

Toronto, Ontario | October 6-7, 2008

*Learn, Grow, Connect:*

*Practicing community legal education in a diverse Ontario*



# Conference Report



February 2009

**Learn, Grow, Connect:  
Practicing community legal education in a diverse Ontario**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

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The Report and appendices will be posted on the conference web site [www.cleonet.ca/conference](http://www.cleonet.ca/conference) along with web casts of the plenary sessions and two small group sessions, the online program, presenter bios, and other conference information.

**Introduction**

Who: Community Legal Education Ontario/ Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario (CLEO) and the Centre for the Legal Profession, University of Toronto Faculty of Law (the Centre), with additional support from the Law Society of Upper Canada (LSUC) and funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO), partnered to organize and present this conference.

CLEO is a community legal clinic that develops materials and projects to help people understand and exercise their legal rights. It is known for its accessible and accurate materials that support organizations doing legal education work in their own communities.

CLEO also helps build the capacity of community agencies through collaborative projects such as the Six Languages Text and Audio Project and CLEONet, a web site where community workers and advocates can find legal information, news and events from agencies across Ontario.

The Centre is a newly formed gathering place where leading voices from academia, private practice and the judicial and public interest communities can come together on a broad range of issues including professionalism, ethics and public service in the legal profession. The Centre fosters dialogue about the capacities, judgment and actions necessary for effective lawyering, and about the idea that community leadership and public service are essential to becoming a

“good” lawyer. In doing so, it also seeks to forge a stronger link between the study of law, the practice of law and the implications of law for the broader community.

What: CLEO sought funding from the LFO in Spring 2008 to support a provincial conference on community legal education<sup>1</sup>. Community legal education does not yet have a common language or an established set of best practices to guide it. CLEO proposed the conference as an opportunity for organizations to share and learn from each other, thus supporting the development of ever-higher quality community legal education and improving the coordination of efforts.

Why: There is a rapidly growing need for public legal information in Ontario. More and more community organizations find themselves in the position of providing legal information to their clients. Some have a background acting in a legal or quasi-legal function, but for others this is a new area and one they feel ill equipped to step into.

Many of these organizations are over-extended because of the increasing complexity of the legal issues faced by their clients, their clients’ multiple and overlapping legal and social service needs, increased numbers of clients who seek legal information because they do not have legal representation, the multiplicity of challenges and marginalizations being experienced by their clients and the shortage of resources available to them.

Even organizations experienced in the field of community legal education often lack the opportunity and connections to share information about their work. Too often, community agencies produce materials in isolation, unaware of high-quality materials that already exist. This silo approach also means that gaps exist where no one has developed materials.

When: CLEO had considered this conference for the past few years. Fall 2008 seemed the right time for a number of reasons:

- Ongoing discussion about and initiatives in self-help legal information materials are closely related to more general discussions about community legal education;
- The LFO’s Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project was at a point where it could benefit from input and feedback from community organizations across the province;
- Various new community legal education projects – for example, the OWD-funded Family Law Education for Women Project, CLEO’s Six Languages Text and Audio Project – were in their final stages and offered valuable learnings and outcomes to share.

## **Goals**

*Learn, Grow, Connect* set out one overarching goal that contained three specific elements.

*To increase access to justice for Ontarians by improving the capacity of community organizations to provide effective, appropriate, high quality and innovative legal information to their clients by:*

- ❑ *Increasing the tools and knowledge of community legal education practitioners*

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<sup>1</sup> Public legal education and information (PLEI) developed, produced and delivered by the not-for-profit community service sector for their communities.

- ❑ *Laying the foundation for developing a “practice” of community legal education across Ontario*
- ❑ *Beginning to build a network or Communities of Practice relating to community legal education*

### **Summary of Achievements of the Conference**

In evaluating the success of the conference, CLEO reviewed the conference’s goals as set out above as well as several more specific objectives and anticipated outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

As discussed more fully below in the sections “Participation in the Conference”, “Conference Content”, and “Highlights of Conference Evaluation”, the conference achieved its goals, specific objectives, and anticipated outcomes.

- ❑ To our knowledge, this was the first time in Ontario that participants from a wide array of community-based organizations in a variety of fields, located throughout the province, came together to talk with each other and learn about community legal education. During and after the conference, and in many of the evaluation forms, several participants asked whether such a conference would be a regular event. This breadth of interest and participation in the conference represented a significant achievement of the conference; it provided a first-time opportunity for workers from a range of fields from across the province to connect with each other about their community legal education work.
- ❑ The conference drew on the experience of a diverse range of presenters from across Ontario as well as from other jurisdictions. In all, 41 experienced community information and outreach workers, clear language and web experts, academics, lawyers and advocates brought their research, insight, expertise and stories to 15 small group sessions and 7 plenary sessions. Participants were exposed to techniques and skills-based workshops as well as presentations on best practices, innovative collaborations, new initiatives, and research projects; they had a chance to hear about tried and true approaches to producing

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<sup>2</sup> Conference objectives included:

- To allow participants to share tools and best practices
- To provide an opportunity for community legal education users to learn from experts
- To allow experts to hear from community organizations about their needs
- To foster the development of a network of community legal education practitioners
- To explore a leadership role for CLEONet in supporting Communities of Practice
- To allow the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project to present its proposals and receive feedback

Anticipated outcomes included:

- Increased understanding of community legal education related issues and challenges for participants
- Increased skills, tools and knowledge for participants about developing and delivering community legal education to their communities
- Best practices/promising trends ready for development
- Establishment of a community legal education network
- Groundwork laid for CLEONet to establish an interactive online function to support Communities of Practice
- Feedback provided to the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project
- Increased capacity in the area of community legal education for community agencies

and disseminating community legal education as well as new ways of working with technology to help produce high quality, accessible legal information.

The conference was fully registered with 190 people from community agencies and legal clinics, PLEI organizations from across Canada, and legal, government and academic fields from across Ontario. Altogether, close to 100 organizations participated in the conference. (Please see Appendix A, *Participating Agencies*.)

- The evaluation highlights, below, speak to the learning and networking that took place at the conference, and confirm that participants acquired new skills and information that they expected to find useful in their work. Over 80% of the evaluation responses for the small group sessions agreed with the statement – rating it as a 4 or 5 out of 5 – “I learned new skills and or information” and “I will be able to use what I learned here in my work”.

It is difficult to ascertain at this point how much people will follow up on the networking they did at the conference. However, CLEONet’s anticipated leadership role in supporting community legal education across the province will create a structure within which more formal networking and collaboration can happen.

CLEO is pleased to have been able to hold, in partnership with the Centre, the *Learn, Grow, Connect* conference in the fall of 2008. There is an ever-expanding community of agencies using and producing community legal education, and the benefits of ongoing education and networking are clear. We have received a great deal of positive feedback from the conference, as well as encouragement to hold another one, if not on an annual basis, then within the next couple of years. Opportunities to continue to share and learn from each other need to be pursued, and CLEO looks forward to playing a leadership role in facilitating this.

## **Participation in the Conference**

### Participants

CLEO had planned for a maximum registration of 150 – 180 participants, from a wide diversity of organizations, including community organizations using and/or needing community legal education, sole purpose community legal education organizations from Ontario and across Canada, public legal education and information experts, academics and students with an interest in community legal education and policy makers.

The conference had 190 registered participants, which exceeded CLEO’s minimum expectations of 100.

CLEO strived to develop a conference program that would attract participants from a range of community-based and justice sectors, from organizations across the province. This objective was met, as participants came from a wide array of organizations and held a variety of positions within their organizations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See attached Appendix A, *Participating Agencies*

The presence of staff from the LFO throughout the conference was significant and positive, especially for community organizations that are often seeking support, including financial support, for their access to justice work.

### Presenters

Despite the short time frame for planning the conference, CLEO was able to attract significant leaders in the community legal education field as well as critical partners in community agencies to present at both plenary and small group sessions. The presenters worked in and with a range of diverse communities throughout Ontario, including Aboriginal communities, communities with disabilities, youth, racialized communities and communities that speak neither English or French, and women who experience violence.

The keynote speaker, Armine Yalnizyan, is the 2002 recipient of the Atkinson Foundation Award for Economic Justice and coordinates the Inequality Project with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. She kicked the conference off with an impassioned talk about the growing gap between those who have and those who do not, the legal rights that are affected as a result of that gap and the challenges it poses to those with legal problems.

Francois Boileau, Ontario's first French Language Services Commissioner, provided participants with an excellent overview of the *French Languages Services Act* and the opportunities that flow from it to improve the quality of French language services in Ontario.

Some presenters were primarily skills-based, and brought extensive expertise in an area of work relevant to community legal education, such as clear language editing, needs assessment and evaluations, and web site development. Others shared expertise relating to a particular delivery method for communicating community legal education, including PLEI workshops, popular education methods such as theatre and games, and online training.

Unfortunately, the fact that the conference was held during the federal election campaign (which could not have been anticipated by the conference organizers) meant that federal government researchers and policy makers were not able to participate as presenters at the conference, as CLEO had planned.

