

DECISION WRITING SEMINAR



Program

JUNE 8-9, 2026 | ONLINE (EASTERN TIME)

Decision Writing Seminar

Clear, accessible, and well-reasoned decisions are essential to the credibility and effectiveness of administrative tribunals. This hands-on training is a must for tribunal members who want to strengthen one of their most important skills: decision writing. Learn how to write decisions that are concise, precise, and easy to understand—focusing on your audience.

This practical approach has gained momentum across Canada, with both administrative decision-makers and the judiciary adopting techniques that prioritize clarity and reader-focused communication. Whether you're new to the role or looking to refine your style, this session will help you write with confidence, clarity, and impact. Don't miss this opportunity to elevate your work and better serve the public.

The sessions include lectures, discussions, and workshops that stress the nature of good prose, gender neutral language and the special requirements and challenges of decision writing. Much of the instruction will center on practical written exercises. Each attendee will be assigned an instructor who will read a sample of the attendee's writing prior to the seminar and coach the attendees during the seminar workshops.

IMPORTANT: Please note that to participate in this seminar, you must have written at least one decision since it will be worked on during the workshops.

START TIME ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT TIME ZONES IN CANADA

PT: 8:00 am

MT: 9:00 am

CT: 10:00 am

ET: 11:00 am

AT: 12:00 pm

NT: 12:30 pm

Note: The time zone used in the program is Eastern Time.

LANGUAGE AND ACCREDITATION

Bilingual program with simultaneous interpretation.

Participation in this program is accredited in provinces where CLE requirements for lawyers are mandatory.

- **Total: 14h**

For provinces where professional hours apply:

- **Total: 12h30**
- **Professionalism (EDI): 1h30**



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
The Honourable John Norris
Judge of the Federal Court

Justice John Norris was appointed to the Federal Court in 2018. Prior to his appointment, he maintained a trial and appellate practice in the areas of criminal, constitutional and national security law. He appeared as amicus curiae in several national security matters before the Federal Courts. Justice Norris is a frequent contributor to continuing legal education programs, the author of several scholarly articles, and was an Assistant Editor of the Canadian Rights Reporter for many years.

Photo Credit: Balfour

PRESENTERS & WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

- **Ève Bédard**, Lawyer, Plain Language Specialist, Éducaloi (Montreal, QC)
- **Krista Bridge**, Writer and Professor, Humber College (Toronto, ON)
- **Mary Elizabeth Leighton**, Professor, Department of English, University of Victoria (Victoria, BC)
- **Kathleen MacManus**, Member of the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board (Halifax, NS)
- **Caroline Mandell**, Legal Communication Consultant (Toronto, ON)
- **Virginia McRae**, Former Co-Director, Legal Writing Academy, University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)
- **Craig Patterson**, Legal Writing Instructor and Consultant (Toronto, ON)
- **Dr Élisabeth Routhier**, Legal Design Expert and Director of Special Projects, CIAJ (Montreal, QC)
- **Cheryl Suzack**, Professor of Indigenous and Native American Studies, University of California (Berkeley, CA)

10:45–10:55 AM **Log In – Stand By**
(Eastern Time)

10:55–11:00 AM **Welcome Remarks and Housekeeping Notes**

11:00–12:00 PM **Lecture: Good Reasons**

Presenter:

- *The Honourable Justice John Norris, Federal Court (Ottawa, ON)*

12:00–1:00 PM **Lecture: What Is an Issue-Driven Approach?**

Key principles of issue-driven structures; Identify the deep issue; Identify the issues; How to write your issues

Presenter:

- *Virginia McRae, Former Co-Director, Legal Writing Academy, University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)*

1:00–2:00 PM **Lunch/Health Break**

2:00–3:00 PM **Group Workshops: Issue Structure**

Identify the deep issue

3:00–3:45 PM **Lecture: Overviews & Point-First Writing**

Overview; Context; Point-first writing; Context before details; Headings

Presenter:

- *Caroline Mandell, Legal Communication Consultant (Toronto, ON)*

3:45–5:00 PM **Group Workshops**

Write the overview

10:45–11:00 AM **Log In – Stand By**
(Eastern Time)

11:00–12:00 PM **Lecture: Clarifying the Organization of Your Decision**

Presenter:

- Ève Bédard, Lawyer, Plain Language Specialist, Éducaloi (Montreal, QC)

12:00–1:00 PM **Group Workshops**

Select the facts, evidence and law appropriate for each issue

1:00–1:45 PM **Lunch/Health Break**

1:45–2:45 PM **Lecture: Clear Writing [Anglophone groups only]**

Sentences and words; Paragraphs and sentence revision.

