



NSRLP NATIONAL SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

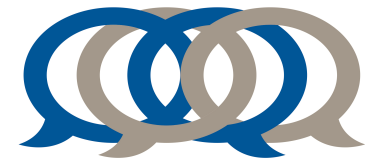


**THE NATIONAL
SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS PROJECT**
Research, Resources, Dialogue & Collaboration



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University of Windsor

"Think of being a SRL like throwing yourself into the middle of the ocean. You flail about and look up to the sun for direction, but you have no idea what is north, south, east or west."



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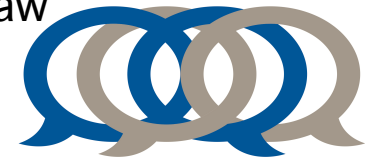
ABOUT THE NSRLP

The National Self-Represented Litigants Project (NSRLP) builds on the National Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs) Research Study conducted by Dr. Julie Macfarlane from 2011-2013.

The NSRLP takes its mandate from the Final Recommendations of the Research Report: 10 Actions Steps for the SRL Phenomenon

- Generating energy and motivation for system change and new programming to assist SRLs
- Promoting and convening collaboration and dialogue among SRL's, lawyers, judges, policymakers and court services staff
- Developing new resources for SRLs, and acting as a clearinghouse for information for all justice system stakeholders on the SRL phenomenon

NSRLP is funded from 2013-15 by the University of Windsor, Faculty of Law and aligns with Windsor Law's mandate to promote Access to Justice for all Canadians.



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NSRLP ADVISORY BOARD



NSRLP Board Members are a source of expertise and collegial support for the NSRLP. They work with the NSRLP team to monitor emerging SRL initiatives and to communicate the work of the NSRLP to their constituencies.

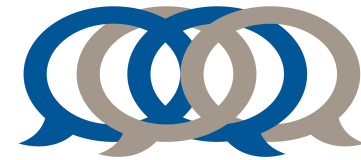
From left to right:

Row 1: Justice John Rooke - *Judge, Associate Chief Justice, Alberta Queen's Bench*; Jennifer Muller - *SRL*; John Manwaring - *Professor of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa*

Row 2: Camille Cameron - *Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor*; Robert Harvie - *Partner, Huckvale Wilde Harvie MacLennan, Bencher, Law Society of Alberta*; Sherry MacLennan - *Director Public Legal Information, Legal Services Society of British Columbia*

Row 3: Trevor C.W. Farrow - *Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School*; Mary Anne Docherty - *Supervisor, Superior Court, Windsor*; Noel Semple - *Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor*

Row 4: Jasmine Attfield - *Law Student Representative*



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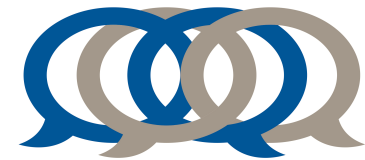
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MESSAGE FROM: Professor John Manwaring

Chair, NSRLP Advisory Board



“The work of the NSRLP fills a huge gap in our ability to communicate directly with the users of the justice system. At a time of seismic change in the delivery of justice services, this has never been more important. The Board provides both an ongoing sounding board and a focus for strategic planning for the future work of the NSRLP, reflecting the Board’s collective commitment to advancing access to justice in Canada.”



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NSRLP TEAM



“We are proud of the energy we have created in countless practical and awareness building projects on behalf of SRLs. Please help by following and supporting the work of the NSRLP.”

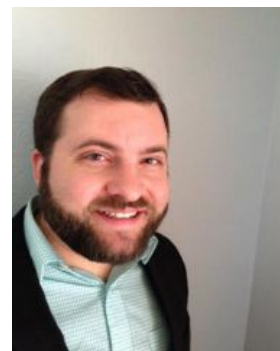
Dr. Julie Macfarlane
Project Director



Sue Rice
Project
Manager



Erin Chesney
Research
Assistant



William Good
Volunteer



Kristen
Bortolotti
Research
Assistant



Tamara
Thomas
Research
Assistant



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FOCUS ON 10 ACTION STEPS

(from the Recommendations of the Final Report, 2013)

A silhouette of a person's head in profile, facing right. Inside the head, there is a white keyhole shape. The word "Change" is written in orange text above the keyhole.

