
Community Legal Information Forums Planning Guide

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LawMatters Community Legal Information Forums Planning Guide

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Background and History

The LawMatters Community Legal Information Forums are an initiative of the LawMatters program of Courthouse Libraries BC, funded by the Law Foundation of BC. The goal of these forums is to create opportunities for library-engagement with other community agencies and organizations who provide legal information services to the public and/or their clients. More information on the LawMatters program may be accessed from www.bclawmatters.ca

Two pilot Community Legal Information Forums were held in 2009: the first was hosted by the Chilliwack branch of Fraser Valley Regional Library on May 27, and the second forum was hosted by Squamish Public Library on October 21. The content of this Planning Guide is based on what we learned from the 2009 forums, and updated as we learn from each forum.

Please feel free to adapt the following materials to suit your library; they are provided as information rather than as prescription.

Goals of the Forums

Note that LawMatters staff have used the **Community-Led Libraries Toolkit** (2007) <http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/> [PDF 148 pp] to guide our planning and set out core principles for library involvement with the community. Also see [Appendix I](#).

i) Provide an opportunity for local legal information providers to meet, update information, discuss local legal information issues, and provide a framework for possible future meetings or consultations.

“A Community-Led Service Planning Model focuses on working collaboratively with the community. Building relationships and partnerships with the community in order to consult with them is the foundation of this model. Understanding the community’s needs as the community expresses and prioritises them is essential to developing and enacting the Community-Led Service Planning model.”

“The Community-Led Service Planning Model emphasises connecting, consulting, and collaborating with community members in order to build relationships and partnerships. This is the first and most critical step toward creating an environment that lets library staff listen to and understand community needs. Building respectful and trusting relationships lets library staff see the library through community eyes.”

- Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, p. 26 - 27

ii) Highlight legal information resources of the local library, identify useful resources which might be added to the library's collection, situate the local library as a safe, reliable place for accessing legal information.

“Community asset mapping focuses on learning about the organised or formal groups in a community. It helps you learn about the services provided in the community and identify potential community partners, providing a launch pad for you to enter the community.”

- Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, p. 53

iii) Share information from the LawMatters program, Clicklaw website (www.clicklaw.bc.ca), Courthouse Libraries BC, and Povnet (www.povnet.org), as may be appropriate.

Preparation for Holding a Forum

The guidelines below describe a forum with LawMatters staff involvement in planning and presenting, but we welcome libraries who would like to host a forum on their own and make use of any of the procedures outlined. LawMatters staff are willing to help with any of the tasks below, as they are able.

i) Local library and LawMatters staff correspond (email/phone/ in-person) to discuss a date, a venue, possible participants and any other issues. If there are key legal information providers in the community, you may want to check with them before finalizing the date.

ii) Local library assembles guest list [see [Potential Participants](#)] and agenda [[Appendix III](#)]. You may want to check if there are any interagency meetings currently in the community, and publicize the forum through them. Invitees may also have ideas of other names to invite.

iii) Library sends out invitation [see [Sending Invitations](#) and [Appendix II](#)] and keeps track of who is coming. Those who are interested but unable to attend could forward brochures or posters for distribution. Send a reminder approximately one week in advance of the meeting date.

iv) Library may wish to put together a brochure or resource guide for participants to take away highlighting legal collection or information [[Appendix IV](#)].

Potential Participants – Starting Points

Identify potential participants who provide local legal information. You may already have a strong network or have worked with these organizations before. However, if you are looking for ideas on representatives to invite, here are a few ideas you could start from:

- Access Pro Bono



LawMatters

At your local public library

- Local Transition Houses
- Local Courthouse Library
- Local Family Justice Centre
- Justice Access Centre
- RCMP Victim Services
- Community Resource Centre
- Youth Advocacy Association
- Service BC
- Service Canada
- Specialized Victim Assistance
- Community Response Network
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Immigration services: MOSAIC, SUCCESS, ISS of BC
- John Howard Society
- Legal Services Society – Legal Information Outreach Worker
- Legal Services Society Local Agent
- Native Courtworkers & Counselling Association of BC
- Native Friendship Centres
- Women’s Centre
- Workers’ Advisors Office
- Child & Youth Mental Health
- RCMP Community Policing
- Local Services for Seniors Group
- PovNet representative

There are many options, and every community is different. This list is not exhaustive but can give you an idea of where to start. Try searching the Clicklaw HelpMap for organizations/services in your area!



www.clicklaw.bc.ca/helpmap

Sending Invitations

Library sends out the forum invitation approximately one month before forum and keeps track of who is attending. Those who are interested but unable to attend could forward brochures or posters for distribution, and the final notes and contact information could be sent to them after the forum.

