

West Coast LEAF News Alert November 3, 2009



Polygamy Reference an Opportunity to Focus on Women's Equality

October 22, 2009 - West Coast LEAF welcomes the Attorney General's announcement today that it is proceeding to the courts to determine the constitutionality of the polygamy prohibitions of the Criminal Code. It was in 1989 that former Bountiful community member Debbie Palmer expressed concern to the provincial government about the sexual exploitation of women and girls by polygamous leaders in that small FLDS community in south eastern BC. West Coast LEAF - an organization dedicated to women's equality in the law - has been urging government and other actors to address the rights and freedoms of the women and children in that community head on.

"The reference will allow the Court to focus on the equality and human rights of women and children in Bountiful," says Legal Director Kasari Govender. "The polygamy provisions should be reviewed from the perspective of protecting women and children from sexual and other exploitation."

"While this innovative decision to file a BC Supreme Court reference question will allow law makers to get on with it," Govender is quick to add, "in the meantime, there must also be specialized services available to women and children who want to leave Bountiful - the women of that community need to know they have options."

Alison Brewin, Executive Director, adds "The legal debate in Court will take some time. Meanwhile the reality remains that women and children continue to face very limited - and controlled - choices about their lives when they are born in the FLDS community. Government must consider their needs while the court process unfolds."

West Coast LEAF releases Position Paper on Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation

Over this past year, the issue of human trafficking has received renewed and focused attention. Parliament is currently considering three different pieces of proposed legislation aimed at combating human trafficking, and the Vancouver community has been debating whether human trafficking, and in particular, sex trafficking, will increase around the 2010 Olympic Games.

Governmental and non-governmental agencies alike have been working on developing measures to address the issue of human trafficking. West Coast LEAF has prepared a [Position Paper on Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation](#), which includes recommendations and refers to the upcoming bills.

West Coast LEAF believes that any initiatives undertaken to prevent and combat human trafficking must be focused on the vulnerabilities of victims and must adequately provide for their protection.

Transforming Our Future workshop at Kwantlen

West Coast LEAF is pleased to offer [Transforming Our Future](#), a two-day practical public legal education course designed for activists, advocates, and community service providers to learn about the Canadian justice system, human rights law, equality rights, and how to develop legal strategies to address the impact of systemic discrimination.

This workshop is aimed to empower community service providers by providing tools for identifying systemic discrimination, assessing legal avenues for change, and developing strategies meaningful to their communities. Over the two days participants will examine sources of equality law in Canada, and critically examine concepts of equality and systemic discrimination.

WHAT: Transforming Our Future two-day workshop

WHERE: Kwantlen Polytechnic University

WHEN: Friday, November 27 & Saturday, November 28, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

REGISTRATION: Course fee is \$50 per participant (subsidies are available upon request). Course fee includes materials, lunch and refreshments

[Registration](#) is limited. Please register by November 20, 2009.

For more information and to [register](#), Contact [Deanna Ogle](#) at 604-684-8772 ext. 114.

About [West Coast LEAF](#)

West Coast LEAF's mission is to achieve equality by changing historic patterns of discrimination against women through BC based equality rights litigation, law reform and public legal education.

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