



THE CANADIAN
BAR ASSOCIATION
Alberta Branch

Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch
Law Society of Alberta



LAW SOCIETY
of ALBERTA



Celebrating Excellence

Program

January 24, 2018
11:15 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel
Calgary, Alberta

Lunch

11:30 a.m.

Master of Ceremonies: Frank Friesacher, Vice President,
Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch

Grace delivered by The Honourable M.T. Moreau, Chief Justice, Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta

Distinguished Service Awards Presentations

12:30 p.m.

Jenny McMordie, President, Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch
Anthony Young, QC, President, Law Society of Alberta



**PROFESSOR BARBARA
BILLINGSLEY**

Legal Scholarship

Professor Barbara Billingsley “combines the best attributes of the academy into a powerful package: scholarly excellence, genuine peer mentorship, and superlative efforts in providing to her students accessible cutting-edge materials...” wrote Professor Erik Knutsen of Queen’s University Faculty of Law. Her scholarly work, as well as her dedication to her students, has distinguished Professor Billingsley as a leading professional in the area of legal scholarship.

Professor Billingsley completed her Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws at the University of Alberta, and was called to the Alberta Bar in 1991. Subsequently, she completed her Master of Laws at the University of Alberta in 1995, with a thesis on “Direct Democracy in Canada.” Prior to joining the Faculty of Law, Professor Billingsley practiced for a number of years at the firms of Brownlee Fryett (now Brownlee LLP) and Sharek Reay (now Sharek Logan & van Leenen LLP) in Edmonton. She first began her career as an academic and a teacher in 1995, when she joined the Faculty of Law as a sessional instructor, and was promoted to professor in 2011. Professor Billingsley now serves as the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies & Research.

Internationally recognized for her work in the areas of constitutional law, insurance law, and civil procedure, Professor Billingsley has published a number of articles, case comments and book reviews, and has contributed to 7 textbooks, casebooks and edited collections, including authoring or co-authoring two textbooks that are regularly used by law schools, practitioners and judges across Canada. Her works have also been cited in judicial opinions in courts across the country, including the Supreme Court of Canada.

Professor Billingsley’s qualities as a teacher have also been recognized during her time at the University of Alberta, where she has been awarded the Tevie Miller Teaching Excellence Award (2005), and the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (2016). She has also provided her expertise in numerous presentations to the Canadian Bar Association, the Legal Education Society of Alberta, and the National Judicial Institute, among other organizations. Internationally, she was a visiting professor at Niigata University in Niigata, Japan, and has presented at conferences and as a guest lecturer in Scotland and Poland.

In her nomination, nominator Chris Sprysak, Associate Dean of Research & Faculty Development at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law writes “In a Faculty filled with award-winning teachers and scholars, Barb has distinguished herself as one of the Faculty’s best,” and that is certainly evident by her two decades of contributions to legal scholarship in our province.



Ed Ma has dedicated himself to pro bono legal service since the earliest days of his legal career, serving as a role model for other lawyers for nearly two decades. He is described by Pro Bono Law Alberta Board Chair Kevin Feth, QC, as having a “passionate belief in community service and the profession’s obligation to protect our society’s most disadvantaged citizens.”

Mr. Ma is a graduate of the University of Windsor Faculty of Law, completing his Bachelor of Laws in 1998, and was called to the Alberta Bar in 1999. He has also completed two certificates in negotiation training at Harvard University, and the Queen’s Executive Leadership Program at Queen’s University. Mr. Ma has spent his legal career in-house, most recently at Suncor Energy Inc., first as the Senior Legal Counsel for Oil Sands Legal Affairs, and currently as the Senior Strategic Advisor for Energy & Climate Change Policy.

In his first year as a lawyer, Mr. Ma began his work with Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG) as a volunteer lawyer; a role he still fills to this day. He later joined the CLG Board of Directors, and served on the Fund Development Committee and the Human Resources Committees, where he was instrumental in the recruitment of the current Executive Director of the organization.

Mr. Ma is also a Board Director for Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA), a position he has held since 2012. During his time with PBLA, his work with Suncor led him to recognize that there was a void in the availability of legal representation for Indigenous peoples, particularly in Fort McMurray, where Suncor is actively involved. To fill this need, Mr. Ma worked with PBLA to establish the Fort McMurray Legal Advice Clinic, with the hopes that it would aid the Indigenous communities in the area.

Outside of pro bono service, Mr. Ma is prolific in his volunteer work, having served as a mentor for the Canadian Bar Association Law Students Section at the University of Calgary and an Executive Committee member of provincial and national CBA Sections. He also fulfills his passion for the environment and green technology, serving as a jury member for the City of Calgary Environmental awards, an Advisory Committee member for the Renewable Energy Committee and a Low Carbon Economy Advisory Panel Member for Climate Smart Cities for the City of Calgary, among many other positions.