A Reminder is sent out approximately one week in advance of the meeting date.

You may choose to contact organizations ahead of time to determine who to invite and also to establish a relationship.

You may then wish to issue invitations. Here are a couple of template examples:

Sample Invitation #1:

INVITATION

Forum on public access to legal information resources in [Location]

Date:

Location:

Co-sponsors: [Library] and LawMatters Program of Courthouse Libraries BC

Purpose: An opportunity for community organizations to identify local legal information services and resources, identify collaborative opportunities, and discuss possible gaps or improvements in providing access to information.

Agenda: [Brief Agenda Outline –Provide Format (eg. Roundtable, group discussion) and potential discussion topic

Display: Please bring brochures/sample information resources from organization.

RSVP to:

Sample Invitation #2:

Hello,

[Library] will be hosting a community forum [Date] regarding legal information services and resources in [Location/Community].

[Describe the focus of your forum] -

The idea is to gather a number of community groups together to discuss what each group offers in terms of legal information.

Many groups often make referrals to other organizations that offer legal information. We want to make sure we are making the most effective referrals. We also want to identify gaps in legal

information in [Location/Community] and discuss how, as a community, and we at the library, can help fill those gaps and meet our communities legal information needs.

The LawMatters Project of the Courthouse Libraries is partnering with us on this event.

We'd like to invite you to attend and to share your resources. The event will be [Date/Time/Location] - please let me know if you can make it.

Example invitations are in [Appendix II](#).

Meeting Ideas

Potential topics and discussion points

- How my organization provides legal information
- What are the most pressing legal issues my clients are facing
- What legal information needs are missing in our community
- Possible solutions to gaps in legal information services
- How can the library help

Forum Format

- Rounds
- Discussion
- Training and/or Updates

Library staff chairs the meeting and LawMatters staff can take notes (any notes library staff are able to take will be useful as well!)

Generally a forum can be conducted first in rounds with each participant introducing themselves and their organization. The library representative who chairs the forum can then choose to open the floor to discussion among all participants during the Discussion portion (see potential topics above).

Occasionally, if there are new resources available, or if there is a training opportunity, this may be included at the end. The LawMatters Program representative has, in the past, provided overviews of Cliklaw and news on upcoming legal information training at this point.

The format can be altered depending on the agenda and the group. Here is a general outline of how a forum could be formatted:

- Start with library welcome, housekeeping (washrooms etc), ask if all can stay until end time. Participants who have to leave early could do their rounds first.
- LawMatters can introduce the concept and purpose of the forums.
- Before rounds, ask if any participants attend current interagency meetings.
- Rounds can consist of introductions but also discussion questions on the agenda.
- Library could be the final presenter and describe library services and resources including responding to any issues that come up.
 - For example: if a participant says her organization does victim support and a lot of grief counseling, the library can highlight related legal library resources but also point out that the library has resources for dealing with grief.
- Final discussion can be 'should we continue to meet; how often?'
- Evaluation forms handed out at end of forum.

Day-of Forum Set-up/Checklist

- Library display of legal information titles and brochures
- Table for participants' brochures
- Laptop, internet access, projector and screen
 - For any demonstrations etc.
- Light refreshments
- Tent cards for names (LawMatters can bring these)

Post-Forum Activities

- Evaluation Forms collected – 1 copy to LawMatters Program, 1 copy for hosting library.
- LawMatters compiles first draft of meeting notes and sends to library staff for review and any changes needed. Library staff or LawMatters sends draft notes to participants for review and any changes needed.

Appendices (I-V)

I. Further excerpts from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit

The LawMatters Community Legal Information Forums could be one component of a potentially larger community planning process, as described in the report from the Working Together Project ***Community-Led Libraries Toolkit*** (2007), which may be downloaded from <http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/> [PDF 148 pp]

The focus of the ***Community-Led Libraries Toolkit*** is to present a service model in which socially excluded people actively participate as equals in library decision making and planning. However, much of the discussion can assist us in thinking about facilitating community legal information forums.

