

## **Women Lawyers' Forum Report 2012-2013**

The Women Lawyers' Forum is the connecting point for women in the legal profession. Through the inter-lacing of the social and the professional, the Women Lawyers' Forum provides an opportunity for women in the law to meet, to talk and to get to know each other better, for personal and professional benefit. The Forum organizes several events each year where women can engage, relax and enjoy the company of other women who share the law as a common thread.

The Executive of the Women Lawyers' Forum met regularly to plan the year's calendar of events and discuss issues of importance to women in the practice of law. We worked hard to provide women lawyers with opportunities to network while enjoying each others' company, and to provide information and practical advice regarding career planning and choices for women in the law.

In the furtherance of our goals, the WLF organized the following events this year:

### **Wine, Women & Song V**

On October 19, 2012, we presented our fifth annual Wine, Women & Song event to an audience of 60 lawyers and judges at The Park theatre. This event was chaired by Member-at-Large Pamela Reilly and hosted by Co-Chair Jennifer Goldenberg. It featured fantastic performances by:

- The Courthouse Cats featuring Acting Associate Chief Justice Marianne Rivoalen, Irene Hamilton, Donna Miller, Q.C., Master Joy Cooper, Master Carol Sharp and Coralie Bryant
- Nalini Reddy
- Pamela Reilly with Baltimore Road
- Darcia Senft with James Hickerson.

It is always a pleasure to showcase the musical talents of our members. A fun evening was had by all.

### **On Her Majesty's (Not-so-Secret) Service: Working for the Crown**

On October 23, 2012, the WLF presented an informative session about practicing law in the public sector. Moderated by Co-Chair Jennifer Goldenberg, our presenters were: Jacqueline St. Hill, Director, Winnipeg Prosecutions, Manitoba Prosecution Service, Joan Schmidt, Crown Counsel, Public Prosecution Service of Canada and Lynn Romeo, Director, Manitoba Justice – Civil Legal Services. They described the wide variety of work and unique challenges and experiences afforded to those practicing law as government lawyers.

### **WTF from WLF\* – What is life really like on the other side of private practice? (\*What's the fuss from Women Lawyers' Forum)**

On November 16, 2012, Member-at-Large Jennifer Pfuetzner moderated this event which featured presentations from Karen Clearwater, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Lindy Choy, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba – The Appeal Commission and Candace Bishoff, Manitoba Telecom Services. The speakers shared their experiences, each having practiced privately and then moved into an in-house or another non-traditional legal role. They debunked some myths and answered questions about what it is really like to work outside of private practice.

### **Gender Neutral Language in the Legal Profession**

The WLF sponsored this successful CPD session at the MBA Midwinter. Moderated by past co-chair Patricia Lane, our speakers were: Associate Professor Jila Ghomeshi, University of Manitoba (Linguistics) and Sandra Petersson, Research Manager, Alberta Law Reform Institute. The session included

meaningful dialogue about the National WLF's Gender Neutral Language Project, an educational style campaign designed to promote gender neutral language in the legal profession. Topics included the impact of gender neutral language and the social significance of how language is used. The speakers and a very engaged audience shared ideas about the importance of gender neutrality in ensuring effective communication with clients, opposing counsel and the court. In light of the successful session and the enthusiasm it generated, our speakers graciously offered to help the National WLF develop a written protocol for gender neutral language in the legal profession.

### **Performing Under Pressure**

For the sixth year in a row, the WLF teamed up with the Women's Enterprise Centre for our spring professional development networking event. The well received event, co-chaired by Vice-Chair Robynne Kazina and Member-at Large Jennifer Pfuetzner, took place on April 11, 2013, at the MC College. Our members had an opportunity to network with other female professionals and entrepreneurs while enjoying wine and appetizers and being pampered by the students of MC College. Jason Brooks, Performance Consultant, spoke to the attendees about optimizing our performance in high stress situations without sacrificing our health. He provided insight into emotional preparation and other techniques that can be used to help perform successfully under pressure. We heard some fascinating examples from his research in the area of psychology and his work with elite athletes, surgeons and S.W.A.T. teams.

### **Isabel Ross MacLean Hunt Award**

The Isabel Ross Hunt Maclean Award recognizes a female MBA member who has achieved professional excellence in her field, influenced other women to pursue legal careers, supported other women in career advancement or opened doors for women lawyers in a variety of job settings that historically were closed to them. The WLF nominated Madam Justice Colleen Suche for the award, and are thrilled that she was the successful recipient of the award at the MBA Awards Reception in January 2013.

### **Celebrating Success**

Our final event of the year, a wine and cheese reception for women lawyers and judges will be held on the evening of June 19, 2013, at the Blackstone Lounge, Taylor McCaffrey LLP. Co-hosted by the Women Lawyers' Forum and the Manitoba component of the Canadian Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges, we will be honouring the appointments of Judge Cynthia Devine and Margaret Wiebe to the Provincial Court and Justice Diana Cameron to the Court of Appeal, as well as Justice Colleen Suche's receipt of the Isabel Ross MacLean Hunt Award.

Special thanks must go to this year's Executive who have collaborated well and worked very hard in bringing the ideas for these events into reality: Judicial Co-Chair Judge Patti Umpherville, Vice-chair, Robynne Kazina; Members-at-Large: Patricia Lane, Kristin Gibson, Kathryn Hordienko, Colleen McDuff, Jennifer Pfuetzner, Baerbel Langner, Nicole Merrick, Myong Lee and Carolina Freedman.

As well, a big thank you to MBA Executive Director Stacy Nagle and Sections Coordinator Melissa Tannahill; your support and guidance are always appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Goldenberg, Co-Chair and Judge Cynthia Devine, Judicial Co-Chair