



May 15, 2018

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

Annual Meeting - Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters

The National Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (NAC) chaired by Justice Cromwell held its annual meeting from April 17 to 19 in Ottawa. The following members of TAG's Reference Group were in attendance:

- Howard Goldblatt, Chair of the Law Society's Access to Justice Committee
- Julie Mathews, Executive Director of CLEO
- Tanya Lee, CEO of the Law Foundation of Ontario
- patti cross, Family Counsel at the Ontario Court of Justice
- Sabreena Delhon, Manager of External Engagement and TAG, Law Society of Ontario

The first day of the program focused on Indigenous child welfare. The purpose of the session was to "explore and discuss recent thinking and observations on Indigenous child protection as an access to justice issue." Speakers included Dr. Cindy Blackstock (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society), Professor Naomi Metallic (Dalhousie University) and Grand Chief Constant Awashish (Atikamekw Nation Council). Breakout discussions were held following panel sessions with Steering Committee members conveying key points to the larger group. This day ended with a reception at the Supreme Court of Canada where it was announced that former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Beverley McLachlin would become NAC's Honourary Chair.

The second day of the program focused on NAC's mandate and recent initiatives including a public awareness campaign that features articles by Justice Cromwell in *The Lawyers' Daily* and a report on 2017 access to justice activities from across Canada. The program also focused on how regional access to justice activities are aligning with NAC's Justice Development Goals (JDG). Attendees noted some concerns about the activity report – namely its limited circulation and availability online as well as a lack of attribution and contact information for relevant initiatives or organizations. As regional activities were broken up and categorized under the JDG there was concern that much of the context and impact of the effort was lost. There appeared to be a gap between regional activities and the JDG. Some regional efforts were showcased at lunch and a panel discussion focused on international access to justice efforts.

The third and final day of the program focused on the importance of the JDG and how NAC is keen to lead in the coordination of regional access to justice activities in order to create a national narrative. Attendees noted the importance of bringing advocates together and expressed interest enhancing the diversity of both the steering committee and speakers on future meeting agendas. Clarifying NAC's mandate through more stakeholder engagement was also indicated as an area of interest.