

# CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

## ACTIVITY REPORT #15

Submitted to the  
Law Foundation of Ontario  
Access to Justice Fund

On behalf of the

## CONNECTING OTTAWA NETWORK

DECEMBER 30, 2019

(submitted January 22, 2020)

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the fifteenth Activity Report describing the implementation and outcomes of the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa project, funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) under the Connecting Region Initiative of the Access to Justice Fund.

The report describes our interim activities and performance milestones for the six-month period July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

As per our 2019-20 funding agreement, our key objectives for the project were to:

- Connect community legal services and community health and social services.
- Promote the use of electronic and other resources among trusted intermediaries.
- Develop and support volunteer facilitators as trusted intermediaries.
- Conduct public outreach and education.
- Share lessons learned.
- Manage project coordination and review.

To achieve the above, our core activities for 2019-20 were to:

- Maintain and grow our partnership network and maintain regular communication with them;
- Connect community legal services and community health and social services in ways that will strengthen the network's capacity to respond to the complex issues often presented by our focus populations through consultation with our front line professionals;
- Provide capacity building opportunities on legal issues relevant to our target populations to trusted intermediaries and our network of partners through Lunch and Learn workshops, Connecting Ottawa co-hosted workshops with other organizations, and educational presentations delivered upon request at partner agencies' on-site locations;
- Provide capacity building on social issues relevant to our target populations to our network of legal partners through direct one-on-one support and consultation opportunities;
- Host the Connecting Ottawa annual conference;
- Promote the use of resources developed by Connecting Ottawa and other resources posted on our website to trusted intermediaries, including staff and volunteers of partner organizations;
- Update the Connecting Ottawa website to a new platform by June of 2020.
- Recruit and maintain a pool of volunteer facilitators as trusted intermediaries able to connect clients to community and legal services to which they have been referred;
- Promote the volunteer facilitator program to program partners;
- Direct the existing PLEI resources of our legal services partners to most effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect, by providing logistical support for regularly scheduled PLEI events at fixed locations accessible to our focus populations;

## LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

- Share the lessons learned from the program’s continued development in order to build upon the strengths of the network in Ottawa and to support similar and complementary initiatives in other communities; and
- Increase attention and support towards disability-serving agencies who work with people with communication barriers.

For the period of this report, we have made progress in most core activities. Activities receiving increased focus over the six months were: continuing with our capacity building of the social services and legal services sector to increase access to justice for individuals with communication barriers via case consultation and education; expanding our services to include more partner agencies; maintaining and regularly communicating with our partnership network; re-developing our website; reviewing our volunteer program; and continuing to effectively manage and administer the project.

Below, please find a summary of project highlights and a detailed overview of our activities for each strategic objective as well as Connecting Ottawa’s LFO reporting numbers to December 31, 2019 and a financial report to December 31, 2019.

We thank the Law Foundation of Ontario for their continued support of the Connecting Ottawa project and our efforts to improve access to justice for those with communication barriers across the Ottawa region.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES

### **CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

- Expanded, maintained, and supported active partnership network of 53 agencies.
- Explored new opportunities to work with existing and new potential partner agencies.
- As a result of 240 case consultations, trained 208 trusted intermediaries and served 250 clients of partner agencies through direct consultation, joint consultation with a partner agency staff member, or through consulting with a partner agency staff member.
- Offered 3 “Lunch and Learn” sessions to Connecting Ottawa partnership network staff on issues related to Sponsorship, (Youth) Education Law, and Employment Law.
- Conducted 8 training/education sessions for partner agency staff and clients related to issues of social and legal services for those who do not speak English or French.
- Coordinated 2 newcomer identification replacement ID clinics in partnership with YMCA and Pro Bono Students Canada to assist individuals who have had their citizenship documentation lost or stolen.
- Worked with Community Legal Services of Ottawa to support and connect local and provincial organizations to provide legal education resources in Ottawa.

### **PROMOTE THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND OTHER RESOURCES BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES**

- Promoted new CLEO and *Steps to Justice* resources via Connecting Ottawa communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Initiated website redesign for Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Maintained active use of our website and on-line resources:
  - Users of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 43,891 compared to 45,428 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,001 from 880 in the previous period.
  - Number of sessions of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 52,811 as compared to 54,220 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,097 from 994.
  - Page views on the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 95,126 as compared to 97,759 in the previous period. Number of page views on the connexionottawa.com website remained steady at 1,767 from 1,764 in the previous period.
  - Followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds increased in relation to the previous period.

**DEVELOP AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS AS TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES**

- Reviewed the volunteer facilitator program with staff, partners, and Advisory Group.
- Explored new opportunities to help front-line workers assist their clients to access needed services.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

- Presented 2 individual public legal education sessions in collaboration with partner agencies on issues of social and legal services related to those with a communication barrier.
- Presented 2 webinars in collaboration with YMCA pre-arrival services.
- Hosted table at the Ottawa Local Immigration Bi-annual Conference.
- Distributed information rack cards at public events and among partnership network.

**SHARE LESSONS LEARNED**

- Published 6 issues of Connecting Ottawa *Partner Communique*.
- Presented at the Ontario Justice Education Network, “Widening the Circle” Conference in Toronto.
- Presented and participated at the “Time for a Change” Conference on “Immigration and Criminal Law”.
- Attended 5 sector conferences/meetings to meet and network with other organizations addressing the issues of our target populations.
- Initiated planning for the 2020 Connecting Ottawa annual conference.

**PROJECT COORDINATION AND REVIEW**

- Maintained effective and efficient management of operations and administrative requirements.
- Held regular staff meetings to coordinate activities.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held two Advisory Group meetings.
- Met with the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) to discuss project and Connecting Regional Evaluation Report.
- Proposed funding application to LFO to utilize unspent funds from 2018-19.

## ACTIVITY REPORTS

# CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

### OUR CHALLENGE

The challenge was set by Thomson and Kohl:

- Develop a multi-sectorial network of organizations with the potential to build sufficient capacity for legal services to work in closer cooperation with community health and social services, local agencies serving immigrants, and services for disabled persons with a view to ensuring a more integrated service response for clients from the our focus populations, and
- Build the capacity to advocate at a systemic level whenever the system itself has created barriers to accessible legal services.

### OUR INTENT

At an inaugural conference in Ottawa in January 2011, Connecting Ottawa developed a multi-sectorial network of local service organizations committed to finding new ways of working to ensure access to justice for our focus populations. They endorsed a plan that would add staff resources to the network: a social services worker and a legal services worker that would be available to advise and consult with front-line providers of information, assessment and referral services to people with issues that would benefit from legal services. The intent of Connecting Ottawa is not to relieve the overflow of demand for case management services, but to strengthen the existing capacity for competent case management among our partners and, where appropriate, support advocacy efforts for system-level changes.

### ACTIVITIES

- Expanded, maintained, and supported active partnership network of 53 agencies.
- Explored new opportunities to work with existing and new potential partner agencies.
- As a result of 240 case consultations, trained 208 trusted intermediaries and served 250 clients of partner agencies through direct consultation, joint consultation with a partner agency staff member, or through consulting with a partner agency staff member.
- Offered 3 “Lunch and Learn” sessions to Connecting Ottawa partnership network staff on issues related to Sponsorship, (Youth) Education Law, and Employment Law.
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- Worked with Community Legal Services of Ottawa to support and connect local and provincial organizations to provide legal education resources in Ottawa.

### **Connecting Ottawa partnership network**

The Connecting Ottawa network of partners currently includes 53 organizations. This network includes 18 community service agencies, 17 agencies serving immigrants, 10 organizations providing legal services, 7 agencies serving people with disabilities, and 1 organization providing interpretation and translation services.

During the reporting period, we welcomed two new organizations to our partnership network: Philippine Migrants Society of Canada Ottawa and Interval House. The Philippine Migrants Society of Canada (PMSC) Ottawa promotes the rights and welfare of Filipino migrants in Canada. Its membership base includes all Filipino migrants coming to the area. The Society actively upholds and defends Filipino migrants' rights and welfare through education activities, workshops, public forums, and direct services. Interval House of Ottawa - Maison Interval d'Ottawa (IHO) provides a safe place for women, their children, and pets to escape abuse. Offering a wide range of programs and services, the staff and volunteers at IHO help survivors create new beginnings and a violence free future. We look forward to working with these two organizations to support the legal information and referral needs of their many newcomer clients.

During the period we also explored ways to engage some of our current partner organizations more deeply, as recommended in the 2018 evaluation. Following a staff planning exercise at the end of the 2018-19 funding period, we identified organizations within our “Tier 2” classification (i.e. those that actively serve individuals in our target populations but are not extensively involved with the project) to reach out to request meetings to discuss our partnership. A target of four partner meetings per month has been set for the 2019-20 funding period.

During the period, more than 20 meetings with partner agencies were held to discuss Connecting Ottawa’s approach, best practices and opportunities to work more closely together to address the needs of the target populations in the city. The meetings held during the reporting period have resulted in Connecting Ottawa adapting its in-house hours for one-on-one case consultation to more organizations and identifying current and upcoming education and consultation needs moving forward.

### **Capacity building via one-on-one case consultation**

A primary means of developing capacity within the partnership network is working one-on-one with front line staff to address the legal needs of our target populations. Our front-line staff primarily respond to requests for service as they arise. In addition, our lawyers are also co-located with consultation hours with key organizations serving individuals within our target populations.

A key recommendation in the evaluation was that “Connecting Ottawa should have more resources including more time spent at agencies on case consultations and reach out to more



people and more organizations” while at the same time ensure that we are “promoting the model as a capacity building model and not a legal service”.

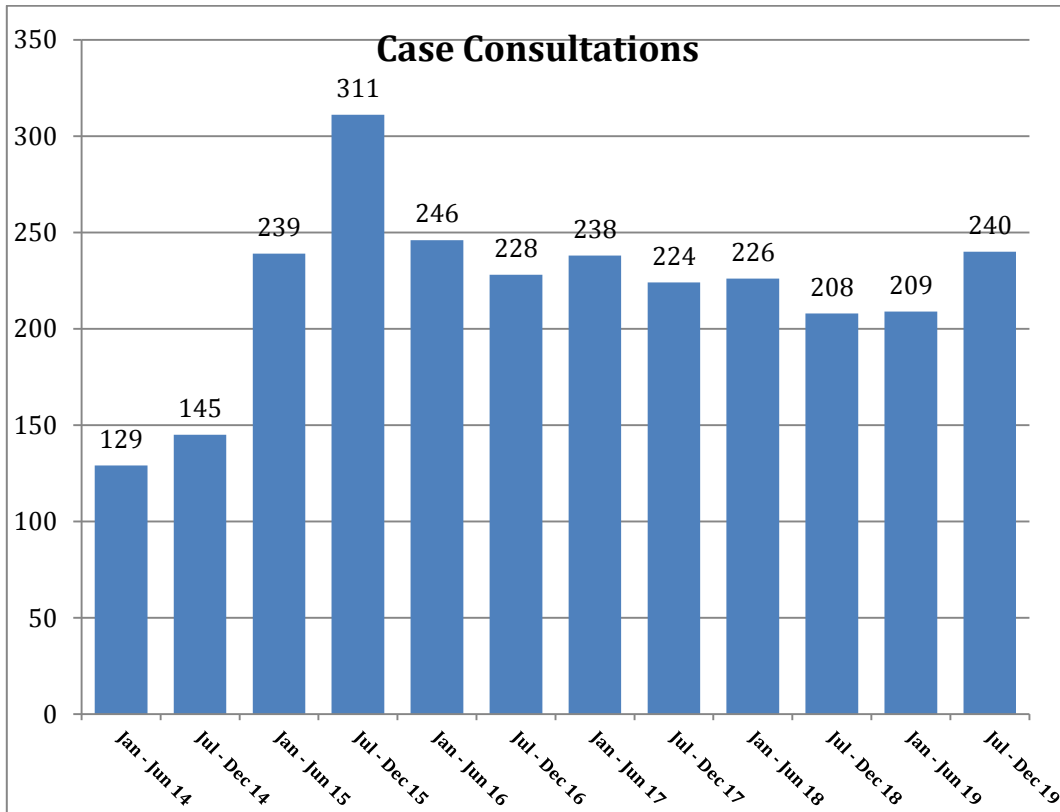
At our staff planning session in May of 2019, we recognized that our capacity for consultation activities was being dominated by the two organizations for which we provided on-site consultations. In an effort to diversify this work across the network, the decision was made to cut back on the hours provided to OCISO and CCI and provide consultation hours to CESOC, YMCA and two to three of the community resource centres in 2019/20. This decision was not due to a lack of demand for client consultation services by the settlement sector – new staff and new issues being faced by newcomers continue to require the expertise of our front line staff – but the desire to spread these services more equitably across the network.

Starting in July, 2019 we decreased the number of hours at CCI and OCISO and added consultations at: YMCA Newcomer Information Centre, Somerset West Community Health Centre (a local health centre serving a large immigrant Asian population) and Interval House (a local women’s centre with a large immigrant clientele) on a trial period. We had also planned to introduce on-site hours at CESOC, Ottawa’s French-language immigrant settlement organization. However, due to a delay in CESOC’s plans for moving their offices, we did not start these sessions in the fall of 2019. For the balance of the funding year we will continue the hours at YMCA and Somerset West Community Health Centre. We have decided to reduce in-house hours at Interval House to an as-needed basis only, moving forward. We also remain on call for when CESOC is open to hosting us.

Outside of these in-house hours, partner organizations and their front line staff also consult with us as they need about hard-to-serve clients who face barriers to communication. We provide their frontline staff with information and advice, help assess the legal issues and communication challenges, help to connect the client with needed information and services, and ensure that the appropriate direction is provided to the front line staff before we terminate our involvement. For extremely complicated cases, we will meet with both the worker and the client to more effectively help the worker provide appropriate information and referrals. Our intent is not to increase the legal services available in the community; instead, we view case consultation as an opportunity to build the referring organization’s capacity to better respond to the needs of our focus populations, or provide legal services for partners whose clients fall into gaps existing within the current legal support system.

All consultation activities are logged, with source and reasons for referral, legal and communication issues tracked, and case notes maintained. The extent of our involvement varies greatly: in some instances we are consulted without clients being identified; sometimes briefly to affirm a course of action; or, in many other instances our staff is extensively involved with researching a legal issue, determining appropriate connections to services and other time-intensive support activities. During the reporting period, there were 240 individual case consultations offered, representing 208 trusted intermediary capacity building sessions and 250 individual clients (some consultations included multiple clients).

The chart below shows the trend in our case consultations for the past five years. The reduced number of interactions for July 2018 – June 2019 reflects our staffing change last year and the resulting period where we were operating with only one front line staff. These sessions continue to dominate the work of our front line staff and will not increase significantly without additional staffing resources.



Please see appendix for two examples of cases that Connecting Ottawa assisted with.

### Capacity building via education

In addition to one-on-one case consultations, Connecting Ottawa develops capacity within our network to provide access to justice for our target populations through education. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa presented 3 Lunch and Learn sessions and presented 8 training/education sessions for partner agency staff and clients related to issues of social and legal services for those who do not speak English or French.

The topics of the Lunch and Learn sessions during the period were: Sponsorship, (Youth) Education Law, and Employment Law. Cumulatively, 17 individuals attended these sessions. Connecting Ottawa coordinated these one hour sessions at different partner agencies in different locations across the city to maintain engagement with different partners and to ensure that front line staff from different locations would be able to attend. Two of these events featured guest speakers, responding to the 2018 evaluation report’s recommendation to partner with other agencies to present topics outside of the scope of practice of our staff.

The response to our fall sessions was significantly lower than previous years. We believe that this may be due to increased workloads being faced by our partner agencies' staff and have explored new delivery mechanisms and formats for the winter series of sessions.

Connecting Ottawa staff also conducted 8 professional development information sessions with partner agencies on various issues and topics. These sessions allow Connecting Ottawa to tailor topics and information to the specific agency's staff and/or client issues. Together, more than 111 partner agency staff attended these various workshops. The evaluation report recommended that Connecting Ottawa explore ways to increase partner agency education sessions moving forward. We have identified a list of training sessions and promoted this list to our Tier 1 and 2 partners. During the reporting period, we were invited by one settlement organization to regularly meet with their employees. We hope to expand this practice to other organizations over the next six months.

To provide more breadth for these training sessions, Connecting Ottawa has partnered with other organizations or private bar lawyers to co-present to partner agencies. During the reporting period, two of these sessions included guest speakers, one from University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic and one from Renfrew Community Legal Clinic. We are exploring opportunities to continue this practice moving forward.

The evaluation report also proposed that Connecting Ottawa partner with other organizations to conduct PLEs. During the reporting period we partnered with the YMCA National Capital Region to present two webinars for transitioning newcomers. The two sessions were: "Your Rights as a Pregnant Worker" and "Your Rights as a Permanent Resident". Both of these webinars have been shared with our partnership network and will be posted on our new website.

### **Connecting partners and resources to fill gaps**

In 2017-18, in response to an identified gap by one of Connecting Ottawa's partners around serving and supporting individuals whose citizenship documentation has been lost or stolen, Connecting Ottawa coordinated a task force to explore the issue and potential partnership solutions. Connecting Ottawa co-chaired a task force with the Ottawa Community Immigration Service Organization (OCISO) to bring together the settlement agencies in the city to discuss the difficulty, demand and potential solutions to helping clients replace lost or stolen permanent residency or citizenship documentation. Following affirmation of this being a shared issue among the partnership network, Connecting Ottawa reached out to organizations providing identification replacement support in Ottawa to explore options to expand their services. Connecting Ottawa and the task force enabled a partnership between Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC), working under the direction of lawyers from Borden, Ladner & Gervais and the YMCA-YWCA Newcomer Information Centre to hold a pilot clinic in March of 2018 to offer these services. Following positive demand, PBSC and YMCA-YWCA agreed to host 4 more clinics in 2018/19. These clinics are continued in 2019-20, with 2 held in the reporting period. We will host two more sessions in 2020 and have partnered with the City of

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Ottawa to host them to allow for more diversity in location for those who may not be able to attend the YMCA location.

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa also worked with the Community Developer at Community Legal Services of Ottawa (CLSO) to coordinate connections between a local organization, Parents for Diversity, with Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY) to explore ways to support front line workers with clients requiring education law information and referrals. This project evolved following Connecting Ottawa's introduction to JFCY via inviting them to speak at a Lunch and Learn and CLSO's introduction to the local group Parents for Diversity. Connecting Ottawa and CLSO together recognized that introducing the two groups and exploring opportunities to offer information and provide supports in the area of Education Law would address an existing gap in Ottawa. To date, we have met with both groups and are continuing discussions to explore opportunities to provide legal education and information related to our target populations in Ottawa.

