



Access to Legal Knowledge: *Update*

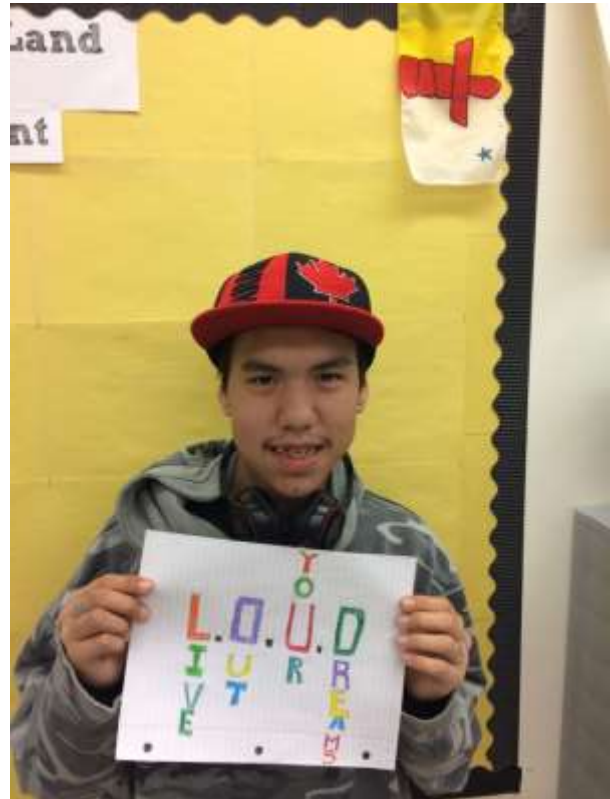
In 2016-17...

Hall Beach – Encouraging youth to become community change makers

From November 23-25, the Law Society of Nunavut ran a Change Maker Program with students ranging from elementary, junior high and high school level.

The program's objective was to teach students about advocacy and encourage them to take an active role in shaping their communities. By learning about different forms of advocacy through case studies, including Shannen's Dream, students realized that anyone can do advocacy work, even youth.

The program also gave students the opportunity to apply their newfound advocacy knowledge through a letter writing session. Students wrote to different officials, including their own mayor and the Prime Minister, about issues they identified as important concerns in Hall Beach. The letters were mailed the following week. This empowering activity gave students a firsthand experience in becoming engaged citizen and having their voices heard through advocacy work, which is a big part of access to justice work.



We hope the students will continue to work on whatever issues matter the most to them.



(Top) A student showcasing his artwork, which was later finalized and submitted to the We Matter campaign's website

(Left) Students focused on writing advocacy letters to different officials



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Rankin Inlet September 2016 – Community members interested in Wills & Estates

On September 24, Robert Bailey attended the Kivalliq Legal Services Annual General Meeting and community barbeque in Rankin Inlet, and provided a Wills & Estate workshop to interested community members. According to Susan Switch, the Clinic Director at Kivalliq Legal Services, the event was a “real success” as many people attended and the Wills & Estates workshop directly responded to a popular legal topic in the community.

The CBA Nunavut branch, with the support of The Law Society, has previously conducted Wills & Estates info sessions in Iqaluit, including at Northmart and the Elders’ Qammaq, and hopes to continue this work in other communities.



Robert Bailey giving a Wills & Estates workshop during the Kivalliq Legal Services Annual General Meeting and community barbeque in Rankin Inlet



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Ottawa – Empowering youth through a better understanding of their legal rights

On July 26, in the context of the Northern Youth Abroad Next Program, Access to Justice Committee Co-Chair Gloria Song, conducted a workshop entitled, “What are my Rights? Law Workshop for Youth.”

During this workshop, 16 youth from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories engaged in interactive discussions focused on three important legal subjects: employment rights, housing rights, and consent for sexual activity. The youth also received the Canadian Bar Association’s Legal Health Check for Youth handout and information on how to contact the Law Societies and Legal Aid offices in the North.

The workshop was an opportunity for youth to build on their existing legal knowledge to further explore their rights and identify areas where they may need more information. As Gloria observed, the youth were eager to engage and asked many questions on issues such as bullying, gossiping, nonsexual verbal harassment, and whether airlines are allowed to search your luggage.



