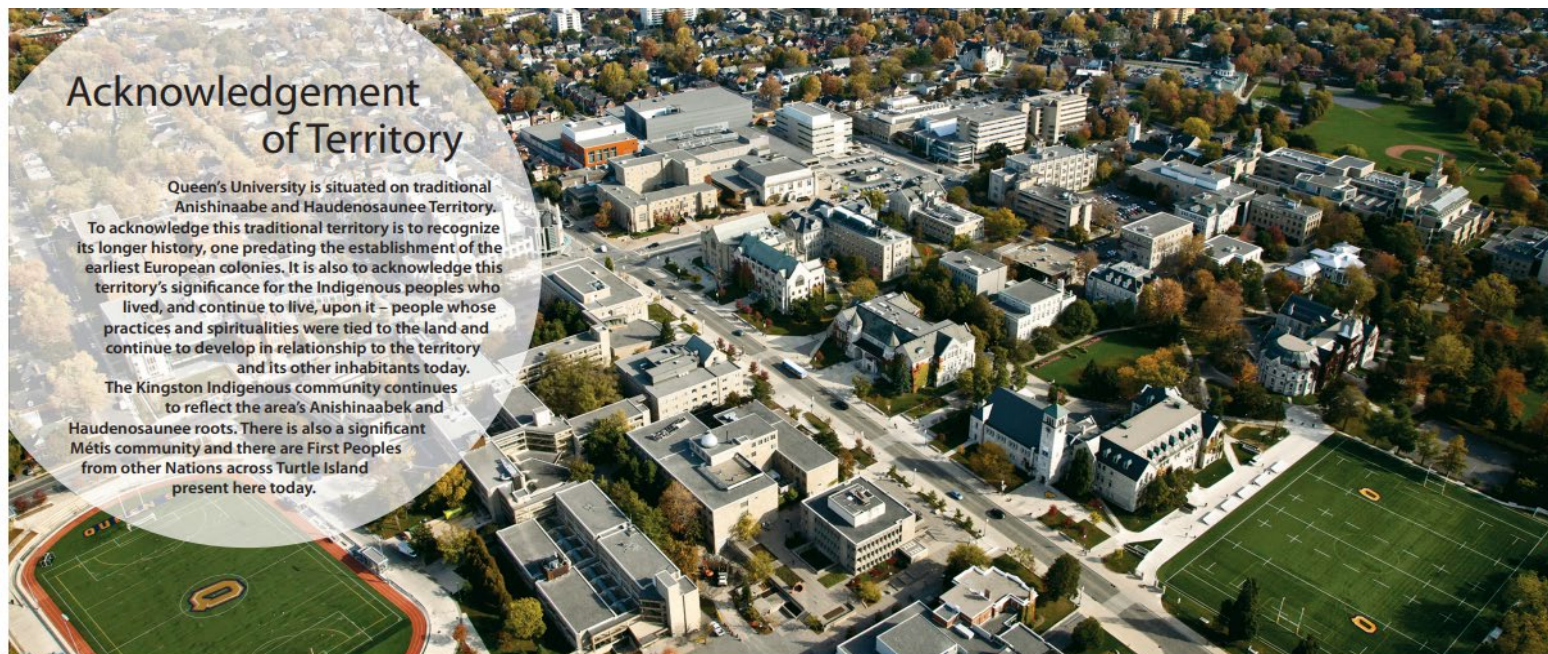


A hand is shown holding a glowing globe. The globe is covered in red outlines of continents and is surrounded by several red triangular warning signs with exclamation marks. The background is dark with some blue and red light effects.

Setting Our Sights on Transforming the Legal Profession to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century:

Situating Reflective Practice as an Enabling Metacompetency

Michele Leering, Visiting Scholar, Queen's University Faculty of Law
CPRA Research Fellow, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law
Australasian Law Academics Conference - University of Melbourne
Educating the Reflective Lawyer: Human Wisdom in an Automated Age
02 July 2026



Resolving to “learn, understand & act”...

Photo credits: Queen's University; Anishnaabe flag (Maurice Switzer, Anishinabek News.ca, 15 February 2015; Haudenashonee flag (<https://www.onondaganation.org/government/sovereignty/>)); Indigenous Art installation (Queen's University Faculty of Law); Queen's University, Land Acknowledgement poster (<https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/ways-knowing/land-acknowledgement>); Cultivating a garden of hope (presenter's back garden 2025); Quote: Jody Wilson-Raybould (2022, p. 26) *True Reconciliation: How to be a Force for Change*. McClelland-Stewart.