## PROMOTE THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND OTHER RESOURCES BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

### OUR CHALLENGE

There are excellent public legal education and information (PLEI) resources available, especially given the leadership of Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and their web site initiative Steps to Justice. However, the fact remains that navigation of the legal system remains challenging for many front-line service providers in Ottawa.

### OUR INTENT

Develop a local web site and electronic resources that includes comprehensive and current information about local legal services, and promote its use by project partners to ensure access to justice by for focus populations.

### ACTIVITIES

- Promoted new CLEO and *Steps to Justice* resources via Connecting Ottawa communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Initiated website redesign for Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Maintained active use of our website and on-line resources:
  - Users of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 43,891 compared to 45,428 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,001 from 880 in the previous period.
  - Number of sessions of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 52,811 as compared to 54,220 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,097 from 994.
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  - Followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds increased in relation to the previous period.

### Provide current information about local legal and social services

Connecting Ottawa publishes a monthly Communique, distributed via email to partner agency members (please also see information below under “Share Lessons Learned”). In each issue, new legal information resources that are available online or via hardcopy are shared with our

partnership agencies for them to distribute among their staff. We also periodically share information about local legal and social services via our social media sites: Facebook and Twitter.

### **Social Media**

Connecting Ottawa maintains a Twitter and Facebook feed to share news and information related to our partnership network, our focus populations, access to services, and emerging legal issues. Over the reporting period we maintained regular activity resulting in increasing our “followers” on Twitter to 656 and our “followers” on Facebook from 145 to 152.

### **Connecting Ottawa Website**

Connecting Ottawa’s websites have been maintained in both English (connectingottawa.com) and French (connexionottawa.com). The domain registrations have been extended until April 2020 and we have arranged for hosting services through a monthly agreement with a hosting service.

The Connecting Ottawa websites are our primary means for sharing information about local legal and social services to partner agencies, other community groups, and the public. The recent Law Foundation of Ontario evaluation reported how well regarded and utilized our site was by local social service and legal service professionals to help them identify information and services to assist their clients.

Connecting Ottawa continues its agreement with the Community Information Centre of Ottawa (CICO) 211, maintaining the feed of the CICO database on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites and promoting 211 Eastern Ontario as the default information, assessment and referral (IAR) resource in Ottawa.

In 2018-19, Connecting Ottawa was advised that our current website platform would soon become obsolete and we decided to use the opportunity to refresh and relaunch this important local resource. Connecting Ottawa prepared a RFP for the site redesign, awarded the contractor, and met with CICO/211 numerous times to review the CICO feed on the database and identify system upgrades that could even more effectively draw the CICO database feed into the new website.

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa worked closely with designer to develop the new look of the website and are in the final stages of design approval. The new website is more aesthetically pleasing, fully accessible, incorporates Google Translate, and offers information on the Connecting Ottawa program and services as well as easy to navigate portals to search for local legal services, social services, and services for those with communication barriers. While this information was available on our old site, only the legal services portal was readily conspicuous. With the new design, we have made more prominent the portals for social services and services for those with communication barriers, which we believe will further serve the needs of legal and social service providers in Ottawa.

Also fully embedded within the new site (as with the old site) is the *Steps to Justice* resource, which is available on all legal topics pages.

In addition, Connecting Ottawa will continue to promote and integrate the following resources via our website and social media efforts:

- Questions on how front line staff can identify legal issues.
- CLEO Resources
- PLE Learning Exchange
- Power of Attorney form
- Affidavit/Commissioner of Oath Resource
- Connecting Ottawa multi-lingual rack cards on legal issues
- Various tools/resources on immigration and refugee processes
- Various tools/resources specific to assisting those with disabilities
- Bedbug/Pest Legal and Social Service Resource in both official languages
- Upcoming Connecting Ottawa events
- Upcoming partner events

**Website traffic**

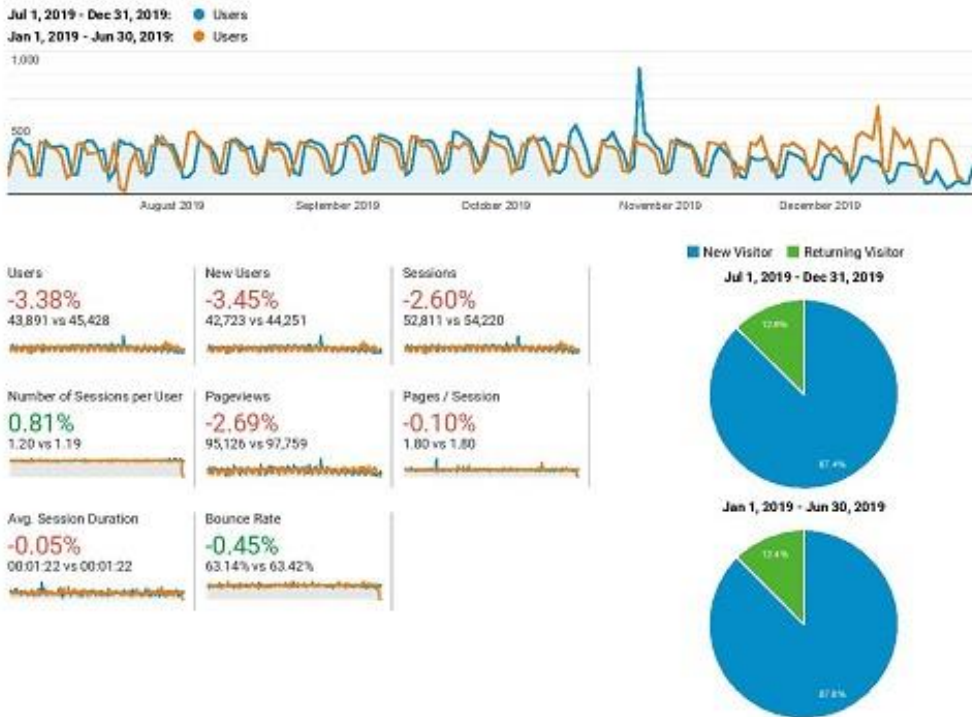
Website traffic for the reporting period was relatively consistent compared to traffic in the previous reporting period:

- Users of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 43,891 compared to 45,428 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,001 from 880 in the previous period.
- Number of sessions of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 52,811 as compared to 54,220 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website increased to 1,097 from 994.
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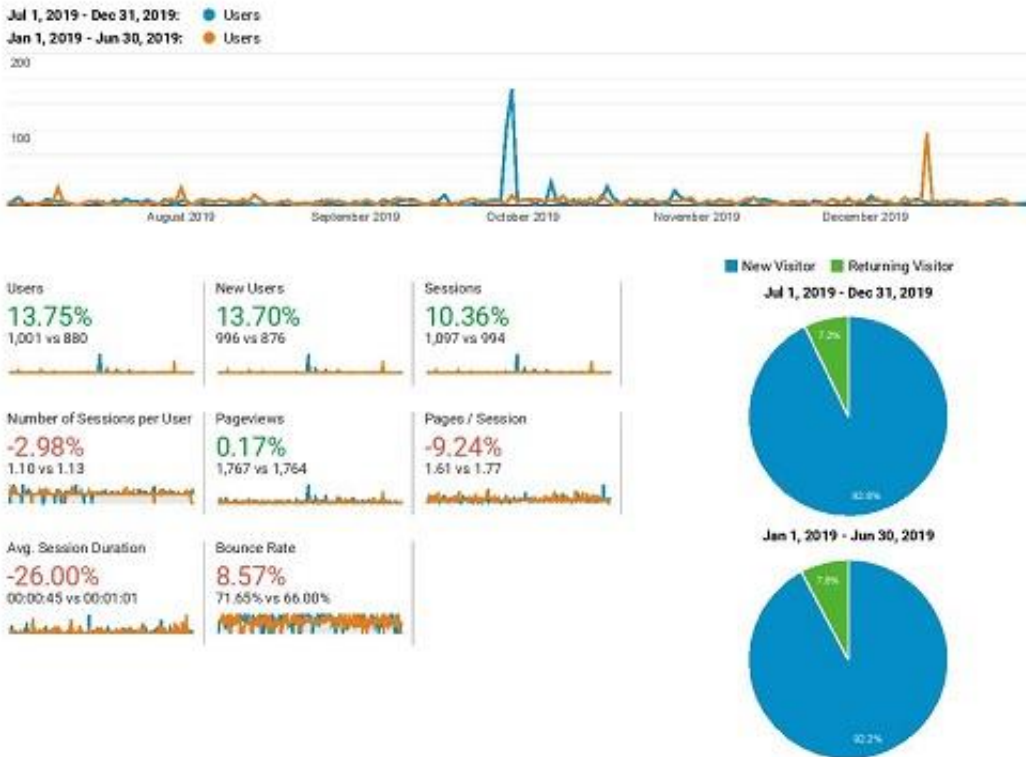
As we are currently redeveloping our site, we did not spend a lot of time during the reporting period promoting the site and resources. We plan to launch the new site in the spring of 2020 with a full communication plan and expect that usage will increase at that time.

The following analytics illustrates the trends identified over the reporting period:

**ConnectingOttawa.com**



**ConnexionOttawa.com (FR)**





## DEVELOP & SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS AS TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

### OUR CHALLENGE

For many clients – and particularly among our focus populations - a gap can exist between the point of referral and the point of legal services delivery; clients never actually connect with the services to which they have been referred. This gap can be bridged by trusted intermediaries who are volunteer facilitators trained and supported to problem solve with the client to systematically overcome the barriers to connection.

### OUR INTENT

Connecting Ottawa will recruit, train, and pay honoraria to a pool of volunteer facilitators who can be effective trusted intermediaries and who can be matched with clients on the basis of gender, culture, languages spoken, and availability.

### ACTIVITIES

- Reviewed the volunteer facilitator program with staff, partners, and Advisory Group.
- Explored new opportunities to help front-line workers assist their clients to access needed services.

The volunteer facilitator program has been part of the Connecting Ottawa model since inception. As has been reported consistently over the past number of years, while the concept is highly regarded, there have been significant challenges to implementing it and maintaining sustained uptake. To try to address these challenges we identified a volunteer manager for the program for a 12-month period in 2018, met with specific partners to identify specific opportunities to utilize volunteer facilitators, explored new processes for recruiting and assigning volunteers, and joined our local volunteer management organization to introduce ourselves to potential volunteers. Despite these initiatives, volunteers are used only sporadically and when there is a Connecting Ottawa staff person available to directly manage the interaction.

During the period, the project team reviewed the ongoing challenges with the program and made a recommendation to the Advisory Group at their October meeting that we discontinue with the program as it is currently envisioned: i.e. as a resource for project partners.

Instead, the project team recommended that we partner with local paralegal training institutions to explore opportunities to connect, when appropriate, paralegals in training with our partner agencies to assist with some of the more common legal processes that we see front line workers trying to address. These include, filling out appropriate forms, filing claims and submissions, accompaniment to appointments, etc.

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The Project Manager will be initiating these conversations with local colleges over the next six months and will report the outcome in our year-end report.

In the interim, our front staff continue to sporadically utilize existing volunteers to assist in one-on-one consultation meetings and with some specific client needs, when appropriate.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

### OUR CHALLENGE

Our legal services partners have the mandate, experience, and resources to present public legal education and information at events throughout Ottawa. PLE materials have already been developed on a number of legal issues. However, PLE resources are not often directed to our focus populations in regularly accessed locations such as libraries, community centres, newcomer centres, rehabilitation centres and peer support groups for persons with disabilities.

### OUR INTENT

Work with our partnership network to provide outreach and education opportunities to effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect. Connecting Ottawa will become the local clearinghouse for PLE events that target linguistic minorities, a convener, and provider of logistical supports (when necessary) to enable regularly scheduled events at accessible locations.

### ACTIVITIES

- Presented 2 individual public legal education sessions in collaboration with partner agencies on issues of social and legal services related to those with a communication barrier.
- Presented 2 webinars in collaboration with YMCA pre-arrival services.
- Hosted table at the Ottawa Local Immigration Bi-annual Conference.
- Distributed information rack cards at public events and among partnership network.

Connecting Ottawa continues to provide legal education and information sessions in conjunction our partnership network, however during the reporting period the Connecting Ottawa team created parameters around the PLE sessions that we would accept. These parameters ensure that the education sessions that we do provide are supporting the capacity building of our partnership network and thus we ask partners' front line staff supporting any individuals to also be present at the education session.