Following this successful event, the LSN will be looking into continuing its participation in the Northern Youth Abroad in the following years. By reaching out to LSN members who reside in the Ottawa region

(Left) Gloria Song conducted the legal workshop rights workshop at Algonquin College on March 21, 2016



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Kugluktuk

On May 9 and 10, Pete McCain and Sara Siebert, two lawyers from the Kitikmeot Law Centre, went to the Kugluktuk high school to talk to Grade 9-11 students about careers in the justice sectors, employment rights, criminal law and court processes. At the end of their second in-class session, students attended court and learnt directly from the court party about the different roles in the justice system, including the court reporter, court clerk, defense counsel, crown counsel and the judge.

Students found the court visit very interesting since it made their learning about legal concepts and processes more concrete. For the principal of high school, Haydn George, this experience was also a reminder that court and the people in the justice sector can be accessible to everyone. He would therefore like to continue organizing court visits with students throughout the year.

During the week, the Law Society also held a community feast and open house. This well attended event was an opportunity for community members to obtain diverse legal information and ask questions to family law, criminal law and employment law lawyers. As Pete McCain mentioned, this type of event is a great way to connect with the community since people are generally more comfortable to talk with lawyers in informal settings.

As the event in Kugluktuk demonstrates, through its A2J events, the LSN not only hopes to deliver interesting activities with beneficial learning points. It also hopes to encourage regular interaction between members of the justice sector and members of the community, which is the starting point for developing more understanding and better relationships.



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Rankin Inlet April, 2016 – Exposing youth to the nuances of community justice and the traditional court system



(Left to Right) Bryn Bamber from OJEN, Jessie Baxter Community Justice specialist, students from Alaittug High School, and Jonathan Park, a member of the private bar in Nunavut

During the court circuit week of April 18, a team of Access to Justice volunteers from the public and private sector as well as from community justice and educational sector, held an Open House event and in-class sessions at the Alaittug High School.

The Open House was held on April 21 at the Community Hall and invited community members to drop by and talk with various representatives of the justice system. Tables were set up with lawyers and various legal information materials, including Wills & Estates, employment law, home ownership, and human rights.

These informal meetings and discussion encouraged community members to seek out legal information based on their needs. It also allowed for positive associations with different members of the justice system.

On April 19 Jonathan Park, a member of the private bar in Nunavut, and Jessie Baxter, Community Justice Specialist for the Kivalliq region, conducted two in-class sessions with Grade 10-12 students. These sessions explored both traditional and community justice in terms of sentencing and diversion.

Using scenarios as points of discussion, students reflected on the applicability of the law and the real life consequences of breaking the law. In addition, by engaging in role play, students gained an understanding of what court may entail at a personal level for different people involved, including the victim, the accused, family members, and the community as a whole.

Throughout the sessions, students were exposed to the complexities and nuances of the law, thus giving them a better appreciation for issues such as sentencing and diversion. For example, by learning that a judge considers a variety of information before deciding on a sentence, such as victim impact statements and Gladue factors, the session dispelled the myth that sentencing in court is arbitrary. Students also learnt that community justice is not necessarily the “easy way out”. That in fact, it can be quite difficult because through community justice, an accused must take full accountability for his or her actions.

The in-class session connected well to the students’ study of “To Kill a Mockingbird” as it encouraged students to think about how the law codifies morals and ethics. Rather than seeing the law as a set of abstract written rules, the workshop encouraged students to see the law as a framework to decide the consequences for doing something that is not accepted by a community or society at large.



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Iqaluit – Connecting student to members of the justice sector and increasing their knowledge on criminal law issues

On April 15, Jenna Montgomery from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC), Lisa Tootoo from Community Justice and Bryn Bamber from the Ontario Justice Education Network OJEN, went to Nanuksuk High School to discuss legal issues related to criminal law with Grade 10 and 11 students.

This activity took place during the students' law class and provided them with a basic introduction to the criminal law. Using a participative approach based on realistic scenarios, students explored various truths and myths about the criminal justice system. Practical topics were addressed such as what happens when someone is arrested, what is bail court, what are the consequences of not showing up to court, and whether someone's criminal records can be sealed.

Beyond sharpening their critical thinking skills in small groups and gaining an increased understanding of criminal law, students also had the opportunity to engage with representatives of the justice sector in a positive and educational approach. For some students, this was the first time they had ever met a lawyer. These interactions can therefore change students' impressions of lawyers and of the justice sector more broadly, thus bridging the gap between the law and community.

The LSN would like to further develop such interactive Access to Justice activities with students of all levels in Iqaluit.