Change

FEBRUARY: Confronting the urgency of system change, embracing innovation and evaluation - Julie's Blogs, keynote address to the BC Family Justice Summit, launch of [NSRLP YouTube channel](#)

MARCH: Listening to SRLs and including them as system stakeholders - launch of ["Coping with the Courtroom"](#)

APRIL: Making private legal services responsive to SRLs - ["SRL for a Day"](#) and "What I Wish I Had Known"



MAY: Evolving new models of public legal services – launch of [Access to Justice All-Stars](#) team

JUNE: Enhancing information portals, forms, court guides, and on-line resources designed to meet SRL needs – BC SRL Focus Groups



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FOCUS ON 10 ACTION STEPS

(from the Recommendations of the Final Report, 2014)

JULY: Enhancing Mediation and Dispute Resolution Services – launch of [“Settlement Smarts for SRLS”](#)

SEPTEMBER: Judges and SRLs - [“An Open Letter to the Canadian Judiciary”](#)



OCTOBER: Integrating New Knowledge into Legal Education and Training – [“A Proposed SRL Curriculum”](#)

NOVEMBER: Measuring the Social Impact of Self-Representation [“Sarah’s Story”](#)

DECEMBER: Re-Building Public Trust – [“Dear Santa”](#) and [“Working with SRLs: Ideas And Suggestions from the Bench”](#)



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NSRLP MANDATES



- RESEARCH

- RESOURCES



- DIALOGUE
& COLLABORATION



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2014 RESEARCH

National US Study with IAALS

(Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, University of Denver)

Legal Advice vs. Legal Information

(court staff training and evaluation)

Measuring the “Costs” of Self-Representation

(with the Civil Justice Forum and Prof Noel Semple)

SRL Intakes

(ongoing collection and analysis of demographic and some experiential data)



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SRL 2014 INTAKE

While detailed qualitative data collection ended with the SRL National Research Study (published in 2013), SRLs continue to contact the NSRLP almost every day. An Intake procedure to continue to collect quantitative data and expand the existing database is ongoing.

150 + # of SRLs contacting NSRLP in 2014
63 # of SRL Intake Forms completed

56% Hold a University or college degree

64% Had a lawyer at some point in the case

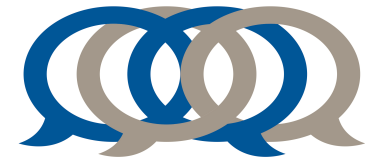
93% Faced a lawyer on the other side

98%

Interested in participating in a conference, working group or pilot projects

100%

Joined the NSRLP mailing list in order to stay connected



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NSRLP RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

PUBLICATIONS

Coping With the Courtroom

A primer for SRLs on how to prepare for appearing in court, packed with the type of practical self-help tips that SRLs tell us they need. Adapted by provincial governments & agencies to offer jurisdiction-specific information.

Settlement Smarts for SRLs

Practical advice and information to enable SRLs to make effective, strategic and empowered use of settlement conferences, mediation, and party negotiations /Offers to Settle.

Working with SRLs: Ideas and Suggestions from the Bench

A small Working Group of judges representing jurisdictions across Canada collaborated with NSRLP to produce this collection of courtroom management tips and advice for other judges. Used by the National Judicial Institute and for regional judicial trainings.

SRL Annotated Bibliography

Periodical and news articles and government reports from Canada, the US & international source and updated every 3 months.

What Court Staff Told Us

A short summary document from our original research interviews with court staff. Used in court staff training in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Updated provincial resources for SRLs are ongoing on the NSRLP website



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DIALOGUE & COLLABORATION

Initiatives include:

- Regular consultation to government and pro bono agencies
- Showcasing individual efforts via the Access to Justice All-Stars Team
- Promotion of [#a2j](#) on Twitter
- SRL Speakers Bank