What “stands out most about Ed is his... infectious enthusiasm which draws others in to follow him in making important contributions to the community,” says Professor Nigel Bankes of the University of Calgary Faculty of Law. This is certainly evident in all he has accomplished as a leader in pro bono service in our province.



Despite having been called to the Bar only 5 years ago, Brianna Guenther has already distinguished herself amongst her peers through her dedication to volunteerism and community service, and her “infectious spirit”, which “drives others to volunteer” according to nominator Chantel Cabaj.

Ms. Guenther graduated from Queen’s University Faculty of Law in 2012, and completed her Master of Laws at Georgetown University in Washington, DC in 2014. She is currently an associate at Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP, where she practices as a Corporate Commercial Lawyer. Ms. Guenther is also a contract professor at Mount Royal University, teaching Corporate Governance & Ethics to senior level Business Administration students.

Ms. Guenther’s passion for volunteerism stretches back to her youth, and she has been engaged with some of the same organizations for nearly twenty years. Currently, Ms. Guenther is actively involved as a Stampeders Ambassador, where she helps to raise funds for the Stampeders Foundation which supports a wide variety of organizations in Calgary; a Director with the Wings of Hope Breast Cancer Foundations, which provides money to low-income breast cancer patients; and as a Child Care Respite Volunteer for the Children’s Cottage, which provides support for children in crisis situations.

She has also distinguished herself as a leader at her firm of Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP, where Ms. Guenther has led the campaign to fundraise, recruit volunteers, and serve hot breakfast to the clients at the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre. This has led to approximately 30,000 plates being served by members of the law firm to homeless Calgarians, an impact which is credited to Ms. Guenther’s enthusiasm and leadership for the initiative.

Ms. Guenther is also a dedicated volunteer within the legal profession. She has been an executive committee member of the International Business Law Section of the Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch since 2013, and has served as a mentor to undergraduate and law school students at the University of Calgary since 2014.

Grant Zawalsky, Managing Partner at Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP describes Ms. Guenther as “an outstanding role model for other lawyers and staff at our firm and inspiration to everybody around her,” something that is illustrated in her genuine commitment to her community through her tireless volunteer efforts.



WENDY BEST, Q.C.

Service to the Profession

Wendy Best, Q.C. has been practicing law in Alberta for 38 years, and in that time, she has made an indelible impact on the legal profession in our province. Marie Gordon, QC, describes her as a mentor and role model who demonstrates the ability to be “an active lawyer, a law partner, a presence in the community, and a top-notch litigator and educator.”

Ms. Best received her Bachelor of Laws from the University of Calgary in 1979, and was called to the Alberta Bar in 1980. She has practiced with Dunphy Best Blocksom LLP since 1982 (then called Landerkin Dunphy), where she was made a partner in 1986. Further illustrating the esteem in which she is held by her colleagues and the legal community at large, Ms. Best was awarded her Queen’s Counsel designation in 1994.

Ms. Best’s contributions to legal education in our province have been significant, where she is a regular presenter for both the Canadian Bar Association at the Alberta Branch and National levels, and for the Legal Education Society of Alberta. She stands out as a leading family law practitioner and educator, as evidenced by her contributions to judicial education. She regularly presents to judges from all levels of the courts and from across Canada at the National Judicial Institute’s Family Law Seminars, where she is recognized as one of the country’s leading practitioners, and is regularly asked to present by the education programs for the

Supreme Court of British Columbia and the Court of Queen’s Bench of Alberta. The high calibre of her written and oral presentations are valued by the many judges and lawyers she has taught over the course of her career.

The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family is another organization that has greatly benefited from Ms. Best’s expertise in the area of family law, and dedication to the service of the legal profession. She has sat on the Board of Directors of the organization since 1996, and recently served as its President from 2009 to 2016, where she was instrumental in sustaining the organization through a time of renewal and re-engagement.

Despite her numerous commitments to the profession and her practice, Ms. Best is also known as an exceptional role model and mentor for young lawyers. She has fought to succeed as a woman in a profession that was dominated by men, and has been an inspiration to female and male practitioners alike through her hard work, talent, and personal and professional strength. She is known as generous and giving of her time, and always willing to share her experience and knowledge with junior members of the profession. Her colleague at Dunphy Best Blocksom, Ellen Embury, testifies to this, saying “Wendy teaches me every day about my responsibility to our profession, to our clients, to our partners, and to our community. I cannot think of someone more deserving of this recognition.”



The Distinguished Service Awards celebrate excellence in the legal profession. Jointly awarded by the Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch and the Law Society of Alberta, these prestigious awards recognize the many outstanding contributions Alberta lawyers make to the pro bono legal service, to legal scholarship, to the community, and to the profession.