Please see the Conference Guide, attached in hard copy as Appendix B, for a complete listing of presenters and their biographies.

### **Conference Content**

The conference program offered a mixture of plenary and small group sessions designed to flow from the preceding plenary. Material from the conference is available on the conference web site [www.cleonet.ca/conference](http://www.cleonet.ca/conference), including web casts of plenary sessions and two small group sessions, handouts, links to web sites and PowerPoint presentations. Summaries of each small group session are attached to this report as Appendix C, and are also posted on the conference web site.

## Plenaries

The conference comprised seven plenary sessions which were open to all conference participants. These sessions were presented as plenaries because the conference planners were of the view that the topics would be of interest to most participants and were important to the practice of community legal education. At three of the plenaries, single presenters – or, in the case of LFO’s Linguistic and Rural Access initiative, a team of presenters – made remarks, including the keynote address on the first day and the presentation by Ontario’s French Language Services Commissioner on the second day. At four plenaries, panels composed of two to four speakers made presentations.

## Small group sessions

Fifteen small group sessions were offered at the conference. Participants could choose from five possible small group sessions in each of three time slots over the two days. All of the small group sessions were intended to contribute to the achievement – to a greater or lesser degree – of the three primary conference goals.

Within the overarching objectives, some workshops were designed to impart specific skills or training that could be put into immediate practice; those workshops included:

- “Tips for creating legal information in clear language”
- “Effective public legal education workshops: Tools of the Trade”
- “Online training: Helping community workers and advocates learn about the law”.

Other sessions were designed for experienced practitioners working in diverse communities to share some of the challenges they’ve faced and good practices they’ve developed; those sessions included:

- “Cell phones? Facebook? Wallet cards? Getting legal information to young people”
- “The right to know: Developing and delivering legal information for people with disabilities”
- “Community legal education experiences in Aboriginal communities: What we can learn”
- “Using community legal education to support racial justice work”.

Moderators were recruited for each small group session. They introduced panelists/session leaders and, in some sessions, facilitated Qs and As and discussions. The moderators also kept track of time and the order in which speakers spoke. They handed out and collected evaluation forms and gave presenters a card and small honorarium on behalf of the conference organizers at the end of each session.

## Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Drop-in Café

Also running over the two days of the conference was the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Drop-in Café. The café was hosted by George Thomson and Karen Cohl, consultants conducting research and consultations into linguistic and rural access for the LFO. George and Karen presented their preliminary findings at the start of the conference, and invited conference participants to drop in and share their thoughts on the preliminary findings in an informal drop-in setting; many participants took them up on this offer. George and Karen reported that the feedback through the café was invaluable to their project. In a closing plenary at the conference, George and Karen reported back on what they’d heard through the café.

### LSUC/ PBLO consultation with community organizations

At the end of the first day, participants moved from the conference site at 89 Chestnut Street to the Law Society of Upper Canada (LSUC) for a consultation with community organizations on legal needs hosted by the LSUC and Pro Bono Law Ontario (PBLO). The conference presented an ideal opportunity for these organizations to consult with community-based organizations, and the piggy-backing of this session on the end of day one of the conference represented a successful coordination activity by CLEO, LSUC and PBLO.

Shortly after the consultation, Ontario Attorney General Chris Bentley offered remarks, followed by a lovely dinner in Convocation Hall provided by LSUC.

### Community marketplace

Throughout the conference, a “community marketplace” showcasing community legal education projects and materials by participants was set up in an area adjacent to the main ballroom in which the plenary sessions took place. The marketplace provided an opportunity for community-based agencies to display and hand out samples of their community legal education work, share information and network.

### **Highlights of Conference Evaluation**

Participants were asked to complete a general conference evaluation form as well as evaluation forms for each small group session they attended (see Appendices D and E).

Evaluation material was also gathered through:

- ❑ Informal feedback received from conference participants
- ❑ A review of registration (number of registrants; range of organizations/ positions)
- ❑ A debriefing meeting of the conference coordinating group<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ A debriefing meeting with the Centre for the Legal Profession<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ Ongoing teleconferences with the Conference Advisory Committee<sup>6</sup>

### General feedback

We received completed general conference evaluation forms from 60 participants. Out of the 56 respondents who answered the question related to their level of satisfaction with the conference, 27 were very satisfied and 29 were satisfied.

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<sup>4</sup> Julie Mathews, CLEO Executive Director; Pamela Cross, Conference Moderator and Legal Consultant; Diana Vazquez, CLEO Event Coordinator

<sup>5</sup> Jane Kidner, Acting Executive Director; Lorne Sossin, Academic Director

<sup>6</sup> Lenny Abramowicz, Executive Director, Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario; Gayle Broad, Assistant Professor, Algoma University; Lynn Burns, Executive Director, Pro Bono Law Ontario; Lisa Cirillo, Legal and Project Coordinator, Family Law Education for Women Project; Karen Cohl, Consultant, Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project; Michael Kerr, Campaign Coordinator, Colour of Poverty Campaign; Heather Robertson, Vice President, Central Programming and Innovation, Legal Aid Ontario; Lorne Sossin, Academic Director, Centre for the Legal Profession

Participants spoke to the diversity of topics and speakers as well as the high quality of the presenters as positive elements of the conference:

*Range of topics/speakers was best aspect of conference.  
Diversity of topics.  
Wide range of subjects covered.  
Quality of speakers and knowledge.  
High caliber panelists/presenters.*

Most participants liked the mix of plenary and small group sessions, although some would have liked more opportunity for interaction in the plenary sessions. As always, participants wanted the small group sessions to be longer.

*I liked everything – the workshops brought variety and movement.  
The plenary sessions and workshops were informative and useful  
in different ways.*

Participants also appreciated the networking opportunities at the conference – and wanted more of them.

*Networking: new information and ideas  
Loved networking with other advocates.  
Diversity of people attending.  
Getting a broader understanding of programs other agencies are doing.*

#### Evaluation feedback on plenary sessions

The general conference evaluation forms were inserted in conference bags that were given to participants when they registered. Participants were reminded to fill in the evaluation forms and drop them off in a box by the registration table at the end of the conference. The completion rate for general evaluation forms was 31.5% (much lower than the 61% completion rate for feedback forms from small group sessions which were handed out at the end of each session and collected right away).

Overall, feedback for the plenary sessions was very positive. For four plenary sessions, over 80% of respondents found the sessions interesting or very interesting. In their comments, some participants expressed an interest in seeing certain plenary sessions presented as workshops, referring to the workshop as a “more powerful format”.

All respondents (54/54) ranked the keynote address by Armine Yalnizyan as very interesting or interesting. In the words of one participant:

*Inspiring, energetic, passionate. A wonderful start to the conference.*

George Thomson and Karen Cohl’s presentation about the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project was also of great interest to participants, with 53/57 respondents assessing it as very interesting or interesting. Conference goers were excited by the potential of this LFO initiative:

*Good to see the start of an initiative that can be helpful to so many people.*

Evaluation feedback was also enthusiastic for “Spotlight on innovation: Creation through collaboration” presented by Fatima Ahmad of Educatoi, Lisa Cirillo of Family Law Education for Women (FLEW) and Fiona MacCool of CLEONet, which people described as “*Excellent*” and “*One of the strongest panels*”.

The plenary “Making change: Public legal education and community empowerment” opened the second day of the conference with a panel that included a community legal worker from northern Ontario, a lawyer from the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the legal director of the Barbra Schlifer Clinic and the coordinator of a workers’ action centre. Participants appreciated the diverse experience and information presented by this panel, with 94% rating it as interesting or very interesting.

#### Evaluation feedback on small group sessions

The completion rate for evaluation forms varied from session to session, but the overall response rate was 61% (260 completed evaluation forms from 425 participants in 15 small group sessions). The small group sessions were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest rating.

For nine sessions, 100% of respondents rated the statement “I found the workshop content to be interesting” as a 4 or 5; they gave the same rating to workshop presenters in response to the statements “The presenter was knowledgeable” and “I enjoyed listening to the presenter”.

The statement that received the lowest rating on all small group session evaluations was “I met people I hope to keep in touch with”, with no more than 53% of respondents in any session awarding it a 4 or 5. In the general conference evaluation forms, however, respondents spoke very positively about the networking opportunities at the conference. (The low rating to the question relating to “keeping in touch” may be because most of the small group sessions – as well as most of the plenaries – did not build in significant chunks of time for interaction or discussions; this is one of our “lessons learned”, discussed below.)

Participants liked skills-based workshops like “Tips for creating legal information in clear language” and “Effective public legal education workshops: Tools of the trade”, and expressed their appreciation for the expertise of the presenters and the practical information they shared.

*Excellent. Great exercises, very practical.  
I particularly liked the handouts, they are useful resources  
Good practical examples and helpful materials to take back to work.  
I found this workshop absolutely excellent, stimulating, practical.*

“Tips for creating legal information in clear language”, led by Tannis Atkinson, a clear language editor and consultant, was held twice during the conference in response to popular demand. Both sessions received very positive feedback. On a scale of 1 to 5, where five is the highest rating, 100% of participants (17/17) rated the statement “I found the workshop content to be interesting” as a 4 or 5. The same 100% of respondents also gave ratings of 4 or 5 to the statements “I learned new skills and/or information” and “I will be able to use what I learned here in my work”.