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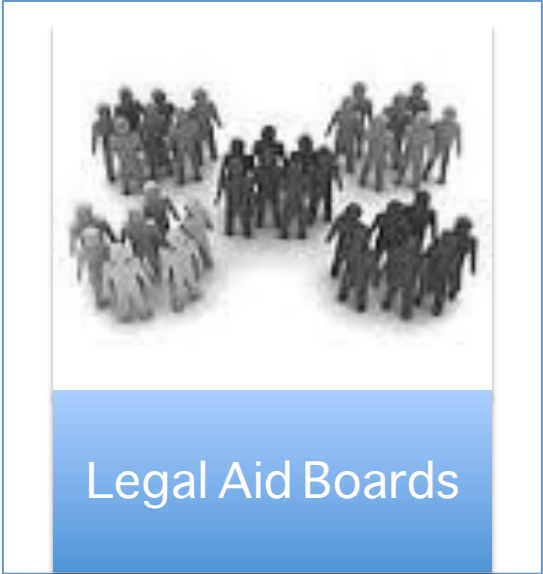


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DIALOGUE & COLLABORATION : NSRLP ACTS AS A CONVENER



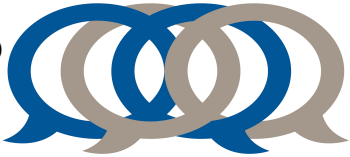
NSRLP convenes a quarterly conference call among leaders from Law Societies in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia and the National Federation. Discussion topics to date have included para-legals, Law Week, and unbundled legal services.



NSRLP convenes a quarterly conference call among leaders from Legal Aid Boards in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Discussion topics have included new program development and funding priorities.



A small steering group of SRLs have created CASSLS (Canadian Association Supporting SRLs) as a means of networking and support. NSRLP facilitates these conversations and offers assistance with a start-up website



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NSRLP'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE ALL-STAR TEAM



**Family Duty
Counsel Team**
Windsor ON



**Registry Counter
Staff**
*Prince George
BC*



Justice David Price
Judge
Ontario Superior
Court
Brampton, ON



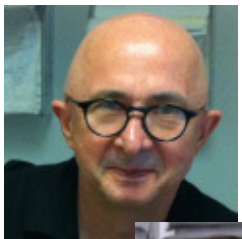
Peter Halls
Court Service
Worker
FLIC (Family Law
Information Clinic)
Toronto ON



Katrina Trask
Research Lawyer
Newfoundland and
Labrador Supreme
Court
St. John's, NFLD



Lisa Nakamura
Senior Policy
Analyst
Ministry of
Justice
BC
Vancouver, BC



**BC Supreme Court
Self Help and
Information Services
JAC (Justice
Access Centre)**
Vancouver, BC

Heather Liu-Litwin
Law Help Ontario
Volunteer
Toronto, ON



Darrel Pink
Executive Director
Nova Scotia
Barristers Society
Halifax, NS

SRLs shared with us the name of someone working in public legal services who who made a positive difference during their SRL experience.



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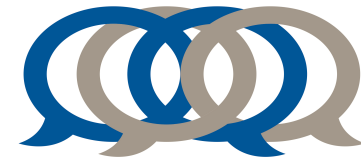
DIALOGUE & COLLABORATION

(further 2014 highlights)

16

Speaking Engagements & Workshops on the SRL Phenomenon including:

- BC Family Justice Summit
- Newfoundland and Labrador Judicial Training
- Dispute Res Section American Bar Association Annual Conference
- LSBC Benchers Retreat
- CBA meetings in New Brunswick, Newfoundland
- Nova Scotia Barrister's Society
- AFCC Conference - Association of Family and Facilitation Courts
- SOAR – Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators
- Participation in The National Action Committee Roadshow for the “Cromwell Task Force ”



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SRL PARTICIPATION

(2014 highlights)

7

SRL Speakers Bank

speaking engagements including:

Ontario County Law

Association Presidents

Canadian Courts Administrators Network

BC Family Justice Summit

20

SRLs participating in Working Groups

Including:

BC Justice Form Filing Working Group

Civil Resolutions

Tribunal Working Group

BC Legal Services Society

BC Ministry of Justice focus groups

20

SRLs featured in media stories

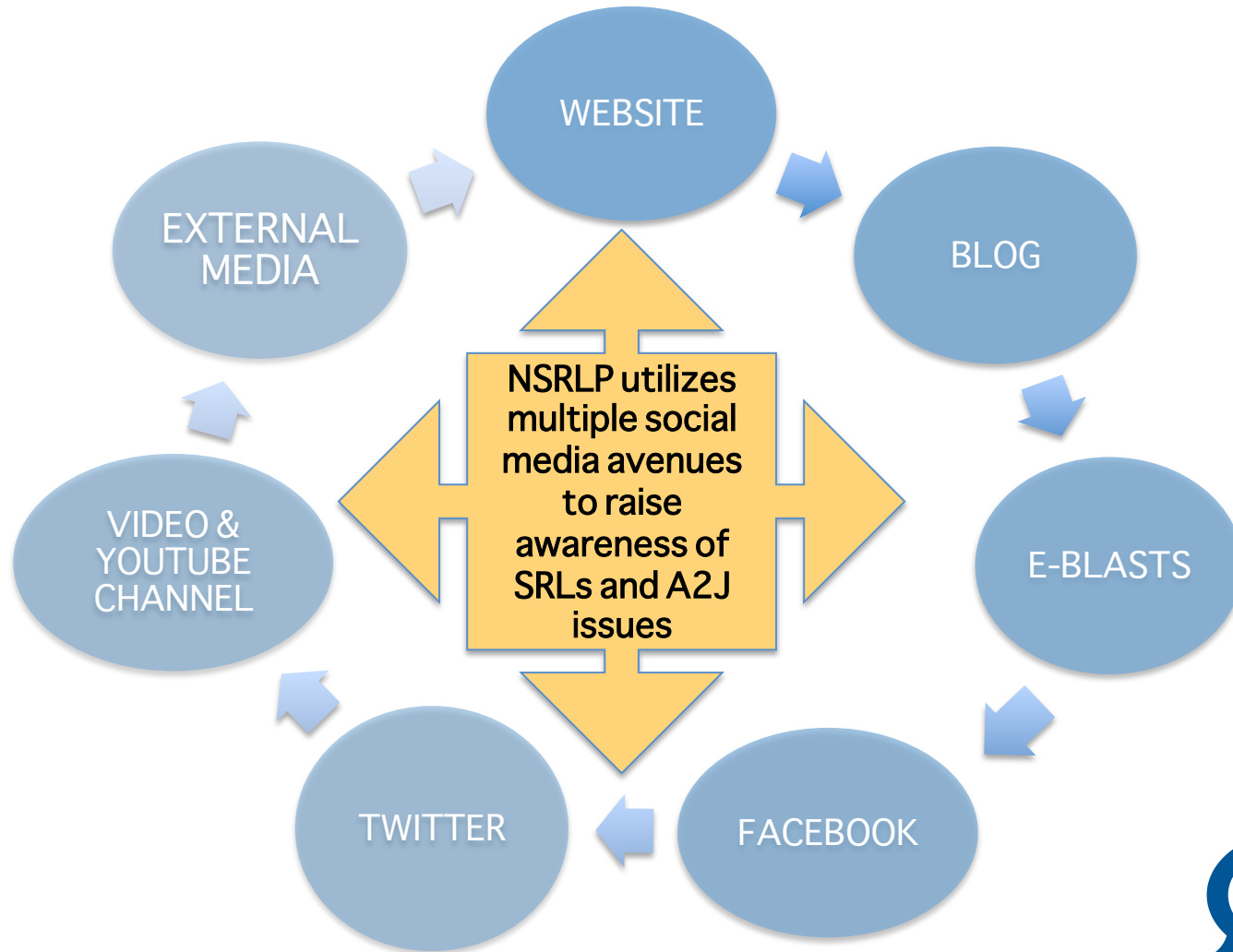


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USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO FURTHER DIALOGUE



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WEBSITE ANALYTICS

2014 Highlights



Page Views 27,152



Most views in a month: November 4,524

Most Viewed Pages



Coping with the Courtroom - 1083



Open Letter to the Canadian Judiciary - 999

Busiest day of the year



795 views on September 22
(due to media coverage of the Open Letter to the Canadian Judiciary)



Most popular feature

91 countries viewing site. Top 5:

1. Canada
2. US
3. Australia
4. Brazil
5. UK



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JULIE'S BLOG

5

Guest Bloggers:

Annette Demers - *Acting Law Librarian and Sessional Lecturer, University of Windsor*

Karen Hudson QC - *Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission and executive member of the Association of Legal Aid Plans of Canada*

