

Award from the UBC Law Alumni Association. Boyd is humbled at times, hearing reports of lawyers arriving in court with printouts from his website or judges citing his work in the courtroom.

While he is happy to have made such an impact, he is eager to maintain the focus of his pro-bono work as a public service to address the dearth of information for those seeking to resolve family matters.

"We've got stopgap measures like Access Justice, the Salvation Army's pro-bono program, and Pro-Bono Law British Columbia, which do a great job," says Boyd, "but they're still sort of half-way points, and they're not a complete solution to the problem. We need duty counsel. We need lawyers that are immediately available in the court house. Legal information from a website or a pamphlet is no substitute for proper legal advice. Family is the core of our

economy, it's the core of our social organization, it's so terribly important. But our public schools don't talk about the consequences of family breakdown and the obligations which survive the termination of the spousal or parental relationship."

Boyd speaks fondly of his own family—a stability he seem to want to confer on others.

"I enjoy being able to make a concrete, meaningful, real difference in somebody's life," he says. "I like making my clients laugh. I like solving their problems. I love being able to give them good news or to help them work through a really difficult time. It's tremendously gratifying in a way that I don't think I would be gratified handling a shareholder's grievance or something like that. Family law is very personal." ●

Profile

by Mary Milstead

AMBER PRINCE ('05)

Four years ago, Amber Prince thought she might spend the summer working at Hastings Race Track in Vancouver. She had recently graduated from UBC Law and was planning to start the Master's in Law program at the University of Victoria.

"I didn't do the traditional route, summering at a law firm, articling and carrying on from there," says Prince. "I didn't have a clear sense of direction for myself, and I was hesitant to work at a big firm."

A lifelong lover of horses, she landed the job at the track instead. However, things did not work out quite the way she planned.

"Unfortunately, I only lasted about a day," Prince laughs. "It was not a good fit. There was a lot of hard physical labor involved."

Instead she accepted an opportunity to work as a summer student for Atira Women's Resource Society. Founded in the 1980s, Atira is a not-for-profit organization committed to ending violence against women through providing direct service as well as working to increase awareness of and education around the scope and impact of that violence on communities.

The position at Atira was a better fit. "I think of myself as being a left-leaning feminist of Aboriginal heritage," says Prince. "My philosophies are in line with Atira's and my outlook informs all of my work with women." Although she was not aware that this type of work existed when she was a law student, she grew into it with the help of her colleagues. Halfway through her master's program, she was offered the position of Legal Advocate for Atira. She accepted.



As Atira's Legal Advocate, Prince's mandate is to provide legal assistance and support services for marginalized women. She helps them navigate the often overwhelming legal system, primarily in areas considered "poverty-law," such as residential tenancy law, income law, human rights law, WCP appeal and income assistance appeal. Prince also provides support services, including attendance at family or criminal court when guidance and personal support are needed, and providing referrals for legal services outside her jurisdiction.

It is not all nuts and bolts and statutes and court appearances, however.

“Sometimes the most important thing is that the woman is being heard. Being listened to and also believed. To feel supported is sometimes the most important thing, and that’s been a big lesson for me,” Prince says. Within an organization like Atira, the lines between responsibilities are often blurred. “I find it difficult to compartmentalize aspects of a woman’s life. It’s her life,” she explains. “It’s not, ‘this part is legal, this is counseling, this is housing.’ We build relationships with particular women, and they trust us for certain reasons, and then we help them with everything.”

Working on the frontlines in the fight for access to justice, Prince sees first-hand how justice is applied to marginalized members of society. “The crucial test for justice is: does what is said on paper

translate into reality for people? I’m able to get a glimpse of whether justice is working. I try to do my part to try to ensure that there’s some access to justice for the women I’m working with,” says Prince. “Unfortunately, my experience here is that there are differing levels of justice. I don’t think the women I work with have the same access to justice as those who are less marginalized. It’s a great challenge and I try to bridge that gap.”

Originally from Prince George, BC, and a member of the Sucker Creek First Nation in Enilda, Alberta, Prince began her education with a degree in criminology. Convinced she was not cut out to be a police officer, she moved on to law school at the University of British Columbia. Together with her master’s degree, her education has given her the skills and expertise needed to help clients navigate the legal system.

Profile

by Milton Kiang

DEANNA OKUN-NACHOFF ('02)

Who'll care FOR OUR CAREGIVERS?

In May, the Ruby Dhalla live-in caregiver controversy forced Canadians to take a closer look at the treatment of foreign domestic workers—one of society’s most under-represented classes.¹

In the same month, Hesanna Santiago, a 44-year-old live-in caregiver who’s worked in Canada for more than four years, was threatened with deportation because her 12-year-old daughter, who lives in the Philippines, was diagnosed with renal disease.

Immigration officials say Santiago may be deported because of the “excess demand” her daughter would place on the health system if she came to Canada.

On May 20th, 2009, *The Province* reported Santiago as tearfully saying, “I’m now asking to please give me compassion, to allow my family to come here. It is our dream to be here in Canada. I tried all my best to work here. I tried.”

It is cases like these which weigh heavily on Deanna Okun-Nachoff ('02), the 36-year-old executive director and staff lawyer at the West Coast Domestic Worker’s Association. As the only lawyer within the organization, Okun-Nachoff handles cases involving domestic workers who face deportation because of illness.

“There’s a reason why I keep a box of tissues by my desk,” says Okun-Nachoff.



Under Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program, domestic workers must take a medical examination before entering Canada. They are required to work as live-in caretakers for two years before becoming eligible to apply for permanent residency.