Overview...

Why this Symposium Series now?

What is reflective practice? Tracing its emergence in theories of learning and professional education

A few insights gained from my doctoral research

Overview of themes emerging from the Series...

Preview of post-Series knowledge-sharing plans...

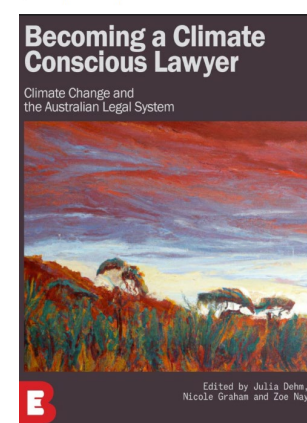
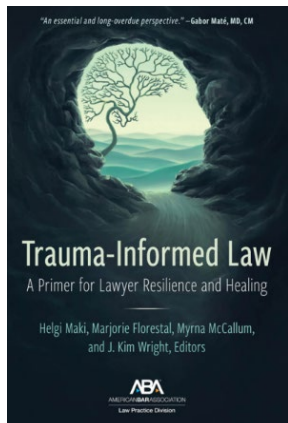
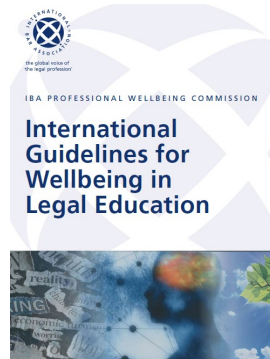
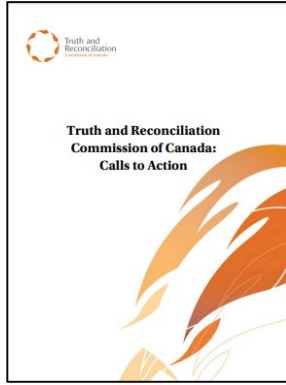
Posing a few reflective questions...



POLYCRISIS

So many imperatives for increased and deepened
reflective capacity – a *pedagogy of reflection...*
and reflective practice as a professional
metacompetency

There is a need to reimagine legal education as more
vibrant, engaging & rigorous professional learning
experience to better equip us to provide responsive,
visionary, and ethical leadership on ... human rights,
access to justice, rule of law, people-centred justice
systems, climate justice, and in the face of a global
polycrisis and unrelenting and disorienting change...



In a world without unifying social norms we will turn to law to mediate and resolve our crises, or we will turn to guns. Since guns now include weapons of mass destruction, it is clear that law is the safer arena of struggle. Lawyers are the champions we will send forth to represent us in that arena. We need good ones.

(Matsuda, M. J. (2014). Admit that the waters around you have grown: Change and legal education, p.1390)



Finding hope ...



Seeing reflective practice as a discipline and enabling a capacity to take action to help narrow what author and teacher Parker Palmer called the tragic gap: “the gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be.”

Hoping to support new legal professionals competent in the discipline of law but also who also have what Parker Palmer (2007) described as the “the skill and the will to deal with the institutional pathologies that threaten the profession’s highest standards.”

Reflective practice as a very big tent... and a lifelong journey... grounded in theories of learning and education....

- Domains of reflection
- Temporal aspects
- Depth and/or foci of reflection
- Different dimensions
- Structured reflective cycles
- Philosophical orientations
- Reflective *practices*
- What it is not...



Operationalizing & conceptualizing the concept for law...

Naming & claiming five domains of reflection

What is the change we seek through reflection?

As a road map for implementation ... (Leering, 2023)