Heather Hui-Litwin - *lawyer, former SRL and volunteers as a duty counsel with Law Help Ontario*

Noel Semple - *Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law University of Windsor*

Rob Harvie - *Partner, Huckvale Wilde Harvie MacLennan*

Sherry MacLennan - *Director Public Legal Information, Legal Services Society of British Columbia*

Blogs are posted Tuesdays and highlighted on Twitter and Facebook

41

Published Blogs in
2014

Blog generating
most comments

*Open Letter to
the Canadian
Judiciary*



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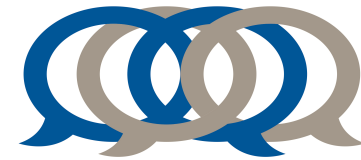
E-BLASTS

- E-Blasts are newsflashes distributed bi-weekly via Mailchimp to approximately 700 (and posted on Twitter (900) and Facebook (650))
- Contain 3 to 4 news pieces highlighting NSRLP initiatives, other Canadian and international SRL and A2J stories
- All E-Blasts are archived and available on the NSRLP website



37% -42%*

**Open rates average (industry average is 9.2%)*



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TWITTER

907

of Followers

FACEBOOK

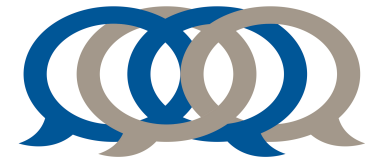
649

of Followers

THE # “HASHTAG”

#a2j

Included in our tweets to generate a discussion and log of conversations regarding the SRL phenomenon and access to justice



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VIDEO & YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Launched in June 2014

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/06/30/bc-benchers-professional-video/>

Current videos

Dr. Julie Macfarlane Address BC Benchers on SRLs

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/06/30/bc-benchers-professional-video/>

Sarah's Story – The Impact of Being a SRL

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/11/19/sarajs-story-the-personal-and-social-impact-of-self-representation/>

SRL Derek's Story

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2015/01/15/dereks-experiences-as-a-self-represented-litigant/>

SRL Kelly's Story

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2015/01/15/kellys-experiences-as-a-self-represented-litigant/>



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EXTERNAL MEDIA COVERAGE

(2014 highlights)

80 # of NSRLP Interviews up to end of 2014

CBC The Current – Making the legal system work for people who represent themselves

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/09/22/cbc-the-current-making-the-legal-system-work-for-people-who-represent-themselves/>

CBC Radio – Cross Country Check Up with Rex Murphy

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/11/29/cbc-radio-cross-country-check-up-with-rex-murphy/>

Toronto Star – Open Letter to the Canadian Judiciary

<http://representingyourselfcanada.com/2014/09/22/toronto-star-stinging-message-to-canadas-lawyers/>

5 additional media features

- Television
- Radio
- Newsprint
- Professional Publications
- Web

Coverage areas:

- ✓ Local
- ✓ Provincial
- ✓ National
- ✓ International

Regular stories and interviews in the Law Times, Lawyers Weekly and Canadian Bar Association National magazine



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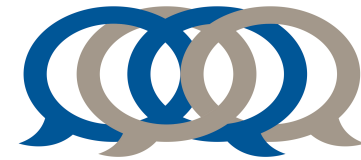
KUDOS 2014

“The presentation you gave on video was great. We have a huge number of new benchers this year, and I think they pretty much all came away with a new understanding of a number of things. First was the prevalence of SRLs. But more importantly, I think, was the fact that SRLs are not all people with a vendetta against lawyers and the justice system..... I think your presentation opened some eyes about the values of unbundling beyond it being just a concept or nicely spoken words... (you) put some flesh on the bones of a concept that I think many lawyers don't understand. It hit the right notes.”
– *Michael Lucas, CEO LSBC*

"Just when I think your effectiveness on A2J is peaking you bring me even more joy."
– *Mark Benton, Executive Director Legal Services Society BC*

“I remember a very senior lawyer telling judges and lawyers at a Pro Bono Law Ontario dinner (at which he was being honoured) that SRLs were here to stay and we had to adjust to them rather than make them adjust to us (lawyers/judges). These comments were not well-received...there is a still a long way to go but your research is critical”. -*Anon.*

“You made my day, thank you!!! You made me feel heard, thank you so much!” -*SRL*



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