



NOREEN COLLINS  
1999-2000



KERI GRENIER  
2017



KRISTA SIMON  
2015



ROSE KEITH  
2007

## with TLABC's **Female Past Presidents**

### Who were your mentors, leaders or past TLABC presidents who inspired you?

(NC) Ed Montague and Jim Murphy who had given so much of their time to the no-fault fight a few years prior to my presidency at the expense of their law practices and family life I'm sure. I was very inspired by their level of dedication. I was also inspired by Margaret Birrell of the Coalition of People with Disabilities who played a pivotal role in that same no-fault fight and taught many of us so much about political strategy.

(RK) Maris McMillan and Noreen Collins.

(KS) I have been fortunate to have many mentors over the course of my education and career as a lawyer. Too many to name. I certainly think my east coast upbringing instilled in me a "can do" attitude.

(KG) My inspiration came from various places. My mother and grandmother were strong independent women who believed that women could do everything men could do. My grandfather competed in world triathlons at the age of 70 after a cancer diagnosis and said "If I can do this, my grandkids can do anything." They all inspired me in different ways. I have looked up to many lawyers and judges who presented at TLABC conferences. They lit a passion in me to want to be the best injury lawyer that I could be and to be involved with TLABC on a deeper level. Certainly, every past-president of TLABC was an inspiration, especially the women who served before me as well as all the presidents who resided outside the lower mainland. I was also inspired by many

lawyers that I have worked with who believed in me and told me that they felt I would do great things. In a reverse psychology sort of way, I was also inspired by everyone who said I couldn't have it all. My biggest inspiration was my partner who I have looked up to personally and professionally for years. As a result of his example and confidence and belief that I could be a good leader, I knew I had it in me to be the president of TLABC.

### What advice would you give someone going into a leadership/president position for the first time?

(NC) Enjoy the experience. It's an amazing time where you feel part of something "bigger" than just your day to day practice. It broadens your horizon and gives you an appreciation of the role of lawyers and legal organizations in trying to make the world a better place. As president I got to attend the Freedom of Information and Privacy awards which TLABC co-sponsored and I wrote a column about that because I was in awe of the brave people who had taken on the system at great personal cost to themselves. I think everyone comes into this role with a mixture of eagerness and trepidation and everyone gets more comfortable in the role as time goes on. Then we think we're still President after we no longer are!!

(RK) Trust yourself and lead authentically. You are in that leadership position because of the qualities that you bring to the table. Although there is much to be learned from those that

have gone before you, you don't need to emulate those who have gone before you.

(KS) Lead in your own way. You only get out of it what you put into it. If you are president, put a strong team in place in your law practice. And let those team members know how much you appreciate them.

(KG) I could probably write a book or at least a really long blog on advice for new leaders, but in my view, the most important advice that I could give would be to be confident in yourself. Don't be afraid to stand up for what is right and what you believe. Take a deep breath and simply do the best you can. Understand that no one can do a perfect job, no matter how much you strive for perfection. The good news is that I don't have to write a book about leadership as there are hundreds, if not thousands, of books and numerous articles and videos on the internet. I would recommend reviewing some of this material, Ted Talks being a personal favorite. Obviously, it is impossible to canvass all the material on the subject of leadership but even the small amount that I reviewed was of great assistance to me. Don't be afraid to ask for help and to reach out to past leaders or other people you respect because they will be more than willing to assist. Try to inspire, lift up and recognize those around you. Don't forget to take care of yourself and remind yourself – you got this!

### What is one characteristic that you believe every leader/president should possess?

(NC) The ability to work in a collaborative way with others and to listen to other points of view. However, it is also important to be respectful of others and I think this organization has improved tremendously in that aspect over the years as we went from being a much smaller and more loose organization to the larger and more sophisticated organization we are today.

(RK) Compassion and the ability to take into consideration the views of those around you.

(KS) Treat people with respect and be a good listener.

It also is important to remain true to your own values and vision. But also, a leader must be humble, and have the ability to put one's own views aside to give proper weight to other ideas and perspectives.

(KG) The one characteristic that I believe is most important in a leader is passion. If you can't be passionate about the cause and the group you are leading, then how will you inspire those around you?

### What are some of the expected and or unexpected impacts that resulted from your term as TLABC president?

(NC) One impact was that TLABC joined the Coalition for Access to Justice and entered the legal aid battle. We had several amazing criminal lawyers join our organization and continue that battle which is still ongoing. An unexpected impact was the good laugh we all had when the Y2K bug turned out to be nothing after it led to a big fight in the U.S. about tort reform given the

huge amount of litigation that was expected as a result of the bug. I feel old even mentioning it! Another impact was that TLABC and the CBA worked on a number of initiatives together during my term and as a result I became the liaison between our two organizations for a few years after my presidency which I enjoyed very much. I met a lot of incredible female lawyers in areas other than personal injury whom I had not known before and I was thrilled to be a founding member of the Women Lawyers Retreat Committee which is now legendary and was the brainchild of the incomparable Megan Ellis.

(RK) My term as president resulted in the development of a number of great long term relationships and was an incredible learning experience.

(KS) I feel more connected to the legal community; and to BC. I am proudly 'East Coast', but have adopted the west coast as my home. And I feel more strongly about the Mission and Values of TLABC. I have a lot of respect for lawyers and community members who are dedicating their time and effort to bringing about positive change in all areas of law. Quite unexpectedly, I have remained very involved in the leadership of the organization. I say "unexpectedly" because I would have thought I would take some time away after such an intense year. But it hasn't really slowed down. It has been a pleasure to carry on on the Board and on committees, and to work with a group of such dedicated lawyers and leaders in our profession.

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(KG) One of the greatest things I learned during my term was how much TLABC is a force to be reckoned with and the government knows it! Every political function I attended confirmed the power of our group, which was awesome and inspiring. As a result, an unexpected impact was the extent to which I would become knowledgeable and interested in the political world, something that I pretty much avoided prior to being the president. A great unexpected impact was the relationships I developed with some of the people I worked with. Name recognition in the industry has also been an interesting outcome. I find that I now get more referrals from people I have not met or people recognizing me at legal events. This is not exactly rock star status but certainly an increase in personal recognition from before I was the president. Two of the coolest things that came out of my term as president (not that I can claim any credit for them) was the creation of the BC Coalition to End Distracted Driving ([www.distracteddrivingkills.ca](http://www.distracteddrivingkills.ca)) and the creation of Rights Over Arbitrary Decisions, aka ROAD B.C. ([www.roadbc.ca](http://www.roadbc.ca)) to fight the minor injury cap.

### Why was serving as TLABC president an important goal for you?

(NC) It was important for me as the first female president simply to break that glass ceiling. I knew great female presidents would follow and I hope we get to a stage where having women presidents is so normal we don't have to write about it *the Verdict* anymore!

(RK) It was important to me as it gave me an opportunity to move the association in a way forward that made sense to me.

(KS) I grew up doing lots of volunteer work, and my law school encouraged community service. I have always viewed a career in law as a helping profession; and it is important to give back to our community of lawyers, and thus the greater community.

I also feel quite strongly about changing the public perception of lawyers. So, as a woman under 40 in a leadership position, I could bring my style of leadership to the Association, and show a different version of 'lawyer' to the public. I still try to do that. I hope in some small way this encourages woman in our profession to seek out leadership positions as well.

(KG) When I agreed to climb the ladder and then ultimately become president I was not aware that I would be heading into a year with a provincial election, with ICBC in financial crisis, no permanent CEO and a potential of a no-fault fight on the horizon. Despite knowing most of that information just before assuming the position, I was still confident that I could do a good job and it was a goal I wanted to achieve. Ever since my first TLABC seminar in 2001, I became a huge supporter of the organization and its mission. Many lawyers that I respected had previously been the president of TLABC and it was an organization I was passionate about. I also loved the people. The opportunity to lead the organization, particularly in a year of huge potential change excited me and it would be a huge personal challenge. I was determined to give TLABC everything I could to try to make a difference in the lives of British Columbians.