During the period, Connecting Ottawa provided 2 individual presentations in collaboration with our partner agencies on the following topics:

- Refugee Preparatory Classes
- Express Entry Information

During the period, Connecting Ottawa accepted an invitation from the YMCA of the National Capital Region Pre-Arrivals team (Build-on) to conduct two webinars with international audiences of individuals approved for immigration status in Canada and waiting to travel. The two topics of these seminars were "Your rights as a pregnant worker" and "Your rights as a permanent resident". More than 20 individuals participated in the webinars. More importantly,

the exercise provided Connecting Ottawa staff with information on how to conduct webinars so that we can integrate this practice into our education program moving forward.

Connecting Ottawa also seeks to actively participate in opportunities to share information about our program with not only target communities but also current and future service providers. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa set up a table at the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Bi-annual conference. Having a table at this conference was an excellent opportunity to connect with many of our partners and share our rack cards and resources.

Connecting Ottawa has developed a series of public information rack cards, translated into Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Spanish, English and French, on issues of Housing Law, Family Law, Criminal Law, and Immigration Law. During the reporting period we continued to promote the utilization of these cards in our communique and during meetings with partner agencies.

## SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

### OUR CHALLENGE

To share our experience – good and not so good - with peers and colleagues so that the system of legal services is strengthened and is more readily accessed by our focus populations.

### OUR INTENT

- Host an annual conference for network partners and interested stakeholders
- Seek out conferences, symposia and other opportunities to make presentations, participate on panels and offer workshops, to audiences of our peers and colleagues in community services, especially legal services.
- Share information and news with our network of partners

### ACTIVITIES

- Published 6 issues of *Connecting Ottawa Partner Communique*.
- Presented at the Ontario Justice Education Network, “Widening the Circle” Conference in Toronto.
- Presented and participated at the “Time for a Change” Conference on “Immigration and Criminal Law”.
- Attended 5 sector conferences/meetings to meet and network with other organizations addressing the issues of our target populations.
- Initiated planning for the 2020 Connecting Ottawa annual conference.

### Connecting Ottawa Communique

Connecting Ottawa’s newsletter *Communique* is distributed electronically to members of our partnership network, other service professionals, as well as, periodically, attendees from our previous conferences and education workshops. Network partners are encouraged to distribute the newsletter to front-line workers each month. Newsletters include pertinent news and information relevant to access to justice for linguistic minorities and those with communication barriers, upcoming events, and resources most beneficial to those supporting clients with communication barriers. The communique is sent monthly. During the reporting period the July, August, September, October, November and December issues were developed and distributed.

### Conference Presentations and Attendance

Connecting Ottawa staff were invited to present at and attend numerous industry and sector meetings that connect with serving our target populations.

Our lawyer Alexandra Derisier was invited to present at two industry sessions:

- Ontario Justice Education Network’s Widening the Circle

- Time for Change conference

Our team also attended the following conferences during the reporting period:

- Ontario Justice Education Network's Widening the Circle (2 staff attended)
- Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Bi-Annual Conference (3 staff attended)
- Canadian Council on Refugees Fall Consultation (3 staff attended)
- Immigration Law Summit (1 staff attended)
- Community Legal Services of Ottawa Annual General Meeting (1 staff attended)

Presenting and attending at these conferences provide us with the opportunity to share the Connecting Ottawa project with other organizations in the city and across the province who are also working with and addressing the needs of our target populations. It also provides a great opportunity to network and learn from these organizations to develop better practices for our project.

### **Committee Membership and Participation**

In addition to presenting at and attending sector conferences, Connecting Ottawa is a member of and participates on a number of local sector committees:

- Refugee 613 Stakeholder Group
- Refugee 613 Executive Committee
- Refugee 613 Housing Task Force
- Steering Committee on Social Assistance
- Workers' Rights Action Group

Participation in these meetings allows our staff to understand the best practices and issues of our partners and professional associations so that we can incorporate this information into our interactions with front line staff.

### **Annual Conference**

Connecting Ottawa's 9<sup>th</sup> annual conference will be held in May 2020. This conference has always been well received and regarded as an opportunity among our partnership network for staff professional development as well as community networking and sharing of lessons learned.

During the period, Connecting Ottawa brainstormed topics and secured the location for the 2020 event.

## PROJECT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

### OUR CHALLENGE

To manage a project that will move from being “a good idea” to being a demonstration of “good practice” and excellent outcomes.

### OUR INTENT

Our purpose is to strengthen the capacity of network partners without creating another organization, by resourcing and coordinating activities, evaluating performance and outcomes, ensuring that all partners understand their contribution and role over time, and communicating regularly and effectively with our network partners and other stakeholders.

### ACTIVITIES

- Maintained effective and efficient management of operations and administrative requirements.
- Held regular staff meetings to coordinate activities.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held two Advisory Group meetings.
- Met with the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) to discuss project and Connecting Regional Evaluation Report.
- Proposed funding application to LFO to utilize unspent funds from 2018-19.

### Staffing

During the period, Connecting Ottawa maintained its staffing of 2.5 professional staff to support its mandate and project goals. Under contract we have two full time lawyers: Alexandra-Marjorie Derisier LLL, LLB and Liz Majic, J.D. Ms. Derisier has an extensive background in labor relations, human rights, and refugee law and has been actively involved, personally and professionally, with the settlement and immigration sector in Ottawa. Ms. Majic brings a depth of knowledge in landlord and tenant law, social assistance, and employment law drawing on an extensive background working with vulnerable populations and complex human rights issues. She previously worked at three community law clinics, Canada Without Poverty, and the Feminist Alliance for International Action. She also has strong education and PLE abilities with experience both as a University lecturer and in offering seminars to front-line workers and clients.

Gina Grosenick, Ph.D. is an independent consultant under contract for 2.5 days per week to provide project management services and coordination. Dr. Grosenick holds a Ph.D. in (non-profit) communication and has an extensive background managing and communicating about community based programs and networks.

## LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

Office accommodations and human resources services continue to be provided by our partner agency Centre de services communautaires de Vanier, a community resource centre. CSC Vanier is the “employer of record” for project staff, manages payroll and benefits administration, provides the security of mature personnel policies and other human resources infrastructure, and provides office accommodations.

### Operations and Administration

The project manager coordinates and maintains the effective and efficient management of the project. She coordinates the project, liaises with the Advisory Group, oversees project staff activities, approves all project expenditures, works with the bookkeeper to ensure the project’s financial health, and coordinates all project communication and planning.

