



**Legal
Services
Society**

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in British Columbia
since 1979

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Public Legal Information and Applications

2013 Community Engagement Evaluation

In 2013, the Legal Services Society completed an evaluation of its Community Engagement program. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the program was meeting its objective of enhancing access to justice in rural, remote, and Aboriginal communities. The engagement program consists of partnerships with community agencies. LSS provides each of the partners with a small, annual grant that enables them to expand their mandate and to help more clients through legal information, assistance with legal aid applications, and referrals to other resources. LSS builds strong relationships with its partners through initial orientation, regular webinars, an annual training conference, and office visits. The first year of the program focused on legal education and information, assisting clients to apply for legal aid, and helping the partners build awareness and strong referral networks within their own and nearby communities. These activities are a first step towards building communities with strong capacity to resolve legal problems.

LSS's work was guided by research that said people in smaller, isolated, and Aboriginal communities look to established and trusted organizations in their communities for help with difficult problems. With this in mind, the society's goal was to partner with such agencies. Partners include women's centres, immigrant agencies, advocates, First Nations, employment offices, community service centres, and more.

This evaluation looks at how those partnerships have worked and the difference they have made in their communities. Community leaders and intermediaries were asked about the impact of the new community partners. Forty-one percent said they filled a gap for needed in-person legal information and help. Another 25 percent identified the support provided to the most marginalized people in the community. In addition, 87 percent of community partner clients said they received the assistance they needed to resolve their legal problem. Community partners also said they valued their expanded mandate and ability to assist with a wide range of legal issues.

LSS is greatly encouraged by these results. The society believes the Community Engagement program is a sustainable model for supporting basic legal services in smaller communities and should be expanded as funding permits. LSS will continue to look for innovative ways to support other rural and remote communities to develop their capacity to assist in the timely resolution of individual legal problems.

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**Legal Services Society
Community Engagement Evaluation**

Final Report

4/25/2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legal Services society established the Community Engagement partnership initiative in 2010 in response to two strategic Board priorities to enhance community engagement and enhance Aboriginal services. The aim of the CE initiative was to increase community capacity in rural, remote and Aboriginal communities using trusted organizations to identify and address legal needs by building on existing resources and improved networking.

The following questions formed the focus of this evaluation:

1. Is there evidence that the program is on track to achieve the short-term objectives envisioned in the original plan?
2. Has the program been implemented as intended?

In order to respond to the research questions a mixed methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative methods, was used. Methods included online surveys with clients and CP's intermediaries, focus groups with CP organizations, and the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique.

Results

- A BC map indicates many CP communities also have a Law Foundation (LF) Advocate, an LSS local agent, or both. Many services are concentrated in southern BC. Many of these communities are still quite small and isolated, although there are CPs in larger urban centres, as well, particularly those with large urban Aboriginal populations.
- Crown Publications: Findings indicate that the number of publications increased by 20,310 (866%) across all CP communities in the first year of the CP initiative.
- Application and referral rates: Using data from CMS, a comparison of applications, referrals and referral rates for client cities was completed for the year before (July 2010-June 2011) and year after (July 2011-June 2012).
 - The analysis found no statistically significant difference between the two years for any of the three variables.
 - A community-by-community analysis found application numbers increased more slowly after the CP initiative (increases in 38% of the CP communities), however referrals increased in 50% of these communities. Therefore overall referral rates improved.
 - Consistent with past annual fluctuations in applications, volumes dropped by 821 (7%) in 2011-2012. However, referrals dropped by only 4%, meaning the combined referral rate was slightly higher (by 3%). A number of variables, including normal annual fluctuations in applications and referrals, and factors external to the CP program, could explain these findings.
 - In focus groups CPs indicated that a strength of the program is their ability to help clients who they know are ineligible (e.g. divorce), by redirecting and providing them with other assistance to resolve their legal issues. Therefore, slightly smaller numbers of people applying for legal aid may reflect the work of CPs who are redirecting and helping clients with other resources,
- CPs saw a total 3010 people in the first year (2011-2012). The issue types that CPs deal with most frequently are family issues (29%) followed by civil (20%), CFCSA (18%) and criminal (14%).
- CPs referred 2030 clients to the LSS website, 643 to a Legal Information and Outreach Worker (LIOW) and 1202 clients to do a legal aid application. Combined, CPs held 503 workshops, averaging 20 workshops per CP.

Focus Group results

- All agreed that the program contributed to their capacity to provide legal support, through increased hours, resources, outreach capabilities and simply by expanding the scope of their mandate. For some smaller communities, this was the first initiative to bring legal aid support back to their community.
- Administrative requirements and growing demand for services put strains on these organizations to meet the needs of clients. They identified a need for new outreach/ promotional materials.

Client survey results

- Of the 54 responses to the client survey, 52% (28) of respondents had experienced a previous legal issue in the past, 48% (26) had not.
- Of those who had experienced a problem, 89% sought and received assistance to help resolve it. Eleven (92%) of this group were satisfied with the help they received through legal aid, and one person was not.
- Of current legal issues cited: 45% had family issues, 28% cited 'Other' ('civil law) issues, 26% had welfare/disability, 19% criminal and 9% CFCSA.
- 87% of respondents said they received the assistance they needed to resolve their legal issue, while 13% (7) said they did not.
- Those who answered yes were asked what was most helpful: 34% said receiving information, 17% said talking to someone in person, 14% said applying for legal aid, 14% said referrals, and 10% said help filling out forms.
- Respondents were asked what barriers they face to accessing services, 26% said transportation, 17% indicated they did not know where to go (17%), and 9% had literacy issues.

Intermediary survey

- Most intermediaries agreed (79%) that there are many people in their communities with unmet legal needs. They cited Legal support for family law issues (42%), affordable lawyers/legal aid (37%), legal information/advocacy (34%) and legal support for civil law issues (18%) as the primary needs.
- 44% identified CP as their primary source for information about legal aid. Most use the CP to refer clients for legal information (81%), obtain legal publications and resources (63%), refer clients for help with legal aid applications (61%) and they receive referrals from the CP (28%).
- Intermediaries recommended CPs and LSS do more awareness raising and outreach for the initiative, suggesting more advertising (36%), workshops/meetings (26%) and targeted outreach to community organizations (21%) would enhance community awareness.
- Most said that all the services provided by CPs are important to meeting the legal needs in their community. 87% said helping clients identify when a problem is a legal issue, 91% said help identifying non-legal solutions to legal problems and 89% said legal information and publications were either important/ very important.
- Intermediaries identified the following as the greatest contribution that CPs make to their communities:
 - 41% fills a gap for needed in-person legal information/help
 - 25% helps the most marginalized people in our community
 - 15% workshops, outreach and resources
 - 9% located in community so clients do not need to travel

In summary, findings indicate the Community Engagement initiative is making a difference for people in rural, remote and Aboriginal communities across British Columbia. Particularly in smaller communities, there were few or insufficient legal resources available to help the people who need legal support the most.

INTRODUCTION

Legal Services society established the Community Engagement partnership initiative in 2010 in response to two strategic Board priorities to enhance community engagement and Aboriginal services. The goal of the program is to increase community capacity in smaller, difficult to reach communities throughout the province, particularly rural, remote and Aboriginal communities, using trusted and established organizations to identify and help address legal needs by building on existing resources and improved networking. After one year of implementation, LSS identified the need for an implementation evaluation to answer questions about the implementation and early outcomes of this initiative. The evaluation includes a mixed methods design to examine the first year of implementation (2011-2012).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Based upon existing research examining needs in remote and rural areas¹ that underscored the importance of using well established community intermediaries to reach people in these communities, LSS designed the Community Engagement (CE) partnership initiative. The CE partnership initiative contracts with community organizations in remote, rural and Aboriginal communities to facilitate legal aid outreach to underserved and hard to reach populations. Community partners provide access to public legal education and information materials, act as a link between LSS and people who need to apply for legal aid services, and raise awareness about legal aid in their communities. They do this through workshops, information dissemination and by receiving and making client referrals to other local community organizations. LSS provided twenty-four community organizations with contracts to carry out this work in 2011-2012. The total budget for that year was \$247, 460, and the average annual CP contract was \$10, 310. (Please see Appendix B for descriptions of these organizations).

Program objectives

Responding to two Board priorities (to enhance community engagement & Aboriginal services), PLIA created a plan in 2010/2011 to,

Implement a community engagement strategy that increases local agents' and intermediaries' capacity to help clients solve their legal issues, and increases public access to PLEI and legal aid intake, with an emphasis on rural, remote and Aboriginal communities.

For the purpose of this project, the terms "rural, remote and Aboriginal" are defined as:

¹ Reid, G. & Malcolmson, J. (2008). *Voices from the field: Needs mapping self-help services in rural and remote communities*. Justice Education Society. Retrieved, http://www.justiceeducation.ca/themes/framework/documents/Voices_from_the_Field_Final_August_2008.pdf;

Cohl, K., & Thompson, G. (2008). *Connecting across language and distance: Linguistic and rural access to justice: Final report*. Law Foundation Ontario. Retrieved, http://www.lawfoundation.on.ca/pdf/linguistic_rural_report_dec2008_final.pdf

- Remote: No legal services such as lawyers, advocates or court registries accessible by local transportation or within a driving distance of thirty to forty-five minutes.
- Rural: Areas where people do not regularly commute to an urban centre that has a regional LSS or local agent's office and regional court services.
- Aboriginal communities refers to both urban and rural Aboriginal communities.

