

Make-a-Will Week

April 10-16, 2015 encourages you to write your will or revise an existing will. According to a 2014 report for BC Notaries, just 55 per cent of British Columbians have a signed, legally valid, up-to-date will.

A will ensures that the people and organizations you cherish most receive the benefit of your estate. If you die without a will, your estate may not be distributed as you wish and the cost of administering your estate may be higher. In BC, every person 16 years or older can make a will.

A Will

- Allows your named executor to act immediately to make funeral arrangements and take control of your estate.
- Protects your possessions and ensures they are dealt with as you have directed.
- Provides an opportunity to make arrangements for children, other dependents and pets.
- Clarifies your wishes and who is to carry them out.
- Minimizes the cost and effort administering your estate.
- Must be in writing, signed at completion by the will maker and in the presence of two or more witnesses who also sign the will.

If You Already Have A Will

Review your will every few years to make sure that it is current. For example, your life circumstances may have changed or your executor may have moved. If your will is not up to date, see a lawyer or notary about making a new will or adding a codicil.

Once you have made a will, tell your executor where you keep it. Then, make a family tree and list your beneficiaries' current addresses and phone numbers.

Finally, if your notary or lawyer has not already done this, register your will with the BC Vital Statistics Agency. The Agency does not keep a copy of the will, only the date on which it was made and its stored location. This alerts others that you have made a will. It costs \$17 to file a Wills Notice and can be done online, by mail, or in person.

Wills, Estates and Succession Act

The *Wills, Estates and Succession Act* (WESA) came into force on March 31, 2014. WESA is now the sole source of legislation for wills and estates. Key features include:

- Clarifying the process for distributing estates where there is no will.
- Allowing the court to recognize a document as a will even if it does not meet all the standards usually required to make a will.
- Lowering the age at which a person can make a will to 16.

WESA does not invalidate wills written before March 31, 2014. However, some of the laws about interpreting wills have changed, so individuals may wish to review their existing will with a lawyer or notary to make sure their wishes can be upheld.

Leaving a Legacy

If you plan to leave a legacy to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. we would like to include you in our **Circle of Hope** — our dedicated friends who have planned a future gift to the Society. We do not need to know the specific details and you may choose to remain anonymous. If you wish to designate your gift towards a specific initiative, or would like more details on our work, please contact 1-800-667-3742 Melanie Brooks mbrooks@alzheimerbc.org or Leona Gonczy lgonczy@alzheimerbc.org.

Information from the above article was compiled from:

Government of Canada www.seniors.gc.ca

The Province of B.C. www2.gov.bc.ca

The Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia www.trustee.bc.ca

The Canadian Bar Association British Columbia Branch www.cbabc.org