As well as the quotes included in section [2. Goals of the forum](#), the excerpts presented below are intended to provide some thoughts to guide our approach:

“Community Assessment & Needs Identification:

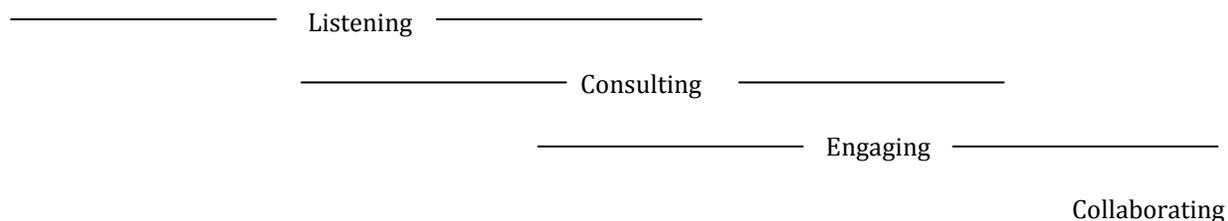
Staff spend time in community developing relationships with community members. Staff hear from community about what is important to them. Staff discuss with community members and hear from the community what their priorities are.”

- Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, Chart, p.30

The chart below is adapted from adapted from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit (Chart p. 16) and illustrates a continuum of user engagement:

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CONTINUUM*

Giving Information	Getting Information	Getting Information	Engaging	Partnering / collaborating
INFORM / EDUCATE	CONSULT	DISCUSS / DEBATE	ENGAGE / PARTICIPATE	PARTNER / COLLABORATE
Library plans services and informs the public of the services.	Library asks the community what it wants or finds important.	Library asks the community what it wants or finds important.	Library involves community in library activities.	Library works with community members to plan services.
Outreach	Surveys	Focus groups	Advisory committees	Collaborative service development
Library Booths	Polls	Public meetings	Expert advisors	Community-Led Service Planning
Marketing	Over-the-desk chats	Seminars	Community panels	
Programming	Feedback forms			
ICT training				
Literacy promotion				
Press & Pamphlets				
Open Houses				
Outreach				



*Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, Chart p. 16

II. Sample Invitations

Sample invitations: #1



INVITATION

Forum on public access to legal information resources in Chilliwack

Date: May 27, 2009, 1 – 4 pm

Location: Chilliwack Public Library

45860 First Avenue, Chilliwack

Co-sponsors: Chilliwack Public Library and LawMatters project of
Courthouse Libraries BC

Purpose; An opportunity for community organizations to identify local legal information services and gaps in access to information for their clientele.

Agenda: Round Table discussion: Legal information your organization provides and what is it not able to provide (gaps in resources and/or misperceptions about what your organization can do)

Group discussion: what would improve access to legal information in Chilliwack?

Display: Please bring brochures, sample information resources of your organization.

RSVP to:

Sample invitation #2:



>> Hello,

The Squamish Library will be hosting a community forum the morning of October 21st regarding legal information services in Squamish. The idea is to gather a number of community groups together to discuss what each group offers its clients in terms of legal information. Many groups often point people towards other organizations that offer legal information - the trick is knowing who offers what. We also want to identify gaps in legal information in Squamish and discuss how can we as a community, and we at the library, can help fill those gaps.

The LawMatters Project of the Courthouse Libraries is partnering with us on this event and has previously hosted a similar event in Chilliwack (<http://bclawmatters.blogspot.com/2009/06/first-lawmatters-community-forum-on.html>).

We'd like to invite you to attend and to share your resources. The event will be from 9am-12pm on October 21st at the Squamish Public Library - please let me know if you can make it.

Thanks!

Marie <<

III. Sample Agendas

Sample Agenda #1



Forum on public access to legal information resources in Chilliwack

May 27, 2009, 1 – 4 pm

Chilliwack Public Library

Agenda

- (1) Welcome and introductions
- (2) LawMatters Community Forums description
- (3) Go-round: each representative to describe briefly [3 or 5 min] the legal information your organization provides and perhaps is not able to provide (gaps in resources and/or misperceptions about what your organization does)

Break

- (4) Group discussion: what legal information service is missing in the Chilliwack area; what would improve the public's access to legal information in your area?
- (5) Brief demonstration of new website Clicklaw and future Help Map
- (6) Wrap up and evaluation forms, follow up

Sample agenda #2/reminder email:

>> Hi all,

Thank you so much to those of you who have already rsvp'd this event. For those who haven't and are planning on attending, please let me know as we'd like to have a good idea about the numbers to expect that day

So far, we are expecting approximately 15 attendees from a variety of community groups in Squamish. These include Helping Hands, Community Futures, Seniors Connections, Povnet, RCMP, Squamish Council, BC Government Agent, Howe Sounds Women's Centre, Quest University, Child & Youth Mental Health, Sea-to-Sky Community Services...

The forum will start with a round-table, with each participant briefly describing what their organization does, what types of legal information and referrals it provides, and whether they find there are gaps in legal services in Squamish.

The hope is that by sharing this information, we will all learn more about what already exists in our community and where we as a community perhaps need to work in order to fill gaps in knowledge.

Following the round table, we expect there will be a group discussion about how Squamish can improve access to legal services and how we can follow up on that.

Finally, there will be two quick presentations: one from Courthouse Libraries BC about the LawMatters project and website ClickLaw (<http://clicklaw.bc.ca>); and one from the Legal Services Society and services they provide for Squamish residents.

We will have a resource table available and encourage you to bring materials about your organization to display and/or hand out.

Looking forward to seeing you all next week.

Thanks again,

Marie <<

IV. Sample Library Brochure: Squamish Public Library October 2009

Clicklaw

Clicklaw is a website aimed at enhancing access to justice in British Columbia.

It features legal information and education, but it is not a site of laws. Instead, Clicklaw features legal information and education designed for the public from 24 contributor organizations, as well as selected others.

www.clicklaw.bc.ca
Operated by:



www.courthouselibrary.ca

Other Online Legal Resources at the Library

We also have subscriptions to thousands of online magazines, newspapers that may have relevant legal information for you.

- MasterFILE Premier
- Business Source Premier
- BC Stats
- BC Codes

All you need is a library card number to access these resources.

Go to www.squamish.bclibrary.ca and click on "Find Articles".

Legal Information at the Squamish Public Library






Chat live online with our expert staff and find answers to your questions.

www.askaway.org

Squamish Public Library
37907 2nd Avenue
PO Box 1039
Squamish, BC V8B 0A7

Phone: 604-892-3110
E-mail: libcirc@squamish.ca
<http://squamish.bclibrary.ca>

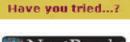
View an online list of legal materials at the Library:
www.squamish.bclibrary.ca

Click here

Then here

Welcome to the Squamish Public Library

Find the Library on  and 

Quick Links	Have you tried...?	Popular
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Catalogue • My Account • Renewals • New Books • Find Books • Bus Schedule 	<p> Sign Up for NextReads</p> <p>RESEARCH TOOLS: Start Your Research Here!</p> <p></p>	<p></p> <p>Calendar of Events</p> <p></p>

Some of the titles we have include:

- Tenant Survival Guide
- Grandparents raising grandchildren: a legal guide
- Aboriginal people and the law in BC
- Introduction to contracts
- How to appeal your conviction
- Surviving your divorce: a guide to Canadian family law
- Your guide to Canadian law
- Sexual harassment: a guide for understanding and prevention
- Your welfare rights: a user's guide to BC benefits
- Canadian legal guide for small business
- Print & Online Statutes & Regulations
- BC Codes
- Legal Info & Advice Toll Free Phone Numbers in BC
- Parents' rights, kids' rights
- Sexual abuse information series

Squamish Public Library			
Search	My Account	Databases	Reading Lists
New Arrivals and Reading Lists Archived Arrival Lists			
New Arrivals	Adult Reading Lists	Young People Reading Lists	Children's B
<p>New Adult Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Fiction Adult Non Fiction Large Print Reference Movies Adult Audiobooks Adult Music French Books Graphic Novel 	<p>Popular Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Squamish Library Book Club (Fiction) Oprah's Book Club Ottier Prize List <p>Adult Non Fiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Squamish Library Book Club (Non-Fiction) Dealing with Bereavement Children and Youth Mental Health Art Books for Teachers and Students Legal Information 	<p>Young People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People Book Club Stellar Book Award Nominees 	<p>Children's B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Cedar B Art Books fo Literacy kits

V. Sample Forum Notes

Example #1:

Chilliwack Forum on public access to legal information resources held May 27, 2009

Attendance:

- Anouk Crawford, Ann Davis Transition Society
- Al Ricard, Chilliwack Family Justice Centre
- Debbie Denault, Chilliwack Learning Communities Society
- Darlene Wahlstrom, Chilliwack RCMP Victim Services
- Christine Newhook, Community Response Network
- Julie Pariseau, Immigrant Services Program of Chilliwack Community Services
- Baljinder Gill, Legal Services Society
- Michelle Lavergne, Native Courtworkers & Counselling Association of BC
- Michaela Gasparini, Xolhemet Transition House Society
- Jody Burrell, Chilliwack Specialized Victim Assistance
- Natalie Fouquette, Chilliwack Branch of Fraser Valley Regional Library
- Jennifer Douglas, Chilliwack Branch of Fraser Valley Regional Library
- Drew Jackson, Courthouse Libraries BC Outreach and Clicklaw
- Nancy Hannum, LawMatters Project
- Janet Freeman, LawMatters Project

Regrets:

- Kim McLandress, Chilliwack Restorative Action And Youth Advocacy Assoc.
- Maria Gray, Elizabeth Fry Society
- Connie Vince, John Howard Society
- Irene D Adams, Sto:lo Nation Social Development
- Ellen Boyes, Legal Advocacy Program of Chilliwack Community Services
- Marian Moore, Chilliwack Law Courts

Handouts [available from Janet jfreeman@courthouselibrary.ca]:

- Forum Invited Attendee list of contact information
- BC Toll-Free Numbers for Legal Advice and Information
- Reading List of Legal Information, and Multilingual Legal Information Titles
- Legal Advocacy Program of Chilliwack Community Services poster
- Services from John Howard Society of the Fraser Valley
- New legal information website: Clicklaw

Other handouts available from attending organizations

Notes from participant presentations:

Chilliwack Public Library

- People are often desperate when they come to the library, and they want advice, even from library staff
- Have print and electronic resources and help people as much as we can.
- Libraries are the only information resource that is open to the public evening and weekend hours



- No longer keep print statutes, but have subscription to QP LegalEze database of BC statutes and regulations
- BC Laws site [www.bclaws.ca] is more user friendly than QP LegalEze, but does not have as much search capability
- Have a new brochure on social services: "What do you Need in Chilliwack?"
- No longer can give computer classes – these were based on grant funds

Limitations on public computer access

- Can't save to flash drive or CD
- Can't do both web and word on same computer
- Can't do email attachments
- Computers do not have audio capability
- Users need a library card, although guest passes are available for limited times

Chilliwack Family Justice Centre

- Provide information for people about family court, particularly getting orders for child custody, guardianship, access or support.
- Free mediation available, as well as parenting after separation classes

RCMP Victim Assistance

- Mostly provide emotional support
- Give a package of information to victims to read
- Noted that there are 22 new officers in this region, and they often need help to become familiar with community group services

Chilliwack Specialized Victim Assistance

- Provide services to victims of crime; including men, women and children
- Most common crimes are family violence and sexual assault
- Do provide court orientation and accompaniment
- Don't specialize in family law – refer people to Ann Davis Transition House or others

Ann Davis Transition House

- Legal advocate helps with legal information and advocacy, not legal advice
- Advocate available on Wednesday only
- Works with women and men (generally women)
- Do have counselors for men, services are not just for battered women
- Also help with disability claims and child tax benefits
- Much busier since legal aid cuts

Native Courtworkers & Counselling Association

- Many clients have cognitive issues and fear of officials
- Work with Aboriginal people (and others) in criminal court, and help them understand the process. Do a quick assessment of cognitive abilities and determine eligibility for Legal Aid
- Stress the importance of making court appearances
- Help people in jail apply for Legal Aid and determine potential for diversion.
- Informally, also helps with residential tenancy issues, residential school settlements, Aboriginal social services and other poverty law issues
- Office hours on Fridays for homeless people

- In Chilliwack Tuesdays, Wed and Friday, Abbotsford Monday and Thursday.

Chilliwack Learning Community Society

- Use a community development approach to promote literacy for groups and individuals
- Train literacy workers to be tutors with learners
- People attend to learn about community resources and learn essential work skills
- People have legal challenges
- A literacy task group helps people and organizations learn how to use plain language and to do a plain language audit of their materials, and offers training in plain language skills.