Program goals

PLIA will know it has succeeded in implementing its strategy by meeting the following criteria:

- Community partnerships are created in at least 10 rural, remote or Aboriginal communities, at least five being Aboriginal.
- Community partners are satisfied with the training they receive to take on the new role.
- Awareness of LSS PLEI and intake services has increased where there are community partners.
- Intake applications have increased in areas where there are community partners.
- Number of publications ordered by community agencies and/or local agents has increased where there are community partners.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The scope of this evaluation will focus on the implementation and first year of Community Engagement activities to inform decisions about how to improve upon and continue to grow the Community Engagement partnership initiative at LSS. The evaluation period includes the time from the date partnerships contracts were implemented (July 2011) until July 2012. Since intermediate and long term program goals are not typically observable for 3-5 years after a program has been in operation, this evaluation focuses primarily upon measuring short term outcomes and operational issues.

Evaluation questions

To meet the objectives, the following questions formed the focus of this evaluation:

1. Is there evidence that the program is on track to achieve the short-term objectives envisioned in the original plan?
 - a. Have we increased awareness of PLEI and intake services in Community Partner (CP) communities?
 - b. Have we improved the capacity of CPs to assist clients with legal issues?
 - c. Are CPs satisfied with the support and resources provided?
2. Has the program been implemented as intended?
 - a. What population is the program reaching and are we reaching our target population (rural, remote and Aboriginal communities)?
 - b. What are the greatest challenges to implementation and how can we improve?
 - c. What is the most significant change in CP communities?

EVALUATION DESIGN

In order to respond to the research questions a mixed methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative methods, was used. Every effort was made to involve Community Partner organizations and other LSS stakeholders in the design and implementation of this evaluation, incorporating elements of participatory evaluation. Methods included online surveys with clients and CP's intermediaries in their communities, focus groups with CP organizations, and a Most Significant Change (MSC) approach. To supplement findings, the analysis includes information from program records and documents, including analysis of the CE partner's monthly reports.

This section will provide a brief overview of the method and sampling procedures.

DATA COLLECTION

Preliminary consultation

Prior to designing the evaluation framework, program stakeholders and community partners were consulted to seek input on the logic model and key questions for the evaluation. Consultation with community partners involved an informal focus group via webinar to seek input on the evaluation approach. Partners were asked to identify questions they felt were important, and data collection approaches they felt would be appropriate and feasible.

Program records

In addition to other methods, program tracking and monitoring documents were used to collect data measuring the impact of the program on the communities. These include:

- CMS data (Business Intelligence)
- Crown Publications data
- Community partner monthly reports
- Community profiles (provided at the beginning of the contracts)
- Development of a provincial map which plots CP locations in reference to Local Agents and other Community Advocates

Online surveys & focus group

Surveys and focus groups were used to collect information from the three key stakeholder groups: 1) Community partners (CP); 2) CP clients 3) CP intermediaries. Each received a slightly different survey based upon the indicators and evaluation questions to which they were best positioned to respond.

CP focus groups

Community partners were divided into 2 focus groups during the Fall 2012 Annual Community Partner conference in Vancouver. Community partners were asked to provide feedback regarding the program overall, training, resources and support. The LSS evaluation coordinator facilitated and recorded the focus groups.

Intermediary surveys

During consultations with Community partners, the CPs identified intermediaries in their respective communities as an important source for information about the impact that the program has had on the community. To obtain feedback from these intermediaries, a short 12 question survey was delivered online using Fluid Surveys.

To define the survey sample, CPs were asked to provide a list of organizations in their communities that use their services. Up to 5 organizations from each CP community were surveyed online. In total, contact information for 93 organizations in CP communities were collected. Of this group, 55 completed the online survey.²

Client surveys

Hearing from clients directly is essential to assessing the outcomes of services. Using an exit survey approach, clients were invited to complete a short survey after accessing a community partner's service. This approach was used in an effort to balance the desire to hear from clients directly, with the challenges to accessing this population. There are two main challenges. First, clients accessing CP services are facing very difficult times, and may not be in a position emotionally or psychologically to complete a survey. Secondly, many CPs are small, busy organizations and do not necessarily have the time or resources to assist clients with the surveys.

The online survey was designed to be as quick and manageable as possible to balance these constraints with the importance of hearing from clients. CPs were provided with a link to the online survey and an opportunity to provide feedback and review the survey via webinar in advance of the survey launch.

Client consent was gathered on the spot and was collected by each CP. Discretion was left to the CP to assess the needs of the client and determine whether to complete the survey at their office or send the client an email with a link to complete on their own time. Some CPs requested paper versions of the survey as they often worked in the community and did not have ready access to a computer. This was provided, and the CP was asked to input the survey information on their own, or forward to the Evaluations Coordinator. The Evaluations Coordinator remained available to conduct interviews by telephone if needed, although this did not happen. The survey period was two months, during which CPs were contacted regularly by the Evaluations Coordinator via email and telephone to address questions or help resolve concerns or problems.

The original sample target was estimated based upon the volumes reported in CP monthly reports, however during the survey period CPs reported that their client volumes were quite low. The survey was extended for a third month to accommodate for this. In total 54 surveys were completed online by CP clients, which is below the original targeted sample estimate. While this is not enough to constitute a representative sample of clients, it is enough to inform some conclusions about the impact this program has for clients. Results from surveys were analyzed using Fluid Surveys analysis tools.

² The population is unknown, and thus this is not a probabilistic sample.

Most Significant Change

An evaluator working with international aid organizations pioneered the *Most Significant Change (MSC)* evaluation approach as a strategy for evaluating grassroots community development initiatives at the local level in developing countries. The purpose of this approach is to learn more about program outcomes from the people who are closest to them. This participatory research approach gives those delivering and receiving the services an opportunity to identify and define the most significant outcomes for their local communities. This approach offers tremendous learning opportunities for all involved, particularly the funding/ coordinating organization, and is a highly effective means of identifying unintended benefits.

In a slightly modified version of the MSC method, Community Partners were asked to submit one story that describes the most significant change that has resulted from their community partner program. After all stories were submitted, a panel of 6-8 people from LSS were brought together to discuss the MSC submissions and identify the top three *Most Significant Changes* that celebrate the impact of this initiative.

As incentive for participation in this research, CP's who submitted a story were entered into a draw to win one of three prizes worth \$100.00 each.

Limitations

Funding programs can present many opportunities and challenges in evaluation, because they are arms-length from those who are receiving the services. Due to the physical distance between LSS and the remote communities funded under the CP initiative, many traditional evaluation methods were not feasible. For this reason, this evaluation capitalized on available technology, such as webinars and online survey applications to reach as many stakeholder groups as possible. While this is a strength, technology can also present limitations. With online surveys, response rates are often lower and there are more opportunities for error and misunderstanding because the interviewer/ survey administrator is not present to explain difficult concepts or troubleshoot problems. Also, in this particular evaluation, while the CPs were very supportive, and their connections to the community mean many have well established rapport with clients, they are also very busy and do not always have the resources to support a survey initiative. Some CPs simply did not have time to conduct surveys with clients. Also, some CPs in very remote communities did not have enough (or any) clients during the survey period in order to do the survey with.

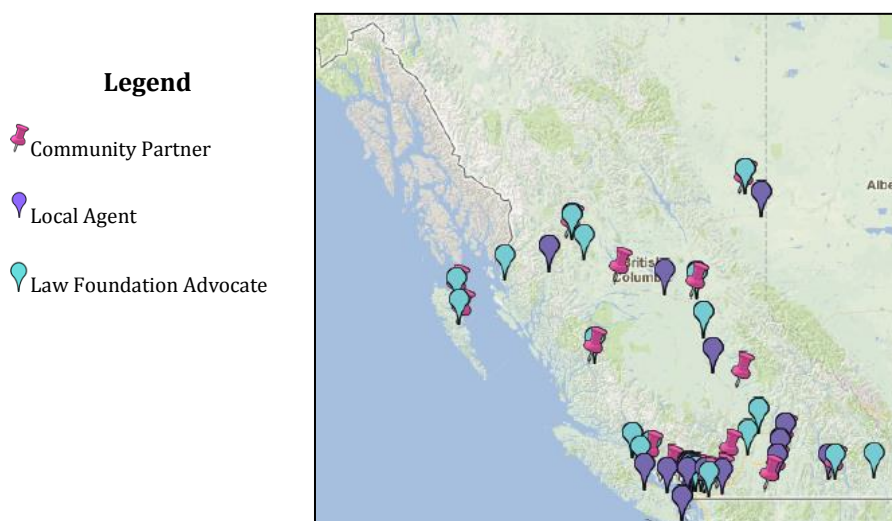
While there were no explicit concerns raised by CPs about the survey initiative, some did suggest that they did not feel that clients understood the CP initiative enough to be able to distinguish it from the other services provided by their organizations. Consequently, they felt the survey may not yield enough meaningful results about the program. Also, two CPs voiced their concern that many of their clients were in stressful situations when they were accessing services and did not feel comfortable asking them to complete a survey at this time. This likely affected response rates for the client survey.