Regular staff meetings and semi-regular meetings with the Advisory Group Chair are held to ensure effective communication and coordination of activities. During the reporting period, the project manager met bi-weekly to monthly with each staff member to discuss issues of workload, sharing of information, reporting, and activities moving forward. Meetings with the Advisory Group Chair were held on an as needed basis and addressed issues related to funding, finances, staffing, project manager oversight, and Advisory Group planning.

### Advisory Group

The Advisory Group met twice during the reporting period and is an essential resource to ensure that the programs and activities of the project meet the needs of the various groups within our partnership network.

During the reporting period, we welcomed a new member of the Advisory Group, the Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre. The current membership of the Advisory Group is:

<b>NAME</b>	<b>SERVICES SECTOR</b>	<b>PARTNERING ORGANIZATION</b>
Lois McIntyre	Community	Canadian Hearing Society
Mohamoud Hagi-Aden	Community	South East Ottawa Community Health Centre
Daniel Gagnon	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Siffan Rahman	Community	Somerset West Community Health Centre
Mirela Tihon	Immigrant	The Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC)
Christine Sharp	Community	Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre
Leigh Presseau	Community	Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre
Julie Demers	Community	Community Information Centre of Ottawa / 211
Gary Stein	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Arber Zaplluzha	Immigrant	Catholic Centre for Immigrants – Ottawa
Basia Mair	Immigrant	Ottawa Community Immigrant Settlement Organization



### **Project Review and Direction**

In June of 2018, the Connecting Regions Evaluation Report was released by the Law Foundation of Ontario. Connecting Ottawa had been integrally involved in the review process, with the Project Manager and Advisory Group Chair participating on the evaluation committee, arranging for interviews with key stakeholders, and providing data and support as needed. The Connecting Ottawa team reviewed the report to identify opportunities to integrate recommendations into current practice or identify what additional capacities would be required to expand the services as recommended in the report. These discussions were summarized in a formal response that was forwarded to the Law Foundation of Ontario in early November, 2018.

During the reporting period we met with the Law Foundation of Ontario on two occasions to discuss the project and moving forward in light of the evaluation. The meetings were very productive to share information on the project and helped to provide Connecting Ottawa with direction on opportunities for moving forward.

During the reporting period, we also explored opportunities and prepared a proposal to utilize unspent funds from 2018-19 as a result of staff changes. We were advised that our proposal was not accepted and we will be working to resubmit a proposal in the short term.

We very much value our relationship with the Law Foundation of Ontario and would like to thank David Kinsman and Helen Tewolde for their ongoing support and direction.

### **Financial Report**

The financial report to December 31, 2019 is below. Expenses for the first six months of the 2019/20 grant are in line with expectations. We respectfully request the balance of our funding to be forwarded for the operations of our project for the subsequent six months of the current project grant.

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

<b>CONNECTING OTTAWA</b>		
<b>STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS FOR SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED DECEMBER 31 2019</b>		
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actuals</b>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
<b>2.0 Law Foundation of Ontario</b>		
412 Received During Year	279,750	153,520
412 Received During Year for Special Event		-
412 Holdback receivable		-
	<b>279,750</b>	<b>153,520</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>3.2 Website Hosting, Management and Administration</b>		
595 Translation	-	-
625 Website Hosting, Management and Administration	8,000	3,624
	<b>8,000</b>	<b>3,624</b>
<b>3.3 Facilitators to Connect Clients and Legal Services</b>		
590 Training	1,000	200
620 Volunteer (IPL) Honoraria		-
550 Meeting Costs	400	-
595 Translation		-
510 Printing/Supplies		-
	<b>1,400</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>3.4 Legal Worker/Social Worker Connection</b>		
515 Accommodation	14,000	7,667
530 Cloud/Mobile Services	2,200	1,054
531 Out of Contract Telecom Expenses		
540 Equipment Purchases	1,500	136
545 Materials and Supplies	1,000	257
550 Meeting Costs	750	104
557 Professional Fees		-
558 Liability Insurance		26
56X Salaries and Benefits	175,000	79,580
562 Resource Development		-
585 Staffing Costs	1,000	117
590 Training/Professional Development	2,500	160
595 Translation/Interpretation	1,500	479
615 Travel	2,500	905
699 Sundry		24
	<b>201,950</b>	<b>90,509</b>
<b>3.6 Secretariat</b>		
510 Administration		-
545 Materials and Supplies	400	-
550 Meeting Costs	750	74
560 Project Co-ordinator	53,000	26,037
615 Travel	500	548
	<b>54,650</b>	<b>26,659</b>
<b>3.7 Shared Lessons Learned</b>		
520 Annual Conference	3,000	311
545 Materials and Supplies		-
546 Materials and Supplies: Rack Cards	1,500	-
550 Conferences, etc		-
595 Translation/Interpretation		-
615 Travel	750	267
	<b>5,250</b>	<b>578</b>
<b>3.8 Administration</b>		
542 Lead Agency Stipend	6,000	6,000
527 Bookkeeping	1,500	780
525 Bank Charges		30
522 Auditing	1,000	-
699 Sundry		-
799 Contingency		-
	<b>8,500</b>	<b>6,810</b>
<b>3.9 Special Events</b>		<b>35</b>
		<b>35</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>279,750</b>	<b>128,414</b>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES (EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25,106</b>

## LFO REPORTING STATISTICS

<b>Organization: Connecting Ottawa</b>	<b>Grant file #: CONRE-09-19</b>
<b>Project title: THE CONNECTING REGION -- CONNECTING OTTAWA</b>	

	<b>Total #</b>	<b>Notes or comments</b>
<b>PLEI</b>		
# of print resources produced, updated	5	
# of online text resources produced, updated	*note B	CO website is continually updated and used as a resource within the community
# of video or audio resources produced, updated	2	Webinars
# of PLEI training sessions	2 8 3	PLE Sessions Partner training sessions Lunch and Learns
# of people with legal needs or members of the public trained	220	Via PLE training, webinars, and conferences
# of trusted intermediaries and / or frontline workers trained	100 208	Via training/education sessions and Lunch & Learns Via consultations with front line staff
# of sessions / page views	53,908/96,893	
# of print resources distributed	500	rack cards, CLEO information, other PLE information
# of online text resources downloaded		
# of video or audio resources viewed, downloaded or distributed	*note B	
<b>Legal Services</b>		
# of clients served	250	
# of clients provided legal advice or brief services	250	Our mandate is not to represent clients but to provide advice, education and limited services
# of clients represented	0	
# of services to support people through legal processes (e.g. court navigator)	0	
<b>Pro bono</b>		
# of students engaged in pro bono work	0	
# of paralegals engaged in pro bono work	0	
# of lawyers engaged in pro bono work	2	
# of pro bono hours volunteered by lawyers	0	
# of pro bono hours volunteered by students	0	