“Effective public legal education workshops: Tools of the trade” led by Margaret Capes was well attended and was rated as a 4 or 5 by 100% of participants (37/37) in response to the statement “I found the workshop content to be interesting”, and close to 90% (32/37) gave a rating of 4 or 5 to the statement “I learned new skills and/or information”.

Participants also expressed appreciation for panels with speakers who brought diverse perspectives to small group sessions. One such session, “Doing effective public legal education for racialized and non-official language communities”, had a panel of four presenters who talked about their experiences creating culturally sensitive resources using community media, producing materials in multiple languages, and doing information workshops. More than one person commented on the span of information that was covered and one participant observed:

*Presenters’ content didn’t overlap and provided helpful information for every step of [the] process.*

One hundred percent of respondents (17/17) rated the 3-person panel that led the small group session “Cell phones? Facebook? Wallet cards? Getting legal information to young people” as a 4 or 5 in response to the statement “I found the workshop content to be interesting”; 88% (15/17) indicated they learned new skills and or information.

Also rated by 100% of respondents (15/15 who selected 4 or 5) for being interesting, learning new skills, and using what was learned at the conference in their work was “Community legal experiences in Aboriginal communities: What we can learn”. Comments from participants reflected the desire to have more information on this topic and also to have had more of an Aboriginal presence at the conference.

## **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

*Learn, Grow, Connect* was the first major conference organized by CLEO. Not surprisingly, there were many challenges and lessons learned.

1. Timeframe: CLEO planned this conference in a very short period of time – approximately 4 months. Falling as it did over the summer months, this created considerable challenges for the conference coordinating group on many fronts:
  - it was not possible to do the planning and outreach that would have enabled CLEO to retain outside services – such as an event planner
  - it was difficult to confirm speakers, which meant it was difficult to finalize the program
  - the registration process was bottlenecked very close to the conference date
  - generally, planning was more stressful on all fronts because of the short turnaround time

2. New partnerships: CLEO's partnership with the Centre for the Legal Profession, University of Toronto Faculty of Law was very positive. CLEO benefited significantly from the input of Lorne Sossin, the Centre's Academic Director, and Jane Kidner, the Centre's Acting Executive Director. This was the first time that CLEO has undertaken a partnership with an academic institution with a mandate relating to improving access to justice, and the partnership provided many opportunities to expand the scope and reach of the conference. For example, Lorne connected the conference coordinating group with the LSUC, which prompted the idea for a LSUC consultation followed by a dinner.

The partnership also provided access to the 89 Chestnut Street conference facility, the university's event promotion and electronic registration systems, and law students (hired by CLEO to assist with on-site registration as well as small group session notetaking).

3. Conference Advisory Committee: This committee brought together important leaders from a variety of fields and organizations relating to community legal education and access to justice. Unfortunately, the short conference planning time and the fact that most planning took place over the summer meant that the conference coordinating group did not benefit as much as it might have from the guidance of this committee.
4. Conference format and content: A number of conference participants commented that the agenda, while stimulating and exciting, was so full that it did not leave enough time for interaction between presenters and participants. People also expressed the desire to have fewer plenary sessions and more small group sessions and workshops – and, again, to build in more time for discussions and interaction in both types of sessions. In terms of topics of the sessions, participants found the skills-based workshops very useful, but also seemed to like the range and diversity of topics presented.
5. Conference organizing: Evaluations commented that the organization of the conference was excellent, that logistical details were well taken care of and that the two days flowed very smoothly for participants.
6. Outreach on subsidies: Subsidies were offered to small not-for-profit organizations so that their staff could attend, but the conference coordinating group had a difficult time estimating the amount of funding that would be needed for this purpose. People were very reasonable with their requests and happy with any small assistance; we learned that cash-strapped community-based organizations don't have huge expectations for subsidies (at least not from a sister non-profit agency) so robust advertising of subsidies, including perhaps proactive and targeted outreach on the availability of the subsidies, could be done.

***Learn, Grow Connect Conference***  
**Participating Agencies**

- 1 Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- 2 ACLCO – Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario
- 3 ACTEW – A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women
- 4 Action Ontarienne Contre la Violence Faite Aux Femmes
- 5 Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)
- 6 Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (Tenant Duty Counsel Program)
- 7 Agentic Communications Inc.
- 8 Algoma University
- 9 Amnesty International
- 10 Anduhyaun Inc.
- 11 ARCH Disability Law Centre
- 12 Bayview Village Place Tenants' Association
- 13 Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre
- 14 Canadian Civil Liberties Association
- 15 Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- 16 Canadian Forum on Civil Justice
- 17 Catholic Crosscultural Services
- 18 Catholic Immigration Centre
- 19 Centre de sante communautaire Hamilton/Niagara
- 20 Chrysalis Women's Shelter
- 21 Colour of Poverty
- 22 Community Advocacy & Legal Centre
- 23 Community Counselling & Resource Centre
- 24 Community Legal Clinic
- 25 Community Legal Education Ontario
- 26 Costi Immigrant Services
- 27 CUIAS Immigrant Services
- 28 Department of Justice Canada
- 29 East Toronto Community Legal Services Inc.
- 30 Educaloi
- 31 Family Law Education for Women (FLEW)
- 32 Federation of Canadian Municipalities - China Migrant Labour Rights Project
- 33 Green Pastures Society
- 34 Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic
- 35 HALCO-HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic (Ontario)
- 36 Halton Community Legal Services
- 37 Hamilton Mountain Legal Services
- 38 Human Rights Legal Support centre
- 39 Income Security Advocacy Centre
- 40 Industrial Accidents Victims Group of Ontario (IAVGO)
- 41 Injured Workers' Consultants
- 42 Jaffari Support Services
- 43 Jewish Women International of Canada (JWIC)
- 44 Justice for Children and Youth
- 45 Kenora Community Legal Clinic
- 46 Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Service

- 47 Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic
- 48 K-W YMCA Cross Cultural & Immigrant Services
- 49 Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Legal Clinic
- 50 Law Foundation of Ontario
- 51 LAWPRO
- 52 Legal Aid Ontario
- 53 Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County
- 54 Literacies (journal)
- 55 London Employment Help Centre
- 56 Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre
- 57 Manitoulin Family Resources
- 58 METRAC: Metro Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children
- 59 Ministry of Attorney General
- 60 Muskoka Interval House
- 61 Northumberland Community Legal Clinic
- 62 Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre
- 63 New Canadians' Centre of Excellence
- 64 Niagara North Community Legal Assistance
- 65 Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation
- 66 North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services
- 67 Office of the Worker Adviser
- 68 Ontario Association of Patient Councils
- 69 Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- 70 Ontario Justice Education Network
- 71 Parkdale Community Legal Services
- 72 People Advocating Change through Empowerment (PACE)
- 73 Phoenix Place
- 74 Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services
- 75 PovNet
- 76 Pro Bono Law Ontario, Communications and Technology
- 77 ProBono Students Canada
- 78 Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan
- 79 Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick
- 80 QSO, Legal Aid Ontario
- 81 Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
- 82 Rural Legal Services
- 83 Scarborough Community Legal Services
- 84 Self Help Alliance
- 85 Sojourn House
- 86 South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
- 87 South Etobicoke Community Legal Services
- 88 Springtide Resources Inc.
- 89 The Centre for the Legal Profession
- 90 The Law Foundation of Ontario
- 91 The Law Foundation of Ontario - Access to Justice Project
- 92 Timmins Legal Clinic
- 93 University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic
- 94 West Scarborough Community Legal Services
- 95 Willowdale Community Legal Services
- 96 York Community Services

**Small group summaries**

*Learn, Grow, Connect: Practicing community legal education in a diverse Ontario*  
Toronto, Ontario | October 6-7, 2008

1. Cell Phones? Facebook? Wallet cards? Getting legal information to young people
2. Community legal education experiences in Aboriginal communities: What we can learn
3. Doing effective public legal education for racialized and non-official language communities (available as a web cast at [www.cleonet.ca/conference](http://www.cleonet.ca/conference))
4. Effective public legal education workshops: Tools of the trade (available as a web cast at [www.cleonet.ca/conference](http://www.cleonet.ca/conference))
5. Getting legal education to the community: Supporting community workers
6. Legal information for women who have experienced violence: Learning through trauma
7. No business like show business: Theatre, games and other popular education methods
8. Online training: Helping community workers and advocates learn about the law
9. The right to know: Developing and delivering legal information for people with disabilities
10. Tips for creating legal information in clear language
11. Using community legal education to support racial justice work
12. Web 101: Going online for small organizations

## 1. Cell Phones? Facebook? Wallet cards? Getting legal information to young people

*This workshop explored innovative ways to deliver legal information to young people. The presenters shared initiatives from community legal education and other sectors and invited participants to share their own experiences, challenges and successes.*

### 1. **Raine Liliefeldt (Acting Communications Manager, YWCA Toronto)**

- The YWCA runs over 40 programs for women and girls and has had particular success with three sorts of initiatives: social media, youth ambassadors and sampling / experiential marketing.
  - i. **Social media (such as Facebook and MySpace)**
    - Social media includes any tool that allows you to share information and network with peers
    - The challenge is in getting and retaining youth's attention. Today, the audience creates, selects and changes channels at astonishing speed
    - The benefit of using social media is the sense of immediacy. Kids can connect to their Facebook pages through their cell phones, so they always have access; and once an organization creates a Facebook page – you too can connect immediately with youth.
    - Facebook has proven very successful in promoting events, creating a network within your constituency and providing it with immediate updates.
  - ii. **Creating Youth Ambassadors to Talk to Other Youth**
    - It is very important to talk to youth in the way they talk to each other: frankly, bluntly and honestly
    - Creating ambassadors among the youth you serve and getting them involved in designing the message and creating the materials has proven highly effective.
  - iii. **Sampling and experiential marketing**
    - The YWCA has had success with this. Small materials that can be slipped into a pocket are best.

### 2. **Michelle Hamilton-Page (Sexual Health Educator, Toronto Public Health)**

- The key to reaching youth is to start your research with them. Ask youth what catches their eye and then integrate it into your outreach.
- Think also of how youth generally get their information. What are they looking at? Why haven't you used it?
- Direct communication campaigns through text messaging have been particularly successful. Cell phone are everywhere. For some constituencies, text messaging may be more effective than 'older' online strategies.
- Text messaging can be tailored to specific groups and it allows peer-to-peer information.
- The challenge with new media is actually getting the information out there. Hypertag is a service which broadcasts information to Bluetooth devices and is recommended by Ms. Hamilton-Page.

- Hypertag is free, doesn't distinguish between carriers, is anonymous and trackable, allows recall, is discreet and requires the consent of a client to receive.
- The uptake rates on Hypertag have been very good.
- For more information: [mhamiltonpage@gmail.com](mailto:mhamiltonpage@gmail.com)

### **3. Martha Mackinnon (Executive Director, Justice for Children and Youth)**

- The challenge in conveying legal information is that sometimes you need a lot of words in order to be accurate.
- Justice for Children and Youth's most popular publication is an info packet that fits into a jeans pocket: it has a map of Toronto with services for youth listed.
- The key is that information has to be easy to have-on-you: there's a concern among homeless youth that their stuff will be stolen. It also means using low-tech ways of reaching them – this group won't have cell phones.
- A second idea that has worked well are credit-card sized plastic cards which have the Q & A to a particular question, e.g. 'are you under 18 and detained by police?'
- The cards are durable and portable, with the challenge being to accurately deal with complicated legal questions in the allocated space.
- The fact that youth have the cards on them also has a preventative effect. They are able to pull the cards out in front of police, who recognize them, but the cards are non-threatening: it helps equalize the power in some small way.
- Colour-coding materials is also useful as people begin to refer to the information by colour.
- It's important to involve youth in the creation of materials and to test materials on youth. Creating material in a format that kids can carry with them is essential.
- A lot of the material will also be used by adults who interact with the kids.

### **4. Questions & Answers**

- Both low and high tech means of communication are needed: the more venues of communication, the better.
- Cell-phone messaging is most appropriate for information that will refer youth to further information and resources, for e.g. a number to call if they have legal questions on the subject.
- Cell phone usage is going up among youth and the poor, and YWCAs, schools, shelters and libraries provide internet access. Text messaging and web resources are important, relevant resources to the legal aid context: for many, the internet is the only privacy in their lives.
- Using these avenues doesn't require IT expertise – the groups rely on the passion of people who are involved in this work.
- Youth action committees, outreach work, and building partnerships with teachers can be key to establishing the relationships with youth needed to develop, test and distribute the materials. Developing broad-based partnerships with teachers has been a challenge, but school groups are on Facebook too. Legal educators have to take the first step.

It's possible to maintain privacy on Facebook. Workers can have one personal and one professional page, and it's possible to create closed Facebook groups. It's important to go to where the youth already to best deliver the information.

## 2. Community legal education experiences in Aboriginal communities: What we can learn

*This workshop showcased innovative public legal education initiatives in rural and urban Aboriginal communities. Participants had an opportunity to learn about collaboration and leadership in developing appropriate public legal education.*

### 1. Claudia Belda (Public Legal Education Coordinator, Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation)

The presentation discussed five projects currently increasing access to justice for remote Aboriginal communities through Pro Bono Law Ontario.

1. Telejustice Project: an 'urban-to-rural' initiative through which large urban law firms support duty counsel in remote rural regions. The project established a roster of 25 volunteers to take questions on various legal topics.
2. An interactive 'Ask-a-Lawyer' website is also operational.
  - The website uses community volunteers who know the communities the project serves as well as their languages.
  - The questions are filtered or reworded by the Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation and then assigned to the appropriate lawyer. The answers, in turn, are edited to ensure accuracy.
  - The system relies on at least indirect access to the internet in order to access the posted answer, but people can send in questions by fax or phone.
  - All Q & As are stored for future reference.
3. The Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation submits a legal column once a month to the local Wawatay newspaper and hopes it will soon be translated into the local languages to extend its reach.
4. One page information sheets in the local languages on relevant issues to the communities are currently under development.
5. Web casts, video conferencing and chat rooms may be promising avenues to provide legal information and legal advice. The difficulty is few of the target communities have high-speed access to the internet.

The outcomes of the projects have been positive. They provide anonymous advice, which can help overcome issues of shame, complement and assist duty counsel, provide information and training to community legal volunteers and create a cross-cultural experience for urban lawyers.

Technology, translation and volunteers have been key to making the project work.

### 2. Patti MacDonald (Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres)

- This presentation focused on why there's a need for public legal education for urban Aboriginal populations and how it should be approached.
- *The legal needs of Aboriginal people are particular and they are complex.* Prior to colonization, Aboriginal communities were tightly developed, with prescribed roles for every person and strong justice systems.
- Residential schools returned children to their communities with little understanding of how to interact with or contribute to their communities.

- The *Indian Act* and federalism has also complicated the situation. Women in domestic violence situations face particular challenges, as reserves are federally administered and many reserve councils refuse to enforce provincial family law orders.
- *Meaningful, timely and ongoing collaboration is key to developing public legal education in Aboriginal communities.*
- Programs designed, developed and delivered by non-Aboriginals simply do not work, partly out of distrust for legal authority by Aboriginal communities and partly because the Aboriginal world-view *is* different.
- Staff and agencies need to be more involved in communities and should use local approaches and Aboriginal models. Pan-Aboriginal approaches also don't work: there are over 500 different Aboriginal communities.
- Foundation teachings are very important: “courage” and “respect” speak to Aboriginal people. “First Nations” is problematic as a term – it excludes many individuals as it implies status, on-reserve Indians. Be aware of systemic stereotypes and misinformation as well.
- Organizations should be encouraged to train Aboriginal people to take the materials out to their communities.
- Legal educators should also emphasize training *non-Aboriginal* people on Aboriginal legal issues and sensitivities.

## **1. Questions & Answers**

- Comments by Christa Big Canoe, Legal Aid Ontario
  - Legal Aid Ontario is working on an Aboriginal Justice Strategy
  - The strategy uses the constitutional definition of ‘Aboriginal’ – LAO is also working against a ‘Pan-Aboriginal’ approach
  - The Legal Aid website includes a Development Paper, with feedback from Aboriginal participants on cultural competency training for legal aid lawyers.
  - Aboriginal people should provide the services to their own communities. They have specific and specialized understanding of their communities, the difficulties they face and the cultural resources available to them.
  - It’s important to train Aboriginal people on their rights, but so too is education of non-Aboriginals on the legal issues faced by Aboriginals.
- Comments by Fatima Ahmad, Project Coordinator at Éducaloi (Québec)
  - Éducaloi was approached by Les Femmes Autochtones du Quebec
  - They are currently developing plain language legal education tools for Aboriginal women on topics like child support and domestic violence, in French, English and in Aboriginal languages
  - Éducaloi used Aboriginal volunteers and lawyers to develop the information spots.
  - For further information, please visit: [www.educaloi.qc.ca](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca)
- Comments by Deborah Doherty, Public Legal Education and Legal Information Service of New Brunswick
  - New Brunswick has very limited legal aid
  - In developing legal education for Aboriginal peoples, we maintain very close collaboration with Aboriginal communities

- We created an Aboriginal family violence tool-kit in collaboration with Aboriginal groups and under the guidance of an Aboriginal steering committee
- In work-shopping the kit, legal aid went out to the communities to assess the content.

