



West Coast LEAF NEWS ALERT July 7, 2008

In this issue of the West Coast LEAF Alert:

Life time of Achievement: Eloise Spitzer Long-time LEAF national and West Coast LEAF volunteer and a founding mother of LEAF Eloise Spitzer has been honoured with the first-ever LEAF Lifetime Achievement Award.

Secret Lives of Saints: Highlights from Daphne Bramham's presentation at the West Coast LEAF Annual General Meeting. Braham is a columnist and author of *The Secret Lives of Saints: Child Brides and Lost Boys in a Polygamous Mormon Sect*.

A Lifetime of Achievement: Eloise Spitzer

Long-time LEAF national and West Coast LEAF volunteer and a founding mother of LEAF Eloise Spitzer has been honoured with the first-ever LEAF Lifetime Achievement Award. For more than twenty years she has been an active supporter of West Coast LEAF and provided her expertise in law, human resources, planning, communications and fundraising.

In 1985 LEAF launched a court challenge on behalf of a Yukon woman who had been forced to keep her husband's surname as long as he was alive. Eloise attended the Whitehorse Registry Office on April 17, 1985 and began the process of bringing this challenge forward.

Not only was this LEAF's inaugural challenge, it was also one of the first under the Charter's new equality rights section. Ultimately, the law was ruled unconstitutional and LEAF was truly on its way to 23 years of transforming women's future.

Following is a brief excerpt from her acceptance speech:

I am a second generation activist, and feel blessed by the large and generous community of supporters around us, and the foresight and dedication of women like Nancy Ruth. I was fortunate to work with her and many gifted women like her. LEAF is truly a family. I have made friends for life and have been lucky enough to have walked beside them for decades.

I'm glad that founding mothers had forethought to include women across Canada. I was up north at the time of LEAF's forming, in Whitehorse. It was thrilling to work on early stages of Sharon McIvor case [for Aboriginal women to retain status upon marrying], and the naming case. I'll never forget standing at the door of the registry office in Whitehorse, just two days after LEAF's first board meeting in Toronto.

My person goal is to strive for equality my whole life. My 20 year old daughter is still under-represented in elected positions and has the earning potential of 70% of men's. I hope one day women can repay their student loan at 70% as well!

Helen Keller said "Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose."

By taking risks and being creative, we'll continue to be successful.

Secret Lives of Saints

Daphne Bramham, columnist and author of *The Secret Lives of Saints: Child Brides and Lost Boys in a Polygamous Mormon Sect*, spoke at the West Coast LEAF Annual General Meeting on July 26th. Random House says *The Secret Lives of Saints* is a riveting, shocking account of the founding and flourishing of the polygamous, fundamentalist Mormon sect in Bountiful, B.C. Daphne Bramham has been a columnist at the *Vancouver Sun* since 2000 and has won numerous awards for her writing.

Following is a brief excerpt from her talk:

It's a story with everything: sex, politics, money, power and greed. The town is really called Lister and started with a single family in 1946. By the time the Charter was signed in 1982, the population had nearly quadrupled. The only way for men to get to heaven is to have three or more wives. Heaven for women is by invitation only. The average family has 35 kids.

Currently, there is a split in the community. Half follow Winston Blackmore, who has 26 wives and 116 children, and half follow Warren Jeffs, who was convicted last fall for 5 years to life as "accomplice to rape", because he arranged a marriage between a 14 year old girl and her 19 year old cousin, who subsequently raped her.

The local schools are funded by the province and always pass inspections. There are approximately 500 students, but few go past grade 8 and many children never graduate. Women are trained as practical nurses and midwives.

Sample questions taken from a Grade 11 biology test in a Bountiful school:

"How many goldfish are in the aquarium?"
"What is the school motto?"

"What are your views on celestial marriage and obedience?"

We have failed the children of Bountiful - failed to provide the rights they're entitled to. We send people to Afghanistan to provide those rights. Pressure must continue. We must continue to build a multicultural, multi-ethnic and tolerant society.

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West Coast LEAF works to realize this vision of women's full equality through public legal education, strategic litigation, and law reform.

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