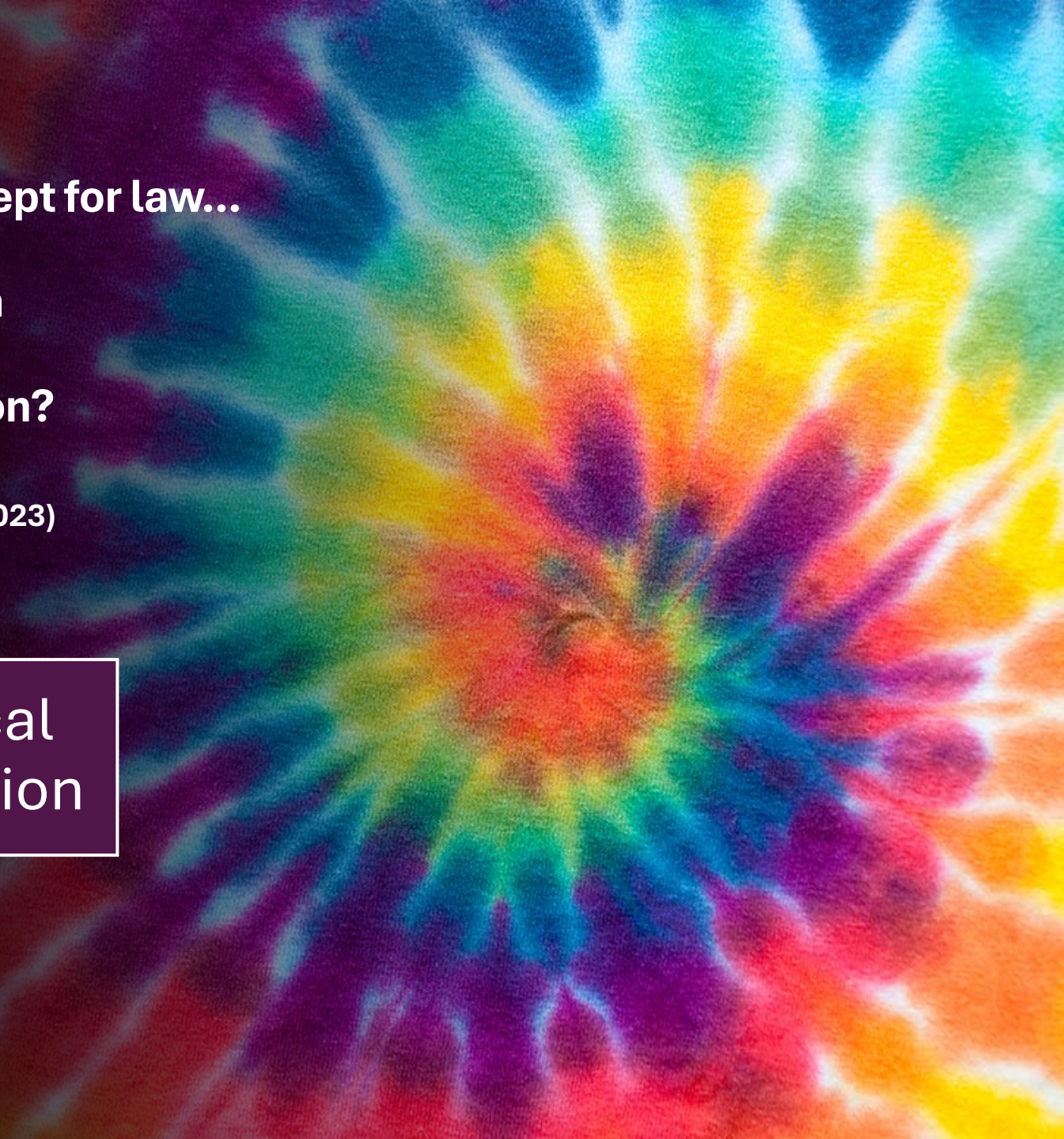
On
practice

Self-
reflection

Critical
reflection

Collective
reflection

Integrative
reflection



Getting more systematic about it: Developing reflective professionalism

Inclusive, complex, iterative, developmental, evolving,
instrumental to transformative... a discipline...leading to praxis...



Reflection on practice

Improves technical proficiency through reflection, including capacity to learn, learning from experience, to integrate theoretical or technical knowledge with problems/practice, to develop skills; and professional judgement.

Self-reflection

Reflects on self and values; fosters self-awareness including world view, biases and assumptions, ideas about professionalism, cultural competence, ethical judgement, resilience and responsiveness to clients and colleagues.

Critical reflection

Uses reflection to develop critical perspectives on law, legal institutions, “law as lived,” justice, access to justice, “rule of law,” equality, human rights, paradigms and philosophies of practice and conflict resolution, etc.

Collective reflection

Reflects with others to develop new knowledge, increase rigour, accept constructive feedback to develop new knowledge and understanding, engage in generative dialogue to discover better approaches, new possibilities and more effective strategies and solutions.

Integrative reflection

Integrates the domains of reflection to deepen insights, create new professional knowledge, build expertise and ethical judgement, expand notions of professionalism, act with integrity and authenticity.



