

48th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FAMILIES AND THE LAW

For all members of the legal community

Program

OCTOBER 9 TO 11, 2024 | IN PERSON & ONLINE | WINNIPEG

Delta Hotels Winnipeg, 350 St Mary Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3C 3J2

"Families and the law"

CIAJ's 48th annual conference will discuss the justice system as it affects families in Canada. The conference will consider the wide ambit of concerns regarding the system's ability to aid families in resolving their disputes. Are there enough resources available? Are the courts and tribunals the best forum for families and children? Are we ready for a culture shift or paradigm shift? There is no doubt that improving the situation for families in difficult and sometimes heartbreaking situations is paramount. All members of the legal community are invited to join forces to explore these issues and offer some solutions.



- *Bilingual program with simultaneous interpretation.*
- *Participation in this program is accredited in provinces where CLE requirements for lawyers are mandatory.*
- *Participation in this program is approved under Section 41 (1) of the Judges Act.*

OUR PROUD PARTNERS

We are proud of our valued partners who support our annual conference, "Families and the Law." Their commitment and support are essential to the success of this event.





HONORARY CHAIR

**The Honourable Justice Michelle O'Bonsawin,
Supreme Court of Canada**

An Abenaki member of the Odanak First Nation in Quebec and the first Indigenous judge appointed to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Ottawa. Before becoming a judge, she was General Counsel for the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group and worked at Canada Post. She practiced mental health law, labor law, human rights, and privacy law, and taught at the University of Ottawa. Holder of an LL.B. and an LL.M., she will complete her doctorate in 2021. Active in the legal community, she is also a speaker and author of several legal publications.

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CHAIR

**The Honourable Chief Justice Marianne Rivoalen,
Court of Appeal for Manitoba**

Born and raised in St. Labre, Manitoba, she has extensive experience in litigation and aboriginal law, having served as Senior Counsel with the Department of Justice Canada. Appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench in 2005, she became Associate Chief Justice (Family Division) in 2015 and Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal in 2023.

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CO-CHAIRS

- **The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil**, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec City)
- **The Honourable Justice P. Colleen Suche**, Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba, CIAJ's past president (Winnipeg)

MEMBERS

- **The Honourable Justice Julie Audet**, Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Ottawa)
- **Jennifer Cox**, KC, Staff Lawyer, Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, Dalhousie University (Halifax)
- **Patricia M. Hebert**, KC, Barrister & Solicitor / Registered Mediator, Bruyer & Mackay LLP; Sessional Instructor, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta (Edmonton)
- **The Honourable Justice Lana Krogan**, Court of King's Bench for Saskatchewan (Regina)
- **Dean Robert Leckey**, Full Professor & Samuel Gale Chair, Faculty of Law, McGill University (Montreal)
- **The Honourable Justice P. Colleen Suche**, Court of King's Bench of Manitoba, CIAJ's past president (Winnipeg)
- **The Honourable Justice Connie Petersen**, Family Division, Court of King's Bench of Manitoba (Winnipeg)
- **The Honourable Judge Robert Proulx**, Youth Division, Court of Québec (Montreal)
- **Rollie Thompson**, KC, Professor Emeritus of Law, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University (Halifax)
- **Maggie Wente**, Partner, Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP (Toronto)
- **The Honourable Justice James R. Williams**, Family Division, Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (Halifax)
- **Christine O'Doherty**, Lawyer, CIAJ's Executive Director (Montreal)
- **Mary Plagakis**, CIAJ's Project Manager of Multidisciplinary Programs (Montreal)
- **Lise Bujold**, CIAJ's Assistant Director (Montreal)
- **David Lazzam**, Articling student CIAJ (Toronto)

8:00–9:00 AM

Registration and Breakfast

Login for online participants

9:00–09:30 AM

Land Acknowledgment, Welcome Remarks and Introduction

M.C.:
Honorary Chair:

- *Christine O'Doherty, Lawyer & Executive Director, CIAJ (Montreal)*
- *The Honourable Justice Michelle O'Bonsawin, Supreme Court of Canada (pre-recorded)*

Chair:

- *The Honourable Chief Justice Marianne Rivoalen, Court of Appeal for Manitoba (Winnipeg)*

CIAJ President:

- *The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec City)*

09:30–11:00 AM

Panel 1 – Reforming Family Law Systems: Putting Families at the Center

Despite recent reforms, many who interact with family law systems in Canada experience legal processes which are alienating, inaccessible, and at times hostile. This panel will introduce the conference's overarching themes through a discussion of what positive outcomes for children and families might look like, how our current family law systems fail to ensure those outcomes, and ways in which we might redesign family law to better serve the needs of Canadians.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice P. Colleen Suche, Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba, CIAJ's past-president (Winnipeg)*

Speakers:

- *The Honourable Justice James R. Williams, Family Division, Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (Halifax)*
- *The Honourable Justice Connie Petersen, Family Division, Court of King's Bench of Manitoba (Winnipeg)*
- *Diana Lowe, KC, Justice System Consulting at Re-imagining Justice and Co-Lead of the RFJS (Calgary)*

11:00–11:15 AM

Health break

11:15–11:45 AM

Activity – How Can You Create Change?

Speaker:

- *Jacinta Gallant, Founder and President, Our Family in Two Homes; Lawyer and Mediator, Waterstone Law Group PEI (Charlottetown)*

11:45–12:45 PM

Harnessing Brain Science to Re-imagine the Family Justice System

Modern brain science shows that the experiences we have in childhood change the brain in ways that make us more or less likely to succeed in school, at work, as parents, and in other family relationships. Childhood adversity affects more than just our academic and social outcomes: it also makes us more vulnerable to mental health and substance use problems, which are a common backdrop to family justice system cases. This session will describe how brains are built, how stress undermines healthy brain development, and how to promote resilience in children and families. Applying this science to family justice system reform is a complex challenge that will require new ideas, concrete action, and system-level collaboration.

Speaker:

- *Nicole Sherren, Principal Consultant & Owner, R2P Solutions (Calgary)*

12:45–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30–2:45 PM**Panel 2 – Socio-Economic Impacts on Families: Navigating Legal Challenges and Financial Realities**

Family law is uniquely shaped by the interplay between legal, social, and economic factors, and in the absence of robust and equitable family law systems, individuals and families are vulnerable to a range of negative outcomes including poverty, housing insecurity, and unequal access to justice. The panel will discuss the socio-economic issues which underpin family law in Canada, exploring both legal and extra-legal reforms which might alleviate the burdens that participants in the family law system bear. The discussion will pay particular attention to interdisciplinary approaches including examples of immigration law intersection with family-related rights, social support programs and community resources, Canada child benefit coverage, and the need for increased provincial programming.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec City)*

Speakers:

- *Eugenie Depatie-Pelletier, Adjunct Professor, Department of Geography, Université Laval; Research associates, Canada Chair in Global Migration Processes (Montreal)*
- *Rollie Thompson, KC, Professor Emeritus of Law, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University (Halifax)*
- *Susan Young, Lawyer, Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University (Halifax)*

2:45–3:00 PM**Health break****3:00–4:30 PM****Panel 3 – Protecting Our Future: Exploring Challenges and Solutions in Child Protection**

"Child Protection" is a concept that includes not just the immediate health and safety of the child, but a broader approach to the social, legal, and educational environments that shape a child's upbringing. This panel considers what meaningful outcomes for children interacting with the justice system entail, from ensuring positive resolutions for ongoing cases, to early intervention and prevention strategies to limit the number of children in need of protection. Discussion will include perspectives on current shortcomings of Canadian child protection systems.

Moderator and Speaker:

- *The Honourable Associate Chief Justice Gwen B. Hatch, Family Division, Court of King's Bench, Manitoba (Winnipeg)*

Speakers:

- *The Honourable Judge Robert Proulx, Youth Division, Court of Québec (Montreal)*
- *Tammy Law, Lawyer, Tammy Law Professional Corporation (Toronto)*

8:00– 8:30 AM

Registration and Login for Online Participants

8:30–9:30 AM

Breakfast on Collaborative Law

Speakers:

- *Caroline Bourbonnais, Lawyer, Le Cabinet Bourbonnais (Montreal)*
- *Jessica Schofield, Partner, Taylor McCaffrey LLP (Winnipeg)*
- *Greg Evans, K.C., Lawyer, Mediator & Arbitrator, Evans Pollock Family Law (Winnipeg)*
- *Brea Lowenberger, Cofounder & Director, CREATE Justice and Access to Justice Coordinator, College of Law, University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)*

9:30–11:00 AM

Panel 4 – Indigenous Family Law Governance and Child Protection

This panel discusses the possibilities and challenges within the area of Indigenous family law governance following the enactment of the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. The discussion will touch on issues of legislative drafting, policy implementation, and capacity building amongst Indigenous governing bodies, while also exploring what truly Indigenous-led approaches to family law and child protection might look like, as well as what is still required of Canadian legal systems and governments in meeting the goals of reconciliation.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Veronica L. Jackson, Supreme Court of British Columbia (Victoria)*