RESULTS

COMMUNITY PARTNER LOCATIONS

One of the primary objectives of the community engagement initiative is to reach rural, remote and Aboriginal communities that may not otherwise have access to legal aid information or legal support services. The following map illustrates the locations that are currently served by an LSS community partner. To provide an indication of the other sources of legal aid information and support, LSS local agents and Law Foundation advocates are also noted on the map.

Figure 1: BC Map of LSS Community Partners, Local Agents and Law Foundation Advocates



This BC map indicates that many of the CP communities also have a Law Foundation (LF) Advocate, an LSS local agent, or both. In many smaller communities, the LF advocate and the CP are within the same organization, such as Bella Coola where they are the only organization providing these services.

Additionally, many of the services are concentrated in the southern portion of the province. This does not mean that they are in urban centres, as many of these communities towards the south are fairly isolated and do not have additional services, such as Boston Bar, Sechelt (the Sunshine Coast) and Hope. Also, some of the urban organizations, such as Prince George Urban Aboriginal Youth Outreach, specifically target the urban Aboriginal community.

The scale of this map is small, which obscures the distance between CPs and other services. Also, not all map markers are visible at this scale. To provide further context, inset maps are provided in the appendix and a link to the interactive map is available upon request.

CROWN PUBLICATIONS

One of the objectives of the CP initiative is to create a network of community organizations who are able to distribute Legal Services publications throughout their communities and to their clients. CPs are able to order publications through Crown publications as needed and are encouraged to

distribute them widely, to court houses, libraries and other community organizations. Crown publications tracks the number and type of publications ordered by each CP, facilitating a comparison of the number of publications ordered before and after the initiative in the CP communities. Findings from this comparison indicate that the number of publications increased by 20,310 (866%) across all CP communities in the first year of the CP initiative. Available data from the second year suggests this trend is continuing, as 12, 830 publications had been ordered as of March 1, 2013.

Table1: Total publications ordered by Community partners before and after the CP initiative

	Year (July 1 - June 30)	# of publications
Pre- Community Engagement	2009-2010	2,895
	2010-2011	2,653
After Community Engagement	2011-2012	22,963

MONTHLY REPORTS & PROGRAM DATA

To provide an overall picture of program activity across all 24 community partner locations, data from the Community Partners' monthly reports and LSS CMS (LSS' case management database) has been analyzed. One indicator of program success is increased referral rates and applications from CP communities.

Using data from CMS, a comparison of applications, referrals and referral rates for client cities where community partners are located has been completed for the year before (July 2010-June 2011) and year after (July 2011-June 2012). A sample of 75 communities were chosen based upon whether they are known CP communities (i.e. one of the 24 communities where a CP is located), or if they are a smaller community known to benefit from a nearby CP (e.g. communities that are visited by a CP that is in a neighbouring community or whose main court location is in a CP community). CPs in large urban communities (e.g. Vancouver) were excluded from the analysis, because their size would disproportionately skew any distribution. It is challenging to isolate any relationship between the CP initiative and the number of applications in all communities due the myriad variables that may influence the volume of applications, but it is nearly impossible to do this in large urban communities where there are more services available to people. The presence, or lack thereof, of a difference in application volumes is not enough to establish a causal relationship, but offers context to the overall assessment of multiple indicators.

A t-test was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the average number of applications, referrals and referral rates for these communities in the year before and the year after the initiative started. The analysis found no statistically significant difference between the two years for any of the three variables. However, a community-by-community analysis found that there were some communities with higher volumes of applications and higher referral rates in the year after the initiative was implemented. Of the 75 communities, 32 had more applications in 2011-12 than they did the year before the CE initiative was introduced (2010-11), 35 communities had fewer and 6 communities had no difference.

The table below focuses only on the communities where a Community partner is physically located (24 locations plus Hope and Gibsons, where a community partner visits regularly). In this analysis, a larger proportion of the locations had fewer application volumes in 2011-2012 (after the CP initiative began) than they did before the initiative. In the 26 communities, 17 had fewer applications and 9 communities had more. However, a larger proportion of these communities had more referrals (13) in the year after the CP program was implemented. Therefore, while application numbers only increased in 38% of the CP communities, 50% of these communities had improved referral rates.

Table 2: Number of CP communities with increase/decrease in application volumes

Number of CP communities (n= 26) with increase/decrease in application volumes before (2010-2011) and after (2011-2012)		
Change in volume of applications	Number of communities	Average increase/decrease of application volumes
Increase	9	12.5
Decrease	17	44

Although applications are down in a larger proportion of CP communities, the combined application volumes in the CP communities did not drop substantially. Consistent with past annual fluctuations in applications, volumes dropped by 821 (7%) in 2011-2012 from 2010-2011. However, referrals dropped by only 4%, meaning the combined referral rate was slightly higher (by 3%) for the CPs in 2011-2012 than the previous year. The table below presents findings from this analysis.

Table 3: Referral rates in Community Partner communities

Year (July 1–June 30)	Applications	Referrals	Referral Rate
2009/2008	11,919	8,782	74%
2009/2010	10,281	7,234	70%
2010/2011	10,980	7,907	72%
2011/2012	10,159	7,595	75%

A number of variables, including normal annual fluctuations in applications and referrals, and factors external to the CP program, could explain these findings. Indeed, this fluctuation appears consistent with past years (i.e. 2-4% annual fluctuations). Furthermore, this data does not capture whether clients were referred from a CP or another source. However, it would be expected that as awareness of legal aid grows in these communities (an objective of the CE initiative) applications would grow. Further analysis and ongoing monitoring of referral rates may reveal patterns over time and across communities that would support the conclusion that the CP program is influencing higher referral rates.

It should also be noted that measuring legal aid applications provides an indication of whether the program successfully improves access to legal aid representation, however it does not capture much of the other work that CPs do, particularly for people who do not qualify for legal aid.

Evidence from CP focus groups suggests that CPs are performing a triage/ pre-application assessment with clients and are therefore catching those who would not be eligible before they apply. CPs indicated that a strength of the program is their ability to help clients who they know are ineligible (e.g. divorce), by saving them the time from applying and providing them with resources and assistance to resolve their legal issues. Therefore, slightly smaller numbers of people applying for legal aid may reflect the work of CPs who are redirecting and helping clients with other resources, when they are not eligible. This interpretation does appear to be supported by the higher referral rates (increased number of successful applications) over previous years. Perhaps the assistance CPs provide with applications, both in pre-screening for eligibility and ensuring applications are complete, improves overall referral rates.

Types of issues

In monthly reports, CPs reported the number of people they assisted through the CP initiative, and provided some details about the issues they helped with. Data from these reports were coded and aggregated to provide a global assessment of the number and types of issues CPs assist people with.

According to the monthly reports, CPs saw a total 3010 people in the first year (2011-2012).

Table 4: Number of clients and type of legal issues in first year (2011-2012)

July 2011 – June 2012		
Legal Issue	# of clients	% of clients
Aboriginal Rights	19	1%
Assistance with Legal Aid	30	1%
CFCSA	533	18%
Civil	596	20%
Criminal	430	14%
Family	863	29%
Gladue Information	27	1%
Human Rights	2	0%
Immigration	16	1%
Unspecified ³	494	16%
Grand Total	3010	100%

The issue types that CPs deal with most frequently are family issues (29%) followed by civil (20%), CFCSA (18%) and criminal (14%). The distribution of issues was similar for the first 5 months of the second year, as outlined in the table below.

³ Some CPs reported the number of clients overall, and did not itemize by type of issue. These were recoded as “Unspecified”.

Table 5: Number of clients and type of legal issues in second year (2012 – 5 months)

July 2012 – December 2012		
Legal Issue	# of clients	% of clients
Aboriginal Rights	14	1%
Assistance with Legal Aid	22	1%
CFCSA	242	14%
Civil	310	18%
Criminal	196	11%
Family	519	30%
Gladue Information	10	1%
Human Rights	1	0%
Immigration	9	1%
Unspecified	428	24%
Grand Total	1751	100%

CPs also reported the number of people that they referred to other legal aid services, including for legal aid applications, a LIOW or to the website. The table below contains the total number of referrals in each category made by all CPs between July 1, 2011-December 31, 2012, as well as the average and median number of clients referred by each CP per month.

Table6: Type of referrals made by CPs (Total) July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2012 (18 months)

	Referred for legal aid application	Referred to LIOW	Referred to LSS website
Total # of clients	1202	643	2030
Average # of clients a month per CP	3	1	5
Median # of clients a month per CP	2	1	3

CPs referred 2030 clients to the LSS website, 643 to a Legal Information and Outreach Worker (LIOW) and 1202 clients to do a legal aid application. CPs were asked to identify the number of clients who knew that the organization provided legal aid assistance. Of those clients asked (2432), 64% (1564) knew they could get legal aid assistance before attending.

In addition to referrals, CPs also reported on the number of workshops they held in their communities to promote legal aid or distribute legal aid publications and information. Combined, CPs held 503 workshops from July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2012, with an average of 20 workshops per CP in that time (range from 2 – 74 workshops). Workshop topics ranged from tenant resources, legal rights, legal aid services, family law issues, employment insurance, Aboriginal legal issues, child protection/welfare and criminal legal rights. Locations included malls, community meetings, symposiums, libraries, schools, elders organizations, health fairs, and legal clinics and other community events (e.g. picnics, church gatherings).

FOCUS GROUPS

At the beginning of the focus group, the Community Partners were provided with a goal statement that they had submitted to LSS when they initially received the contract one year before (2011). At that time, they had been asked to consider what their goals were for Community Partnership. CPs were then asked to reflect on whether, a year later, they had achieved those goals and to elaborate on the successes and/or challenges they experienced to achieving them. The findings from both focus groups were coded and are summarized into themes in this section.

Successes

Better capacity / foundation of knowledge about LSS PLEI materials

The partners felt they had developed a strong understanding of the variety of LSS PLEI materials, which many of them had indicated was a goal for the program. In particular, the Family Law in BC website was cited as an essential resource to their work and clients, and that the CP program has enhanced their capacity to support clients to use this website.

For example, one partner mentioned that the CP program expanded the scope of their mandate enough that they could now help clients they were otherwise unable to help. This CP indicated that clients often came into their employment/ immigration program but would also have family law issues. In the past, they were unable to help them due to the limited scope of their mandate and lack of resources. Now, they are able to provide resources to those clients and help them get support for their family law issues (which are often intertwined with their other issues). Other CPs agreed that they now have more time to help clients with family related issues, including helping with referrals to legal aid and have greater availability to assist clients in emergencies. Most CPs concurred that there is a very large gap in services for Family Law, and the CP program is helping to fill that gap.

The CP initiative has also supported the community by giving other organizations a place to refer clients who need help with legal issues. CPs indicated that prior to this program, clients did not have a direct connection to legal aid, and this created a barrier for many. They stated that, in the past, they were able to provide the phone number and website, but did not have resources to follow up and assist clients. Community Partners are now able to do the follow up and one-to-one support, which has not been available since regional legal aid offices existed in many of their communities. This benefits clients and the community by speeding up the court process (i.e. fewer adjournments because clients have paperwork/ representation in order faster with help from the CP) and providing support for people who “don’t fit” traditional coverage requirements for legal aid (e.g. DUI, family). Furthermore, they can reach people who would otherwise not have help and are able to increase overall outreach to surrounding smaller communities / reserves. Follow up is also important, as many of the people require on-going support, particularly people who have disabilities or lack the means to keep up with the demands of the system.

Challenges

Ongoing support and resources

Overall, many CPs indicated that the need for legal aid support is greater than the resources they have available. While all agreed that the program has brought much needed support, many

expressed the view that as more people are becoming aware of their work, the demand for services is outpacing their resources.

One concern shared by both focus groups was the administrative and participation requirements of the CPs, which presents a challenge to their ability to meet the growing needs of clients. They expressed concerns about the monthly reporting, and some suggested that quarterly reporting may be more feasible. They also indicated that the reporting forms are onerous, and they felt that a re-design of the reporting process may make it more efficient and feasible.

Related to this, was a discussion about webinars. While many agreed the webinars are valuable, partners felt that the webinars could be improved in two key ways. First, the scheduling is important, not all partners are available at the times they are offered and consequently some people miss the webinars. Efforts have been made to vary the date and times of webinars, however some partners suggested running the webinars more than one time to give partners options for participation. Others also indicated that more advanced notice of webinar dates and times would help. Some suggested making the webinars optional, as not every webinar is useful.

Secondly, it was suggested that the CPs be given an opportunity to provide input into the webinar topics. This would ensure that webinars are both useful and relevant to CPs, and will help LSS address their training needs. This is connected a larger conversation about training. CPs indicated that ongoing training opportunities would be beneficial, particularly for CP organizations where there is turn over in the position. Participants voiced the perspective that, as diverse organizations, they have varying training and support needs. Overall, they suggested moving away from a “one-size-fits-all” approach, to one that is slightly more tailored to their diverse needs. LSS has endeavored to enhance access to the webinars by making them available online for partners to review afterwards.

Confusion about CP role in community

Both groups independently raised a concern about the promotional outreach materials. CPs stated that clients were confused by the outreach cards and poster that tell clients they can get legal aid at their organizations. All CPs recognized that the approach was taken to communicate in simple and straightforward terms that clients could get help with legal issues there, but they were concerned that it left clients with the impression that the CP organization could provide more help than it actually could. Participants indicated that the term “legal aid” means legal representation to many clients, they do not understand that it also includes legal information and resources, which contributes to the confusion. The partners provided examples about clients who became upset because they could not get a lawyer or legal aid directly from the CP. In one case, a woman who had received one of the CP cards which read “apply for legal aid here” waited to contact the CP until shortly before her court date because thought she would simply get a lawyer there. The woman became upset when she had to go through the application process with the call centre, and did not have a lawyer in time for her court appearance.

CPs suggested that the language on the cards and poster could be clarified with more specific language that distances the CP from “Legal Aid”, while still conveying the message that they can get legal help and assistance accessing legal aid.

Summary of focus groups

In summary, the focus group discussions provided a forum for discussing whether the program, as implemented, is helping partners achieve the goals they set when they started the program and whether LSS is achieving its objectives of bringing legal aid support to their communities. The general sentiment between both groups was that the outcomes of the first year were mixed, as they experienced both successes and challenges in achieving their goals. All agreed that the program contributed to their capacity to provide legal support, either through increased hours, resources, outreach capabilities and simply by expanding the scope of their mandate enough that they could support their existing clients in more ways. For some smaller communities, this was the first initiative in many years that endeavored to bring legal aid support to their community, and for those it had the greatest impact.

At the same time, the administrative requirements and the already growing demand for services put strains on these organizations to meet the needs of clients. These findings suggest that improvements could be made to the administrative aspects of the program to increase efficiencies and perhaps additional flexibility around webinars could be provided. Perhaps a follow up focus group, or consultation process with partners about webinars and reporting would elicit new options for enhancing the reporting process and webinars/training.

SURVEYS

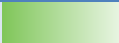




Client survey

Results from the client survey are summarized below. Again, there were 54 respondents who were asked 10-15 questions about their legal issue, the assistance they sought and general questions about their access to legal assistance.

Previous Legal Problems

The survey asked respondents about the nature of their current and past legal problems. Of the client sample, 52% (28) of respondents had experienced a previous legal issue in the past, 48% (26) had not. Of those who had experienced a problem, 89% sought and received assistance to help resolve it. This group received help from the following sources:

Table 6: Sources of assistance for past legal issues

Response	Chart	%	#
Legal Aid		48%	12
Community organization		40%	10
Family/Friend		0%	0
Lawyer (Private)		28%	7
Other, please specify...		28%	7
Total Responses			25

Those who indicated that they had contacted legal aid (12) in the past were asked a series of follow up questions about their experience, including how they accessed Legal Aid. Five (42%) stated they had contacted legal aid in person, while three (25%) used the telephone and another 3 (25%)

contacted legal aid through another organization. One person contacted legal aid through all three. Eleven (92%) of this group were satisfied with the help they received through legal aid, and one person was not.

Those who were satisfied provided information regarding why. Three were happy that they received a lawyer, when they otherwise would not have been able to afford one. One person felt that they legal aid lawyer influenced the outcome of their sentence. Two people were satisfied because they received information that they needed.

The person who was not satisfied offered the following comment, expressing frustration about the challenges of navigating the system:

"It is hard to find legal assistance, and if you have learning challenges it is difficult to navigate who to contact, and how to receive assistance. Unless you have experience within the system, or have an individual assisting you, it is very overwhelming to get the help you need..."








Of the three who did not seek help for their legal issue, one stated they "did not know they had a legal problem" and the other indicated "tried to get help, but there were no services available."

Current legal problem

In addition to past legal problems, the survey included questions about respondent's current legal issues for which they were seeking assistance from the Community Partner.

Respondents learned about the CP from the following sources:

Table 7: Source of information about LSS Community Partner

Response	Chart	%	#
A friend/family member told me about it		24%	13
I was sent from another community organization.		22%	12
I was here for another issue and they told me I might need legal assistance and offered to help		20%	11
Other, please specify...		11%	6
I saw a poster that said you can help with legal issues.		9%	5
I always knew I could get help here with any problem		7%	4
I found you on the internet		6%	3
		Total Responses	54


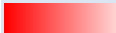





Most found out about it through a contact or another organization. Those who specified other sources, identified their lawyer, another staff member at the agency, their psychiatrist/counselor and one person stated they found them while they were at their local mall.

Transportation is an indicator of accessibility, so the survey included a question asking how respondents accessed the community partner. Of 54 respondents, 31% drove their own vehicle, 17% walked to their Community partner's location, 20% used public transit and 11% got a ride

from a friend or family member. Interestingly, three people indicated they accessed the partner remotely by telephone (2) or internet (1).

With respect to the current issues faced by CP client respondents, they indicated they were seeking help for the following legal issues:

Table 8: Legal issues faced by Community Partner clients

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Family		45%	24
Other, please specify...		28%	15
Welfare/ Disability		26%	14
Criminal		19%	10
Housing		9%	5
Child protection / Child welfare		9%	5
Employment		2%	1






“Other” issues primarily included civil issues, such as debt, housing (eviction), health, wills & estates, and employment insurance, as well as immigration and child benefits.