Legal Services Society

- A LSS legal information outreach worker is based in Surrey, and covers Langley to Chilliwack.
- Provides legal information, gives presentations to community groups, and assists with Family Duty Counsel in Surrey
- 65% of clientele in Surrey is Punjabi
- Helps people access legal services and find information through the web and publications
- Specifically, helps people file in small claims court and family court
- Changes in legal aid coverage recently, see LSS website for updates eg dispute resolution is no longer covered
- People can call the central legal aid number, or visit the LSS intake office in Chilliwack

Xolhemet Transition House

- Services for women and children in abusive situations
- Also work with homeless people
- Work with victim assistance and special victim assistance people
- Accompany clients to court
- Connect clients with legal aid; will drive clients to legal aid in Surrey and Abbotsford
- Find pro bono a bit difficult
- don't give legal advice

Courthouse Library BC

- Services include toll-free and email reference from the Vancouver library, and on-line research help materials in different legal topics as well as case law and legislative research
- New Westminster branch includes in-person reference service, but small branches such as Chilliwack do not have reference help, and hours are limited.

Discussion notes

Discussion on Chilliwack Courthouse Library Access

- Suggested that there be a sign in the window showing hours open, 1-800 number, and services available when open, and possibly post a list of referral sources such as pro bono
- Interest in workshop on Law Source training sessions, and access to litigator data base
- Courthouse Library is very busy, since the courthouse itself is busy
- Advocates would like access to the library after hours
- People doing more on their own now and CLBC is 'it' for legal research
- CLBC website should show what services are available in the small branches

Other Discussion:

- Courthouses themselves could be more user friendly: signage is very poor, and sometimes court staff [eg sheriffs] don't know about services in the building, particularly community group services.
- This forum is a good opportunity to increase our community information; we want to be able to give good referrals
- Reminder that public library has many resources to help people with legal information as well as other topics such as grief and loss, employment, parenting, citizenship and housing
- Literacy issues are a common thread to all our issues; the concept of doing a quick literacy assessment is essential for library staff, but also for other groups
- Useful to have police officers aware of community diversion programs.
- Government, police and legal aid services need to be more aware of mental health issues of clients, as well as cognitive abilities
- Chilliwack does not have enough family lawyers
- Legal version of Enquiry BC is needed
- Confusion regarding differences between pro bono services and lawyer referral service.

Presentation of new website of legal information from Courthouse Libraries BC: www.clicklaw.bc.ca

This site includes plain language legal information on problem solving as well as sections on learn and teach, and reform and research the law. A new feature to be added in a few months is a Help map which will list all legal advice and information services in the province.

Follow up

- Suggested to hold a second session of this forum group in a few months, focused on how to use the Clicklaw site (including proto-type map of Chilliwack services)
- CLBC will investigate how to include advocates in legal data bases training sessions
- Community groups will continue to share information, for example, concerning diversion options
- LawMatters will produce a fact sheet explaining the differences in legal advice services. [Dial a Law has a script online called *Low Cost and Free Legal Services* at http://www.cba.org/BC/public_media/lawyers/430.aspx which is lengthy but thorough]

Example #2:

Squamish Forum on Public Access to Legal Information Resources

held October 21, 2009 at Squamish Public Library

Attendance:

- Melinda Peters , Squamish Helping Hands
- Kevin Bracewell, RCMP NCO
- Kathryn Hennigar, RCMP Community Policing
- Victoria Rigdon and Carolyn Green, Squamish Chamber of Commerce
- Candace Dunkley, Service BC
- Wendy Faris, Howe Sound Women's Centre
- Karen Clarke, The Squamish Creative Connections Group for Seniors
- Jan Oberson, Sea-to-Sky Services
- Doug Race, Squamish Council and retired lawyer
- Theresa Nystrom, Quest University Student Services
- Penny Goldsmith, PovNet
- Sylvia Tobler, Legal Services Society
- Janet Freeman and Nancy Hannum, Courthouse Libraries BC, LawMatters and Clicklaw projects
- Marie Palmer, Squamish Public Library

Regrets:

- Paul Lalli, Squamish Council
- Kathy Daniels, Sea to Sky Community Services
- Rob Smith, Child & Youth Mental Health
- Melanie Koenderman, Quest University
- Stephanie Nand, Community Futures
- Squamish Nation representative
- Sea to Sky Restorative Justice Society
- Native Courtworkers & Counselling Association of BC

Handouts [available from Janet jfreeman@courthouselibrary.ca]:

- BC Toll-Free Numbers for Legal Advice and Information
- Legal Information Reading Guides, and Multilingual Legal Information Titles
- New legal information website: Clicklaw

Other handouts available from attending organizations:

- Legal Information at the Squamish Public Library

Notes from participant presentations:

Squamish Helping Hands

Is a new service; a shelter with two caseworkers, currently open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Clients are facing housing, criminal and homelessness issues.

RCMP Community Policing



LawMatters

At your local public library

- Operates with volunteers and is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 – 4:30.
- Provides information on pardons, peace bonds, restraining-orders, home security, business crime prevention, auto crime prevention, personal safety, fraud information, and bicycle safety.
- They do not provide legal advice.

RCMP

Police cannot give legal advice; their role is to investigate criminal matters. Their knowledge of civil and family law is limited and they make referrals for legal help. They make use of the victim services database to refer victims.

Squamish Chamber of Commerce

Receive questions mostly from Chamber members and other service agencies regarding business law, as well as debt and mortgages. They refer the questions back to their lawyer members, and a new service to members will offer discounted legal advice in business law.

Service BC [local BC government agent]

- Provide information on all BC government services, including court services.
- Can provide court contact information, and access to the courts websites and applications from the public access terminals. Staff can also help a person get in the right direction when dealing with an issue related to government.
- The office acts as a contact for agencies such as Legal Services Society [legal aid] and Residential Tenancy Office, and can forward applications and filings. Residential Tenancy hearings are done by long distance, but they do not have space for phone hearings at the Squamish office.
- They provide provincial government phone and fax service as well as community access computer terminals. The office cannot take court fine payments.
- Service BC is a Ministry of Housing and Social Development [income assistance/welfare] conduit office; therefore the application process is done through SBC although clients are dealing with the North Vancouver office of MHSD by telephone and fax.
- A Service Canada office for federal information will be opening in Squamish soon, and will forward passport applications.

Howe Sound Women's Centre

- The Centre is staffed with advocates who can meet with and listen to women's concerns, including abuse, custody and access, welfare, disability and human rights issues.
- They offer publications and information, assistance with forms as well as transition house services, a children's program and First Nations and multicultural outreach.
- They do not have adequate staff to provide court accompaniment.
- An Access Justice pro bono legal clinic is available for women each week (Thursdays for 2 hours). The clinic provides free legal advice, but not free representation in court. Women can decide to hire one of the clinic lawyers to represent them in court if they want. Note that although the clinic is free, women must book appointments.
- There is a Criminal Lawyer available for clients who fit the criteria (client must call HSWC to see if they fit the criteria).

Squamish Community Health

- Squamish Seniors Creative Connections Group hosts workshops occasionally on legal issues for seniors: a talk on Adult Guardianship is scheduled for January, and a talk on Wills and Estates is scheduled for March.



- The Squamish Community Health Unit provides a Seniors One Stop Information Line and brochure rack. There is a range of resources for seniors here including some legal information. The Seniors One Stop phone number is 604-892-2293.

Sea-to-Sky Community Services

- Runs family-based programs, including counseling for women who have experienced violence, a homelessness outreach worker, alcohol and drug programs, employment programs, disability services and a sexual abuse intervention program for children. Their homeless outreach program generally works with people not using the Helping Hands Shelter
- Accepts all income levels, provides help with forms and occasional court accompaniment for child protection cases.

Squamish Council member and former practicing lawyer

The Squamish District does not give legal advice to individuals.

- Worked for a firm that offered pro bono service including clinics re wills/estates planning, buying a house, and pro bono services mostly to non-profit societies, and specialized in business and estate issues.
- Mentioned that Lawyer Referral Service [see LawMatters list of toll-free phone numbers] offers 30 minute consultations with a local lawyer for \$25 – sometimes legal questions can be cleared up in the consultation.

Quest University Student Services

New position; helps international students connect to local resources, and understanding how Canadian law is different.

