

Lessons learned at Law Day as Calgary Courts Centre hosts 31st annual family event

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Law Day draws big crowd

IMAGE: 1 OF 10



Now officially Canadian, Douglas and Barbara Charleston explain their story to Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi in a citizenship ceremony during Law Day at the Calgary Courts Centre in Calgary, Alta. on Saturday, April 13, 2013. The Charllestons have lived in Canada since 1969 (previously from Scotland), but due to being snowbirds, they hadn't been able to officially become citizens until now. The courthouse was wide open to the public, with no security checks, for the annual educational day designed to teach about the Canadian judicial system. Lyle Aspinall/Calgary Sun/QMI Agency

Trying to carry a prohibited item inside the court house can often turn a visitor into a criminal.

And using the same scientific principles learned in high school can help today's forensic investigators uncover suspects to crimes, no matter how large or small.

They are just some of the lessons Calgarians learned Saturday at the 31st annual Law Day held at the Calgary Courts Centre.

The family-friendly event held in major cities across Canada offers the public a look inside the life of law by viewing interactive displays, taking tours of holding cells and courtrooms and participating in mock trials, among other activities.

Co-chair Robert Bourne said it provides an informal chance to learn about the legal system and expose people to the different organizations that support it.

A display of confiscated items, including guns — both real and fake — brass knuckles, or the more unusual cane with hidden sword or hollowed out iPod used to hide drugs, was a big hit for many at the event.

Once every one or two weeks, Sheriff Max Muiznieks or his colleagues find a prohibited item, including homemade weapons like ninja stars made from soup cans, or a sock with a rock inside.

“Some of the items maybe people picked up on vacation in a foreign country and they forget about them in their bags ... some like knives might not necessarily be illegal, but they don’t realize they are not allowed to come into the courthouse,” he said.

And a table of items confiscated by border services officers at the airport showed how they help keep Canada safe, by preventing animals, disease and endangered species from entering the country.

A swallow’s nest from China where it is a delicacy and a calf’s head made into a flask from Colombia were among items sniffed out by a dog named Rusty welcoming pets by visitors Saturday.

“One of the most recent things he has found that was interesting was some live turtles in a checked bag coming from China,” said Rusty’s handler Laura Hiscott.

At the forensic crime scene unit table, visitors could learn how fingerprints can be used to link an object with a suspect, such as a robbery note to a bank robber or an attacker to a beer bottle he used as a weapon.

“We show how we find fingerprints and how we make identifications with them and fingerprints on different things can tell us how an object was being handled,” said Const. Scott Mark.

Carter Gaffney, 10, was left wanting to work as a police officer after visiting that booth.

“My favourite part has to be the Calgary Police Service forensic crime scene, because I got to get my fingerprints and it was really fun because I didn’t know that filings could show that,” he said.

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