Arviat – Learning about alcohol and the law

On April 9, Access to Justice Committee member Priscilla Ferrazzi conducted a workshop for young adults on alcohol and the law at the Arviat Wellness Centre. According to Priscilla, “[t]he event helped the community learn about the law as it relates to alcohol and other related legal issues. The participants were very interested in learning and were active in their participation. The group dynamic was positive and inclusive.”

Using scenario-based discussions, the workshop reviewed the basics of the legislation on alcohol and the penalties for alcohol related offences. Participants also learnt how laws related to alcohol were developed over the years in Arviat and how the laws, such as prohibition, was meant to address some of the community’s concerns about alcohol. Thinking about the bigger picture of the legal framework is important to put the laws in context and illustrate their legislative purpose.

As one participant mentioned, this workshop offered a “[v]ery useful introduction to some of the legal issues youth, community and students deal with and it [gave] a good starting point to go for more info.”



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Pond Inlet – Unforeseen weather leads to event cancellation

Due to unforeseen weather conditions, the Access to Justice event in Pond Inlet scheduled for March 21, was cancelled. The Law Society of Nunavut (LSN) was planning on doing in-class sessions in the Grade 10 and 11 social studies classes.

The Law Society of Nunavut (LSN) greatly appreciates all the efforts made towards developing and planning the event. We would like to give a special thank you to Sarah Bailey and Ivan Nault from Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC), and Robert Wells the principal at Nasivvik High School.

We hope to reschedule another Access to Justice event in Pond Inlet in 2017.



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Arctic Bay

Law Society of Nunavut organized two Access to Justice events.

On the evening of January 16, 2017, a community event was held at the Uqutaq Community Centre. It brought together approximately 30 participants, including Elders, members of the court party, including Justice Hennessy, as well as defense and crown lawyers. This session provided an opportunity for the community to discuss their concerns and needs related to the justice system.



*Elder and Justice Hennessy
Courtroom 1 & 2*

A central theme of the discussion revolved around differences between the contemporary justice system and the traditional Inuit way of dealing with conflict. Some participants raised the need for counselling to address issues of anxiety and anger. Community members also raised their concerns about the challenges offenders face when they come out of jail, such as difficulties in finding employment. Beyond reflecting on the issues at hand, the discussion also allowed participants to gain a better understanding of existing resources in the community and key people in the justice system to contact for further information and support.

On January 18, facilitators attended the High School to discuss how court can be a difficult process that brings about stress, feelings of anxiety, and even thoughts of suicide. The session was also an opportunity for students to learn more generally about the court system.



Elders were invited to broach this sensitive yet important topic through an informal discussion. During the session, Elders spoke about their personal experiences and situations they have encountered with others to provide guidance on how to deal with negative feelings that arise due interactions with the justice system. Students were engaged and asked various questions, including difficult questions that relate to suicide.

Both events in Arctic Bay demonstrated that creating an open dialogue and fostering relationships are important components of access to justice. Encouraging discussions between members of the community and members of the justice system can promote a holistic understanding of access to justice from multiple viewpoints, which is critical to finding creative and adaptive solutions.

*(Top) Youth at the community meeting with Justice Hennessy
(Consent signed by Cadet Supervisor)*



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More of Arctic Bay



(Left) Cadet; (Right) Lisa Tootoo, Community Justice Specialist

Elder, Courtroom 3



(Left) Elder Qappiq, 96 years old; (Right) her daughter





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Resolute Bay

On the evening of January 18, the Law Society of Nunavut held a Victims' Rights Community event in the Qarmartalik School Gym. This event was facilitated by Community Justice Outreach Worker, Ameela Aqiatasuk, and provided for an intimate and comfortable setting where participants learnt more about the rights of victims and court processes.

The session successfully responded to the needs of participants, which included obtaining answers on various questions related to victims' rights. Many questions related to court processes such as being a witness to a trial. Participants also discussed the importance of talking about an incident they witnessed or faced, for the sake of taking care of their own mental well-being. Importantly, a mental health nurse was on site and provided participants with more information about mental health and available resources in the community.

For many participants, this was the first time they ever spoke about victims' rights. The Law Society of Nunavut hopes to organize additional sessions on victims' rights in Resolute Bay and throughout Nunavut.

Please note that the Law Society of Nunavut had planned for additional events to take place earlier on January 18, but due to unexpected delays in transport, the court party was unable to facilitate these programmed events.