



Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic

December 2010
Volume 4 Issue 1

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Legal Aid Ontario Update

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is funded by Legal Aid Ontario (LAO). Kinna-aweya is an independent, non-profit corporation overseen by a Board of Directors, but the clinic is accountable to LAO for the funds given to the clinic to provide high quality poverty law services in the District of Thunder Bay.

Legal clinics are one aspect of the range of legal services provided by Legal Aid Ontario. Other services include the issuance and administration of legal aid certificates for criminal and family law matters and duty counsel services in family and criminal court. In Thunder Bay there is also a family law office that is equipped to provide legal advice and assistance to eligible clients seeking assistance for some family law matters. Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services is also part of the legal aid family in Thunder Bay.

Please see *Legal Aid Ontario Update* on page 2

Good Food Box

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is a host site for the Good Food Box program in Thunder Bay.

The Good Food Box is a non-profit program for families and individuals who want to purchase quality, fresh, local produce at a lower price than shopping at grocery stores.

You can purchase a family box for \$20 or an individual box for \$12. Boxes are ordered and paid for by the first Thursday of each month. Food is available for pick up at the legal clinic on the third Thursday of the month. This means food is accessible at a time when some have less money available for buying food.

There are many other host sites throughout the city, to make it easier for people to pickup their food. To find the host site closest to you, call (807) 345-7819.

To order and pick up a Good Food Box through the legal clinic's office at 86 S. Cumberland Street, please call (807) 344-2478 for more information.



Come on out and support your community by participating in Thunder Bay's Good Food Box Program

Legal Aid Ontario Update from page 1

Sally Colquhoun and Beth Ponka, the legal clinic's management team, meet regularly with staff from other offices providing legal services in northwestern Ontario to people with low incomes. It's a good opportunity to share information and build better communication among the legal aid service providers in our District and identify gaps in services that we can try to fill.

Legal Aid Ontario has adopted a Transformation Strategy that includes modernization and regionalization. They have changed the way they provide some legal aid services in Ontario. Some legal aid area offices have closed and instead people can go to their local court houses to apply for legal aid using a computer. People can also call a province-wide toll-free number in Toronto to apply for legal aid. The demand for service has been higher than expected and people calling the toll-free number have had to wait on hold for a long time. Legal Aid Ontario is aware of this problem and has been making changes to try to improve the waiting times.

Legal Aid Ontario has announced that they will be looking at reducing administrative costs in legal clinics and they have released a paper on that topic. They are holding consultations throughout the province with Chairs of the Boards of Directors and management staff to share information with clinics about areas they have identified for possible reductions. Our meeting was on August 9 and we shared our concern that some of the information they are using as a basis for their calculations isn't correct. Our services are delivered across a vast district with many small communities including reserves. Legal clinic clients are vulnerable and often they have multiple issues. Our challenges are different than the challenges in Toronto and there aren't opportunities for cost savings on rent and office space like there may be in Toronto. Clinics have always managed within fixed budgets and follow generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP) to a high standard. We will keep the membership informed as this process unfolds as well as any other changes that affect our clients.

Social Assistance Improvements for OW Recipients

In September, the Government introduced rule changes that benefit people receiving Ontario Works. Small gifts (non-cash) received from family or friends will no longer be deducted from social assistance. Small gifts can include items such as groceries or gift cards. Also, the penalty for not complying with participation requirements has been reduced to a reduction or cancellation for 1 month for the first time it happens and 3 months for the second time. You have the right to appeal this decision.

For more information on your appeal rights, call the clinic.

Social Assistance Rates increase by 1%

Ontario Disability recipients will get an increase effective November 1. For a single person, the maximum monthly cheque rises from \$1042 to \$1053 and for a couple (one disabled) it goes from \$1584 to \$1601. Ontario Works recipients will see their cheques increase effective December 1. The monthly maximum for a single person will increase from \$585 to \$592 and for a couple the maximum rate will rise from \$1010 to \$1020.

Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy was developed in 1997 by the federal government in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, to better address the serious socio-economic needs of urban Aboriginal peoples.

The three main priorities of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy are: improving life skills; promoting employment training, skills, and entrepreneurialship; and supporting Aboriginal women, children, and families. The Strategy is designed to improve policy development and program coordination among all levels of government.

The Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project (NCBP) is the main project of the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy, under the sponsorship of Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan (Thunder Bay Aboriginal Head Start Day Nursery).

The NCBP is an after-school program designed to improve Aboriginal student success. Activities include cultural teachings, sports and recreation, help with homework, and a nutrition break. The program is delivered in seven schools where there is a high concentration of Aboriginal families.

The legal clinic's Director of Administration, Beth Ponka, is the Chair of the community-based advisory committee that provides input and advice on the delivery of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is one of 13 sites across Canada working in urban centres to address the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities. The Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee is expanding its role in the community by inviting various community, government, and private sector partners to work with the Aboriginal community to address the priorities identified in our community plan.

The Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy is funded by the Office of the Federal Interlocutor, the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and the City of Thunder Bay. A significant donation has also been made by Grand Portage Lodge & Casino.

For more information about the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Thunder Bay, contact Frances Wesley at 768-2310 or Beth Ponka at 766-7093.

Assistance with Tax Returns

It is critical to file your income tax return to ensure you can receive benefits such as the Child Tax Benefit and a credit for the GST/HST.

Lakehead Social Planning Council is a site for the Volunteer Income Tax Program. People with low income can make arrangements to have a volunteer complete their income tax return throughout the year. For more information, contact the Lakehead Social Planning Council at 624-2330 or visit them at the Victoriaville Mall, 125 S. Syndicate Avenue.

Healthy Smiles Ontario

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a new program for kids 17 and under who do not have access to any form of dental coverage. If eligible, your kids will get regular dental services at no cost to you.

To find out more about the eligibility requirements, call the ServiceOntario INFOLine toll free at 1-8636-532-3161, visit ontario.ca/healthysmiles or contact your local public health unit.

The initiative is part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy to support the development of healthier communities.

Speaking Out at Speakers' School

After three years of operation, Speakers' School is fast becoming an integral part of the social justice infrastructure of Thunder Bay. The school is a collaborative effort of the Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic, the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group and the Lakehead Social Planning Council. What began as a pilot project in the fall of 2008 with a modest budget has developed into a full time program offering a spring and fall course for classes of 15 students. The school is targeted for people who are living on a low income, unemployed, or are injured workers.

The Legal Clinic plays a vital role by helping oversee the development and operation of the school, providing a space for monthly meetings and having various staff members participate as guest speakers and on the panel evaluating the final graduation speeches. Currently, Speakers' School is funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and the Bay Credit Union Social Justice Fund. The school is fortunate to have dedicated staff and volunteers including our newest instructor, Karlie Brotchie, who is no stranger to the legal clinic as she also, facilitated the successful Photo Voice Project.

Speakers' School provides high quality, inclusive and participatory training in public speaking, leadership and social justice issues. It is designed specifically to remove barriers and enhance learning for people who are economically disadvantaged. Public speaking exercises are a regular part of the curriculum including practicing tone of voice, posture, breathing and impromptu speaking. Participants are given one-on-one help with speech writing and an atmosphere of peer support is fostered by offering opportunities to provide input and constructive feedback. Some of the social justice topics include the history of social assistance, ODSP, living with HIV, the injured workers movement, advocacy and Seven Grandfather Teachings. An alumni group which meets monthly allows graduates to continue honing their skills and to further develop their knowledge of social justice issues. The school provides a meal at each class, a transportation allowance and if necessary, a child care allowance. Tuition is free.

The success of the school is evidenced not only in the quality of the students' final speeches which they deliver to an audience of peers and community leaders but also in the growing recognition from our community and across the province. Graduates from the school have been invited to speak and participate in a variety of forums including a union meeting, Northern Regional Training for Legal Clinics, press conferences and the Speakers' School Coordinating Committee. This year Speakers' School was honoured to be the recipient of an award by the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union. The Rainford Jackson Award recognizes an organization that has made significant contribution to combating racism and promoting equality. Interest in the school is spreading across the province and other legal clinics wanting to develop similar programs have approached Speakers' School for guidance.

If you are interested in learning more about the school or want to register for the next course, send a message to speakersschool@gmail.com or phone Karlie at 627-9136.

Homelessness Partnering Strategy

In 2006 the Government of Canada announced the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) to help prevent and reduce homelessness.

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is an active member of the Thunder Bay HPS Community Advisory Board for the Aboriginal-designated stream of funding. Recently approval was granted to fund a joint proposal submitted by the John Howard Society and the Ontario Native Women's Association. With the funding available they will implement the "*Nihdawin: My Own Home*" project.

The project will work with Aboriginal people, specifically women and their families, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to conflict or at risk of conflict with the law. They will work with women in correctional institutes, those exiting correctional institutions and with those being held on remand. The project will ensure that the woman have their basic needs met through providing shelter, food, clothing and medical care. Once their basic needs are met, the workers will assist the women to connect with supports required to create the stability needed in their lives.

The JHS will be responsible for the shelter, food provision, basic life skills training and housing support. ONWA is responsible for counseling, advocacy, and cultural training/support for the women. Each organization has a web of support services that the woman can utilize depending on their individual needs.

This project is a superb example of how the community can work together to build partnerships and provide services that address key community priorities.

For more information about this project, contact Tracy Gagnon at ONWA, 623-3442.