Respondents were then asked whether they received the assistance they needed to resolve their legal issue, to which 87% (47) answered “Yes”, while 13% (7) said “No”. Of those who answered “No”, the reasons they cited included,

- Legal Aid office was closed (they would follow up the next day),
- The CP provided information and resources for other services (including Family LawLine and a pro bono lawyer’s service) they could contact.
- They needed representation (Legal aid income cut off is too low).

Respondents who answered “Yes” to the question asking whether they had received the assistance they needed to resolve their legal issue, were prompted to explain what aspect of the service was most helpful to them. Answers provided were coded into the following categories:

Table 9: Community Partner Services that were most helpful








Response	Chart	%	#
Receiving information about legal aid/ my legal issue		34%	16
Talking to someone in person		17%	8
Help applying for Legal Aid		14%	7
Referral to another organization for help		14%	7
Help filling out forms/ paperwork		10%	5

Access to services and use of technology

The survey asked respondents a series of questions about access to technology and services, in an effort to identify the barriers that these people experience in accessing programs and assistance. This information is helpful in providing information about the population that Community Partners are reaching, and identifies barriers to access that this program is helping to overcome.

All respondents were asked to identify any barriers they have previously experienced that make it difficult for them to access support or services. Their responses are summarized in the following chart:







Table 10: Barriers to accessing services

Response	Chart	Percentages	Count
Transportation		26%	14
Did not know where to get help		17%	9
Other		11%	6
Literacy or language barriers		9%	5
Health or disability issues		5%	3
Legal Aid does not cover areas of law v		5%	3
No computer or internet access		5%	3

Of those who experienced barriers, results indicate that transportation is one of the most common, followed by not knowing where to get help. “Other” barriers included, no income or not enough money to get legal assistance, lack of childcare and reluctance to ask for help.

With respect to internet access 63% (34)of respondents indicated that they did have access to internet, 37% (20) did not. Those who did not have access cited the following reasons:

Table 11: Reasons why clients do not use internet

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
I do not have access to the internet		42%	8
I do not know how to use the internet		21%	4
I prefer to talk to somebody, rather than read		16%	3
Other, please specify...		11%	2
I do not like to use the internet		5%	1
I have trouble reading online		5%	1

Of those who do have access to internet (n=34), 62% have it at home, 21% access it at a library or community organization and 12% access it on a mobile device (e.g. smartphone). Respondents with internet were also asked if they would use the internet to get help with a legal problem, 71% (24) stated they would. Those who did not (n=10) stated this because they did not know where they would look online, that they would rather speak to a real person, had language barriers or that they had difficulty knowing what information to look for.

Client perspectives about the contribution that community partners make to their community
Finally, respondents were asked to reflect on the contribution that the Community Engagement initiative makes to their community. Many clients indicated that their CP organization was the only place they knew of to seek assistance of this type:

“It makes a huge difference because I do not know where else I can turn.”

"I don't know how my legal issues would be resolved without the assistance of this program. Before this program, I felt like I was searching for assistance without finding any. I felt frustrated knowing that my child was in a position of vulnerability and I could not find anyone to talk to. I searched many organizations including non-profit groups, the police and even churches and nobody knew how to help me."

Another person noted that the CP offers a safe and comfortable atmosphere:

"[I'm] not scared to come here"

Some responses suggested that the accessibility of CP organizations, particularly for those with transportation or accessibility barriers is the greatest contribution of the CP initiative.

"I have difficulty getting around physically and understanding things mentally. It meant at lot less strain mentally and physically on me."

"Due to losing my licence, I have not been able to drive and work (because my job required me to drive). I do not have the money for a bus to [nearby city] to meet with duty counsel, and I do not have a computer or use the internet so going to [this organization] to meet with someone in person was very helpful to me."

"Being in a small community, it was very helpful to get assistance locally to get myself applied for Legal Aid representation. Otherwise, it would mean travelling to a larger centre to seek assistance."

"Means everything, I can't get through the system due to a stroke I suffered from last year."

Other respondents indicated that the CP support for legal issues that Legal Aid can't cover, or in-person information about legal aid and support for applications was most important to them.

"Saves me a lot of money as I cannot afford a lawyer and am able to access the paperwork needed to file my divorce."

"Direct person to person contact with legal aid coordinator. This is more helpful than just over the phone assistance because you are able to show your documents to the worker. Sometimes person to person also helps make it easier to explain my issues or concerns."

Community partners also provide many referrals to Legal Aid services and other community organizations:

"I did not know there is a Family Law Line to call. It was helpful to have a list of legal services I can access."

Intermediary Survey






The results of this survey highlight the perspectives and experiences of local organizations who work in the same communities that CPs are located. These organizations were asked to provide general information about the need for this type of program in their community, their awareness of the CP program and the contribution that this program makes to their community. They were also asked to provide suggestions for how to improve access to legal information and meet the needs of people in their communities.

Community needs

Community organizations possess grassroots knowledge about the needs and resources available to people in their communities, and therefore are best positioned to provide an indication of the needs and services available to meet those needs. A series of questions on this survey asked intermediaries to describe the level of need for legal aid/ legal support services in CP communities and to provide their perspective on the availability of services to meet those needs.





The first question asked intermediaries whether they agreed or disagreed that “*there are many people with unmet legal needs in this community*”. Their responses are as follows,

Table 12: Agree / Disagree “There are many people in this community with unmet legal needs”

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree		44%	24
Agree		35%	19
Neutral		15%	8
Disagree		4%	2
Strongly Disagree		2%	1

Of the 54 responses, 44% strongly agreed that there were unmet legal needs in their community. 35% (19) agreed, and only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Those who responded strongly agree or agree were asked a follow-up question to identify what those needs were. Their qualitative responses were coded into the following categories for analysis.

Table 13: Legal Needs in CP communities






Needs identified	Chart	%	#
Legal support/ services for Family Law		41%	18
More affordable lawyers/ access to legal aid funding		37%	16
Legal information / advocacy services		34%	15
Legal support /services for Civil law issues		18%	8

Over 1/3 or respondents (37%) identified the need for more affordable lawyers and legal aid funding to support clients through legal representation. This group of people indicated that there was a need for more face time with lawyers, expanded legal aid eligibility (i.e. higher income threshold, more service coverage). Many of the intermediaries (34%) also felt that there was still an unmet need for legal information and advocacy (e.g. help with forms, navigating the system, applying for legal aid) based services in their communities. They stated that the court system is too confusing for many clients who face a broad spectrum of serious barriers, and that they require someone to assist them with the process, particularly when they are ineligible for legal aid or

cannot find a lawyer. They also identified the legal aid application process as confusing, which highlighted the need for one-to-one support with applications. Finally, two themes that were evident throughout the responses from intermediaries was the need for family law services (41%) (advocacy, legal information and representation) and civil law services (19%) (e.g. debt, Estates and Wills).

To further probe this question, intermediaries were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the community has many resources to support people with legal needs. As would be expected based upon findings on the last question, their responses suggest there are not enough services in most CP communities.




Table 14: Agree/ Disagree “This community has many resources that people can access for help with legal needs”

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree		5%	2
Agree		17%	7
Neutral		21%	9
Disagree		40%	17
Strongly Disagree		17%	7

There were, however, 22% who felt that there were many resources available, and 21% who were neutral about this question. Therefore, it would appear that some CP communities are well resourced to meet the legal needs of clients.

Further to this, the survey asked CP intermediaries to identify other services that were available to help people resolve their legal and related problems. Their responses were coded and quantified to offer another measure of the level of support available for people in the CP communities.

Table 15: Number of services to help people with legal needs in CP communities

Response	Chart	Percentages	Count
3-5 Other services		24%	13
No other services in community		22%	12
The CP & 1-2 other services		46%	25




Twelve (22%) organizations responded saying there were no other services in their community to address legal needs, and 46% identified only 1-2 other services in their community. Many services identified included RCMP Victim Services, Native Court workers, other advocates, duty counsel /local lawyers and Community resource centres and local clinics where people can receive paralegal advice 1-2 days a week.

Community awareness of CP initiative

Another evaluation objective focused on the question of whether communities were aware of the role and services of the community partner. To respond to this, the survey included a few questions that asked about their knowledge of and their perceptions of the broader community's awareness of the LSS CP, as well as their use of those services.

The first question asked intermediaries about how they learned that the Community partner was offering this service, as a measure of their awareness of the initiative but also provides feedback as to what the common modes of communication are for spreading information about these initiatives.






Table 16: Intermediaries' primary sources of information about CP initiative

Source of information about CP	Chart	%	#
Community meeting/ forum		7%	4
Outreach to organizations in community		27%	15
Word of mouth		59%	32

Most intermediaries (59%) learned of the initiative through informal communication channels, whether through their CP or other community organizations. Next, 27% of respondents identified the outreach activities as their first point of contact with the community partner and 7% learned about the initiative through community meetings or forums.







The next question asked about their primary source for information about legal aid. Most (44%) indicated that they received most of their information through their local CP. However, 27% stated they used the internet, including the LSS website, online newsletters (ELAN) and unidentified websites. The other sources identified included other community organizations (workshops, brochures), LSS publications and through the local courthouse and/or local lawyers.

