

April 21, 2016



## Update Report TAG – The Action Group on Access to Justice

### **RECENT ACTIVITIES**

#### **Reference Group**

The next Reference Group is scheduled for April 21, 2016.

#### **Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead**

From April 5-7, TAG Manager Sabreena Delhon attended *Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead*, a conference held in Edmonton that brought together mayors, municipal staff, federal and provincial/territorial representatives, Indigenous leaders, staff from various community change initiatives as well as citizens with lived experience of poverty. The conference was sponsored by a range of organizations including the City of Edmonton, Tamarack, the McConnell Foundation, Maytree and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. It was a valuable opportunity to learn about the work of other collective impact initiatives and situate access to justice within a broader poverty reduction context. Details from the conference can be found [here](#).

#### **Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters**

TAG participated in meetings convened by the Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (NAC) in Montreal from March 3-4, 2016. The first day focused on broadening NAC's membership, improving communications and exploring fundraising options. The second day brought together provincial and territorial representatives to share updates on their access to justice work and brainstorm ways that NAC could best support their efforts. TAG was represented by Grant Wedge (Executive Director of Policy, Equity and Public Affairs) and Julie Mathews (Executive Director of Community Legal Education Ontario) with support from Sabreena Delhon (Manager, The Action Group on Access to Justice). A report about [TAG's activities in 2015](#) was prepared for the session. Additional details about the meetings can be found in Tabs 2.1-2.4 of the April 2016 Access to Justice Committee materials.

#### **Code Across Toronto**

TAG was one of the "challenge-owners" at CivicTech Toronto's [Code Across Toronto](#) event on March 5th. Held on International Open Data Day, the event brought together 75 coders, designers, urban planners, government staff, policy makers and other specialists to explore ways that technology could advance collaboration toward public good. Attendees were tasked with developing solutions to various challenges relating to health, housing and education. TAG's challenge to the group was to create a tool that would compile relevant legal information, referrals and tips into a printable report that users could review with a trusted intermediary or legal service provider. A prototype of the tool was developed and next steps are being explored. The event was an excellent opportunity to connect with a community that is using technological approaches to solve social problems.

## **Student Recruitment For Summer Public Engagement**

TAG is looking for student volunteers to survey people about the legal system. Last summer TAG coordinated an access to justice booth over two days at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. It was a great opportunity to share resources from Legal Aid Ontario, Community Legal Education Ontario, the Law Commission of Ontario and other partners. We also learned a lot about how people approached law in their lives. This year we are expanding our efforts and hitting summer events across the province to learn more about what people in Ontario think about our legal system. How can we make it better? Where should we start? We are recruiting student volunteers to help us engage the public in the following cities: Thunder Bay, Windsor, Sarnia, London, Guelph, Waterloo, Toronto, Ottawa, Kingston and St. Catharines. In-person or remote training will be provided in late May and the maximum time commitment including training is ten hours. Students from all disciplines and departments are welcome. To date over 100 students have signed on for this initiative.

## **Ryerson University's Legal Innovation Zone Family Law Reform**

Last fall Ryerson University's Legal Innovation Zone embarked on a four month Community Collaboration initiative with the aim of identifying reforms for family dispute resolution in Ontario that would benefit parents and children of separating families. A final report from this initiative was released in February 2016 and is available on the [Legal Innovation Zone website](#).

## **CLUSTERS**

### **Digital Inclusion**

Members of the Digital Inclusion (formerly Inclusive Technology) cluster have circulated a survey to members of the Reference Group and legal technology experts. The purpose of the survey is to better understand the ways that technology can be used to increase access to justice for all – particularly for those on the wrong side of the digital divide. Results from the survey will inform a related event that will be held in the fall.

### **Libraries**

TAG recently partnered with the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service North to survey librarians about the access to justice needs of their patrons. Early findings were recently presented in an article on *Slaw* titled "[Access to Justice - the Data Moment](#)". An excerpt is presented below:

"So far we've learned that patrons are most often self-represented and turn to their librarians to understand what steps they should take to address their legal problem. They often do this when they have received a formal document such as an eviction notice or statement of claim. Patrons typically bring these documents with them to show the library staff. We've also learned that housing issues and problems accessing government benefits are some of the main reasons that patrons turn to their librarians for guidance. In the past four weeks, we have received over 160

responses with 90 per cent of those respondents indicating they would like training on how to spot legal issues, find reliable legal information and make effective referrals to legal assistance.”

### **Indigenous Justice**

TAG has convened a cluster that examines the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care in Ontario through the lens of reconciliation and access to justice for First Nations, Métis Nation and Inuit Peoples. A First Nation consultant with expertise in Indigenous community engagement is coordinating activities. This cluster brings together Ontario focused organizations and agencies responsible for Indigenous children and youth such as the Association of Native and Family Services Agencies of Ontario, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth – Ontario, Office of the Children’s Lawyer – Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies. Other participants include elders, Indigenous and other mandated caretakers, Chiefs of Ontario, Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres, Inuit Tapiritt Kanatami, Métis Nation of Ontario and the Law Society of Upper Canada’s Indigenous Advisory Council.

A youth engagement session was held on March 4, 2016 in Toronto. Participants had experience with being in care and noted that cultural sensitivity, professional accountability and the need for greater accessibility to pre-apprehension resources were key areas for improvement. Other engagement sessions are in development and key community and policy recommendations slated for delivery in late 2016. For more information please visit the [Indigenous Justice page](#) of the TAG website.