### What did you find the most challenging in your term as president?

(NC) I jumped from being a table officer for a year to the Presidency so I felt I didn't know enough about the job as I hadn't been on the "ladder" long enough to know what was expected and also to appreciate some of the internal politics which exist in every organization. Based on that experience when I subsequently became chair of the Nominations Committee we introduced changes to better prepare people for the role. Generally people are table officers working as a team for a few years before becoming President now so the transition is much smoother I hope.

(RK) Trusting in myself and having the confidence to be in a leadership role of an association that is full of so many wise and talented members.

(KS) It was impossible to balance the demands of my practice and the demands of the position as President. I could not have made through the year without the support of my husband, my colleagues at my firm and my assistant. My clients were also very understanding that was not as available for them, and I am thankful for that.

(KG) The biggest challenge I faced was finding a so called "balance" between my commitment to TLABC and the rest of my responsibilities. Flying all over the province, keeping up with the emails and documents that I needed to review, preparing

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for meetings, and deciding where to focus my efforts every day (TLABC, work, kids, home, partner, extended family, friends, me) was an ongoing challenge.

### What did you enjoy the most in your term as president?

(NC) The amazing people I worked with on the Executive and Board as well as the hard-working and dedicated staff at TLABC. I also got to go to the AAJ Presidents' meeting and share the challenges that exist for all the TLA organizations throughout North America which was a very rewarding experience.

(RK) Getting to know and working with the staff at TLABC.

(KS) Meeting our members, especially when I was able to travel outside of Vancouver. I grew up in small towns and I know it is important to engage members all over the province.

(KG) I enjoyed the people the most. I developed great relationships with those I worked closest with and I feel that I developed some great relationships for life. In addition to the amazing people I worked with in the TLABC office and on the executive, board and committees, I also had opportunities to meet "VIPs" including but not limited to: Premiers, John Horgan and Christie Clark; Attorney Generals, David Eby QC and Suzanne Anton QC; people at the top of ICBC; and my personal favourites, meeting and chatting with the Chief Justices: the Honourable Thomas Crabtree, Chief Justice of the Provincial Court; the Honourable Christopher Hinkson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; and the Honourable Robert Bauman, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal.

### In what ways did you balance your role as president with other priorities in your life at the time? Was there anything in particular that helped you achieve that balance?

(NC) I'm not sure I did balance it all. I had a 5 year old daughter at the time and was a partner in a small but busy personal injury practice. At work my partner Leo Cullen took on extra responsibility. Otherwise, I just learned to work in a very focused manner and manage my time very efficiently. It was a tightrope act sometimes but I got better at it as my year carried on and I became used to the role. Also, I had a great VP in Tony Vecchio who was incredibly supportive and always took the time to discuss the prevailing issues at odd hours and usually eating sushi!

(RK) Balance, what balance?!?! My husband was an incredible support and picked up what I was unable to carry on

with during my term.

(KS) See #6.

(KG) We all strive for balance but never really find it. Accepting that you will never find balance is probably the best thing you can do. During my year as president, I tried to accommodate everything in my life as best I could but sometimes failed miserably. The reality was that some aspect of my life would always pay the price for another and while the biotechnology exists for cloning, I understand this is not a good idea. Prioritizing was all I could do and try my best not to let other people's views or opinions dictate my priorities. During my term, I had a full-time personal injury practice, I was a single mom of three kids, I had a partner who lived in another city, I lived in Kelowna and was dealing with one of the more challenging years in TLABC's history. Each aspect of my life deserved attention, including me. I am not sure there was anything in particular that kept it all together and me still sane, but ultimately it was a combination of a supportive partner, family, friends, colleagues and staff, working my outlook calendar like nobody's business, scheduling workouts, scheduling holidays and just accepting that life was going to be a little bit crazy and that I was going to upset people with my choice of priority from time to time.

Editorial Note: the Verdict Editorial Board would also like to acknowledge female past president Maris McMillan who served as TLABC President from 2002-2003.

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