



Annual Report 2016 - 2017

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About People's Law School

People's Law School is a non-profit society in British Columbia, dedicated to making the law accessible to everyone. We provide free education and information to help people effectively deal with the legal problems of daily life.



Our vision

Our vision is a province where people have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to resolve everyday legal matters. What does this look like? It means that British Columbians have access to legal information and education that is in **language they can understand**, that helps them develop **skills and attitudes to seek solutions**, and that **empowers them to take action**.

Strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities address the law-related information needs of British Columbians:

- **To secure program and project funding** to support the public legal education and information needs of people in British Columbia.
- **To use technology efficiently and creatively** to increase access to and the impact of public legal education and information.
- **To improve internal and external communication** to increase awareness and access to public legal education and information.
- **To develop tools to measure and assess impact** of public legal education and information.
- **To enhance community alliances and partnerships** that strengthen awareness and access to public legal education and information.
- **To recruit the best people** to facilitate, promote, develop and distribute public legal education and information.

Our history

Founded in 1972 by a committed group of UBC law students, People's Law School was the first organization in Canada dedicated exclusively to educating the public about the law.

Report from the Chair



On behalf of the Board and staff of People's Law School, I am pleased to share our 2016-2017 Annual Report. Inside you'll get a view of our activities and accomplishments throughout the year and discover the impact that PLS had in the community.

The past year was successful for PLS. We developed and launched a new brand and tagline to express both who we are and what we strive to help people do: "work out life's legal problems". The People's Law School made significant contributions to access to justice by providing new and updated education and information resources on the law throughout

British Columbia.

Chief among these resources is our new website which we are excited to launch in June 2017. We think this resource is a "game changer" in the BC public legal education community, with its unique mix of interactive technology, tips and problem-based, practical information. We are especially grateful to the Law Foundation of British Columbia for its support in the development of what we are confident will become a valuable resource for all British Columbians.

I would like to acknowledge our staff, current volunteers and members of the Board for their service to People's Law School during the year. Special thanks to Joan Letendre, Notary Public, an outgoing member of the Board, for her more than 10 years' contribution of time and talent to PLS.

Together with your support and that of our funders and community partners, we look forward to advancing in years to come a strong program for public legal education and information in British Columbia.

Hassan El Masri
Chair

Report from The Executive Director



In 2016-2017 we moved significantly ahead in our work to provide British Columbians with resources to help them solve their everyday legal problems. We listened to the comments of people who rely on our booklets and our website, and we took what we learned to make major changes to improve them.

A transformational project grant from the Law Foundation of British Columbia enabled People’s Law School to build a new website that will launch in June 2017. This website offers a fresh approach to delivering information to the public on everyday situations that have a legal aspect—such as writing a will or buying a used car. We put the information in language you can understand, with examples based on real-life situations and tips to avoid or resolve problems. Information on the site is easy to find and – above all – practical. The goal: to encourage people to deal with their legal issues.

You’ll notice a change in our print publications too, the result of work undertaken throughout 2016-2017. Booklets now reflect the following principles that guide our presentation of information in all formats:

- **User-centred:** with language and reading levels a person can understand
- **Engaging:** photos, user stories and tips
- **Practical:** practical steps to solve legal problems
- **Authoritative:** lawyers, notaries and other experts review and update our content.

And the new brand: during the year People’s Law School developed and unveiled the new brand you see in this report. We designed it to capture, in word and in image the spirit that motivates us: to provide a diverse public with practical, reliable resources to help “work out life’s legal problems”. Our new brand is fresh, colourful and uncluttered. It’s a strong visual link to our approach of presenting complex legal information in a straightforward way.

People’s Law School’s accomplishments throughout the year have been made possible through the generous funding of the donors recognized in this Annual Report. Their financial contribution has a direct impact on the lives of British Columbians who rely on the information we provide. We thank them as well as the many volunteers who have worked tirelessly to create and deliver our resources. We are grateful for your support.

Patricia Byrne, BA, JD, MBA
Executive Director

**“Work out
life’s legal
problems.”**

**We believe that British
Columbians should
understand the legal
issues that are a part of
everyday life.**

With the right tools, we can take control over our lives and avoid or deal with legal problems if they come up.

