

## 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.

#### Projects advancing this goal



101

#### Organizations identifying this goal as their primary focus



7

## HIGHLIGHTS

in AB, SK, ON, NS

Access to Justice Week events were held simultaneously

62 clients

were connected to service providers and provided with culturally appropriate services by The African Nova Scotian Social Worker program

1641 people

were served by Pro Bono Ontario's Medical-Legal Partnership in children's hospitals

210 survivors

of sexual violence were provided legal support by The Journey Project in NL

## What is JDG#5 About?

Collaboration is increasingly recognized as the best way to find innovative and effective responses to the A2J crisis. Traditional justice sector actors now understand that the participation of community members and leaders in developing and implementing new models brings a greater degree of resolution for people's legal issues.

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 justice sector institutions and equity seeking organizations to coordinate access to justice efforts. In 2020, these events were held virtually.

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 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 2020, collaboration on A2J highlighted the value add that working together brings to those in need. Across the country and within provinces, justice sector organizations came together with the express purpose of ensuring that the focus remains on the crisis in access to justice and ensuring that the right voices come to the table for problem-solving and decision-making.

2020 was also a practical year for collaboration, focusing on ensuring that community members are empowered to support each other, including with respect to COVID-related legal issues.

## Recommitting to Collaborative Efforts

Canada's **Access to Justice Week** took place in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Organizers highlighted the work of justice organizations and pro bono organizations in each province, hosting a series of webinars to educate the public, lawyers and community organizations on how to improve access to justice in their own neighbourhoods. National events included: Unbundled

Legal Services in Canada, A Conversation about Access to Justice and Systemic Racism, and Exploring Community Justice Help to Advance Community-based Access to Justice. Canada's Access to Justice Week is a collaborative effort supported by CREATE Justice at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law, the Law Society of Saskatchewan, CBA Alberta, the University of Alberta Faculty of Law, The Access Group on A2J (Ontario), the Law Society of Ontario and the Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia.

**Legal Aid BC** signed two memoranda of understanding in 2020 to support Indigenous clients and its Reconciliation Action Plan. The first MOU, signed with the **BC Métis Federation** reinforces the coordination of supportive justice services for Métis people in BC and establishes a process for relationship building between the two organizations. The second MOU, signed with the **Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC** outlines the long-standing collaborative relationship between the two organizations and recognizes the importance of supporting each other's mandates to move forward on key Indigenous justice services.

**Access to Justice BC** developed a practical family justice leadership strategy to address child well-being issues in the family justice system and invited Indigenous justice leaders to co-develop a sub-strategy focused on Indigenous family well-being. The approach applied an Indigenous lens and is based on brain science, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and resilience research.

In Manitoba, the **Law Society** advanced collaborative A2J efforts, establishing a two year pilot role for a Manitoba Access to Justice Coordinator to lead the A2J initiatives of the Law Society, act as primary support for the Manitoba Access to Justice Steering Committee and serve as a liaison to the Faculty of Law, developing A2J initiatives. The Law Society also established an Advisory Committee for implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, with membership participation by the Hon. Murray Sinclair.

The **Access to Justice Committee for Nova Scotia** was convened following the wrap-up of the work of the original Access to Justice Coordinating Committee in 2018. The new committee will continue to promote coordination and collaboration on A2J initiatives in Nova Scotia. The Committee is co-chaired by the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia and the Deputy Minister of Justice and is supported by the Access to Justice & Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia.

## Coordinating A2J Efforts

Justice sector leaders in Quebec, including the **Ministry of Justice**, the **Chief Justices** of all three levels of court, the **Chambre des notaires**, the **Law Commission and the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions** convened a table, with three subcommittees to propose 40 innovative measures to improve access to justice, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tables considered justice system responses to the state of emergency as well as long term approaches to reduce delays and costs to litigants, simplifying procedures for citizens and promoting out of court settlement in the area of civil and small claims, family and child protection, and criminal. The Small Claims subcommittee created an Inventory of Ongoing and Upcoming Initiatives to promote awareness of the services or tools available to parties.

The **Justice and Health Partnership Measuring Impact Advisory Committee**, a national committee stemming from the Justice and Health Partnership Community of Interest identified justice and health partnerships as one of the critical components of access to justice, met throughout 2020.

**Justice Canada** chaired the Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders from around the world who came together to discuss strategies to increase justice as a part of the COVID-19 response and recovery. During Global Week for Justice, it also chaired the Inaugural meeting of the Open Government Partnership Coalition on Justice and participated in a Roundtable on Justice Data Priorities and the Pandemic and a discussion on Justice for Women and Girls: Moving from Commitment to Action Amidst COVID-19.

The Journey Project, a collaboration between the **Public Legal Information Association of NL** and the **NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre**, provided legal support for survivors of sexual violence, developed and provided training on trauma and sexual violence to legal stakeholders and prepared public legal education materials related to sexual harassment in the workplace, serving 210 people.

The **African Nova Scotian Social Worker** program entered the second phase of the pilot ensuring the delivery of culturally appropriate services and making connections with communities and frontline service providers for 62 clients.

In NWT, the **Outreach Legal Aid Clinic** networked proactively with government departments on the frontlines of services for NWT residents, as well as representatives from Indigenous governments, child protection services and the family law bar to proactively identify and seek out potential areas of miscommunication and service failures before they occur, and to maintain an ongoing dialogue about the various services available to clients.

In 2020, the medical-legal partnership between **Justice Pro Bono** in Quebec and the **Children's Hospital** in Montreal provided legal support to 40 patients and their families.

**Pro Bono Ontario's** Medical-Legal Partnerships program, run in partnership with every children's hospital in Ontario, addressed health-harming legal problems. Triage lawyers embedded within clinical teams trained clinicians on how to identify legal problems and direct legal services to patients. In 2020, the program served 1641 people.

In 2020, **Pro Bono Ontario**, in collaboration with the **Métis Nation of Ontario**, began providing free legal services to Métis Ontarians who have civil legal problems, including family law issues, serving 36 people from October-December 2020. In addition PBO is providing legal issue spotting and legal triage training to frontline workers serving the community.

The **Canadian Bar Association** launched its Reaching Equal Justice Advocacy Guide. This guide is designed to empower CBA members to effectively advocate for greater access to justice. It summarizes key access to justice issues in Canada, and links to advocacy tools members can use to advocate for change including sample social media posts, key issue sheets, and sample questions.

## 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 Committee for Nova Scotia
- NFLD** Access to Justice Steering Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador