2016 EQUALITY BREAKFAST KEYNOTE: MICHÈLE LANDBERG & ILANA LANDBERG-LEWIS

LIFE-LONG CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

We are thrilled to host mother-daughter dynamos Michele Landsberg and Ilana Landsberg-Lewis as our 2016 Equality Breakfast keynote speakers!

Michele is a trailblazing and iconic Canadian journalist, author, speaker and social activist, who has published more than 3,000 columns and features since 1962. She is an outspoken advocate for women and children, human rights and social justice. A multiple award-winning journalist, she is also the author of four bestselling books, Writing the Revolution, Women and Children First, This is New York, Honey!, and Michele Landsberg's Guide to Children's Books.

Michele began her career with the Globe and Mail in the 1960s and went on to join Chatelaine in the 1970s, before joining the Toronto Star, where she wrote a column for 25 years. Michele is one of the first journalists in Canada to provide a feminist interpretation of the news, chronicling the lives of women, their struggles and achievements, while addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, racial discrimination in education and employment opportunities, and a lack of gender equality in divorce and custodial legal proceedings.

In 2005, the Canadian Women's Foundation established the Michele Landsberg Award to recognize outstanding young women and their accomplishments in media and activism. In 2006, Michele was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. A mother of three and a grandmother, she has been married since 1963 to Stephen Lewis, a former UN Secretary General Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa and co-founder of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. A feminist hero and an unflinching activist, Michele is an inspiration to the women who read her columns, and to a new generation fighting to see that the revolution continues.

Ilana is a tireless labour and human rights lawyer who is devoted to global grassroots social justice as the Executive Director of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. In 2003, she...
STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN WITH KIDS IN FAMILY LAW COURTS

BC’s Family Law Act, introduced in 2013, recognizes a wide range of forms family violence can take and requires that judges consider family violence in determining the best interests of children. Feminists and anti-violence activists fought long and hard for family violence to be acknowledged in family law at all. Yet all too often, women who are dealing with legal issues around parenting after separation from an abusive former partner still find that the family law system doesn’t fully recognize the impacts of violence or adequately protect the safety of women and children.

That’s why West Coast LEAF’s saw a need for legal education to enhance supports for these women and their children. When we traveled around BC to deliver our Financials in Family Law workshop, we heard from frontline service providers province-wide about the need for legal information and strategies to better assist women survivors of violence to navigate family law challenges relating to parenting.

Based on this input, West Coast LEAF developed Parenting and Family Law, a three-hour training aimed at frontline responders who assist women fleeing abuse — including transition house workers, settlement workers, advocates, victim services workers, sexual assault support workers, and others. Our interactive, scenario-based workshop provides an overview of recent changes to family law in BC and their impacts on the parenting experiences of women with abusive or harassing former partners. Our goal is to help participants identify legal strategies to address the most common family law challenges facing mothers who have left abusive relationships.

A pilot version of our Parenting and Family Law training has already been offered in Richmond (at the Legal Services Society Provincial Training Conference), Smithers (at the Northern Society for Domestic Peace), and Burnaby (at Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society). After several more pilot workshops in the Lower Mainland, we’ll be taking the piloting on the road in early 2016, with sessions planned in Bella Coola, Prince Rupert, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, and Grand Forks.

We are grateful to the community leaders, experts, and allies of West Coast LEAF who helped us develop the first versions of the pilot: our Family Law Advisory Committee, who offered insights about emerging trends and strategies in family law; Jane Doe Legal Advice Clinic lawyer Salima Samnani, who helped us prepare and facilitate a training session in Burnaby; and the host organizations and participants from each of the pilots, who provided invaluable feedback. West Coast LEAF is proud to develop this legal education resource in consultation with diverse communities and in response to community needs.