Table 17: Intermediaries' primary sources of information about legal aid

Response	Chart	Percentages	Count
Through the local CP		44%	24
Internet (LSS Website)		27%	15
Other community organizations		20%	11
Publications by LSS		11%	6
Through the local courthouse or lawyers		7%	4

Next, respondents were asked to identify how they worked with and used the services of the local community partner.

Table 18: How CP services are utilized by other community organizations






Response	Chart	%	#
Refer clients to CP for legal information		81%	44
Obtain publications and legal resources to provide to clients		63%	34
Refer clients to CP for help with Legal Aid applications		61%	33
Receive referrals from the CP organization		28%	15
Other, please specify...		22%	12
I do not refer/ receive referrals from CP		2%	1
Total Responses			54

Almost all intermediaries (81%) stated that they refer clients to the CP for legal information, while 61% say they refer them for help with Legal Aid applications. 63% of respondents indicated that they obtain publications and legal resources that they use to give to their own clients, while 28%

they also receive referrals from the CP organization. Of those who responded “Other”, six stated that they use information from the CP for their own newsletters and the rest listed specific issues they send clients to them for (e.g. help with child custody issues, help with domestic violence, assistance with pension issues and applications).

In the next section, intermediaries were asked for their perceptions of whether the rest of the community was aware of the services provided by the Community Partner. In response to the question “would you say that people in your community are aware of and understand the role of the community partner”, 65% said “yes” and 35% said “no” (of 54 responses). Those who replied “no” were probed with a follow up question asking what could be done to enhance awareness of the CP initiative. Their responses were coded into the following categories:

Table 19: Recommendations for enhancing community awareness of CP initiative

Response	Chart	%	#
More community advertising (e.g. posters)		36%	7
Workshops, meetings, events with other organizations		26%	5
Targeted outreach to community organizations		21%	4
Establishing formal relationship/ referral process with local organizations		10%	2
Provide services in language		10%	2

36% feel that more advertising through posters, newspapers and newsletters would enhance the profile of the CP. 26% felt visibility would increase through public events, such as CP led workshops, community meetings or other information sharing events. A few organizations felt that more outreach and liaising with community organizations was needed, and two (10%) stated that formal referral processes would strengthen their ability to work with the CP. An additional 2 (10%) highlighted language barriers as a challenge to reaching out to some communities.

Community Engagement contribution to community

The last section of the survey asked respondents to reflect on the contribution made by the CP initiative services and what aspects of the service are most needed / valued in their community. They were also asked to consider how services could be enhanced to improve access and meet the needs of clients.

Intermediaries rated the various services that CP intermediaries provide on how important they are to meeting the legal needs of people in their communities. The following chart presents findings from this question:





Table 20: Ratings of services by importance to meeting the legal needs of people in the community

Services	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Total Response
Legal information and publications	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	27 (51%)	20 (38%)	53
Workshops and information sessions/tables	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	8 (15%)	27 (51%)	13 (25%)	53
Help identifying when a problem might be a legal issue	0 (0%)	5 (9%)	2 (4%)	19 (36%)	27 (51%)	53
Help identifying non-legal solutions to legal problems	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	28 (53%)	20 (38%)	53
Help finding a lawyer	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	22 (42%)	23 (43%)	53
Help applying for Legal Aid	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	17 (32%)	29 (55%)	53

Generally, most respondents felt that all services provided by the CP were important or very important. 55% felt that Help applying for legal aid was very important, and 32% felt that it was important. 51% felt that both Legal information and publications and workshops were important, and 51% indicated they viewed helping clients identify when a problem is a legal issues as very important. Consistently there were 2-6% of respondents who felt that their services were only somewhat or not at all important to meeting the legal needs of people in the community. Nine percent (5) felt that help identifying when an issue is a legal problem is only somewhat important (0) responded that it was not at all important.

An open-ended question asked what the most important contribution was that the CP initiative brought to their community that otherwise would not exist. Based upon responses, these responses were coded into four categories and are outlined in the table below.

Table 21: Greatest contribution of CP initiative

Response	Chart	%	#
Fills gap for needed in-person legal information /help		41%	21
Helps the most marginalized people in our community		25%	13
Their workshops, outreach and resources are most helpful		15%	8
It is located in this community, clients do not need to travel		9%	5

The availability of in-person assistance with legal issues and legal aid applications was the most commonly identified contribution. This is often because people do not know where to start when they are facing a legal issue and do not know where to access help. The CPs fill that gap in many communities. For example, one person replied:

"Most of the people we deal with who need legal aid do not have the ability or knowledge to access legal aid. The CP has greatly alleviated that problem and the number of people coming to Court saying they have not yet contacted or cannot contact legal aid has diminished considerably. This has helped smooth out and speed up the Court process which is to everyone's benefit."

An additional 25% noted that the CP initiative accesses and helps the most marginalized members of their community, often because they are trusted and able to establish rapport with people who are inherently distrustful of many people in the legal system.





“The CP has built a trust relationship with several Aboriginal people in the community and has a good relationship working with the band.”

Additionally, some CPs have expertise dealing with specific issues, such as spousal violence, or can provide services in particular languages that can help overcome barriers that may prevent people from accessing help.

Improving access to legal aid and meeting the needs of clients

As a final question, intermediaries were asked to reflect on what more LSS could do to meet the needs of people in their communities through the CP initiative. The responses were coded into the following categories:

Table 22: What additional work can LSS do to meet the needs of people in CP communities

Response	Chart	%	#
Work to enhance accessibility of legal aid & advocacy services in all areas		60%	30
Enhance scope and range of CP services		34%	17
Help with forms and providing legal information		28%	14
Continue /enhance these programs in smaller communities		6%	3

Many intermediaries (60%) felt that people in their communities need more lawyers and advocates to represent their interests. Their suggestions included enhancing the amount and scope of Legal Aid coverage, particularly to include more for family and civil law. An additional 34% suggested expanding the scope and range of CP services, to increase hours and expand outreach to smaller communities in their area. Finally, 28% felt that continued or enhanced support for providing legal information and support with legal aid applications and the court system were needed.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

The most significant change component of the evaluation was modified slightly from the full MSC approach. Community Partners were asked to submit only one story that illustrated the most significant change that the CP initiative has contributed to in their community. CPs were asked to consider and choose one of the following domains of change to frame their story with the question:

What was the most significant change to [Change Domain] as a result of the Community Engagement initiative?

Domains of change included:

1. Your clients' awareness & access to Legal Aid
2. The capacity of your community to help people in need of legal assistance
3. Your organization's ability to fulfill its mandate, or meet the needs of clients
4. Any other large changes not captured by other domains

Once partners submitted their stories, a panel of seven LSS representatives reviewed the stories and used a consensus based approach to select the top three most significant change stories from the submissions. The following three stories were chosen and a short explanation describing why each story was selected is included.

MSC story #1: Serving the underserved: Bringing services to the clients

Our Legal Advocacy Office in Chilliwack travels to Hope, BC once a month to provide information and assistance to clients in the Hope area. We have two spaces that we use in Hope, BC. One of these spaces is at the Thunderbird Motel Project. This project is supported housing for people who are chronically homeless or at risk of being homeless. The motel is situated about a 30-45 minute walk to downtown Hope. Clients have difficulty getting into town to receive services, so we are one of the service providers that goes to them once a month.

A lot of the residents of the Thunderbird Motel are actively using drugs or alcohol, have mental health issues and tend to get themselves into difficulties with the criminal court system. Not only that, but they have trust issues with anyone in a position of authority. Since our start with the LSS Community Engagement contract, the clients at the Thunderbird now know that they have access to call and get Legal Aid coverage and to have someone walk through the system with them.

The closest court house to these clients when they are charged with a crime is a 40-50 minute drive, as is the closest Legal Aid office. Since we began this LSS partnership, residents at the motel now know me as the “Legal lady” and come to me with a variety of issues, asking where they should go or who they should call. This partnership has allowed these hard to reach clients to access and navigate the system more easily and they now know of someone to come to if they have any questions.

This story was selected because it demonstrated how this program enhances access to legal aid in underserved communities and builds upon the capacity of existing organizations to reach out to people in hard to reach places. When the people who have the greatest need for services are not able to access the services, due to physical or socio-economic barriers, simply bringing those services to them can make a profound difference. Furthermore, the moniker “legal lady” suggests that this community partner is making a great contribution to the community at the Thunderbird motel as she has established rapport and trust, breaking through some of the barriers that alienate many people from seeking assistance.

MSC Story #2: Accessing the inaccessible: rural & Aboriginal communities

Klemtu is home to the Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nations. It is a very remote and isolated island community on the central coast of BC – north of Port Hardy and south of Prince Rupert. Just over 200 people live on-reserve there. Klemtu is located on Swindle Island and there is no road access; access is by boat or floatplane only. There are two primary options to travel between Bella Coola and Klemtu:

- a charter flight (45 minute flight; approximately \$800 each way)
- a charter flight to Bella Bella (30 minute flight; approximately \$500 each way), and then travel from there to Klemtu by boat (2 hour boat ride; approximately \$200).

Klemtu is a community where it is common for people not to have a phone in their home. Travelling outside the community to access services is not an option for most people living there.