### **3. Doing effective public legal education for racialized and non-official language communities**

*This workshop looked at strategies for providing legal information to these historically excluded communities. Presenters discussed their experiences creating culturally sensitive resources, using community media, producing materials in multiple languages, and doing information workshops.*

#### **Yedida Zalik (Project Coordinator, CLEO Six Languages Text and Audio Project)**

- The Six Languages Project, a CLEO pilot, developed legal information materials on housing rights for the top six low-income, non-official language communities in the clinics' catchment areas.
- I. Three recommendations on how to frame a potential project emerge from CLEO's experience:
    1. Use a variety of criteria to identify the target languages in which materials will be developed. Consider the main groups within the targeted audience and use several sources of data.
    2. Use a variety of methods and formats to communicate the same message in order to reach a broad diversity of people. Online resources, visuals, radio plays, and shorter and longer audio series all have their place.
    3. Collaborate between projects to avoid duplication and maximize community resources. CLEO is currently developing an online, multilingual portal which will help identify, at a glance, gaps in resources and allow clinics to target their development efforts.
  - II. Three main steps are recommended when translating materials:
    1. Translation of the text, by someone with specific experience in the subject-matter who is also a good writer, to ensure the text reads naturally while retaining its accuracy
    2. Community review to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness
    3. A 'legal accuracy check' by a lawyer fluent in both languages and legal systems
  - III. The need to twin legal information with referrals to legal services is particularly important for non-official language speakers who must navigate a foreign legal system in their second or third language.
- Legal assistance may also help counter the systemic discrimination present in our laws and legal institutions.

#### **Alexandra Hickey (Freelance Designer and Multilingual Typesetter)**

- In preparing a multilingual series of a document(s), organizations must choose between using one typesetter across the diversity of target languages or hiring several native-language typesetters.
- It is easier to achieve a visual consistency which identifies materials as a recognizable 'set' when using only one typesetter, but this option requires much closer collaboration between the typesetter, translators and proofreaders to ensure the materials' accuracy.
- Finalize the initial content and its text as much as possible before starting typesetting. Every change may mean a return to each advisory committee, translator and typesetter, so the more final the text, the better.
- Certain languages are simply more expansive than others: editing decisions may need to be made to keep the text to one page (for easy distribution) or to allow longer texts.

- Design should be culturally validated through focus groups, to verify colour choices, photographs and images.
- Right-to-left typeset needs its own software and the Arabic languages have context-specific characters, for which software has complex, customized tables. Also check the readability of detail-intensive fonts with the target communities.
- Most printers are able to work with PDFs and a series of specialized software, but often can't work with Microsoft Word documents. Run a test first to ensure the compatibility of files and the availability of fonts.
- For electronic files, consider fonts and their effect on file size. Service providers may need to integrate a link to download particular fonts so that computers can display the online text.

### **Raine Liliefeldt (Acting Communications Manager, YWCA Toronto)**

- The YWCA's communications strategy can be described as 'making friends with those who have friends, turning strangers into friends and asking those friends to tell others how great you are'.
- In short, the strategy is one of media relations, public relations and experiential marketing.
- The media is a wonderful way to disseminate information: it's free and it increases the value of your material: people skim ads but read articles.
- The YWCA sends a press release to local community media for all its new programmes, usually twinned with a launch to which the media is invited.
- The most effective media strategies build contacts with the editors and reporters. Follow-up on the press release with a phone call to explain the event's relevance to that particular community and call them back at the next event.
- If you do have an event, make sure to have someone available to give an interview in the target language(s).
- For smaller papers, it may also be helpful to draft an article and send it in for their editing and publication.
- Building partnerships is also key: get to know the hairdressers, grocers and other 'chatting hubs' in your neighborhood and ask to leave a card with referral information for them to distribute if legal questions arise.
- Lastly, experiential marketing works for the non-profit sector: people like free stuff. Distribute information with candy on streetcorners and encourage your current clientele to spread the word among their friends.

### **Ginny Santos (Settlement Counselor, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services)**

- Here are seven tips for running legal education workshops.
  1. Start each workshop by setting ground rules that ensure an equal opportunity to participate for all.
  2. Instill realistic expectations among participants of the legal process and what it can and can't provide them.
  3. Use the 'parking lot' method of recording tangential questions as they arise, so participants can ask what's on their minds and not be distracted from the rest of the workshop's information. Return to the questions as a group or in personal interaction at the end of the session.

4. Tailor the agenda to where people are at and what they still need to know. Comparing legal systems to those of their countries of origin can build linkages to personal experience which helps people understand and remember the information.
5. Don't invite an expert to speak: the terminology, pace and register of the language makes understanding difficult. Have an expert present as a resource to answer specific information or to inject realism into a demonstration.
6. Wherever possible, give workshops in first languages. If you use an interpreter, cover the legal terminology in English to ensure the group understands its specific context and meaning in English-language proceedings and can adjust to different translations by other interpreters.
7. A walking tour of a court or public institution can provide people with a strong sense of welcome and belonging, which may encourage them to enforce their rights.

### **Questions & Answers**

- Funders are starting to understand why the complexity of involving community advisory bodies and lawyers in the translation process is justified. It took several years to get the funding for the Six Languages Project but the Law Foundation Project is creating awareness and interest in supporting the development of quality PLE documents in a variety of languages.
- The Six Language Project focused on housing rights as the law was about to change and there was a need for the materials.
- The YWCA relies on women from its own clientele to be ambassadors with the local media and meets with them individually to provide a sense of the messaging and to ensure they are comfortable with sharing their stories.
- Integrating community advisory groups, staff, area-specialist lawyers and lawyers familiar with the target language in the design and drafting of materials can result in conflicting opinions on what to include in the *content* of the piece. Different communities have different needs and there are also differing opinions within each community of what information would best assist people facing marginalization. A successful process is a matter of consultation and compromise.
- The difficulty of keeping material current is one reason for trying to keep the material brief and to base the document on the fundamentals that are unlikely to change. Web-based materials are also easier to amend than audio formats.

#### 4. Effective public legal education workshops: Tools of the trade

*This workshop explored the development and delivery of effective community legal education workshops to adults.*

**Margaret Capes (Legal Education Coordinator, Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc and Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Ontario)**

- ***Find out who your audience will be:*** who they are and what they want as a session should guide the planning of the agenda and the preparation of hand-outs.
- Age, education level, experience with the topic, and racial, ethnic, gender and literacy issues should all influence how you prepare the session.
- ***People retain information better when they are able to apply it.*** Integrate current events (whether in the news or of particular relevance to that community) in explaining and discussing the material.
- A good rule-of-thumb in assessing relevance is to ensure the participants will be able to use the information in their work or lives the next day. This also keeps the material well-g geared to the level and learning objectives of the participants.
- ***Handouts should clearly summarize key information:*** contact information for legal clinics, sample letters of complaint with Ministry's contact information, and/or resource books of community resources, for example. Include only information that will be referred to frequently or used to guide a specific task or outcome.
- ***Adults learn best by building on what they already know:*** use the knowledge in the room as a starting point for comparisons, best practices etc.

#### **Key techniques:**

- ***Study circles*** arise when materials are distributed ahead of time to participants for their reading and reflection. The educator then facilitates a discussion of participants' responses to the materials and guides the discussion to the key insights and conclusions.
- The challenge of study circles is that they require a commitment in advance by participants to prepare. Participants from a variety of backgrounds however report that they learn "a lot" from their use.
- ***Discussion groups*** are like study circles but require no advance preparation. Participants should have time to annotate hand-outs and/or discuss them in small groups before a plenary discussion.
- It can be beneficial to draw out the diversity of personal experiences in the room and explore the pros/cons of particular options.
- Story-telling can be complemented by examples from the facilitator to provide a more nuanced, accurate view of a process or institution.
- Setting ground rules, going around a table, time limits and the 'parking lot' technique for questions can help foster equal opportunities for participation by all.
- ***Case-studies*** have the advantage of being concrete and it gets participants 'out of their own lives'. Working through case studies in small groups can help to dig out the complexities of the scenarios. They also reinforce understanding: 'tell them, show them, have them do it,' is a tenet of adult education.

- **Demonstrations** can also help service providers understand a particular tribunal system which isn't open to the public, particularly when participants are prepared and understand their roles and the pedagogical objectives.
- **Online learning** has the significant advantage of being able to learn on one's own schedule. Exercises, discussion groups and/or bulleting boards are key however to help encourage interaction with the material, other students and the teachers.
- **Simulations and role-plays** frequently attract push-back from participants: this is something to gauge by facilitators, though this may be generational: younger groups (aged 16-21) seem to really enjoy them.
- It's important to provide people with an adequate grounding in the area of the simulation / role-play so that the experience can be beneficial and/or to debrief extensively thereafter.

## 5. Getting legal education to the community: Supporting community workers

*This facilitated discussion was geared to small, resource-stretched community organizations who might be feeling overwhelmed by legal information. The session provided participants with a chance to talk about the supports they need to effectively deliver community supports.*

**Pamela Cross (Director of Strategic Planning and Policy at the National Association of Women and the Law) acted as facilitator for the session.**

I. *Identifying the challenges: Who is your clientele? What challenges do you face in meeting their legal information needs?*

The group identified five challenges common across participants:

1. The increased complexity of people's legal information needs, which engage many areas of law and/or must navigate increasingly complex legal systems
2. The challenge of being able to support their clients in this complex context: staff need improved access to information on the law and changes to rules, practice directives and tribunal guidelines
3. Groups must cope with increased demand for community legal education and legal assistance. Existing resources are also strained by the increased need for interpreters and various accommodations of disability
4. Clients are experiencing, as a group, higher levels of stress than in previous periods, lengthening the time needed to effectively communicate
5. Socio-cultural, language, distance, and transportation barriers hinder access to clientele

II. *Identifying solutions: how could legal information be more accessible and useful to small community organizations?*

1. Providing current, thorough legal information to non-clinic, front-line service providers must be a priority
  - Consider granting front-line service providers access to the online resources developed by the Clinic Resource Office (CRO) and to its regional trainings.
  - Online training modules and short audio-visual webcasts on particular legal topics would be a useful resource for service providers and their constituencies.
  - The Legal Aid Ontario website could be better organized for quick access to information by topic.
  - Workshops are helpful if they are sufficiently advanced and detailed to train staff to recognize the complexity in clients' questions and refer them to the appropriate community resources.
  - Too much information can be worse than too little: it becomes overwhelming and undifferentiated. Better organization of existing information should be the first step. This will identify gaps to be filled by future development efforts.
2. Clearer, current and well-organized referral information for inquiries by service providers, and their clients, is required
  - Clinics must do a better job of informing the public and fellow-service providers of their services. The diversity of specialized clinics is the hidden treasure of the community legal education system.

- Better distribution of the list of clinics working in various catchment and legal specialization areas is essential. Student clinics should also be included on these lists. The LAO, CLEO and CLEO.net websites are very helpful sources of information in this regard.
- There must be more openness by clinics to working with non-legal service providers and lawyers who practice in different areas of specialization. Timely, accurate information and referrals must be easily available at the first point of interaction for clients.
- Rural support workers face particular challenges. E-mail, long-distance telephone calls and well-designed, current resource referral lists should be able to bridge the gap.

### 3. Informing the public: initiatives which have worked for participants

- Legal information columns in local community newspapers convey substantive legal information while raising a clinic's community profile. The group suggests drafting columns on a diversity of legal issues to attract broad community interest.
- An Advocates' Network of legal and front-line service providers was established in London and has raised the accountability of the ODSP by meeting every two to three months with its Board to discuss ODSP policies, procedures and areas of concern to their clients. Creating networks among groups can be helpful in achieving a voice with government departments.
- A women's shelter has had success in creating a basis on which women can make an informed decision about whether or not to call the police the next time they experience abuse by inviting a group of uniformed police officers to come in and talk regularly with the women. Parameters were established to maintain confidentiality and frame disclosure in a way that does not require the laying of criminal charges.
- Luke's Place, a social work organization who assists women survivors of violence through the family law process, has produced an emergency motions tool-kit in collaboration with two lawyers and provides associated training for shelter staff to help the women use the kits.
- Luke's Place has also provided training to lawyers on the effect of trauma on women's ability to receive and retain information. There is a valuable symbiosis in drawing on complementary sources of expertise.

### 4. Developing legal information materials to take into account low rates of representation

- While the distinction between legal information and legal advice remains important, community legal education materials must be developed to keep in mind the reality that clients don't experience this difference in real life.
- Materials must clearly indicate that their information is intended to be twinned with legal advice to guide its application to individual contexts and materials should provide clear referral information to accessible resources.
- Self-help materials, developed specifically to assist unrepresented litigants and particularly their service-providers, are very useful.
- Legal information materials must be drafted to provide front-line staff with the ability to provide good advice and an effective orientation to the legal systems in which the majority of people are unrepresented.

### 5. PLE is also about conveying the fact that certain rights and rights-protection systems exist in Canada. What has worked to reach your clientele or to encourage your constituencies to find you?

- Public service announcements on the radio generate awareness among service providers in the community, which may in turn be able to refer clients to the group. PSAs are free and are played frequently by community radio stations when advertising is scarce.
- There was a consensus that well-organized, current referral lists or resource guides are worth their weight in gold.
- The most important piece of information to provide to the public may be phone numbers with an indication of the type of problems the organization can help solve. Gaining access to the right organization is often the most difficult part.

## **6. Legal information for women who have experienced violence: Learning through trauma**

*Women who leave abusive partners face enormous legal challenges. This workshop focused on successful legal information resources for survivors of violence and discussed the effect of trauma on survivors' ability to learn and access legal information.*

### **1. Wendy Komiotis (Executive Director, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children(METRAC))**

The problem:

- The statistics reveal an epidemic of violence against women. Ethno-cultural identity, age, class, and disability affect the information sought by each community and how best to deliver this information.
- Trauma arises from incidents which overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. 'Too scared to learn' is an accurate description of the effect of trauma on women's ability to receive information.
- Women experience a diversity of reactions to trauma, including withdrawal from social circles, a lack of concentration, focus and memory, and hyper-vigilance.
- The typical classroom setting is therefore not an effective way of delivering legal information to women who have experienced violence.

What works:

- METRAC uses focus and advisory groups to identify a constituency's particular needs and identify how best to deliver legal information.
- Materials are developed in collaboration with an advisory committee of women who have experienced violence or are from a particular community.
- Advisory committees are also multi-sectoral to recognize the complexities of women's lives and draw from support workers in employment, housing, settlement, health and crisis shelters.
- Materials should be in different formats and languages, and websites can be useful to demystify the law provided they are kept up-to-date.
- A training-of-trainers model also works well when materials are developed to be shareable with colleagues and communication is continued, as service providers can fine-tune their understanding of the materials.
- Feedback from service providers is sought-after to ensure the content and delivery of the information is well-tailored to their constituency.

### **2. Carol Barkwell (Executive Director, Luke's Place)**

The difficulties:

- The new family law rules are very settlement driven and create lengthy delays prior to the resolution of a family law dispute. The average time among our clientele is 3 ½ years, during which women attend 5-10 court appearances.
- Women are often more at risk during periods of separation.

- There are also tremendous financial pressures for abused women. Almost 85% of women were represented at some point but run out of money.
- Trauma has the effect of adding to women's fears about the outcome of their family law cases and makes it exceptionally difficult to navigate the very complex family law system.

What works:

- Luke's Place is primarily a front-line resource centre focused on helping women interact with the family law system.
- Counsellors reinforce and reframe legal information for women who have survived violence between appointments with lawyers and help check their paperwork, assemble the evidence, and answer her questions.
- Counsellors are also a supportive presence that women can frequently call to keep the information steady and rely on for support during court.
- As women need to engage the community in many different places, Luke's Place has developed a resource manual for advocates to help support women through the family law process.
- Emergency motions present particular difficulties and securing interim support often takes 8-10 months. Luke's Place has developed a tool kit to help assist advocates in guiding women through the preparation of their emergency motions.

### **3. Questions & Answers**

- A long-term relationship with supportive staff can help women develop self-advocacy skills; empathetic listening helps her see herself.
- Running peer groups challenges an organizations' resources. Peer support is needed to recover, but one of its risks however is that the information gets a bit murky. A facilitator is needed to ensure the accuracy of the information.
- Counsellors can also provide support by ensuring women's applications are reflective of the stories they've told them and contain sufficient detail to support their claims. .
- Studies in emergency rooms have concluded that very little information is retained during periods of stress. Community legal education must also target judges so that they are able to communicate clearly to survivors of trauma.

How to deliver information – the challenges of the Internet:

- The Ontario Women's Justice Network website receives thousands of e-mails. The web's anonymity and accessibility are positive aspects, but the anonymity and women's requests for specific advice create difficulty in elaborating protocols to respond to the questions.
- METRAC is exploring the idea of a legal information telephone line with the Law Foundation. A question could be received and an answer posted on a website within 24 hours. It would also provide counsellors with a sense of the pulse.
- Quick interactions with women who have been traumatized are difficult. They may not hear the information two or three times and may be impatient. Attention must be paid to body language and tone, to giving support in a way that is helpful. It is a difficult constituency to serve exclusively through on-line services.
- CLEO has developed a facilitators' guide for agencies to train their staff – a training of trainers approach. This is a most promising avenue.

## 7. No business like show business: Theatre, games and other popular education methods

*When not portrayed on TV as fast-paced and sensational, law is often seen as dry words on dusty pages. But the law affects people in their real lives, often in dramatic ways. At this workshop, participants discovered popular education techniques for making legal information "come alive".*

### 1. Sarah McCoubrey (Executive Director, Ontario Justice Education Network)

*Introductory comments for the session:*

- There is a correlation between presenters' own levels of comfort, the amount of support their organization provides to interactive strategies and how frequently creative means are used to deliver community legal education.
- A tension also exists between using interactive and creative strategies, which favour the understanding and retention of material, with the effective use of time.
- The goal of community legal education (CLE) is that constituencies acquire knowledge of their legal rights and become willing to affirm those rights.
- Studies have shown that it is essential to get people involved in the first 10 minutes of a session in order to retain its information and that attention wanders within 40 minutes.
- Creative CLE also creates a perception that the legal system is accessible and helps people overcome their fear (and the barriers of language, poverty and geography) to access a legal clinic or to go to court.

