our legal work in cases like *DBS* and others. If you haven't already done so, please send your gift today. Your contributions will make a difference. Please also consider becoming a monthly contributor through pre-authorized chequing or from your credit card. Thanks to all those who have given to LEAF for your continued support.



### *LEAF Restructuring Process*

The newly appointed LEAF Board held its first in-person meeting on November 25–27, 2005 to develop an implementation plan for the integration of litigation, law reform and public legal education, and the aspirations of each part of the organization.

The board developed an action plan for the next six – nine months of a new structural model and processes that will:

- provide a vehicle for increased input of Branches into all aspects of LEAF's work;
- clarify roles and responsibility for all parts of the organization;
- enable increased, proactive planning in programming and fiscal management;
- facilitate growth in people and financial resources;
- facilitate improved communication throughout LEAF;

- provide for a workload that is more evenly distributed and sustainable;
- meet our commitments to external audiences.

We will report on our progress in future updates. LEAF is excited about the potential for renewal and growth as we undertake a bold new direction. We invite questions, comments and your continued support on this journey.

## LEAF Welcomes New Board and National Legal Committee Members

**Jennifer Curran** was appointed as an interim Director of the Board in December. Jennifer was a member of the Ottawa branch of LEAF and has worked and volunteered extensively on youth and women's issues in St. John's and Halifax. She currently works as an articling student at Parkdale Community Legal Services in Toronto.

**Natasha Bakht** joined LEAF's National Legal Committee in June. Natasha is an assistant professor in the faculty of law at the University of Ottawa where she teaches in the common law section. She has written extensively on religious arbitration in family law and is a regular researcher for the National Judicial Institute.

**Kim Brooks** joined the National Legal Committee in October. She is an assistant professor in the faculty of law at the University of British Columbia where she teaches torts, tax and corporate tax law. Kim is also the former co-chair of the National Association of Women and the Law steering committee.

## LEAF Faces in the News

Congratulations to Professor Dianne Pothier who was honoured on October 18 in Halifax with the Frances Fish Women Lawyers' Achievement Award (*The Lawyers Weekly* Vol. 25, No. 24; October 28, 2005). The award is named for the first woman to be admitted to the Nova Scotia Bar on September 10, 1918 (*The Lawyers Weekly* Vol. 25, No. 24; October 28, 2005). Dianne has acted as counsel for LEAF in *Blencoe* and in *Auton*, and is a past member of the National Legal Committee as well as having served on many LEAF subcommittees.

## More Information

*The LEAF Email Update is published every two months. The next Update will be sent in February 2006. If you have questions about anything in this email or about the work of LEAF, please contact us at [info@leaf.ca](mailto:info@leaf.ca) or 1-888-824 LEAF (5323) or visit our website at [www.leaf.ca](http://www.leaf.ca).*

*On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of LEAF National, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all. Thank you for our continued support!*



*Donate Today!*

Your donations enable LEAF to pursue our work to ensure equality for all women and girls in Canada. Thank you for your ongoing support!

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For more information, or to make a tax-deductible donation to LEAF:

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