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

# of pro bono hours volunteered by paralegals	0	
<b>Growing the non-profit justice sector</b>		
# of books, reports, oral histories or other significant legal research or policy work	0	
# of staff employed in the sector (full-time)	2	
# of staff employed in the sector (part-time)	1	
# of students employed in the sector	0	
# of professional development and learning events	0	
<b>Building a culture of law and understanding of rights</b>		
# of training events to build awareness of law, democracy and rights	See above	
# of participants in events to build awareness of law, democracy and rights	See above	
# of student/youth participants	*note B	
# of adult participants	*note B	
<b>Encouraging partnerships and collaboration</b>		
# of organizations you partnered with	60	53 partner organizations 8 sector organization and potential partner organizations

- Note A: We are unable to report specific numbers at this time.
- Note B: We have no means to collect this information at this time.

## APPENDIX

### Case Study # 1

Felix\* and Karen\* have a 17 year old son named Michael\*. They came to a settlement agency for legal advice on a criminal law matter. Michael and his family are Convention refugees waiting to receive their permanent residence status.

Michael became involved in a sexual relationship with a minor he believed was 14 years old at the time. A few days after their relationship ended Michael found out that the minor in question was actually 11 years old. The minor's mother, Amy\*, was an old family friend of Felix and Karen's and when she found out about the relationship she came to Felix and Karen to inform them of what transpired between their two children.

Amy explained to Felix and Karen that her daughter was in fact only 11 years old despite her physical appearance that led people to believe she was much older. Amy further explained that her daughter had a history of lying about her age to older men. Amy reassured Felix and Karen that no charges would be laid against their son.

Three months later the minor was having behavioural issues at school and she confided in a school social worker what had transpired between her and Michael. The school authorities contacted the Children's Aid Society and the Ottawa Police to report the crime. Amy informed Karen and Felix that Michael's name had been given to the Ottawa Police.

Karen and Felix could not afford to go to a criminal lawyer for advice but trusted their settlement worker to guide them to the right person. The settlement worker called CO's lawyer for advice and Karen, Felix and Michael were subsequently booked to see the CO lawyer.

Felix was very emotional and had imagined the police storming their home to arrest their son. The family as protected persons had suffered abuse from the police and military in their country of origin.

No charges had been laid against Michael at the time of his appointment with the CO lawyer but the family needed legal advice.

CO Lawyer did the following

- Gathered all the facts
- Explained the definition of sexual assault as defined by the Criminal code (the family was adamant that no rape had occurred due to no violence or coercion taking place.
- Explained what Statutory rape was and the exceptions where two minors are involved.
- Explained that the decision to prosecute a sexual assault complaint was not the decision of the minor's parents but rather the decision of the Crown.
- Explained that legally an 11 year old can never consent to a sexual relationship nor can her guardian.
- Explained a person's rights when dealing with the police.
- Explained Children's Aid Society's legal obligations.
- Explained the difference between a criminal case and a civil case.

- Explained the statute of limitations on various crimes.
- Explained that the minor or her parents could always take civil actions for damages even if there is no criminal proceeding.
- Provided ongoing consultations with legal advice,
- Connected the family with counseling services
- Connected the family with case workers who spoke the same language as them.
- Assisted with the drafting of their statement to police and CAS.

\*names changed to protect identity

## Case Study # 2

Around the beginning of May 2019, a caseworker at a community resource centre called regarding her client, Cam\*, who was in a car accident at the end of January. At the time of the accident, Cam was 68 years of age and employed part-time at Walmart. Cam speaks and understands basic English even though she immigrated to Canada from Vietnam a number of years ago.

Cam applied for Employment Insurance (EI) and submitted an insurance claim after the accident, but was not in receipt of any benefits at the time she reached out to the community centre. Since the accident, Cam had accrued credit card debt to pay her mortgage. Due to her injuries, she was unable to return to her part-time job.

We reviewed all of Cam's documentation in order to get a better idea of her situation. Unfortunately, Cam had completed the wrong claim forms. We worked with the caseworker to revise and resubmit Cam's claim for Income Replacement Benefits (IRB). Cam would receive 70% of her gross weekly income (up to \$400 max) if her claim was accepted. We also advised the caseworker to send an authorization form to Cam's insurance provider so that she could speak with them about Cam's claim.

The caseworker followed up with EI for an update on Cam's application. It turned out that Cam had stopped receiving EI because she did not understand the weekly reporting requirements. The caseworker clarified Cam's situation with EI. Shortly after, Cam received benefits without a gap in her payment schedule. Cam agreed to visit her caseworker for help whenever her report was due.

The caseworker followed up with the insurance provider numerous times for an update on Cam's claim. They never responded. We wrote a letter on Cam's behalf requesting a response. Within two days, Cam was notified that she qualified for IRB until mid-July and a lump sum of \$6,099.21. We advised Cam to report this income to EI.

In mid-July, Cam was still not able to return to work due to her injuries. Once again, we worked with the caseworker to ensure that Cam's medical documentation reflected her

limitations and restrictions. Cam's benefits were extended until the end of August, at which point it was recommended that she try a gradual return to work. The insurance provider even said they would allow Cam to keep any money she earned at Wal-Mart in addition to her IRB for the month of September.

In September, Cam did not feel she was able to return to work, even on a reduced schedule. With our help, the caseworker assisted Cam in getting an appointment with a personal injury lawyer through the Law Society Referral Service for help with her appeal.

**With the assistance of Connecting Ottawa's consultation services, the caseworker:**

- Acted as a trusted intermediary between CO's lawyer and the client, between the client and her doctor, between the client and EI, and between the client and her private insurance provider
- Coordinated interpretation services for the client in order to help the client overcome her language barrier and therefore understand all of the information pertaining to her case
- Learned how to identify and complete the correct forms for an insurance claim
- Helped to resolve the client's issue with EI and her private insurance provider in order to ensure financial stability for the client
- Gained knowledge of EI law, insurance law, and the Law Society Referral Service