### 2. SH/IM/E/HIM (Shim, Shimmy) – the Universal Injured Worker (Injured Workers' Consultants)

- Shim is a puppet developed by injured workers to convey their message through props and skits.
- Injured workers' also developed a golden toilet, after learning that the Chair of the Workers' Compensation Board had spent \$70,000 redecorating his private, office washroom.
- The golden toilet became an icon for the problems with the injured workers' compensation system. The workers' took the prop on tour. It proved itself to be a good conversation piece with the public and garnered press attention at each stop.
- In short, props are good ice-breakers and are very helpful in drawing the public and the media's attention to the cause.
- A third initiative researched the history of workers' compensation, going back to the compensation system's origins in a 1910-1913 Royal Commission. This led to a skit, with the entire script drawn from the transcript of the proceedings as the stereotypes were so well cast and remain current.
- Performances of the skit have been helpful in getting injured workers' to talk about their experiences with the compensation system, as the audiences recognize their experiences on stage.

### 3. Emily Chan (Community Development Lawyer with Justice for Children and Youth)

- Justice for Children and Youth demonstrated a PLE game modelled on the Q&A of Jeopardy. Different ways of organizing the teams and the challenge of developing questions for different age groups were discussed.

- Games based on general, legal information will often raise a personal story in audiences. Managing the situation to ensure both the continued pace of the game and the accuracy and confidentiality of information provided to the affected person is key.
- The risk in using interactive strategies is that educators cannot provide enough substantive legal information to the audience. Always make sure people walk away only after they've received contact or referral information to a clinic, a website, a phone # etc.

#### **4. Sarah McCoubrey (Executive Director, Ontario Justice Education Network)**

- OJEN discussed their program of organizing mock trials, sentencing circles, appeals, etc. with youth disenfranchised at school or involved with the justice system.
- The kids come for the hook of learning about their rights in their interaction with the police. What they also learn is the interaction between the police and Crown, their ability to trust their defence counsel and most importantly, that public institutions are open to them and can provide them with a positive view of themselves (the mock trial is held at Old City Hall, presided over by a current judge and is coached by lawyers).
- Both students and teachers are predominantly interested in mock criminal cases. The challenge is to develop interest in other types of proceedings that also affect their lives: e.g. IRB hearings.
- There is great resistance from people who work with you as to whether their youth would be able to participate in a mock trial. Consistently, the doubts have proven unfounded: ESL classes and low literacy youth – all manage with some modification of the exercise.
- OJEN has had success with a mock trial with children in grades 3 – 6, with a defamation charged modelled on Hansel & Gretel and linked to the curriculum about bullying and telling the truth. It was very well received.

#### **5. Questions & Answers**

- McCoubrey is a proponent of ignoring the initial reluctance among some youth. In practice, someone will usually volunteer to escape the silence and then things get underway.
- Using interactive strategies to begin a session can energize a group and get them engaged, for a more conventional detail-heavy remainder of a session.
- Funding can be a barrier to developing interactive strategies. Justice for Children and Youth is exploring the idea of clinics contributing to a library system of materials and games etc.
- Mock trials and other exercises are available on OJEN's website. If organizations develop exercises for their particular constituencies, OJEN invites them to submit the scripts to them and OJEN will make them more general and/or distribute them to other groups.

When designing a mock proceeding, include up to 4 important pieces of information for participants to draw out or give them a basic foundation of common knowledge and let the participants improvise from there.

## **8. Online training: Helping community workers and advocates learn about the law**

*Online training can provide an opportunity to learn more about the law in a flexible and accessible environment. The workshop introduced participants to PovNetU, a user-friendly, online training resource for community workers and advocates and Springtide's online course for front-line violence against women workers.*

### **1. Penny Goldsmith (Coordinator, PovNet)**

- PovNet is an online course, designed to help anti-poverty advocates and community workers learn more about the law.
- PovNet's technology is meant to be as user-friendly as possible and, as an online resource, students can work on the training as their schedules allow.
- PovNet has one full-time coordinator and facilitators who work on the course between four to five hours a week.
- The facilitators engage participants. A discussion board has discussion from all the learners with facilitators providing feedback and instruction right away and participants are expected to integrate current events as they occur in their communities.
- The course takes between four to six weeks to complete, but may be returned to if interrupted.
- Evaluation is through a set of targeted questions that go through the learning objectives and goals of the course.
- Advocates receive a certificate recognizing they've completed the course at the end
- PovNet U is currently B.C.-focused but talks are underway to create a template to adapt for all Canadian provinces.
- PovNet U is also developing a specialized course for B.C. Native Court Workers.

### **2. Marsha Sfeir (Executive Director of Springtide Resources)**

- Springtide Resources conducts research and public legal education on issues relating to violence against women.
- A needs assessment conducted with rural communities revealed the need for training that would be accessible across the province.
- Springtide Resources began consultations with client agencies. York University advised Springtide in developing the online course.
- The course was piloted between April 21, 2007 and June 21, 2007.
- The course has ten modules and each module is online for a week. Participants can watch a video lecture and then participate in a discussion forum. York University recommends that modules should be no longer than one hour.
- A challenge arises when areas of law are particularly complex – for e.g. in the immigration context, where not giving the right information may lead to people getting deported.
- A lot of the training was done in person – it was a challenge to figure out how to facilitate the course's online delivery from inside the room.
- 94.8% of advocates reported they felt they had an ability to help women with the legal issues covered in the course after taking it.

## **9. The right to know: Developing and delivering legal information for people with disabilities**

*People with disabilities need access to accurate, understandable legal information, but finding good formats and delivery methods can be challenging and expensive. In this workshop, participants heard about strategies used by some of the leaders in this field.*

### **Ivana Petricone (Executive Director of ARCH Disability Law Centre)**

- Service providers have a duty under the *Human Rights Code* to provide legal services for people with disabilities up to the point of “undue hardship.”
- It’s important to include in the advertising for the PLE the nature of the accommodations available to persons with disabilities. Know your audience and plan ahead: do you need an interpreter(s)? ramps? larger fonts?
- Queens’ University has a good website with guidelines on accommodating various disabilities, while York University has produced a useful pamphlet. Most materials are available on the ARCH website. See also [settlement.org](http://settlement.org) and [accessibility.ca](http://accessibility.ca)
- Internet is a great asset, especially for providing remote access to people in far-flung areas. Note however that PDF files cannot be “read” by software designed to assist persons with impaired vision.
- Adapting services in non-official languages can be difficult as minority-language interpreters are in short supply.
- The ARCH ALERT newsletter reaches almost 3,000 people. They are always looking for writers.

### **Michele Leering (Executive Director and lawyer with the Community Advocacy & Legal Centre in Belleville)**

- The Community Advocacy & Legal Centre in Belleville works frequently with members of the deaf community.
- The work began with the production of sign-language legal education videos for those with impaired hearing almost 12 years ago.
- It’s important to speak with ‘frontline’ people to conduct needs-assessments and provide information in partnership with other service providers and the clients themselves. Legal education must remain interactive to be useful.
- Websites provide good information, as do newsletters. The clinic has also begun to correspond exceptionally by e-mail with clients who have impaired hearing, as a reasonable accommodation.
- They have also developed a “deaf intake guide” to help in the streamlining and processing of persons with hearing problems.
- As a general service clinic, providing legal information to “persons with disability” is a complex broad issue when you consider that clients have different disabilities and different legal needs. The clinics should consider coordinating efforts to produce and assemble inclusive public legal education.

### **Lynda Roy (Outreach and Education Mentor at Springtide Resources)**

- This presentation focused on women with disabilities who experience abuse. Awareness is increasing, but people erroneously believe women with disabilities were asexual or child-like, creating a silent epidemic.

- Abusers may be intimate partners, family members, caretakers: all persons in positions of trust. Women with disabilities are 2.5% more likely to suffer abuse.
- The vulnerability of women with disabilities is enhanced by the challenges they experience in accessing services and the justice system. There is a tension in how to distribute resources and a lack of understanding of the issues among policymakers.
- Women with disabilities should be 'at the table' when developing public policy and public legal education programmes so that their needs and voices are represented.
- Access to information must also be available in a user-friendly manner and developed to address particular concerns: e.g. will a woman with a disability be more intently questioned on her fitness as a parent in a custody hearing?
- Attention must also be paid to developing legal information for intellectual disabilities while retaining the substance and accuracy of the information.
- American sign language may also not have the vocabulary to support the ideas contained in the law or legal information: it may pose a significant linguistic barrier to delivering community legal information.