Human Rights Legal Support Centre Offering Services in Thunder Bay

Ontario's Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC) has been offering legal services in Thunder Bay since September 2009. HRLSC Staff Lawyer Amy Britton-Cox works out of Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic providing legal services to people in Thunder Bay and area. The HRLSC helps people who experience discrimination at work, in housing or services (such as stores and schools). Under Ontario's Human Rights Code, the discrimination has to be related to having a personal characteristic such as one listed below:

- Race; colour
- Ancestry
- Place of Origin
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Creed (religion)
- Receipt of social assistance (housing only)
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Family status
- Record of offenses (employment only, must have been pardoned)
- Age
- Disability
- Sex (includes being pregnant)

People who have experienced discrimination can call 1-866-625-5179 to speak with one of the HRLSC's trained Human Rights Advisors. If you have a human rights case and need a lawyer, you may be eligible to meet with Amy. Or, you can drop by Kinna-aweya to set up a meeting with Amy.

The HRLSC is committed to assisting Aboriginal Peoples in Ontario to enforce their rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The HRLSC has two lawyers, Kingsley Laurin and Lori Mishibinijima, who are Aboriginal working out of its Toronto office. Aboriginal callers can request to speak with one of the HRLSC's Aboriginal lawyers at any time during their contact with the HRLSC. If you have experienced discrimination, identify as Aboriginal, and request an Aboriginal lawyer, you may be eligible to meet with Lori or Kingsley.

Tenant Duty Counsel

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is now providing Tenant Duty Counsel services whenever the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) have sittings in Thunder Bay. The LTB is an administrative tribunal where decisions are made about disputes between tenants and landlords. In Thunder Bay, the LTB sits approximately every three weeks.

Often tenants cannot afford to hire a legal worker to help them protect their rights as tenants. The TDC program provides a legal worker who is knowledgeable about the Residential Tenancies Act, which is the law that governs landlord and tenant matters. The Tenant Duty Counsel legal worker is not able to represent clients at the LTB hearings but is available to provide advice and to assist tenants in accessing mediation services, as well as to help obtain adjournments for tenants who need more time to try to resolve their tenancy issue.

The TDC legal worker is a valuable resource to the tenants who find themselves at the LTB without representation.

2011 Rent Increase Guideline

From a Government of Ontario news release:

Ontario's rent increase guideline for the year 2011 will be 0.7 per cent, the lowest guideline in the 35-year history of rent regulation in Ontario.

The rent increase guideline is the maximum amount by which a landlord can increase the rent of most sitting tenants without seeking the approval of the Landlord and Tenant Board.

The 2011 guideline applies to rent increases that occur between January 1 and December 31, 2011.

The calculation is based on the Ontario Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation that is calculated by Statistics Canada.

Provincial Rent Bank Program and Emergency Energy Fund

The PRBP and EEF can provide assistance for rent or utility arrears and is available through the District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB). For more information about the PRBP, call 807-766-2104, and for more information about the EEF, call 807-766-2111, extension 4001

The calculation is based on the Ontario Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation that is calculated by Statistics Canada.

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic Staff

Thunder Bay

Richard Atkinson - Community Legal Worker/Paralegal

Sally Colquhoun - Coordinator of Legal Services

Dan Cox - Staff Lawyer

Don Henderson - Librarian

Teri Hofer - Secretary/Receptionist/Bookkeeper

Cindy Fortin - Assistant Director of Administration

Barbara Kulifaj - Secretary/Receptionist

Melanie MacKenzie - Community Legal Worker

Patricia Fenton - Executive Secretary

Beth Ponka - Director of Administration

Mary Veltri - Staff Lawyer

Armstrong

Stephanie Wanakamik

Secretary/Receptionist

Geraldton

Guyline Letourneau

Secretary/Receptionist

Chantal Walterson

Community Legal

Worker/Paralegal

Marathon

Miriam McCutcheon

Secretary/Receptionist

Val Biggs

Community Legal

Worker

Nipigon

Tracey Lasook

Community Legal Worker/Paralegal

Board of Directors

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Board members are elected at our Area Community Meetings, which are held each year in our five main communities: Armstrong, Geraldton, Marathon, Nipigon, and Thunder Bay. Each area elects one member to the Board of Directors, except Thunder Bay, which elects three members to the Board.

2010/11 Board of Directors:

Wanda White

Louis Brizard

Bernice Windsor

Andrea O’Nabigon

Angela Nodin

Michael Deschamps Jr.

Alta Fenton

Nipigon

Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay

Geraldton

Armstrong

Marathon

Thunder Bay

President

Vice-President

Treasurer

Secretary

Director

Director

Director

Board members oversee the activities of the legal clinic and provide direction to the management staff. The clinic is funded by Legal Aid Ontario; the Board of Directors ensure that the legal clinic complies with their funding conditions while providing high quality legal services to low-income residents of the District of Thunder Bay.

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