Presenter:

- Craig Patterson, Legal Writing Instructor and Consultant (Toronto, ON)

2:45–4:30 PM **Group Workshops: Workshops on Clear Writing & Revisions**

(Break during the workshop)

4:30–4:45 PM **Q&A and Takeaways**

Presenters:

- Ève Bédard, Lawyer, Plain Language Specialist, Éducaloi (Montreal, QC)
- Krista Bridge, Writer and Professor, Humber College (Toronto, ON)
- Mary Elizabeth Leighton, Professor, Department of English, University of Victoria (Victoria, BC)
- Kathleen MacManus, Member of the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board (Halifax, NS)
- Caroline Mandell, Legal Communication Consultant (Toronto, ON)
- Virginia McRae, Former Co-Director, Legal Writing Academy, University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)
- Craig Patterson, Legal Writing Instructor and Consultant (Toronto, ON)
- Dr Élisabeth Routhier, Legal Design Expert and Director of Special Projects, CIAJ (Montreal, QC)
- Cheryl Suzack, Professor of Indigenous and Native American Studies, University of California (Berkeley, CA)

DECADES OF EXCELLENCE

CIAJ IN 2026

CIAJ marks more than 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

To promote excellence in justice through knowledge, learning and the exchange of ideas.

COMMUNITY

JUDGES, LAWYERS,
LEGISLATIVE DRAFTERS,
INDIGENOUS ELDERS,
ACADEMICS,
POLICYMAKERS, SOCIAL
WORKERS, LAW
ENFORCEMENT...

Join us and our
members in
shaping the
future of justice.

+2 500



+13 000
Subscribers



Members

PROGRAMS



+2 000

Program participants in judicial and non
judicial activities and conferences



+300

Speakers and
experts



+30

Programs, in person and online
CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIUM, ROUNDTABLES,
SUMMITS, SPECIALIZED SEMINARS,
WEBINARS, CUSTOMIZED TRAINING COURSES...

INDEPENDENT & PAN-CANADIAN



CIAJ is a multidisciplinary, independent,
pan-Canadian, not-for-profit network
across Canada.

IN ALL FAIRNESS

A podcast channel to explore
ways of improving the
administration of justice
in Canada.



57 833

Downloads of
our podcasts.



**#CLAWBIES
2023**

Best Podcast
Award

BLOG



+140

Blog posts and
expert analysis
to contribute
to a more
efficient justice
system.



WWW.CIAJ-ICAJ.CA

Planting the Seeds of Justice

Imagine a space where concrete solutions emerge to address the complex challenges of our Canadian justice system. This is what the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice (CIAJ) is all about.

Founded in 1974, CIAJ's mission is to promote excellence in justice through knowledge, learning and the exchange of ideas.

CIAJ acts as a conduit for change. As a non-profit and independent organization, we bring together individuals and institutions from diverse expertise—judges, lawyers, academics, policymakers, as well as social workers, law enforcement, and engaged citizens— to improve the administration of justice across Canada. Our multidisciplinary approach enables us to break down silos and mobilize diverse perspectives across a wide range of sectors, tackling fundamental issues in depth. Together, we develop concrete solutions tailored to the real needs of Canadians.

We are much more than event organizers: we are a driving force for change. At CIAJ, we build bridges where none existed before, ensuring that the justice system reflects the complexity, diversity, and aspirations of our society.

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

By becoming a member of CIAJ, you join a community committed to transforming justice. Together, we have the power to influence policy, improve access to justice and build a more equitable system. Join us today to be part of this essential change.

JOIN CIAJ

Contact us

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

Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice
5950, Chemin de la Côte-des-Neiges, Office 485
Montréal, Québec, Canada
H3S 1Z6
Tel: 514 -731-2855
Email: ciaj@ciaj-icaj.ca



ABOUT CIAJ

OCTOBER 27-28, 2026 | OTTAWA, ON

50th Annual Conference Reimagining Law and Justice Through Restorative Approaches



This conference examines the growing role of restorative approaches in reimagining law and justice beyond traditional punitive models.

It explores how restorative justice principles can reshape the way harm is addressed, accountability is understood, and relationships are repaired across criminal, family, administrative, and community-based legal contexts.

Through practical sessions, case studies, and applied examples, participants will engage with emerging tools and real-world experiences, and reflect on the evolving role of legal actors in supporting meaningful change. The conference highlights concrete pathways to a more inclusive, humane, and trusted justice system.

This program is bilingual with simultaneous interpretation. Participation in this conference is approved under Section 41(1) of the *Judges Act*.

MARCH 29-30, 2027 | TORONTO, ON

Conference on artificial intelligence



CIAJ will hold a **national conference on artificial intelligence and justice**. This event will build on the reflections of the roundtables held in 2026, enriched by the perspectives of the various stakeholders consulted. It will aim to **formulate concrete recommendations to guide the use of AI in the Canadian justice system**.

This conference will be a **unique opportunity to assess the current state of affairs, share best practices, highlight grey areas and explore future avenues** compatible with the fundamental values of the justice system. It may also **contribute to the development of a pan-Canadian framework on the ethical, legal and technical issues** raised by AI.

This program is bilingual with simultaneous interpretation. Participation in this conference is approved under Section 41(1) of the *Judges Act*.