### **Question & Answer**

- Frustration was expressed that ODSP offices do not seem to recognize that some disabilities may affect claimants' abilities to submit an organized, complete file, which is then used as a ground on which to deny coverage.
- It's a systemic problem. Letters should be written to draw the matter to ODSP's attention as a human rights, accommodation issue.
- Legal Aid Ontario reports that 80 percent of their clients whose applications were denied by ODSP had success in their appeal when properly represented.
- Privacy laws may create situations in which the ODSP is not aware of the particular nature of a client's disability.
- If the clinics are to coordinate, research and statistics are needed to figure out what methods are working: fewer than 0.5% of people use the internet to search for legal information.
- The first stop for materials should be CLEONET.CA. Partnerships with others must be fostered and doing so will result in better products. Working with others brings in special expertise and funding.
- 'YouTube' might be a better way of distributing video clips rather than traditional DVDs.
- Illustrations provide one route to conveying information to clients with low literacy or conceptual language barriers.

## 10. Tips for Creating Legal Information in Clear Language

*Creating accessible legal information is not easy, especially if your clients find reading difficult. This workshop introduced the basic principles of clear language and provided tips and tools to help organizations design their legal information with their readers in mind.*

### 1. Tannis Atkinson (Adult Literacy Advocate and Founder of *Literacies*)

- Plain language is about making the information as accessible as possible. It puts the reader first.
- Writers must know their audience, know what they want to convey, and then organize their writing accordingly.
- Think ahead to how your readers will use the information and how you want them to use it – this will help you understand how to organize your ideas in a logical way.
- Ask yourselves how knowledgeable your audience already is: are you trying to convey what the law is or how it has changed?
- Avoid the passive voice: be clear of who is doing what in your sentence and avoid vague, abstract verbs.
- Avoid negative construction: state your message directly and use point-first advocacy.
- Include only the information a reader needs and give each topic a meaningful heading.
- Re-think the writing if your sentences are longer than 30 words and limit paragraphs to three sentences each.
- If words have three or more syllables, they may be too complicated: materials should be written at a grade 7 to 9 level to have the broadest reach.
- Make sure each point on a bulleted list is grammatically parallel to the others
- Pay attention to the design of your materials. Include lots of white space.
- Finally: test your document and make the required adjustments.

## 11. Using community legal education to support racial justice work

*Racialized communities in Ontario face many barriers. At this workshop, presenters who have used community legal education to fight racism talked about ways of integrating racial justice perspectives into organizations' community legal education work.*

### **Zahra Dhanani (Legal Director, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC))**

- The goal of public legal education is:
  - i. to impart legal information in a respectful manner, and
  - ii. to empower people to use the law, even when they think it serves only as a tool against them.
- Service providers must examine their own power and privilege when trying to provide legal information. Privilege is the “normalization and ascribing of power to the dominant group.” We must turn our gaze back on ourselves to examine how our biases might affect the way in which we impart legal knowledge upon others from different backgrounds.
- We must also examine how we benefit from inequality in our society. Community legal clinics exist, in part, because of unequal access to legal representation in our society.
- There are thus two guiding principles in integrating racial justice perspectives into organizations' community legal education work:
  - i. Reflect on your own power
  - ii. Do no harm:
    - a. Avoid wearing symbols of wealth when talking to someone who does not, and cannot, afford such things; doing so creates a barrier and a divide.
    - b. Harm may also be caused by starting work which will have to stop when funding stops.
    - c. Do not judge your clients – this is not our job.

### **Avvy Go (Executive Director, Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic)**

- Poverty among racialized persons in Toronto increased by 300% between 1981 and 2000.
- Many immigrants arrive every year and the threat of recession will make this poverty and inequality more acute.
- Among African Canadians, second-generation children are doing worse than their immigrant parents.
- Inequalities in education, housing, employment and immigration settlement problems contribute to this widening gap between ‘White Canada’ and racialized Canadians.
- *Six practical suggestions for those presenting PLEs:*
  1. Reflect on your own biases: how do they affect the way you design and deliver a PLE?
  2. Make PLEs accessible by using clear language, but do not ‘dumb down’ your message or the expression of it.

3. Provide quality information that is sufficiently detailed to assist your audience.
4. Check your language for jargon and complex legalize: *communicate the idea* to your audience by using plain language to explain the concepts.
5. Name racism when you see it: you don't want your PLE to reinforce stereotypes
6. Consult racialized groups and then actually involve them in developing the PLE and its materials

**Uzma Shakir (Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow; past Executive Director of the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario)**

- Do social justice work with a sense of justice. There is hope and laughter in this work and it is essential to persevere.
- “Racism fatigue” is a luxury that racialized communities do not have.
- Stop seeing people solely through their cultural lenses or yours: they may have more in common with you than you think.
- Community legal educators must aim to transform. Law changes and is changed by society. We must identify the change we seek and then pursue it.
- Transformative PLEs are thus critical to effectuating a change in unjust laws.
- Community legal educators are in a position to help effect that change: for example, same-sex marriage both reflected and transformed our laws and social norms.
- Systemic change is needed and thus simply informing people of their *status quo* rights is not enough.

**Questions & Answers**

- The choice to pursue a claim, in the face of possible reprisals in the workplace, is the individual's to make. Presenting this option and seeking the transformation of our laws and legal systems remains a community legal educator's responsibility however.
- The delineation of clinics along ethno-cultural lines is no longer a reflection of our ideals but rather reflects the reality that most people in Toronto are racialized.

## 12. Web 101: Going online for Small Organizations

*This workshop introduced participants to the ways in which the Internet can enhance community legal education work. Participants were guided through identifying their online needs and introduced to simple tools and strategies for reaching specific communities and connecting with other organizations.*

### 1. Phillip Djwa (President of Agentic Communications)

- 72% of Ontario households used the internet for personal non-business reasons in 2005. Two-thirds of Canadians use the internet daily, while 83% of teens, and 74% of Canadians between the age of 18-29, have visited a social networking site.
- The vast majority of people have turned to the Internet as an important source of information. As such, the Internet can be an important tool for small organizations to disseminate their information and messages.
- Young people in particular do seem to be moving towards texting, and away from e-mail, to some extent. Texting is instant and it allows people to maintain a conversation about an issue and instantly reach several people.
- Open source applications are great for small non-profits organizations, as is user-generated media (in which you can create your own videos, blogs etc.)
- Effective websites involve a communication paradigm shift for several organizations. Dedicate a staff member to it, who will make updating the site and integrating it into your larger communication strategy a priority. Then provide them with training and resources.
- Youth can be an asset to establishing a web presence: they are very aware of the trends, are influential in their enthusiasm for the project, and may represent the next crop of clients or advocates for your cause.
- A web-based presence is good for providing up-to-date information in digital form. Use it also to organize events, increase your audience, organize volunteer efforts, and launch campaigns. Websites can be brochure-like or be interactive: the latter may better be able to complement your work.
- Tools to use: Blogger.com, Ning.com, Care2, CanadaHelps, and GoogleApps.



## CLEO CONFERENCE EVALUATION FORM

Help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of this conference so that future conferences can be even better. Please leave your completed evaluation form at the registration desk.

### General:

1. Please rank your experience of the conference overall:
  - Very satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Not very satisfied
2. What was the best aspect of the conference for you?
3. What did you like least?
4. What other public legal education/information topics would you like to see at another conference?

### Plenary sessions:

5. Please rank your experiences of the plenary sessions:
  - i. Inequality and Justice (Keynote Speaker: Armine Yalnizyan)
    - Very interesting
    - Interesting
    - Not very interesting
    - Did not attend
  - ii. Shaping new directions: Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice (Karen Cohl, George Thomson)
    - Very interesting
    - Interesting
    - Not very interesting
    - Did not attend
  - iii. Checking in with your community: Needs assessments and evaluations (Gayle Broad, Mary Stratton)
    - Very interesting
    - Interesting
    - Not very interesting
    - Did not attend

- iv. Making change: Public legal education and community empowerment (Mary Lou Fassel, Deena Ladd, Hamdi Mursal, Nan Normand)
  - Very interesting
  - Interesting
  - Not very interesting
  - Did not attend
- v. Spotlight on innovation: Creation through collaboration (Fatima Ahmad, Lisa Cirillo, Fiona MacCool)
  - Very interesting
  - Interesting
  - Not very interesting
  - Did not attend
- vi. What we should know: Community legal education and French language services (Plenary Address: François Boileau)
  - Very interesting
  - Interesting
  - Not very interesting
  - Did not attend
- vii. Helping people help themselves: The role of legal information (Margaret Capes, Mary Stratton, Toby Young)
  - Very interesting
  - Interesting
  - Not very interesting
  - Did not attend

**Accessibility:**

6. Was the conference accessible for you?

- Yes
- No

7. If no, please tell us what would have made it more accessible.

**Other Comments:**

Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about your experience of this conference.



**Small Group Session: From Espanola to Alexandria: Reaching rural and isolated communities with critical legal information**

Please rank this workshop on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the lowest ranking and 5 the highest.

1. I found the workshop content to be interesting.

1      2      3      4      5

2. I learned new skills and/or information.

1      2      3      4      5

3. I met people I hope to keep in touch with.

1      2      3      4      5

4. The presenters were knowledgeable.

1      2      3      4      5

5. I enjoyed listening to the presenters.

1      2      3      4      5

6. I will be able to use what I learned here in my work.

1      2      3      4      5

7. Other comments:



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