How did law professors in
Australia and Canada
understand the benefits of
reflective practice?
(Leering, 2023)

1. Deeper and transformative learning

2. Cognitive development & thinking capacity

3. Self-directedness & self-determination theory

4. Impact of emotions

5. Mental health & wellbeing

6. Ethics, skills, judgment, professional knowledge

7. Professional identity formation & professionalism

8. Prepare for successful practice

9. Support broader justice goals, and access to justice

10. Prepare for uncertain future

**What pedagogical
methods support
reflective practice
during law school?**
(Leering, 2023)

**Introductory
sessions or
guides**

**Role
modelling**

**Reflective
writing**

**Reflective
questioning**

**Structured
reflective
learning cycles**

**Self-
assessment
exercises**

**Planning
exercises**

**Self-awareness
exercises**

**Debriefing
exercises**

**Reflective
assignments**

Portfolios

**Aesthetic
practices**

**Contemplative
practices**

**Feedback &
supervision
practices**

**Assessment
practices**

Factors favouring or influencing reflective practice's acceptance in Australia ...

Micro, meso,
macro

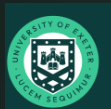
(Leering, 2023, pp. 176 –195)

Influences on individual educators:

1. Professional upgrading in educational theory and practice
2. Familiarity with educational theorists
3. Participating in faculty curriculum projects
4. Teaching & learning grants & fellowships
5. Capacity & expertise required to teach a particular course
6. Cross-disciplinary influences
7. International literature and collaboration
8. Other – values, beliefs, commitments, and experiences
- ? **Impetus for critique and encouraging critical reflection**

Meso and macro influences

1. Teaching & learning workshops, journals, and evolving SOTL (empirical studies too)
2. Integration of professional skills
3. Government involvement & oversight
4. Plethora of reports & studies
5. Growing number of law schools & equity goals
6. University-specific factors
7. Implementing graduate level attributes and TLOS
8. Evolving legal educational curriculum with clinical legal education, experiential learning, ADR, PLT integration in some faculties
9. Cross-pollination of clinical/PLT instructors teaching Priestley 11 courses
10. Positive professional identity, mental health & wellbeing movement



University
of Exeter

Association of Law Teachers Annual Conference
Exeter 2026

Themes emerging across events in the Symposium Series... more than 150 speakers... five events

Rich, powerful, insightful, catalytic, transformative




ACPD CALT

Creativity, Collaboration & Care

Western University, London Ontario
June 3-5 2026

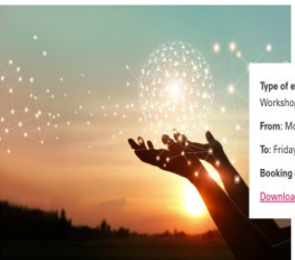



Virtual Symposium 22-24 June 2026
Queen's University Faculty of Law, Canada
Join legal scholars, educators, regulators, and practitioners advancing reflective
practice as a core professional competency

Centre for Legal Education Conference 2026

The future begins now

Building on the success of previous conferences, the Centre for Legal Education at Nottingham Law School is delighted to announce its seventh international conference.



Type of event: Conferences | Seminars | Webinar | Workshops
From: Monday 29 June 2026, 11 am
To: Friday 3 July 2026, 3 pm
Booking deadline: Wednesday 10 June 2026, 12:00 pm
[Download this event to your calendar](#)



**Educating the Reflective Lawyer:
Human Wisdom in an Automated Age**

**2026 Australasian Law
Academics Association
(ALAA) Conference**

Knowledge sharing & and possible next steps....

Series website houses: abstracts, presentations for all in the Series, & recordings and transcripts for QLVS. Plus, six curated resources, and six+ future podcasts (experts, new initiatives...)

Final Symposium Series Report with recommendations for the future

Two special academic journal issues dedicated to reflective practice in law – approx.

June 2027 – *The Law Teacher* & *Legal Education Review*

And... what else would help?



International Symposium Series on Reflective Practice for Legal Professionals

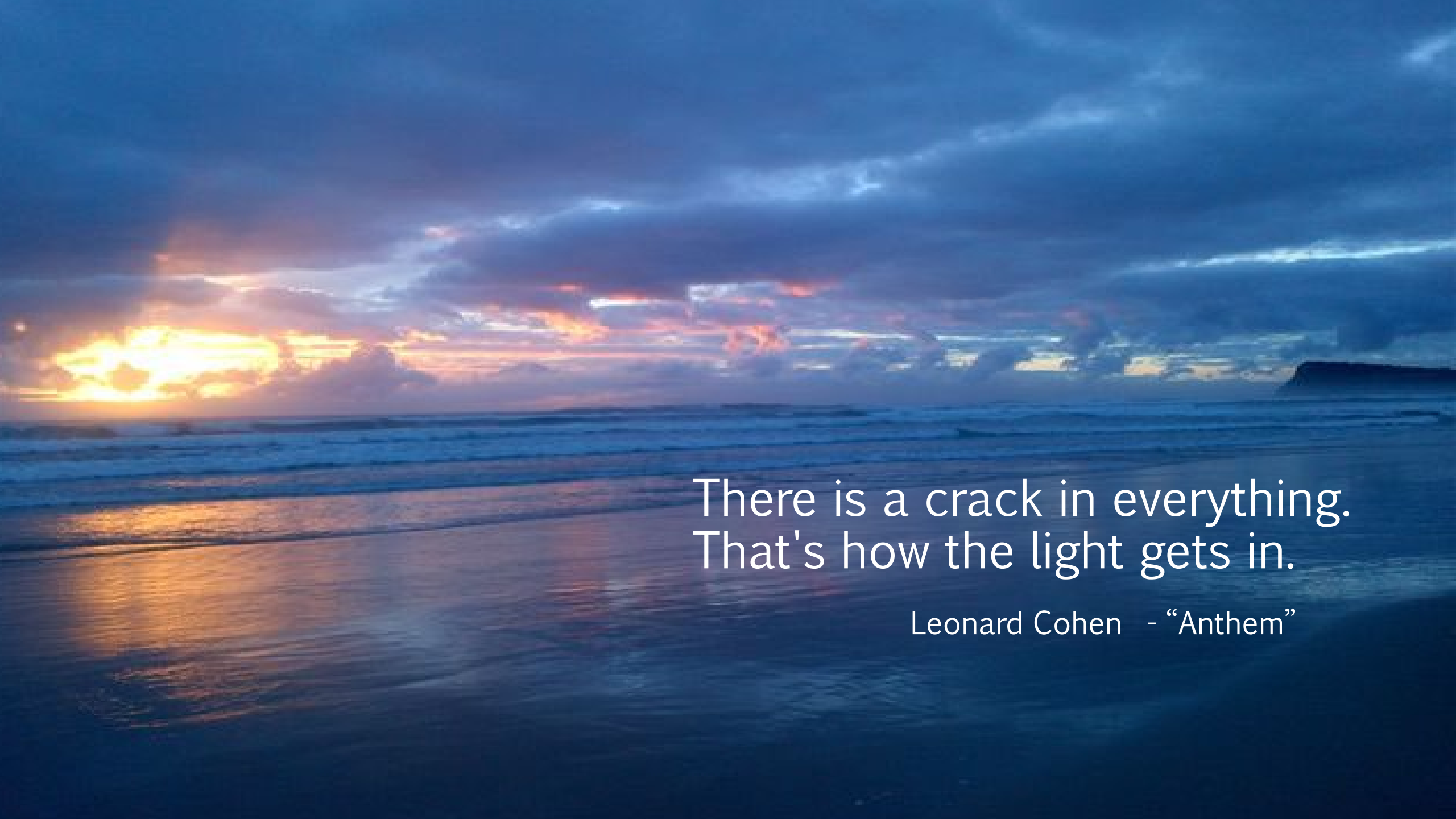
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International Symposium Series: Reflective Practice for
Legal Professionals

Please visit
the Series
website!



A wide-angle photograph of a beach at sunset. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, but a bright, golden light breaks through a gap on the left side, creating a 'crack' in the darkness. This light reflects on the wet sand in the foreground and illuminates the edges of the clouds. The ocean waves are visible in the middle ground, and a dark, rocky outcrop is visible on the right horizon.

There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen - "Anthem"

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

- *How do I understand reflective practice and its benefits for students, for law teachers, for legal practitioners, and other justice sector actors?*
- *What is the change I seek by engaging in or encouraging reflective practice?*
- *How can we individually and collectively work with stakeholders across the professional learning continuum, disciplines and borders to advance reflective practice in law?*
- *How do we or will we know if we are successful?*

