

# BCLA Funds Intellectual Freedom

By Deb Thomas.

Did you know that BCLA has a fund whose sole purpose is to promote intellectual freedom and to aid in the defense of British Columbians who are victims of censorship?

## Lois Bewley Intellectual Freedom and Defense Fund

This fund, founded in 1990, was created "to provide a permanent, stable source of revenue to underwrite costs of educational programs, activities and services offered by BCLA alone, or in conjunction with other organizations, in the promotion and understanding of intellectual freedom and freedom to read, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Canadian Library Association Intellectual Freedom Statement. And, in so far as funds will permit, the Fund is to provide a permanent, stable source of revenue to assist in the defense of colleagues or other workers in the writing, publishing, distribution, or retail area who suffer from censorship attacks in the workplace." (from the BCLA Board Manual)

Two examples of how the fund has been used are:

- to support Cranbrook Public Library when they were challenged (and picketed) for including a book by Anne Rice with sexual content considered unacceptable by some local residents

- to support James Chamberlain who entered into (and won) a lengthy court case with the Surrey School Board in 1997 when they did not approve three books recommended by the Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia for inclusion in the school library or for use as learning resources.

The fund was recently renamed the Lois Bewley Intellectual Freedom and Defense Fund to honour Lois Bewley, a staunch defender of intellectual freedom and inspirational instructor at UBC's School of Library, Archival and Information.

If you would like to donate to the fund, go to <http://www.bcla.bc.ca> and click on *Donate Now*. If you would like to request funds to assist in a challenge to censorship or offer an educational program about intellectual freedom, contact Deb Thomas, current chair of the Fund, at [deb.thomas@bpl.bc.ca](mailto:deb.thomas@bpl.bc.ca) for more information

*Deb Thomas, Chair, The Lois Bewley Intellectual Freedom and Defense Fund*