**61,500 booklets
distributed throughout BC**

With grants from our funders, we distributed 61,500 booklets on everyday legal problems to British Columbians directly and through community and public organizations.



**57,237 visits to our
booklets online--up 22%
over previous year**

Using wiki technology, our booklets are accessible to all British Columbians across multiple digital platforms.

80 classes helped almost 2,000 British Columbians learn about the law

In partnership with our volunteer lawyers, notaries and community agencies, we offered free classes on common legal problems.



For teachers, students, community groups: Justice Theatre

79 performances and forums staged for groups across BC, Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan.

New curriculum resources developed--lesson plans, background information and activities.

New Brand

We developed a new brand that's fresh, colourful and uncluttered. It is a strong visual link to our approach of presenting complex legal information in a straightforward way.



Key Priorities During the Year



New Information: Create it, update it and make it easy to use

This year PLS focused on developing new resources on common consumer problems including buying a car, signing a cellphone contract, or hiring someone to perform a service. Our approach is to

- identify the typical problems encountered with a purchase
- provide information on the relevant law
- offer practical suggestions for resolving – or avoiding – the problem
- include sample documents to assist with the process.

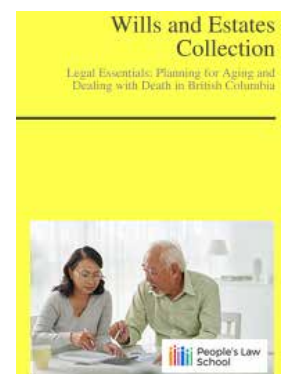
We developed this information for our new website, and included condensed versions in our print booklets. Over time, we'll build on our website content, with additional legal topics and problem-solving information and tools.

In addition to our consumer law resources, PLS updated the popular titles *Scams to Avoid* and *A Death in Your Family*. Updating these titles ensures they are legally accurate – but it also includes rewriting the material to be clearer, to provide more

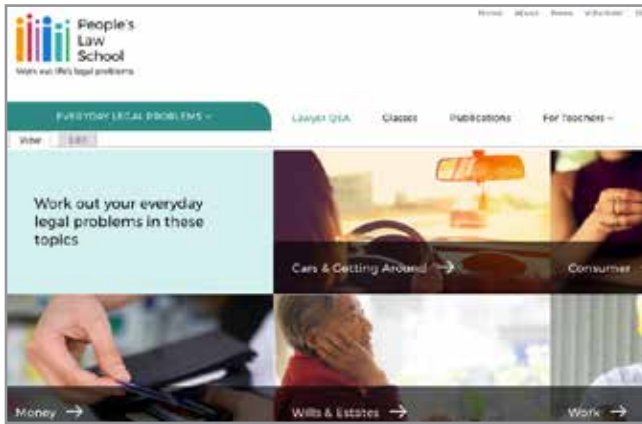
step-by-step guidance and tips, and to add user stories.

Our goal is to encourage readers to take action to resolve/avoid legal problems.

We also consolidated into one bound book (the *Wills and Estates Collection*) our four publications, *Power of Attorney*, *Writing Your Will*, *A Death in Your Family* and *Being an Executor*. Copies of the *Wills and Estates Collection* will be distributed to libraries throughout the province, for use as a reference tool for the public.



“It is laid out so the regular guy can understand the process. I thought it was excellent, thank you.”



New Website: Improving our platform for information delivery

Although print continues to be an important medium for PLS resources, the web has grown in prominence with us as a platform for information delivery. During the year, we developed peopleslawschool.ca, a new content-rich site that

- focuses on everyday legal problems
- is written in clear conversational style
- contains a balance of text, graphics and interactive elements
- provides tips and sample documents to help the user take action

In addition, the site houses PLS publications, information on classes and Justice Theatre sessions, and a public question-and-answer forum. The forum will enable the public to submit their questions about the law and view answers posted by PLS volunteer lawyers, notaries and other experts.

After extensive user testing, the site was substantially completed by the end of the year, with its public launch scheduled for June 2017.



More Resources for Teachers and Students

Drama is an effective way to tell “the big story”– the principles that underlie our legal system, the rule of law and the role of judge and jury. PLS’s Justice Theatre program offers schools and community groups dramatized portions of a criminal trial that are performed by professional actors. Commentary by justice experts accompanies the drama and highlights the educational elements of the performance.