Funding for this project has been generously provided by the BC Ministry of Justice.

joined with her father, Stephen Lewis, to establish a foundation that would work directly with grassroots organizations in sub-Saharan Africa in their struggle to turn the tide of the AIDS pandemic. The Stephen Lewis Foundation has funded more than 1,100 initiatives, partnering with more than 300 community-based organizations in 15 African countries.

As a labour and human rights lawyer, Ilana spent eight years at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), working to strengthen the UN’s implementation of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Ilana was instrumental in launching the United Nation’s Trust Fund on Violence against Women.

In 2009, Ilana received the YWCA Women of Distinction Award for International Development, and was named one of the Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada in 2012.

West Coast LEAF recently released its seventh annual report card on women’s rights in BC. While the situation for BC women has seen minor improvements this year, unfortunately for many women, BC continues to fail to deliver on its responsibilities. In particular, the province has not taken action to address the ongoing violence against Indigenous women and girls, the basic human rights of many incarcerated women and girls are overlooked, many women do not have access to secure housing, women continue to be more economically insecure than men, and women remain unable to enforce their legal rights because of inadequate legal aid.

West Coast LEAF’s CEDAW Report Card is an annual assessment of how well BC is complying with the obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Canada in 1981. The report card grades BC’s progress in nine key areas in women’s rights, including access to justice, economic security, affordable housing and childcare, and safety, the foundations of a society where everyone can participate equally regardless of their gender.

To download the report, visit westcoastleaf.org
“This is one of the highlights of the women lawyers’ year.” — anonymous respondent, 2015 Equality Breakfast survey

**SPONSOR THE 2016 EQUALITY BREAKFAST**

Attended by nearly 800 participants each year, this eagerly anticipated signature event celebrates International Women’s Day and West Coast LEAF’s work to advance the full participation of women and girls in social, economic and political life. Becoming an Equality Breakfast sponsor is an excellent way to demonstrate that you value having women in leadership positions, are committed to corporate social responsibility, and support access to justice for all.

For information on the benefits of sponsorship or to learn more about the event, visit westcoastleaf.org or contact Basya Laye, development@westcoastleaf.org or 604-684-8772, ext. 114.

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**LITIGATION UPDATE**

What we’ve been up to in the courts

**Ensuring that BC’s legal profession remains discrimination-free and equally accessible to all**

In August, West Coast LEAF intervened in Trinity Western University v Law Society of BC to argue that the Law Society’s decision to refuse accreditation to the proposed law school at TWU is consistent with the equality protections in the Charter because TWU’s Community Covenant excludes prospective students and staff on the basis of sexual orientation, marital status, and sex. We are awaiting the BC Supreme Court’s decision in the case.

**Advocating for a human rights systemic that provides justice to marginalized people**

West Coast LEAF, in coalition with the Community Legal Assistance Society, was granted leave to intervene in Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users v. Downtown Vancouver Ambassadors Business Improvement Association. We will argue that decision-makers must take a flexible approach to discrimination claims in order for the human rights system to provide justice to marginalized people. The case is set for hearing at the BC Court of Appeal in March 2016.

**Ensuring women have safe healthcare free from stereotypes**

In November, West Coast LEAF was granted leave to intervene in College of Massage Therapists v Scott. We will argue that allegations of sexual misconduct require urgent action in order protect the safety of women accessing healthcare, and any assessment of whether there is a risk to public safety must not be based on discriminatory myths and stereotypes about women. The case is set for hearing at the BC Court of Appeal in January 2016.

**Challenging mandatory minimum sentences for women**

Finally, also in November, West Coast LEAF was granted leave to intervene in Lloyd v R. We intend to argue that mandatory jail terms for drug trafficking in certain situations have a disproportionate impact on women and are unconstitutional because they separate mothers and children and remove women from their communities. The case is set for hearing at the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2016.

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**INVESTING IN WOMEN’S EQUALITY**

West Coast LEAF is grateful for the ongoing support we receive from our donors, our members, and the Law Foundation of BC. We also thank the following project funders.