There are no local police in Klemtu. Police come into the community for a couple of days every 2 weeks, and have little or no connections or relationships with community members. Circuit court comes to Klemtu only twice a year. There are some serious criminal matters that happen there, and the people involved (the accused persons, victims, and their family and community members) sometimes wait months for the circuit court team (judge and lawyers) to hear these matters.

There is no place in Klemtu where a person can go to apply for Legal Aid in person; the only option is to apply by phone, if you have one. Many of the Elders in Klemtu speak their traditional language and are not fluent enough in English to manage a Legal Aid application by phone. Even for those who are sufficiently fluent in English to manage a phone application, many of them find phone applications confusing and intimidating.

The Circuit Court team that visits Klemtu (and neighbouring communities such as Bella Coola, Bella Bella, Wuikinuxv) found that it was extremely difficult (“like pulling teeth”) to get people in Klemtu to make Legal Aid applications – until I started visiting Klemtu as part of my LSS community partner work. Being able to see people face-to-face makes all the difference: I can help “work them through” the Legal Aid application, and the Circuit Court team is thrilled that I am able to facilitate the intake applications. Before I started doing this as part of my community partner role, the Circuit Court team would often arrive for court and find many unrepresented parties attending, because they had either not made or not completed their intake application and therefore didn’t get a Legal Aid lawyer in time for their hearing date. Now that I am supporting people in Klemtu in making Legal Aid applications, the Circuit Court team is finding that more people have lawyers to represent them at their hearings. For me, this is the most significant change as a result of the community partner work I am doing in my area:

Klemtu finally has help with legal aid applications.

Providing support to existing community organizations in rural communities, enhances their ability to reach out to their communities and provide support where there is virtually nothing. Klemtu has historically lacked access to services, and this story illustrates how the CP initiative is making a big difference in small communities that it is not often economically or logistically feasible to reach.

MSC Story#3: Enhancing capacity: Resourcing communities & helping people resolve legal issues

The third MSC story was chosen for slightly different reasons. The preceding two stories illustrate the community wide changes that the CP initiative contributed to, bringing services to difficult to reach and underserved populations. The third story was chosen because it illustrates the impact that the CP initiative has for the individuals who seek support from these organizations. In particular, those people for whom there are no or very few options, the CP initiative can make an enormous difference by building their capacity to participate in resolving their legal needs.

In many ways, being an LSS Community Partner means that our program is funded to do things we would do anyway - such as refer people to LSS resources and give out LSS publications. We have always taken LSS resources with us whenever we give workshops or presentations in the region. As Community Partners, though, we are able to spend more time at outreach. I do believe this has been effective in letting other agencies know about LSS resources in general, particularly in more isolated small communities. As well, it lets us spend more time with individuals going through LSS resources that are pertinent to their particular issue. We have had a number of clients with whom we've been able to take much more time as a result of the Community Partner funding. Here is just one example.

A woman came in looking for help with a family law problem. She is a single parent of 3 children and was getting no child support. She worked part-time at a low wage job. The father had a good job. She finally got to the point of feeling able to do something about getting child support, and did not know where to start. We have a "West Kootenay Family Law Resources" sheet which includes LSS' family law website and the family law advice line. But instead of a brief "in-the-hallway" explanation and reference to the website and advice line, I was able to spend a bit of time with this woman. We sat in my office and went through the website together. We looked at fact sheets and at forms and the explanations of how to fill them out. All this took about 45 minutes or so. Physically seeing the information was there and that she could access it at home, at the same time as having me talk and be supportive, made a huge difference for her. At the end, she was in tears. They were tears of relief and of understanding. She said "Oh, I can actually do this; I can do this by myself." It was very moving. I gave her my card and told her she could call about any problems she encountered. She has not called. I would be willing to bet that she now has a child support order.

We have had other examples of assisting individual clients with LSS resources somewhat more than we would otherwise be able to do. The most notable for me personally, just recently anyway, was a man with a disabling mental health condition who was charged with assault with a weapon. He had no idea what to do. Were we not a Community Partner, we would have told him how to apply for legal aid representation, encouraged him to do so, and left it up to him to do it. As a Community Partner, I was able to telephone the Call Centre myself with him there. I'm not sure he would have done it otherwise.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary findings indicate that the Community Engagement initiative is making a difference for people in rural, remote and Aboriginal communities across British Columbia. Particularly in smaller communities, there were few or insufficient legal resources available to help the people who need legal support the most. The Community Engagement initiative extends a hand to some of the most marginalized, people in isolated rural communities with limited access to transportation, telecommunications and limited means. By providing existing community organizations with resources to do this work, clients have a place to go where they know and trust that they will get the support they need. For those who are not able to call legal aid on their own, there is a person who can walk them through that process face to face. The CP initiative helps alleviate the alienation that often creates a barrier to services for many people.

There were also challenges and areas where this program can be improved.

1. **CP Locations:** The analysis of CP locations indicates that there are still many rural, remote and Aboriginal communities throughout the province where there are limited or no services available. For example, there are noteworthy gaps in the Kootenays and the far northern regions of the province.

***Recommendation:** Consider strategies for expanding the network of services in a manner that will service as many small communities as possible. This may include placing CP organizations in rural/ remote communities that can provide support to a network of smaller local communities in their region.*

2. **Enhancing outreach:** The surveys and focus groups findings indicate that there is still some confusion in the communities about the existence and role of CPs. In particular, some intermediary organizations and some clients were slightly confused or not aware of the CPs role or spectrum of services. Additionally, some CPs indicated that they had some difficulty drawing interest for their workshops on legal aid/ legal rights. Alternatively, some intermediaries expressed a need for more workshops in their community. Related to this, was the confusion raised about the CP outreach material, and the confusion that it created for clients who do not necessarily understand the difference between the CP and legal aid.

***Recommendation:** Hold a consultation with CPs regarding new outreach materials and support for developing new outreach strategies to people and other organizations in their communities. This may include webinars that bring CPs together to brainstorm workshop topics/ materials, to discuss experiences with outreach and share tips and resources. CPs will have ideas about framing the language on the cards and posters to minimize any chances for confusion.*

3. **Administrative requirements:**

- a. **Reporting process:** The CPs felt that the reporting process was time consuming and did not necessarily make sense for their organization (for example, some

organization do not collect client data the same way). Through the evaluation process, it became evident that the data collection process does not meet LSS' needs as well.

Recommendation: *Re-design the data collection form in consultation with partners and LSS program stakeholders (CP coordinator, manager and LSS Policy and Planning department) to ensure program reporting meets the needs of all.*

- b. **Webinar requirements:** CPs indicated that the webinars are useful, but some have difficulty attending (due to lack of time, or scheduling conflicts). Suggestions for addressing this included making webinars optional and/or offering them more than once so all can have the benefit of attending. CPs also expressed an interest in providing input about webinar topics, to enhance their usefulness.

Recommendation: *Engage in a review of the purpose and objectives for providing webinars and consider whether any of the CP suggestions are feasible. Once review is complete, consult with CPs to develop an approach that enhances the benefits of these resources.*

- 4. **Enhancing resources:** Currently CPs indicate that there is not enough funding to meet the needs of their clients. This is supported by the findings from the intermediary surveys where 79% of these organizations indicated that they observed many people with unmet legal needs in their communities. CPs also feel that demand is growing for their services as more people and organizations become aware of their services, and that this demand is outpacing their resources.

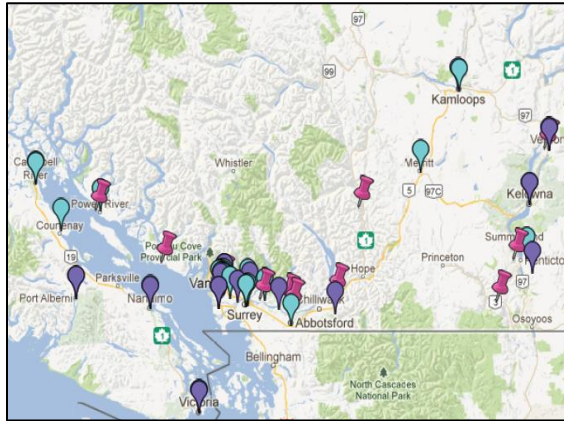
Recommendation: *Consider options for maximizing the financial efficiency across the community partners. This may include putting more resources in communities where demand for services is higher or growing.*

- 5. **Ongoing program monitoring:** Findings from the analysis of applications and referrals suggest that the CP initiative may have a positive impact on referral rates. This finding is supported by the focus group information from CPs, who indicate that they use their knowledge to pre-screen potential legal aid applicants (supporting ineligible clients in other ways), and are able to assist those who do apply to ensure their applications are complete and accurate. This has some potential to improve efficiency in applications and saves some clients time and energy applying when they don't meet basic eligibility requirements. However, the higher referral rate observed in this analysis of one year's worth of data is not enough to draw any conclusions or infer a causal link. More data is needed, and over time, could provide empirical evidence regarding this question (negative or positive).