With generous financial support of the Law Foundation of Ontario, PLS partnered with Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Education, Law and Society to create curriculum resources for Justice Theatre. The resources include lesson plans, background readings and exercises for the intermediate classroom to Grade 12. The resources encourage students to explore big ideas and investigate problems, to apply critical thinking processes, to take action and to engage in community action.



In-Person Service Delivery

Since 1972, thousands of volunteers and staff have delivered face-to-face services to British Columbians seeking law-related information. We do this primarily through our free classes for the public on law-related topics, our participation in outreach events and our information and referral services offered on a drop-in basis at our Vancouver office and by phone, mail and email.

Our classes and outreach events serve multiple purposes: they educate the public/answer questions about common legal issues; they raise general public awareness of PLEI resources and services provided by the key organizations in the sector; and they act as distribution points for PLEI materials.

During the year, we reached 3549 British Columbians through our classes and outreach services, and provided an additional 2233 persons with information and referrals. Working in Vancouver and with our partner organizations throughout BC, we help build stronger communities with our in-person information services.



Improving Systems and Technology

During the year, we migrated our office productivity systems, including email, to the Google platform. The result is a more stable, reliable and efficient system that supports collaboration and information exchange. This migration has also enabled us to improve our reporting capability so that we can better manage information to use in guiding our decisions and communicating with our stakeholders.

“These courses are highly informative and useful to the public.”

“Thank you for providing this valuable service”



Collaborating Across the Sector

Highlights of our participation in sector-wide events during the year include:

- in September 2016, we staged a successful Open House attended by upwards of 150 members of the public and PLEI stakeholder organizations. The Open House featured a pop-up computer lab to demo features of the new website, a Justice Theatre Presentation and a class on a wills-related topic.
- developing and staging 18 classes delivered around the province in conjunction with Law Week
- promotion and participation in the Provincial Court of BC's "Twitter Town Hall"
- working with our PLEI sector partners to create common publishing standards for resources, and to identify and implement common measurement and evaluation guidelines to assist with our work



Funding and Finance

This year we delivered on our strategic objective to secure program and project funding to support the public legal information needs of people in BC. We secured core funding from the Law Foundation of BC, the Department of Justice Canada and the Province of British Columbia. In addition, we received project grants from the Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia, the Law Foundation of British Columbia and the Law Foundation of Ontario.

Effective financial analysis and reporting are essential to guide our operating decisions, report to funders and support our activities to obtain additional sources of funding. Our finance staff and Board members successfully supported us throughout the year with the financial analysis and decisions required to enable us to close the year with a balanced budget. As a result of careful cost containment and resource management, we did not have to draw down on interest earned on monies held in our Endowment Fund in order to balance our budget.

2016-2017 Highlights

Our Funders

The People's Law School enjoys financial support from a range of funders. We thank all of the organizations and individuals who contributed to us during the year.



Department of Justice
Canada



BC Notaries
A TRUSTED TRADITION



Our Board of Directors

Hassan El Masri, Chair
Joan Letendre, Vice-Chair
Guy Belanger, Treasurer
Dean Tate, Secretary
Madam Justice Kate Ker
Amandeep Sanghera
Cindy Switzer
Grant Christoff
Mara Tessier

Why People's Law School?

- ✓ Leader in public legal education since 1972
- ✓ Professional management, with legal and business training
- ✓ Community board and membership attuned to public information needs
- ✓ Committed to best practices and innovation in resource development

“Very informative performance. I teach high school law and thought I knew a lot, but it became clear to me that the traditional adversarial method can be intimidating and stressful for all, including the victim. From this performance I saw how restorative process can be better for all.”

“It was an excellent performance. I am wondering if every school plays this theatre. It would be very helpful for them. Well done.”

Our Staff

Patricia Byrne, Executive Director
Drew Jackson, Legal Content Developer
Kathryn McCart, Education & Referrals Coordinator
Ula Lipska, Accountant & Administrator
Rob McAninch, Justice Theatre Coordinator
Jaime Burford, Education & Referrals Assistant
Elena Renderos, Publishing & Web Assistant

“What you do is so important to making the legal system accessible to more British Columbians.”


