

Legal Education

The Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (“LSNL”)

The LSNL struck the Indigenous Education and Action Committee (the “**Committee**”) in late 2017. The mandate of the Committee is to work within the legal profession to advise, educate and act on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador, which includes addressing the Calls to Action arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In consultation with the Committee, the LSNL is reviewing its library collection to ensure that it includes relevant and appropriate Indigenous resources and it has endeavoured to develop and deliver high quality continuing legal education seminars to its membership. Over the past year, the LSNL has offered three seminars dealing with Indigenous issues and cultural competency and is planning to conduct a blanket exercise, in conjunction with the Canadian Bar Association’s Aboriginal Law Section and the St. John’s Native Friendship Centre. 2018 marked the first year that the Bar Admission Course included a section focused on indigenous cultural competency. The sessions were delivered by Ms. Barbara Barker, a lawyer and member of the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation, and the St. John’s Native Friendship Centre.

The Committee recently conducted an extensive survey of the LSNL membership seeking to: (i) assist it in understanding the level of knowledge within the membership about Indigenous populations in Newfoundland and Labrador; (ii) identify the amount of Aboriginal law practiced by LSNL members; (iii) help identify areas where professional education and cultural awareness is needed as it relates to the provision of legal services to Indigenous people/organizations; and, (iv) identify members of the LSNL that have an interest in assisting the Committee in advancing its mandate. This survey has had an impressive response rate with a significant portion of the LSNL membership participating. The Committee is currently analyzing the data collected, which will be used to inform its future efforts.

External/Outreach

The Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador is in the process of updating its lawyer directory to include the languages that its members are able to provide services in. The Law Society is consulting with the Indigenous Education and Action Committee in an effort to identify the Indigenous languages that need to be included in its database.