

Public Legal Education and
Information Service of New Brunswick

2016
2017

ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION STATEMENT

Helping the Public Know the Law!

PLEIS-NB is a non-profit organization and a registered charity. Our mandate is to develop bilingual educational products and services about the law for the general public in order to promote access to the legal system. Our goal is to assist the public in identifying and understanding their legal rights and responsibilities, and attaining self-help skills where appropriate, to improve their ability to deal with legal issues.

To meet the diverse information needs of people living in New Brunswick, PLEIS-NB has adopted the following objectives:

- (i) To respond to individual and community requests for information about the law, the legal system, sources of legal assistance and law reform;
- (ii) To increase the availability of easily understood general information about the law, as well as law-related information on specific topics;
- (iii) To promote a greater understanding of how the law affects everyday activities and to facilitate self-help skills; and,
- (iv) To act as a clearinghouse for information about the law by promoting awareness of and access to legal resources in the community, while encouraging the coordination of public legal education initiatives.



**Public Legal Education
and Information Service
of New Brunswick**

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Web sites www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca

www.familylawnb.ca

www.youthjusticenb.ca

www.thehealingjourney.ca

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

This past fiscal year was somewhat challenging because of the significant turnover in staff. Most affected by this situation was our Family Law Information Line. Fortunately, our partnership with the University of New Brunswick Law School's new experiential learning course enabled us to train two senior year students to assist us. This proved to be an excellent and beneficial experience for PLEIS-NB and the participating students who had the opportunity to engage with individuals experiencing real life family law issues.

Overall, we had another exceptional year. We continued offering our core activities, successfully delivered 29 family law workshops across the province, enhanced our websites, and proactively promoted and disseminated our publications.

We also undertook several new projects. In one case, we entered into a five year partnership with Victim Services, Department of Justice and Public Safety to create educational safety planning resources for women experiencing intimate partner violence. The highlight was a unique new self-help tool for women living in an abusive relationship to assess their personal risk and take steps to mitigate their risk. We also produced four traditional safety planning factsheets and undertook two days of training for provincial Victim Services staff to help them effectively use the package of resources. Over the next four years we will review and update all victim services publications, create new ones for children, as well as victims of abuse living on reserves and evaluate the usefulness of the new plans.

With project funding from Justice Canada, we were able to create a handbook on family law issues for immigrants, as well as a Spanish family law booklet.

The annual report offers the perfect opportunity to thank the dedicated staff at PLEIS-NB, our Board Members, the agencies we partner with, as well as the many lawyers who play an instrumental role in helping us to educate the public about the law. I would certainly be remiss if did not express our appreciation to Justice Canada, the New Brunswick Law Foundation and the Office of the Attorney General of New Brunswick who have been providing us with core funding and in-kind support for the past twenty-eight years.

We look forward to exciting new opportunities for promoting access to justice in the year ahead.



Deborah Doherty, Ph.D.
Executive Director

PEOPLE

Board of Directors 2016-2017

We were pleased to welcome a new board member, Martha McClellan, who will be representing the University of New Brunswick Law School. We wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution of our vice-president, Kim Poffenroth, who ended her term with us in March 2017.

Clea Ward (President)

McInnes Cooper

Robert LeBlanc

Faculté de droit, Université de Moncton

Kim Poffenroth (Vice-president),

Chief Legislative Counsel, Legislative Services,
Office of the Attorney General

Martha McClellan

Director of Career Development and External
Relationships, Faculty of Law, University of New
Brunswick

Suzanne Bonnell-Burley

Director, Consumer Affairs, Financial and
Consumer Services Commission

Jason Dempsey

Phillips Dempsey, Moncton

Staff 2016-2017

We bid farewell during the year to Chris MacKay, Jennifer Weston, Ashley Bard and Tammy Pitre. Best wishes to all of them.

Current or New Staff

Dr. Deborah Doherty, Executive Director
Judy Sembinelli, Bookkeeper/Family Law
Workshop Coordinator
Emma Thompson, Administrative Assistant/
FTSOTC

Law Students

Juliette Cormier, UNB Legal Researcher
Spencer Flynn, Office Assistant



Judy Sembinelli



Spencer Flynn

Juliette Cormier

Volunteers 2016- 2017

Pro Bono Students:

Université de Moncton

Nicolas LeBlanc
Jonathan Clavette



From left to right:
Jennifer Weston,
Legal Researcher;
Nicolas LeBlanc,
UdeM; and Jonathan
Clavette, UdeM.

University of New Brunswick

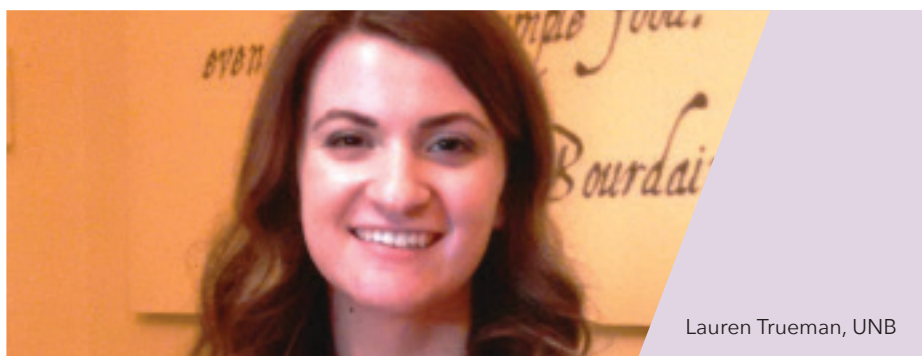
Amaki Otuteye
Lauren Trueman



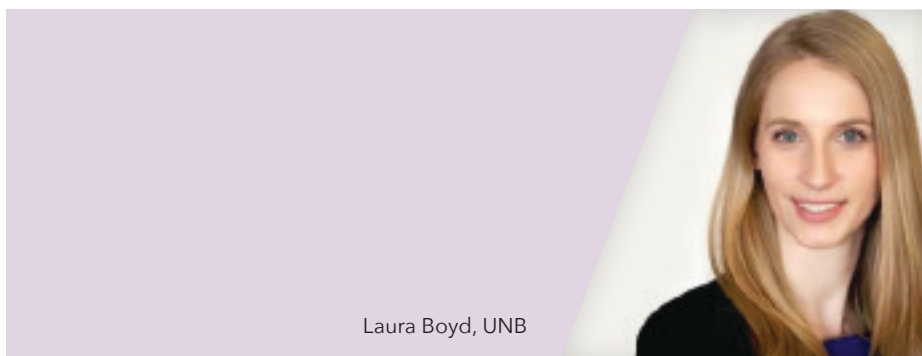
From left to right:
Brandon Gillespie,
UNB Law; Amaki
Otuteye, UNB
Law; Dr. Deborah
Doherty, Director
of PLEIS-NB.

Experiential/Clinical Procedure Law Students: (UNB)

Brandon Gillespie
Laura Boyd



Lauren Trueman, UNB



Laura Boyd, UNB

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Toll-Free Family Law Line – 1-888-236-2444

The Toll-Free Family Law Line, which is offered in cooperation with Court Services Division, Department of Justice and Public Safety, is the entry point for the free parenting after separation course and access to the family law line information officer:

- **For the Sake of the Children (FTSOTC):** There were 1,349 registrants for the course. Of these, 928 attended the classes. About 56% of these were female. Classes are offered in both English and French; however, 83% of the registrants took the course in English. In partnership with Court Services, efforts were made via a social media campaign to increase awareness of the course. Participants were most likely to be referred to the course by friends and family (31%), followed by court staff (23%).
- **Family Law Information Officer:** Despite some staff turnover this year and re-staffing delays, the information line responded to 1,791 unique calls this past fiscal year. That's an average of 150 calls each month. Consistent with previous years, about two-thirds of the callers were female. Just over 50% of the callers wanted general information and resources on family law matters – custody and access being the most popular. In terms of procedural assistance, 11% asked for assistance with child support; 14% needed information on custody and access; while 18% requested information on doing their own divorce. The line offers service in both official languages. Approximately 20% of the callers received service in French. Court staff, Legal Aid and private bar lawyers, as well as community agencies are pleased to refer individuals who have general questions about family law matters or court procedures to the Family Law Line. In fact, 36% of referrals come from court staff and another 33% are individuals who have learned about the workshops on the Internet.

Family Law Workshop

In previous annual reports, we described the Family Law Workshop initiative as a special project. However, with targeted funding the past couple of years from the New Brunswick Department of Justice and Public Safety and the NB Law Foundation, we have decided to categorize the workshops as a core program/service. The classes reached over 200 individuals and we shared more than 6,400 publications with registrants as part of their much appreciated Family Law Workshops kits. We strive to reach people living outside the larger urban areas as they face greater barriers in accessing law information. Attendance was down 13% from the previous year due to on-going staff turnover this year and reduced funds for promotion and social media. Nevertheless, we organized 35 workshops, of which 29 were delivered. Of the 7 French workshops organized, we successfully held 4 and these were in the rural communities of Caraquet, Edmundston and Shediac. Evaluation feedback from participants and lawyers remains extremely positive.