Speakers:

- *Earl Stevenson, In-House Legal Counsel, Peguis Child & Family Services (Winnipeg)*
- *Raven-Dominique Gobeil, Attorney, First Nations Family Advocate Office (Winnipeg)*
- *Lisa Weber, Founder & Lawyer, Weber Law (Edmonton)*

11:00–11:15 AM

Health break

11:15–12:30 PM

Telling a New Story About Family Justice

Facilitators

- *Nicole Sherren, Principal Consultant & Owner, R2P Solutions (Calgary)*
- *Diana Lowe, KC, Justice System Consulting at Re-imagining Justice and Co-Lead of the RFJS (Calgary)*
- *Jacinta Gallant, Founder and President, Our Family in Two Homes; Lawyer and Mediator, Waterstone Law Group PEI (Charlottetown)*

12:30–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30–3:00 PM**Panel 5 – Unveiling the Layers: Understanding and Addressing Intimate Partner Violence**

To properly address intimate partner violence (IPV), courts and legal practitioners must gain a far more fulsome understanding of the psychological, social, and legal characteristics of IPV than is currently evidenced within our family law systems. This panel will take an interdisciplinary approach towards the dynamics of IPV, from the coercive power imbalances between victims and perpetrators, to the underreporting of IPV, particularly within marginalized communities, to the barriers victims face when accessing the justice system.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Lore Mirwaldt, (Family Division) Court of King's Bench of Manitoba (Winnipeg)*

Speakers:

- *Jennifer Koshan, Professor & Research Excellence Chair, Faculty of Law, University of Calgary (Calgary)*
- *Dr. Ilana Dodi Luther, Executive Director, Access to Justice & Law Reform Institute (Halifax)*
- *The Honourable Justice Robynne B. Kazina, Court of King's Bench, Manitoba (Winnipeg)*

3:00–3:15 PM**Health Break****3:15–4:30 PM****Panel 6 – Understanding High-Conflict Families and Paths to Resolution**

As the number of high-conflict family court disputes increases, this panel explores the dynamics of high-conflict families, the challenges they present to family courts, and how we might resolve those problems through reform. What makes a family “high-conflict”? How do current administrative practices exacerbate existing problems? Do adversarial legal systems enable high-conflict family disputes, and how might we move towards more constructive dispute resolution models?

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Julie Audet, Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Ottawa)*

Speakers:

- *Dr. Rachel Birnbaum, Co-Director, Research Institute with Children, King's University College (London)*
- *Vincent Ramsay, Retired Lawyer (Kingston)*
- *Suzanne Williams, Lawyer & Mediator, Strathdee Williams Family Law (Victoria)*

4:30–5:00 PM**CIAJ AGM****5:30–7:30 PM****Reception at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

8:00–9:00 AM

Registration and breakfast

Login for online participants

09:00–10:15 AM

Panel 7 – Consent and Decision-making Challenges for Gender-Diverse Children and Families

Considering recent provincial policies concerning gender-diverse students, this panel will discuss the legal, ethical, and personal implications of parental consent requirements for gender-diverse children and families. The panel will touch on the rights of children and parents, the socio-medical context of gender diversity, and the roles and responsibilities of school boards and various levels of government in decision-making concerning gender-diverse children.

Moderator:

- *Dean Robert Leckey, Full Professor & Samuel Gale Chair, Faculty of Law, McGill University (Montreal)*

Speakers:

- *Dr. Shuvo Ghosh, MD, FAAP, Developmental-Behavioural Pediatrician, Montréal Children's Hospital, McGill University Health Centre (Montreal)*
- *Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, Associate Vice-Rector for Indigenous Relations, Professor, Canada Research Chair (Montreal)*
- *Bennett Jensen, Director of Legal, Egale Canada (Toronto)*

10:15–10:30 AM

Health break

10:30–11:45 AM

Panel 8 – Innovations in Family Law: New ways of Supporting Families

As we look to the future of family law in Canada, recent scholarship and advocacy are paving the way for innovative solutions to the challenges Canadian family law currently faces. In this interactive workshop, you will be invited to actively engage in discussions with our panelists, who will explore various strategies for resolving family law disputes while minimizing the impact on children. Topics will include collaborative lawyering, the concept of one lawyer representing both parties in a divorce, neutral advice provided to both parties, as well as gender equity in compensatory support and the role of of punishment in family law.