PovNet

- PovNet is an online community of anti-poverty advocacy organizations that maintains a website of legal issues and resources of interest to people living in poverty.
- The website contains a “Find an Advocate” feature which lists local advocacy organizations.
- PovNet also offers a series of email lists for advocates and community workers on issues such as welfare, housing/ homeless, debt, mental health, First Nations/Aboriginal and workers’ rights.

Squamish Public Library

- Similar to other community resources, library staff cannot give legal advice, but try to help a patron formulate a legal question in order to point to useful resources.
- Patrons often use the library as a first stop or testing ground for working out their questions; lots of homeless people use the library.
- Important to have community brochures and information so that staff can pass the information on to library patrons; our biggest challenge is where to send people for help.
- Library has both reference [use at the library] and circulating legal titles in plain language
- Reference titles include online databases of BC statutes and regulations and BC Codes.
- Eight public access terminals available for online searching, including audio capability, and can be used for up to one hour a day.
- Library is also part of provincial library AskAway on-line information services virtual reference..
- Library website: from home page, go to Recommended websites – hot topics – legal information – legal reference checklist, which includes top six websites and family law / divorce resources

Courthouse Libraries BC

- Services include toll-free and email reference from the Vancouver library, and on-line research help materials in different legal topics as well as case law and legislative research. New website coming in November.
- Vancouver library includes in-person reference service for the public, but small branches such as North Vancouver do not have reference help, and hours are limited, although a computer access terminal is available.
- Operates both the LawMatters and the Clicklaw website projects.

Lawmatters at your local public library project

Provides grants to public libraries to enhance their legal information collections, as well as training and legal reference support to library staff. Reading guides of legal information by subject heading, as well as multilingual titles, are available for the public.

Clicklaw website project

Clicklaw provides online legal information in three categories: Solve Problems [law in daily life], Learn & Teach, and Reform & Research. Resources from BC publishers are highlighted currently, but more resources will be added soon, along with a Help Map feature using Google maps.

Legal Services Society [please note: LSS recently announced that they will be cutting some programs, such as LawLine as of April 1, 2010. For a recent update, see their newsletter at http://www.lss.bc.ca/elan/Oct_Nov_09/ELAN.htm]

- Provides legal aid [legal advice and legal information] services.
- Website details different services such as legal representation, criminal and family duty counsel, LawLine, Legal Information Outreach Workers, and publications.
- Family Law in BC website contains step-by-step guides to court procedures, including forms and definitions of legal terms..
- LawLink website organizes plain language legal information resources, primarily for low income people [this site will be replaced by Clicklaw eventually].

Discussion of legal information resources gaps

- There is a need for a local referral list of legal resources. Marie offered the library as a central resource for collecting this information and including it on their website.
- There used to be regular meetings of Squamish community groups, and it would be useful to have them again
- Lack of police victim assistance service, but a coordinator has been hired, and the service should be available in January 2010..
- More services for seniors needed, such as tax forms help, elder abuse awareness [Public Guardian and Trustee office helps adults who require assistance with decision-making - toll free number is 1-800-663-7867] and legal advice.
- Lack of services for South Asian population [estimated to be 10%]
- Need to identify services for First Nations (More services needed for First Nations populations.)
- Lack of local court impacts ability of people to file their claims and represent themselves.
- Difficult eligibility requirements for legal aid, as well as lack of local legal aid lawyers also make it difficult for people to appear in court.



LawMatters

At your local public library

- Growing need for services for homeless people, as this population grows. Sylvia mentioned that TRAC {Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre] has a page with many links to resources on homelessness, see www.tenants.bc.ca – Housing Issues.

Action Items

- Marie will coordinate development of a centralized list of local resources, and canvass participants regarding future meetings of community groups.

VI. Evaluation Form

Evaluation Form

Forum on public access to legal information resources in [Location/Community]

[Date], [Location]

1. What aspect(s) of the forum did you find most useful?
2. How confident did you feel referring to legal information providers *before* this forum? (Circle response)

Not confident ←————→ *Very confident*
1 2 3 4 5

3. How confident do you feel referring to legal information providers now (at the end of the forum)?

Not confident ←————→ *Very confident*
1 2 3 4 5

4. How could this forum format be improved or strengthened?
5. Any suggestions on specific actions community groups could do in [location/community] to improve public access to legal resources?
6. Any other comments you'd like to make?

Thank you for your participation!