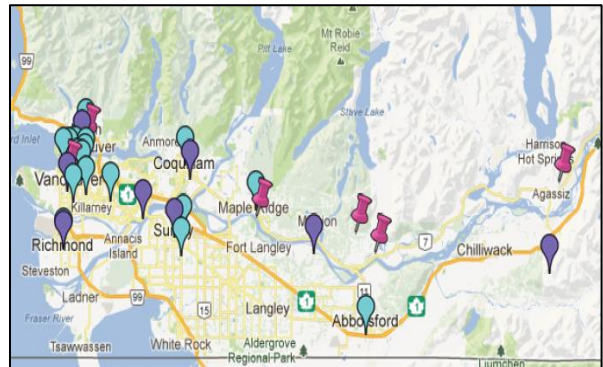
Recommendation: *Continue monitoring the referral rates for CP communities annually to assess this question.*

Appendix A: BC maps with CP Locations, Local Agents and Law Foundation Advocates

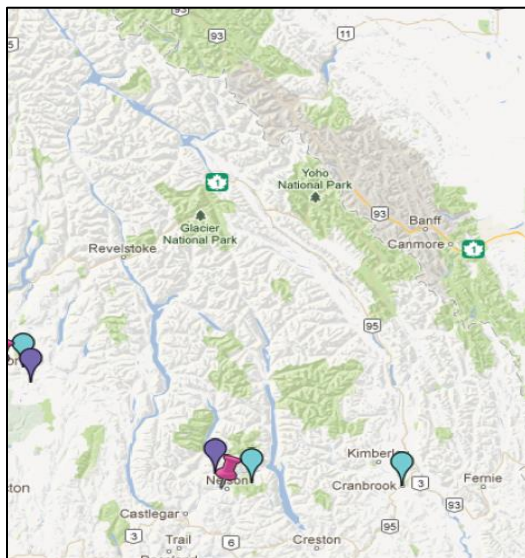
Southern regions of British Columbia



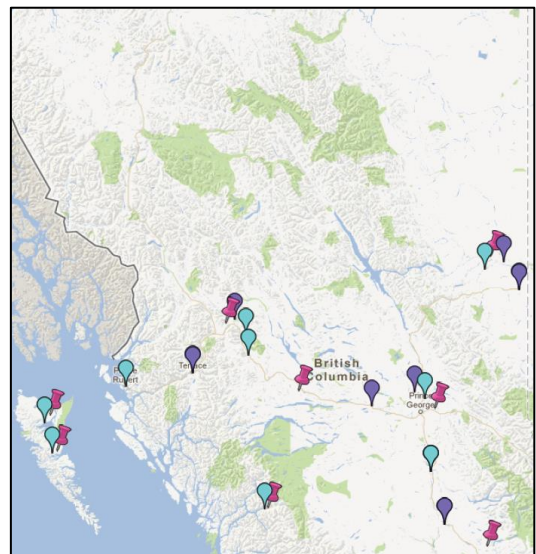
Lower Mainland



East Kootenay region



Central, North & Northwest regions



Legend



Appendix B: LSS Community Partners 2011 – 2013

1. 100 Mile House & District Women's Centre Society

Is a 24/7 safe house that offers multiple violence prevention services. As an LSS community partner, they are able to offer legal support and resources to clients and the broader community.

2. Abbotsford Community Services – Anti Poverty, Advocacy and Addictions Services.

The Community Legal Advocacy Centre, part of the multi-service Abbotsford Community services, was able to expand their services to provide LSS CP services in Abbotsford and Chilliwack as well as outreach services to Hope, Agassiz and Mission.

3. Abbotsford Community Services – Multicultural and Immigrant Integration Services

Also part of Abbotsford Community Services, this department provides advocacy and legal information services to new Canadians and other multi-cultural populations. They were able to expand their range of legal information and outreach services to this population.

4. Atira Women's Resource Society (Vancouver)

Atira provides a variety of services to women and children impacted by violence in Vancouver, Surrey/White Rock and New Westminster. With the LSS contract, Atira contracted an Aboriginal lawyer to run a legal information clinic (2 hours/week) in one of their downtown eastside locations.

5. Boston Bar First Nation

Boston Bar is a small First Nations community on the Fraser River; the nearest LSS local agent is in Abbotsford (148 km away) or Kamloops (212 km away). Internet service is available through a regular telephone line and is intermittent with regular outages. The community partner program is located in the local Band Office and the community partner worker also provides outreach services to 7 other First Nation communities in the Fraser Canyon: Spuzzum, Boothroyd, Siska, Kanaka, North Bend, Skuppa, and Lytton.

6. Canim Lake Band

Canim Lake is a very small First Nations community, semi-isolated from most services. The community partner contract has given the community's restorative justice advocate another means of going out into the community and provide assistance to people in need.

7. Elizabeth Fry Society (Burns Lake)

This agency provides a safe house in Burns Lake for women and children coming from abusive situations. They provide counseling and general support, including clothing and help looking for work. The community partner contract has given the agency additional staff time to provide even more help and information for women and children who come into the office.

8. Haida Gwaii Legal Project Society

This community partner program is operated out of 2 on-reserve office locations on Graham Island, Haida Gwaii: Old Massett and Skidegate. Both community partner workers are also legal advocates, well-known in their respective communities, and this contract has given them additional time to spend helping people with legal needs.

9. Lower Similkameen Community Services Society (Keremeos)

This agency is well established in their community, providing a broad range of community services for children, youth, and adults, including mental health services, literacy, housing, victim/witness

services, and counseling. As a trusted organization, the CP contract has enhanced their capacity so they can assist people with legal aid applications and offer legal information

10. Michael Reed Law Corporation (Vanderhoof)

Michael Reed is an Aboriginal lawyer with a family law, criminal law and real estate practice in Vanderhoof. He is the LSS local agent for Vanderhoof and Fort St. James. This community partner contract gives him additional time each week which he can direct towards added outreach to community members in Vanderhoof and remote First Nation communities in the area.

11. Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services

This multi-service agency provides a variety of programs and services to people in Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows. In addition to providing resources and information, the community partner worker works one day a week at this agency, providing direct client contact and legal information, resources and referrals.

12. Nelson CARES (The Advocacy Centre)

The Advocacy Center has been operating for over 20 years, providing advocacy services to people living in poverty. The community partner contract has given the advocates additional hours each week to concentrate on community outreach and to help clients learn about and navigate the LSS family law website.

13. Nicola Valley Advocacy Centre (Merritt)

The NVAC provides legal advocacy services to low-income clients in the Nicola Valley, ranging from information and referrals through to full representation. This contract has given them the funds to hire an additional worker (one day/week) to reach out to other service providers and organizations in the community as well as to outlying areas.

14. North Shore Community Resources Society (North Vancouver)

This is a multi-service agency that offers information and referral services for child care, affordable housing, families, and seniors. The community partner contract has provided for public legal education workshops, one-on-one client support with legal information, legal aid applications, PLEI materials and referrals to legal services.

15. Penticton & Area Women's Centre

This agency provides a resource centre offering information and advocacy. The community partner contract provides additional hours to one part time staff member to conduct community outreach and information/education about Legal Aid services and resources, including distribution of publications.

16. Powell River Employment Program Society / Community Resource Centre

Providing a broad range of resources, services and supports to community members. With the community partner contract they are able to help with legal aid information and referrals.

17. Prince George Urban Aboriginal Justice Society

This agency provides Aboriginal restorative justice programs for adults and youth. As a result of the community partnership contract, they now also offer legal aid information, resources and referrals.

18. Seabird Island Band (Agassiz)

The community partner program at Seabird Island is located in the main Band administration office on-reserve, in an area that is the civic centre for the community. They are a community hub for all

types of services for the Sto:lo Nation (24 member bands). The community partner provides legal information, outreach and help with legal aid applications to community members from all the Sto:lo Nation communities, not just Seabird Island members.

19. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (Fort St. John)

This provincial agency has an office in Fort St. John that provides free immigration settlement services to newcomers including free one-to-one consultations and form-filling assistance, referrals to local services, and enhanced support. As a Community Partner, they offer support to clients who need to apply for legal representation, as well as giving access to legal information and resources.

20. Sunshine Coast Community Services Society (Sechelt)

This agency provides many support programs to Sechelt and surrounding community members, including counseling, parenting support, FASD support, and violence prevention / transition house support. The community partner contract has filled a big gap, providing funding for a service where clients can receive assistance contacting legal aid or accessing legal resources.

21. Social Health and Economic Development (SHED) Society of Bella Coola

This agency provides legal advocacy services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of Bella Coola, Anahim Lake and Bella Bella. The community partner contract has increased their capacity to expand service to Klemtu, and address the lack of legal services available to those communities' members through direct support with legal aid, referrals to legal aid services, distribution of LSS written resources and public legal education presentations.

22. Trail Family and Individual Resource Centre Society (FAIR)

This multi-service agency offers a broad range of programs and services, including specialised victims services and legal information. The community partner contract has enhanced this organization's capacity to do outreach, strengthening existing community relationships and establishing a formal place for people to get help applying for legal aid.

23. Upper Skeena Counselling & Legal Assistance Society (Hazelton)

USCLAS accepts legal aid applications and provides legal aid representation (they are the LSS local agent in Hazelton), and provides poverty law information, referrals, and representation (they host a Law Foundation-funded advocate). Being an LSS community partner gives them additional time needed to distribute public legal information and build community knowledge and capacity to support people with legal needs.

24. Vernon Women's Transition House Society

This agency provides support services to women and children impacted by violence and abuse, as well as justice and legal advocacy programs, including a free legal clinic. The community partner program has enabled the organization to raise awareness of LSS services and increased legal aid access for the entire community.