Together, we will also consider digital tools and broader structural changes designed to alleviate case backlogs and improve access to justice. This workshop will be a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and co-create innovative solutions for the future of family law in Canada.

Moderator:

- *Patricia M. Hebert, KC, Barrister & Solicitor / Registered Mediator, Bruyer & Mackay LLP; Sessional Instructor, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta (Edmonton)*

Speakers:

- *Jacinta Gallant, Founder and President, Our Family in Two Homes; Lawyer and Mediator, Waterstone Law Group PEI (Charlottetown)*
- *Melissa Bourgeois, Family Lawyer, One Family Law (Edmonton)*
- *Jo O'Sullivan, Collaborative Lawyer and Mediator, Founder and Principal of O'Sullivan Family Law Ltd (Brighton)*



11:45–11:50 AM **Brief Break**

11:50–12:50 PM **Fireside chat:**

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Chief Justice Marianne Rivoalen, Court of Appeal for Manitoba (Winnipeg)*

Speaker:

- *Susan E. Guthrie, JD, Family Law and Mediation Attorney, AI & LegalTech Integration Specialist for Legal Professionals, Practice Building Consultant (Chicago, United States)*

12:50–1:00 PM **Closing Remarks**

- *The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec City)*

1:00 PM **Lunch Boxes**

DECADES OF EXCELLENCE

CIAJ IN 2024

CIAJ marks **50 years** of leadership in the advancement of the administration of justice in Canada. Since 1974, the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice has brought together legal professionals through its annual events, webinars, and publications, reaching a diverse and influential audience.

OUR MISSION

Promote excellence through knowledge, learning and the exchange of ideas.

CIAJ offers Canada's legal community up-to-date education and research programs in both official languages.

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ACROSS CANADA



The Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice is a multidisciplinary and bilingual legal network across Canada.

IN ALL FAIRNESS

A podcast channel to explore how we can all contribute to improve the administration of Justice in Canada.



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50 years: Planting the Seeds of Justice

CIAJ is a non-profit, independent organization that links individuals and institutions involved in the administration of justice across Canada. Its work is multidisciplinary and wide-ranging. Collaborating with governments, courts, tribunals, professional associations, law schools and law firms, CIAJ sponsors and conducts conferences and specialized seminars and prepares comprehensive papers and reports. Its services are offered in both official languages.

Join CIAJ: develop yourself, shape a better world, and make a difference.

Become a member of CIAJ and benefit from cutting-edge training and research programs, connect with key players in the system, and contribute to improving the Canadian justice system. As a member, you'll also enjoy exclusive benefits such as discount on every in-person program, free webinars and the accumulation of CPD hours.

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Contact us

Please contact us for more information about our organization, the benefits of membership and how you can assist us with our mission.

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50 YEARS OF CIAJ





NEXT EVENT

Indigenous Justice System: A Knowledge Sharing Symposium

CIAJ's 2nd edition of the Indigenous Justice System – a Knowledge Sharing Symposium will bring together members of Indigenous communities, judges, legal professionals, and law students across Canada to discuss and reflect on the evolution of the Indigenous Justice System in relation to colonial laws and courts.

This conference will take place on Tsuut'ina Nation land adjacent to Calgary from November 4 to 6, 2024.

Indigenous Peoples at the forefront

Indigenous Peoples are best served by the system when their laws, morals, values, customs and needs are prioritized. This conference is a space for dialogue and knowledge sharing among Indigenous leaders and Elders, and actors of the legal system on how Indigenous communities design their own legal institutions and how they interact with the existing legal system to create a better justice system, reflective of Indigenous culture and values. We want to create a space for dialogue and exchange on the continuation of active education and exploration of ways to narrow the gaps and work closely with and under the Leadership of Indigenous Peoples, which is critical to all who are involved. Together, we aim to collectively identify solutions for improved collaboration and outcomes.

Focus on solutions

The various presentations, activities and panels will consider the wide ambit of realities and challenges regarding the system's ability to serve Indigenous communities, families and individuals. Are there enough resources available? Are courts and tribunals the best forum? Which other resources may be optimal to reach resolutions and improve outcomes? In person and online participants will discuss in depth, share experiences and practices, challenging the current state of affairs as we work closely towards continuous improvement. They will also experience the traditions of the Tsuut'ina Nation.

[Register now to reserve your seat](#)

