

# JDG 5

## WORK TOGETHER

**5.1 ESTABLISH COORDINATED EFFORTS** - Bring all of the organizations involved in access to justice in each province or territory together to focus on local solutions.

**5.2 INCLUDE EVERYONE** - Involve the major institutions (courts, governments), professional groups (lawyers' associations), community groups and non-profits (clinics, PLE providers), academics and individuals to find new creative approaches.

**5.3 BE BOLD; TAKE ACTION** - Local and national coordination must lead, take action and inspire others to tackle access to justice.

**5.4 WORK WITHIN INSTITUTIONS** - In addition to coordinating across the justice system, access to justice should be a serious focus within judges' organizations, lawyers' and paralegals' associations, courts and institutions.

**5.5 COORDINATE ACROSS CANADA** - Keep momentum and sustained attention to these issues across the country to complement local and regional activity.

A focus on collaboration is a shift in the culture of the justice system. The sector has historically been siloed into professional groups, divided by jurisdiction and focused on maintaining the independence of judges and lawyers by segregating institutions.

In response to the Action Committee's Roadmap to Change, issued in 2014, a collaborative group or committee has been established in each province or territory in the country. Each year, the Action Committee meets for its annual Summit bringing together representatives from these provincial/territorial collaboratives and representatives of the justice sector institutions to coordinate access to justice efforts.

The Action Committee has many ways to share access to justice ideas in Canada. Anyone involved in access to justice can subscribe to its monthly A2J Newsletter to receive highlights of interesting projects and innovative approaches. The Access to Justice Research Network, hosted by the CFCJ, is a community of researchers working in universities and in community organizations, sharing research results, academic writing and new thinking on these issues. Links to these two communications tools and other Action Committee news can be found at [justicedevelopmentgoals.ca](http://justicedevelopmentgoals.ca)

In 2019, the justice sector partnered with the health sector, libraries and social services workers to increase access to justice for vulnerable communities. Coordinated and collaborative initiatives showcased A2J and strengthened the capacity of service providers.

Organizations saying this is their primary impact on A2J: **11** Projects aligned: **108**

## Working with Health and Social Services Providers

Justice & Health Partnerships (known in the USA as Medical-Legal Partnerships, and in Australia as Health Justice Partnerships) are collaborative arrangements between medical and health service providers and community legal clinics to foster early, multidisciplinary interventions for low-income individuals and families with overlapping medical and legal problems. Early resolution and prevention of problems that connect to the social determinants of health play a significant role in improving people's lives and diminishing the economic, social and other costs of poverty and ill health. In 2019, the Community Advocacy and Legal Centre in Belleville Ontario worked as part of a Justice & Health Partnership with primary health care organizations to provide on-site legal clinics for patients, education sessions for healthcare providers, assistance with completing forms and a streamlined referrals process, including a "hotline" for advice. They received nearly 300 referrals from their healthcare partners and provided educational workshops to approximately 150 healthcare providers.

*"Jane was a single parent of two young children diagnosed with terminal cancer. She was referred to our office for help by the systems navigator RN at her doctor's office. CALC worked closely with Jane over the course of two years, assisting with a range of legal issues. For example, CALC represented her when she was being evicted in the midst of her cancer treatment, prevented her disability benefits from being cut off, helped her access the Canadian Child Tax Benefit so she was able to put food on the table, completed Power of Attorney documents and a will indicating guardianship for her children, and facilitated assistance through referrals for family law problems. Without this support Jane may have been homeless, and undoubtedly would have struggled to meet the basic needs of her children."*

Community Advocacy and Legal Centre

The African Nova Scotian Social Worker (ANSSW) plays a significant role in assisting Nova Scotia Legal Aid staff in providing culturally appropriate services to clients

and making connections with communities and frontline service providers. The ANSSW receives client referrals for family, adult and youth criminal matters from across the Province. The ANSSW provides lawyers with a cultural context that can open the door to innovative outcomes and resolutions. The ANSSW works collaboratively with lawyers, supports clients in court proceedings and case conferencing, provides youth mentoring and assists clients in understanding the legal processes they are engaged in. The ANSSW engages extensively with frontline community service providers. In 2019, the ANSSW helped 55 people.

*"[The ANSSW]..helped me and my children get back on my feet as I had completely hit rock bottom. Though the tools were readily available, having knowledge of them and the way she knew how and when to utilize them made this process so much easier....She is truly one of a kind and her role within the Justice system and advocating for people of colour in a province where we are so easily overlooked and undermined, is imperative.... needed by so many more people who also have had the feeling of hopelessness and are lost within their legal battle."*

A Client of Nova Scotia Legal Aid

As a part of the Wellington County Mobile Legal Service (WellCoMs) project, a van traveled to twelve communities in rural Wellington County twice a month a set schedule from May to October of 2019. The van set up in a prearranged location, with a tent and offered coffee and snacks. Two outreach workers were in the van and provided legal information and referrals. Legal consultations with lawyers and caseworkers located at the Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County were arranged over Skype from the van. The outreach workers also made connections with trusted intermediaries in the community.

The Library Hub pilot-project of the Law Society of Manitoba represents an attempt to expand access to justice and provide improved access to a wider range of services for free (and/or low cost) while also reducing duplication among various service providers in the justice system through the transformation of the courthouse library. The Hub will have two distinct aspects: the provision of front-

line legal information and assistance (Phase One) and the creation of an online portal for better access to legal information and services (Phase Two).