Websites

PLEIS-NB (www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca): Our main site features access to most of the resources that can be found on the specialized sites as well. This past year, the PLEIS-NB site had 193,668 unique visitors, of which 82.3% were new visits. There were a total of 384,074 page views. Visitors from Canada accounted for 78% of the visits. Overall, the top three English resources accessed in relation to unique page views were: “No Means No”; “Peace Bonds and Restraining Orders”; and “Probate of the Will.” The most viewed French resources were “What Parents should know about Child Protection”; “Being an Executor” and “When Couples Separate.”

Family Law NB (www.familylawnb.ca): There were 32,648 visits to the English side and 4,365 on the French side, resulting in 37,013 visits to the two websites and 166,679 page views. There were over 36,305 new users to our sites. The top page views of English resources were “Separation and Divorce”; “Doing Your Own Divorce”; and “Child Support”. The top page views of French resources were “Child Support”; “Family Law Forms”; and “Find a Lawyer/Get Help”.

PUBLICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

With over 200 publications, demand for hard copies of our resources remains high. Over the past year, PLEIS-NB distributed approximately 70,000 publications. Most are available free of charge for quantities fewer than 50, or can be accessed on our websites, in libraries and community agencies across the province. This year, the focus was on reviewing and reprinting:

- Will and Estate Planning (Series of five pamphlets)
- Power of Attorney
- Helping the Public Know the Law
- You and Your Lawyer
- And several others received minor updates.

PROJECTS AND CONTRACTS

Safety Planning for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

PLEIS-NB entered into a five year partnership with Victim Services, Department of Justice and Public Safety, to work collaboratively on creating more resources for victims of crime and updating existing ones. This first year of the partnership focussed on the production of a safety planning resource package for use by provincial Victim Services staff dealing with women experiencing intimate partner violence. In addition to traditional safety plan materials, a central component of the safety planning package is a unique self-assessment tool for women who continue to live in an abusive relationship. Produced by PLEIS-NB's executive director, Dr. Deborah Doherty, this evidence-based tool is intended to reflect the social, cultural and geographic realities of New Brunswick women. It is based on findings from a rural family violence research team which found that, for a variety of strategic reasons, women in small towns and rural communities may feel more inclined to stay in abusive relationships than those in urban areas. When this happens, there is often very little that is done to improve their safety. The tool was also informed by an analysis of female domestic homicides in New Brunswick which suggested that the clustering of common lethality risk factors tended to differ from those reported nationally. To ensure effective implementation, PLEIS provided two days of safety planning training for all Victim Services staff in the province.

The "Strategies for Staying Safer" tool complements the four new traditional safety planning tools. A flow chart helps professionals decide which tool(s) would be appropriate depending on their client's situation. Since women are encouraged to keep their plans in a safe place hidden from their partners, we created a wallet-sized card called Strategies for Safer Leaving where she can keep important contact numbers.



These following tools have been placed on the PLEIS-NB and Family Law NB websites along with a "Quick Exit" button. They can also be found on the Victim Services website.



- Living in an Abusive Relationship: Strategies for Staying Safer
- My Safety Plan: Leaving in an Emergency
- My Safety Plan: After Leaving
- My Safety Plan: On the Internet
- My Child's Safety Plan: Someone is Hurting my Mom
- Contacts Card - Strategies for Safer Leaving
- Flow Chart: Safety Planning for Women Experiencing IPV



Family Law and Immigrants

In order to enhance our efforts to support newcomers and increase access to the family justice system we created some additional family law resources for immigrants. The initiatives below were made possible thanks to financial assistance from the Supporting Families Fund, Justice Canada.

- **Family Law and Immigrants: A Handbook on Family Law Issues in New Brunswick**
The handbook profiles the compiled research on family law issues for immigrants. We had collected so much relevant law information that we decided to transform it into a comprehensive “handbook”. The 52 page handbook has become a valuable online resource full of excellent hyperlinks to federal, provincial and community supports for immigrants. It also includes topics not covered in the booklet, like arranged and forced marriages, FGM, parental abduction and so on.

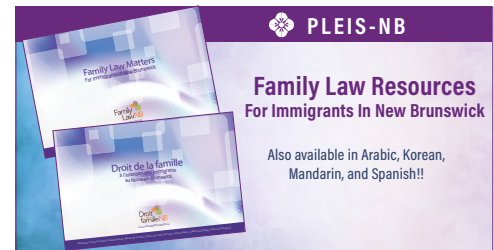


- **Family Law Matters for Immigrants Spanish Version**
With the volunteer assistance of a Jael Duarte, a Spanish lawyer and newcomer to New Brunswick and Marisa Roja with the Fredericton Multicultural Association, the booklet was translated into Spanish and back-translated into English to assess accuracy and legal terminology. The Spanish version now joins our English, French, Mandarin, Korean and Arabic versions, all of which are available online and in hard copy in accessible places in the community.



- **Social Media Campaign**

In early March, we began to make announcements about an upcoming event to launch a new Handbook on Family Law for immigrants. Our Facebook reach, likes, and shares increased dramatically. We created several ads about the handbook in both languages and engaged a social media company to strategically post/boost the ads for 30 days. As a result, our reached audience climbed to 37,273, and 80% of this was in response to our paid ads. Overall engagements totalled nearly 1,000. There were a lot of positive comments and remarks.



- **Dissemination and Promotion**

Our funding permitted us to print sufficient hard copies of both the handbook and the Spanish booklet and proactively conduct a mail them out to every library in the province, family legal aid offices, family division courts, the private family law bar, and various community and immigrant serving agencies. The availability of the resources at local libraries ensures a welcoming and affordable space to make use of the handbook.

On the day we launched the handbook, we also issued a press release. We also created a bilingual memo about the new resources and made 250 copies to go into all the kits for a multicultural networking conference. As well as displaying the announcement at the CBA-NB Branch Mid-Winter Meeting, the booklets are put into the family law kits whenever we offer a “family law and immigrants” workshop.

Overall, we disseminated about 400 publications in one month. As a result of our social media campaign, mail out, press release and launch event, we are now receiving requests for copies of the new materials both from individuals and agencies.

- **Evaluation - Feedback Survey**

In order to obtain feedback on the new resources from users, we engaged an evaluation consulting firm to conduct a survey. The survey was sent out to everyone who had received one of the new resources in the mail, or had contacted us to request one, or had picked one up at an event. Sectors covered included courts, legal aid, private bar, community groups, multicultural organizations, libraries and newcomers. Approximately 347 surveys were sent out by email. A total of 96 respondents accessed the survey. Those who received the resources were very pleased with the caliber of information. Many are already using the resources with clients and finding it to be helpful.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Launch of Family Law Handbook for Immigrants

On March 20, 2017, we held a celebratory event in partnership with the Fredericton Public Library to introduce the new **Family Law and Immigrants Handbook** and the **Family Law Matters for Immigrants** booklet in Spanish. This event was funded by Justice Canada. Close to 50 people turned out to the launch and Minister of Families and Children, Stephen Horsman, brought congratulations from the Department of Justice and Public Safety. We are pleased to note that Library Services has catalogued these new resources and distributed them to nearly 80 public libraries throughout New Brunswick.



Launch on March 20: From left to right: Clea Ward, PLEIS president; Jael Duarte, Multicultural Council of NB; Deborah Doherty, PLEIS executive director; Hon. Stephen Horsman, Minister of Families and Children; Marisa Roja, Fredericton Multicultural Association; and Sylvie Nadeau, NB Provincial Library Services.

Reception following the launch.



Reception following the launch.

Reception following the launch.



Annual BBQ

In 2016 we rocked a nautical theme



From left to right:
Deborah, Chris, Jennifer,
Judy, Spencer, Juliette,
Jael, Danielle

Thanks to Gignoo Transition
House for the awesome
watermelon cake -
what a surprise!



Once again, we were joined at our annual BBQ by staff, friends, partners, funders and volunteers from the private bar, the legal community, the law schools, and community agencies. It is a small gesture of gratitude to those who have contributed in countless ways to our efforts to educate and inform the public about the law. Thanks to Costco Wholesale and Sobeys Regent Street for contributing to our event.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2016-2017

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION & INFORMATION SERVICE OF NEW BRUNSWICK INC.
Statement of Operations
Year Ended March 31, 2017

	2017	2016
REVENUE		
Justice Canada	\$ 94,348	\$ 127,281
Miscellaneous Project Revenue	37,280	76,121
New Brunswick Department of Public Safety	71,564	81,598
New Brunswick Law Foundation	98,808	90,000
New Brunswick Department of Justice	108,687	120,515
Women's Equality Branch	114,796	-
Publication Sales and Other Revenue	6,485	1,521
	<u>536,958</u>	<u>597,036</u>
EXPENSES		
Administration	19,981	32,362
Conference and travel	9,886	5,412
Miscellaneous	8,426	35,837
Office expense	30,871	15,497
Printing and distribution	74,031	69,549
Professional services	21,989	67,148
Salaries and benefits	226,155	238,780
	<u>388,379</u>	<u>465,565</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ 148,579	\$ 131,471

teed saunders doyle | accountants & advisors

An independent member of **DFK** Chartered Accountants

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of Public Legal Education & Information Service Of New Brunswick Inc.

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Public Legal Education & Information Service Of New Brunswick Inc., which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2017 and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of their financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and the presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of Public Legal Education & Information Service Of New Brunswick Inc. as at March 31, 2017 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Teed Saunders Doyle

Fredericton, New Brunswick
June 23, 2017

CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

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