Financial Statements

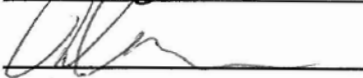
PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL: THE PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT MARCH 31

Exhibit A

				2017	2016
	Operating Fund	Capital Fund	Endowment Fund	Total	Total
CURRENT ASSETS					
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 106,951	\$ 5,880	\$ 29,573	\$ 142,404	\$ 300,113
Short term investments	-	-	185,000	185,000	-
Accounts receivable (Note 4)	20,454	-	-	20,454	17,300
Interfund loans (Note 5)	16,051	-	(16,051)	-	-
Prepaid expenses	7,303	-	-	7,303	2,283
	<u>150,759</u>	<u>5,880</u>	<u>198,522</u>	<u>355,161</u>	<u>319,696</u>
CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 6)	-	16,929	-	16,929	25,940
	<u>\$ 150,759</u>	<u>\$ 22,809</u>	<u>\$ 198,522</u>	<u>\$ 372,090</u>	<u>\$ 345,636</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (Note 7)	\$ 28,677	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 28,677	\$ 30,927
Deferred revenue (Note 9)	130,176	5,514	-	135,690	119,286
	<u>158,853</u>	<u>5,514</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>164,367</u>	<u>150,213</u>
NET ASSETS					
Invested in capital assets	-	17,295	-	17,295	20,889
Unrestricted	(8,094)	-	-	(8,094)	(8,431)
Externally restricted (Note 8)	-	-	198,522	198,522	182,965
	<u>(8,094)</u>	<u>17,295</u>	<u>198,522</u>	<u>207,723</u>	<u>195,423</u>
	<u>\$ 150,759</u>	<u>\$ 22,809</u>	<u>\$ 198,522</u>	<u>\$ 372,090</u>	<u>\$ 345,636</u>

Approved by the Board of Directors


 _____ Director


 _____ Director

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL: THE PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31

Exhibit B

				2017	2016
	Operating Fund	Capital Fund	Endowment Fund	Total	Total
REVENUES					
The Law Foundation of BC	\$ 406,330	\$ 5,272	\$ -	\$ 411,602	\$ 362,855
Justice Canada	80,000	5,000	-	85,000	110,705
BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch	72,526	-	-	72,526	72,510
The Law Foundation of Ontario	54,812	-	-	54,812	-
Notary Foundation of BC	36,000	-	-	36,000	-
Haida Gwaii Restorative Justice Program	-	-	-	-	18,116
Legal Services Society	-	-	-	-	850
Ministry of Justice BC	-	-	-	-	300
User Fees	28,605	-	-	28,605	31,485
Rental income	-	-	74,520	74,520	60,124
Interest income	1	-	90	91	2,271
Membership	-	-	-	-	500
Donations	-	-	200	200	688
	678,274	10,272	74,810	763,356	660,404
EXPENDITURES					
Printing and writing	48,525	-	-	48,525	15,012
Media production	-	-	-	-	92
Event costs	850	-	-	850	1,146
Salaries and benefits	262,517	-	-	262,517	284,624
Contract services	261,772	-	-	261,772	153,954
Travel	22,424	-	-	22,424	31,962
Booklet distribution and postage	31,893	-	-	31,893	38,329
Promotion	9,673	-	-	9,673	2,598
Photocopying and paper supplies	3,009	-	-	3,009	1,611
Conference attendance	2,128	-	-	2,128	1,703
Meeting costs	821	-	-	821	669
Office	5,603	-	-	5,603	4,064
Occupancy costs of premises	-	-	59,253	59,253	54,975
Telephone and Internet	7,260	-	-	7,260	7,827
Insurance	4,167	-	-	4,167	3,714
Professional services	531	-	-	531	23,813
Audit and legal	10,763	-	-	10,763	10,813
IT services and software	5,121	-	-	5,121	4,040
Memberships and directories	880	-	-	880	1,046
Amortization	-	13,619	-	13,619	12,530
Capital items under \$300	-	247	-	247	735
	677,937	13,866	59,253	751,056	655,257
Excess (Deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	\$ 337	\$ (3,594)	\$ 15,557	\$ 12,300	\$ 5,147

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.



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