

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS
AND OUR COMMUNITY BY
PROVIDING QUALITY LEGAL
SERVICES.

Northwest Community Legal Clinic

JUNE 2011

Our Fort Frances office is moving!

Trudy McCormick, ED

On Monday, June 27th, 2011, the new location of the Fort Frances office of the Northwest Community Legal Clinic should be open for business! We are moving to 206 Scott Street, Fort Frances, to better serve our community. Our new office will be storefront, street level, and fully accessible. To allow us to move, the Fort Frances Clinic office will be closed from noon on Tuesday, June 21st until 8:30 a.m. on Monday, June 27th.



The Fort Frances office will re-open at 206 Scott Street on June 27th at 8:30am

During this closure, we ask that clients with urgent issues call the Kenora office at 1-800-403-4757 for assistance.

We want to thank Legal Aid Ontario for its support and assistance in helping us make this move, and our current landlords, the Northern Lights Credit Union, for providing both the Clinic and the former Legal Aid Ontario area office with wonderful offices over the past 11 years.

See you on Scott Street!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Kids Dental Program	2
Pet owners assistance	2
Online application for social assistance	2
Obtaining Government Benefits	3
Walk for Good Life	3
Hoop Dancing - Obtaining Senior Care	4
Money to pay your Hydro One Arrears	4

Changes to Child Benefit Payments for shared-custody parents

Sallie Hunt, Staff Lawyer, Kenora

Do you receive Ontario Works (OW) or ODSP disability benefits and do you have a *shared-custody arrangement* for your children? If so, expect payments for child benefits to change as of July 2011. These benefits are the Canada Child Tax Benefit [CCTB], the National Child Benefit Supplement [NCBS] and the provincially-funded Ontario Child Benefit [OCB].

Currently, when there is a *shared-custody arrangement*, the federal government pays child benefits to each parent on a six-month rotation. Federal

legislation has been changed. It now defines who is a "*shared-custody parent*" and it allows the government to split child benefits between "*shared-custody parents*" on a 50/50 basis each month. These changes will also affect payment of the Universal Child Care Benefit [UCCB] and the GST/HST credit.

While the child benefits that you will receive each month as a "*shared-custody parent*," will be less than what you receive now when it is your "rotation" (one-half of the current amount), you will receive these benefits 12 months/year instead of six months/year.

Both Ontario Works (OW) and ODSP have also changed their rules and regulations, including those for the Transition Child Benefit (TCB).

OW and ODSP have fact sheets and Q & As to explain the changes.

These changes should not change the **total amount** of assistance that a family receives in a year, but the monthly amount will change for families in shared-custody situations.



No-cost dental program for eligible kids 17 and under

Carol Grosset, OM, Kenora

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a new program to access dental coverage at no cost for kids under 17, living in Ontario,

who are members of a household with an adjusted family net income of \$20,000 per year or below. Contact the Northwestern Health Unit - Preventative

Dental Services at 807-468-3436 ext 329 or 1-800-465-4377 for qualification particulars and a list of supporting documents .

Assistance for pet owners of low-income

Yvonne Hutton, CLW, Atikokan

The Farley Foundation is a registered charity that was established in 2001 by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association to help people of low income, particularly seniors and people with disabilities, to pay for the necessary or emergency medical treatment of their sick or injured pets.

There are certain criteria that must be met to be eligible for foundation assistance, including financial status, qualification of the veterinary clinic, the pet's medical condition, and relation-

ship between the pet owner and veterinarian.

Applications to the Farley Foundation are made by the veterinarian on behalf of the pet owner.

If you are interested in finding out more about this program, please speak with your veterinarian, or visit the Farley Foundation website at; www.farleyfoundation.org.



the Farley Foundation

Our Pamphlet Stands
All three offices of the Northwest Community Legal Clinic carry a large supply of pamphlets relating to areas of law within the Clinic Mandate. We invite you to call or stop into your local office to view the selection.

Online application for Social Assistance

Liz Polischuk, Support, Kenora

Wondering if you may qualify for Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)? Want to apply, but it's hard for you to call or get to your local office?

The Online Application for Social Assistance may be for you. It is always available, in English or French from any computer with internet access at www.ontario.ca/socialassistance. You can see if you are eligible and then, if you want, apply for any of the three social assistance programs: OW, ODSP & ACSD.

The information required for the online application is the same that is required for a telephone or in-person application. You can take as much time as needed to complete the application, however, you must move from one page to the next within 30 minutes, otherwise the application will time out.

When you submit your online application, it is sent to the correct office, based on your postal code that you must enter at the start of the application. Staff will then review it and contact you within 3 business days to schedule an in-person

appointment to complete the application process.

For problems with the online application, use the "Help" function, or call Service Ontario at 1-855-231-1255.

If you live on a First Nation, you can determine if you are eligible for any of the 3 programs, but can only apply for ODSP and ACSD online. To apply for OW, you must still contact your local office.

This online application does NOT replace in-person or telephone applications, it is simply a 3rd option to see if you qualify and to make your initial application for the social assistance programs.

Obtaining Government Benefits

Sallie Hunt, Staff Lawyer, Kenora

You may receive a phone call from a company promising you thousands of dollars in benefits that the company can obtain for you from the government, if you just sign with the company. You sure could use the extra money. What should you do?