The Antigonish Womens Resource Centre runs “Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties”. This program provides individuals with an outreach worker who can help with problem solving, emotional support and crisis support on a range of issues in women’s lives. A worker can help individuals talk to and accompany them to services, agencies, institutions, court, legal appointments, medical appointments, and law-related meetings and programs.

Following consultation with several organizations that work with homeless people, Éducaloi in Quebec created 3 guides and a legal fact sheet to answer the most frequently asked questions of stakeholders working with this population on topics such as health care, administrative procedures, criminal records, and various immigration statutes. Éducaloi provided legal training to the stakeholders of these organizations including an immigration component, facilitated by a specialized lawyer.

Through the Post-Release Issues Project, Justice Sector Constellation members in Alberta have connected with various stakeholders within the penal system to identify gaps in the supports for individuals being released from custody. The Justice Sector Services Coordination for the Socio-Legally Disadvantaged: Strategic Directions for Enhanced Access to Justice Report commissioned by the Constellation with a view to improving coordination of justice sector services, includes a number of recommendations regarding issues faced by and supports for those released from custody. The next phase of the Constellation’s project will involve preparing a Client Journey Map and identifying points at which intervention could be made to help ensure better supports for those released from custody at the end of the journey.

## Coordinating A2J Efforts

In Ontario, The Action Group on Access to Justice (TAG) held its fourth annual Access to Justice Week and welcomed nearly 1,500 participants in person and by webcast. The week also saw over 40 speakers at 5 programs accredited for over 13 hours of CPD and EDI Professionalism content, generating over 31,000 social media impressions on #A2JWeek2019 and earned 16 media articles. The ideas resulting from the various programs will be used to develop various work plans for TAG’s 2020 efforts.

Access to Justice BC undertook a campaign to get cross-sector endorsement of the Access to Justice Triple Aim. Fifty-two BC justice sector organizations signed on. At an endorsement ceremony on June 12, 2019, the Chief Justice and the Attorney General of BC led other organizational leaders in formally signing the endorsement document. The Triple Aim has three elements: improving access to justice at a population (and sub-population) level; improving user experience of access to justice; and improving costs - including saving costs in other sectors and ensuring costs are proportional to the benefits.

CLEA Manitoba operates a Speakers’ Bureau of volunteers who donate their time each year to provide legal information sessions to the community on request. CLEA arranged 36 speaking events in 2019. In total, over 680 people attended these sessions. CLEA partnered with 12 various groups and agencies in delivering Speakers’ Bureau presentations, including: Indigenous organizations, a senior’s organization, newcomer organization, community centre, Law Day, parent organization, mental health organization, MP constituency office, as well as 20 libraries as part of the Law in the Library, in partnership with the Winnipeg Public Library. Presentations were on 11 different topics: Wills (including Powers of Attorney and Healthcare Directives), Family Law (including Grandparents Rights, Property, Custody & Access), Immigration, CLEA, Law as a Career, Criminal Law (including Drinking & Driving), Copyright Law, ABCs of 1st Time Homebuying, Youth Justice, Condominium, Small Business and the Law.

The Accord France-Quebec cooperation agreement was signed in Quebec City on March 15, 2019 between the Chambre des notaires du Québec and the Conseil supérieur du notariat français. This agreement ensures notarial cooperation between France and Quebec in the reception of power of attorney or notarized deeds and in the receipt of a signature. The agreement also allows French notaries to act as delegated notaries for the receipt of a signature of one of the parties to a document received before a Quebec notary.

Éducaloi exchanged expertise and experience with international partners in 2019. As part of a collaboration with Lawyers Without Borders Canada, legal communications experts from Éducaloi partnered with Haitian human rights defenders to provide training and support for enhanced human rights and legal information tools. During the week of November 4 to 8, 2019, two Éducaloi employees went to France to conduct the first part of an exchange. The purpose of this exchange was to improve the expertise of the Éducaloi team by sharing

practices with other organizations. A collaborative legal education online tool will be developed over the next year, when ADEJ members will visit Éducaloi.

For 2 ½ days in April 2019, the Action Committee held its Annual Summit in Montreal, gathering 80 A2J leaders from across the country, with participation from the judiciary, governments, legal institutions, law schools, non-profits, lawyers' organizations and equity seeking groups. A full day of the Summit was devoted to a discussion of Indigenous legal orders and Indigenous justice. Distinguished speakers from the Yukon Territory, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, British Columbia and Ontario spoke of the need and opportunity for the Canadian justice system to

follow through on the promise of Gladue and other key decisions and to incorporate and/or share space with Indigenous legal orders and traditions in order to provide more culturally appropriate, community-centred and accessible justice services to Indigenous people.

The Action Committee's national Pop-Up Community of Practice looked to the future this year, with the 43 members learning about and discussing disruptive technologies like blockchain, models of future thinking like Strategic Foresight, and alternate ways to measure and assess access to justice, including the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index.

## The Provincial/Territorial Collaboratives

The Provincial/Territorial Collaboratives foster a local, regional and national link for individuals and organizations working on access to justice.

- BC** A2JBC – Access to Justice BC
- YK** Access to Justice Committee
- AB** Reforming Family Justice System Project
- NWT** Northwest Territories Access to Justice Committee
- SK** Saskatchewan Access to Justice Network
- MB** Access to Justice Steering Committee
- ON** TAG – The Action Group on Access to Justice
- NU** Access to Justice Committee
- QC** Forum Québécois sur l'accès à la justice civile et familiale
- PEI** Access to Justice Committee
- NS** Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia
- NFLD** Access to Justice Steering Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador

