



APPLYING FOR A MARRIAGE LICENCE

Before you can get married in British Columbia (B.C.), you will need to purchase a marriage licence. Only one of you needs to apply in person to a marriage licence issuer. A fee must be paid at the time of the application and you will be asked to provide information for both parties. It is advisable to bring identification for both parties to ensure accuracy of the required information. Marriage licences are only valid for three months from the date of purchase.

Marriage licences are available from any B.C. Vital Statistics Agency office or Service BC centre throughout the province, as well as select private marriage licence issuer offices. The cost of a marriage licence is \$100.00, which includes an official marriage certificate. For the address of a marriage licence issuer please call our office, or visit our web site at www.vs.gov.bc.ca. Contact information is located at the end of this document.

WHO CAN GET MARRIED?

- Anyone over 19 years of age.
- Persons under 19 years of age must first obtain the consent of both parents. Your local marriage licence issuer has the required consent forms.
- No one under the age of 16 years can be married without the consent of the B.C. Supreme Court.

You do not have to take a blood test or be a B.C. resident in order to be married. The marriage licence is only valid in B.C. for a period of three months from the date of purchase.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Once you have applied for and obtained your *Marriage Licence and Registration of Marriage* form, you are ready to plan your marriage ceremony. In B.C., couples can choose a religious or civil ceremony. There is no legal difference between these two types of ceremonies.

Religious ceremonies are performed by a religious representative of your choice. It is important to confirm the religious representative is registered with the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency to legally perform marriages in B.C. as per the B.C. Marriage Act. If the religious representative is not registered your marriage will not be legal.

Civil ceremonies are performed by marriage commissioners who are appointed by the chief executive officer of the Vital Statistics Agency, under the B.C. Marriage Act.

If you have chosen a civil ceremony, your marriage licence issuer can provide you with the names of marriage commissioners nearest to your location and the current fee schedule.

Names of marriage commissioners can also be obtained by searching our web site at www.vs.gov.bc.ca/marriage or by contacting the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency directly.

It is advisable to contact the marriage commissioner, of your choice, as soon as possible to make arrangements for your ceremony.

Getting Married in British Columbia

USE OF SURNAME AFTER MARRIAGE

After marriage you may

- Use the surname of your current spouse by marriage, **or**
- Use the surname of a previous spouse by marriage, **or**
- Use the surname on your current birth certificate.

A person is free to use any of the above surnames. Changing from one surname to another does not constitute a name change under the B.C. Name Act.

If you wish to combine or hyphenate surnames, this would require a legal change of name. This will also result in a change to your birth record. If, at a later date, you wish to revert to your original surname, after you legally changed to a combined or hyphenated surname, this would require a separate legal change of name.

REGISTERING THE MARRIAGE

After the ceremony, the religious representative or marriage commissioner will send the *Marriage Licence and Registration of Marriage* form to the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency where the marriage is registered and a legal record is created.

Once registered, you will receive one official marriage certificate (see sample to the right). The cost of this marriage certificate is included in the marriage licence fee of \$100.00. The marriage certificate is processed in 2-5 working days. Mailing time is not included.

A marriage certificate is usually required as identification to change your surname on a driver's licence, bank account, etc.

HOW TO OBTAIN A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

You may apply for additional copies of a marriage certificate once the registration is received and registered by the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency. For more information, please visit our web site at www.vs.gov.bc.ca, or contact any B.C. Vital Statistics Agency office or Service BC centre.

Certificates cannot be processed in 24 hours until the original marriage record is received from your officiant and the marriage event is registered.

Example of Marriage Certificate



Where can I get more information?

British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

818 Fort St
PO Box 9657 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9P3

General Inquiries: 250 952-2681 (Victoria)
1-888-876-1633 (toll-free in B.C.)

250-605 Robson St Vancouver BC V6B 5J3
101-1475 Ellis St Kelowna BC V1Y 2A3

Any Service BC centre in British Columbia

Business hours are:

Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 p.m.

Please note that services at above listed addresses and telephone numbers are available only in English.