DO NOT AGREE to anything over the telephone, especially when it has been a “cold call.” You need to think about it and maybe get some advice.

Do as someone who called the legal clinic did – ask that the company send you the information through the mail so that you can take the time to look at the material and get some advice.

Have someone who knows about government benefits look at the information.

For example:

- Call one of the several people or companies that prepare income tax returns
- Bring the information in to the Northwest Community Legal Clinic
- If you have a support worker, show her the information and discuss it with her, or
- Talk to a friend or family member.

In January 2011 the Toronto Star* ran an article about a woman who paid \$10,000.00 to *National Benefit Authority* for tax benefits that she could have received for free, or paid under \$300.00 to H&R Block for the same service.

According to the article, *National Benefit Authority* advertised that it could obtain thousands of dollars of government benefits for Canadians with disabilities. When someone

signs up with the company, it then takes a significant percentage (30%) of any money that the government pays.

Before you agree to pay a company to obtain benefits that you may be entitled to for **free**, do some checking. You can apply for most of these benefits on your own when you file your income tax return, or have someone else help you for very little or no cost.

ALWAYS be cautious before agreeing to any contract. Signing takes only three seconds. Getting out of a contract may take months and cost thousands of dollars. Be sure **BEFORE** you sign.

*See: <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/916219--agency-charged-woman-10-000-for-tax-claim-she-could-have-filed-for-free>

Walk for Good Life

Tammy Noble, CLW, Fort Frances

Oshki Aa-yaa'aag Mino Bimaadiziwin Foundation (Good Life For Young People) is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to bring to life the dreams and aspirations of Aboriginal youth through confidence building and culturally-affirming activities. One of the activities organized by the Foundation is the **Walk for Good Life**. This is a 7-day, 500 kilometre journey for Aboriginal youth to walk and learn together. They walk with their Elders and other youth from communities within Treaty #3 Territory. It is a journey of self discovery and accomplishment.

The **3rd Annual Walk for Good Life** will take place from August 1 – 8, 2011, starting at Eagle Lake First Nation and completing a full circle, passing through Couchiching First Nation, Rainy River First Nation, Onigaming First Nation and many others along the way. The theme for this year's walk is “*Empowering Youth by Celebrating Their Gifts*”.

This week-long camp experience is an opportunity for youth to work together, play together and accomplish a goal together. Youth will learn about their culture through

ceremony, historical teachings and storytelling.

Larissa Desrosiers and Jeremy Jordan (Mack Sickz), two up and coming singer/songwriters will be participating in this year's walk and performing at community gatherings to share their stories and dreams for a good life.

To learn more, visit the foundation's website at www.goodlifeforyoungpeople.com or check out photos from last year's walk on their Facebook page “Good Life for Young People” or contact Teresa Hazel, CEO, Good Life for Young People at (807) 274-4088.



**Supporting individuals and our community
by providing quality legal services.**

Fort Frances

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www.northwestcommunitylegalclinic.ca

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Check us
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Office Closures

FORT FRANCES ONLY: June 21
at 12noon to June 27 at 8:30am

ALL OFFICES:

Friday, July 1st - Canada Day
Monday, August 1st - Civic Holiday
Monday, September 5th - Labour Day

Sub-offices

Red Lake - July 6, August 3,
September 7

Ear Falls - July 7, August 4,
September 8

Hoop Dancing - Obtaining Senior Care

Nan Normand, CLW, Kenora

Dealing with diminishing abilities is stressful. Finding resources to continue living life with dignity is akin to hoop dancing. After making the difficult acknowledgement that help is needed, seniors and their caregivers are presented with a dizzying array of services whose regulations often make accessing resources a hoop dance.

We live in a geographically broad area with limited resources. These resources are accessed through Community Care Access Centres (CCAC). The decision about what resources will be offered must come out of their assessment of your need. Once approved, obtaining the service will depend on local availability. If your needs go beyond home care, understanding of the care hoops becomes even more difficult. If you are hospitalized and cannot return home, you will

remain in the hospital in an alternative level of care (ACL) bed. Although the province estimates that 20% of all acute care beds are occupied by ACL patients, the number is higher in our region. Hospitals are pressured by mounting ACL usage in the face of scarce long term care beds. Patients who are waiting for long term care have the right to choose the homes to which they wish to apply. The longer a patient is forced to wait for their choice, the more hard pressed the hospitals are to provide services to other members of the public. There are no winners in this struggle.

Judith Wahl of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly will be in Kenora on September 14 to speak on elder rights at the Fabric of Diversity conference. For further information on the issues of elder care, check out the ACE website at www.ancelaw.ca.

We found money to help pay your Hydro One arrears!

Trudy McCormick, ED

To better serve our communities, the Northwest Community Legal Clinic has agreed to become an Intake agency for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. This project, developed by the Ontario Energy Board, offers emergency financial assistance for **eligible** low-income customers.

The legal clinic will be acting as liaison between the lead agency, Simcoe United Way, and applicants. Applicants must be low-income and facing disconnection of Hydro One service due to arrears. The grant is for a maximum of \$500 annually. Eligibility is based on income, assets and a service sustainability plan. Pre-screening is done by Simcoe United Way. For further information call 1-855-ITS-LEAP (1-855-487-5327).



Consider the environment...

Please recycle this newsletter!