



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

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I recently offered help with directions to a small group of individuals at an intersection in Montreal's Mile End district. They were clearly visitors to the neighbourhood and they seemed uncertain about which way they should go next. I stopped to ask if I could assist in getting them to their desired destination. "We're looking for our family histories", they told me. The response was obvious and they chimed in, laughing, as I said, "Well, those are everywhere!"

This late summer Montreal encounter came to mind as the world marked the 25-year anniversary of September 11th. The encounter is micro in scale, the anniversary clearly macro. Each serves to illustrate the importance of memory, of individual stories, of historical context, and of sharing the moment. At the anniversary ceremony in Gander, Newfoundland, we were invited to trace and recount our many Canadian "family histories", all tied to the events and people and consequences of the 2001 attacks. We remember over and over, each time in learning and reflection mode at an individual and societal level.

Every September 11th, I recall how one of my children, three years old at the time, absorbed the news by putting on a firefighter costume while proudly announcing, "I'm helping the people". I remember Arlene Fried – a victim who perished in her World Trade Center office – who had been one of my law students in 1990 and had shared with me how it was both exciting and challenging to come back to school as a mother of three. I remind myself of what it felt like to stand at the front of my 2001 classroom the afternoon of September 11th, reflecting out loud how members of that cohort would never forget the year in which they started their study of law. Each anniversary, including the 25th, intertwines countless personal memories with complex collective remembrance.

A September letter should probably convey the energy and hope of a new year. It should capture the excitement of "la rentrée" and the intense adjustment that accompanies orientation at the start of the fall term. As summer gives way to the cooler temperatures of fall, this is a season for asking new questions, creating new memories, learning in new ways, enjoying the surprise of new encounters. At the Law Commission of Canada, the rhythm of the academic year is reflected by the incoming cohort of LCC Fellows, recently graduated jurists ready to spend a year exploring the directions indicated by our four-point "dream, repair, build and share" compass. They are firmly in the mode of looking ahead rather than reflecting on the past.



That forward-looking energy relies on the importance of memories with which this letter began. Records of the past nourish future potential; recalling details of where we have been helps fill out the map of where we might go. At the same moment we joyfully welcome newcomers to the Law Commission of Canada, we are feeling the loss of our wonderful team of summer researchers. We waved goodbye to Alexandre, Darius, Omar and Tabea, and wished them well as they prepared for “back-to-school” or “new job” adventures. Now that they are gone, we notice their footprints. They have left little post-it notes on paper copies of background texts – indicating “interesting”, “to return to”, “difficult to follow”, “inspirational”. While they played a central role in completing two puzzles at the lunch table, their contributions to the metaphorical puzzles of LCC projects were much more significant! Someone looking for their histories at the Law Commission of Canada would find traces of those histories everywhere.



Just as the summer researchers leave their footprints at the LCC, the LCC will leave its imprint on their memories and their paths. They will carry their experience with them as they embark on new paths and take on new roles and responsibilities. Each will have unique recollections of the summer of 2026, the combination of which result in a record of questions and conversations, learning and thinking, creativity and discovery. With each anniversary, different memories will surface and different interpretations of those memories may emerge.

Connections among memory, truth, records and justice are central to the three podcast conversations I have had the honour of recording between late August and late September this

year. Maria Shepherd has turned her past personal experience of wrongful conviction into a powerful ongoing commitment to the accountability and fairness of the criminal justice system. Justice Robert J. Sharpe demonstrates the importance of remembering and sharing detailed and compelling stories of a life in law, and of reflecting on the ingredients and qualities of good judgment. Ry Moran reflects on the work of creating a Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for Canada, of collecting records of Canada's residential school survivors, and of shaping libraries and archives in the pursuit of justice. Together they demonstrate dedication to learning from the past, asking hard and pressing questions, and finding ways to renew hope day after day, year after year. We look forward to sharing these new episodes of the LCC's Obiter podcast later this fall.



September in Canada ends with a day focused on truth and reconciliation, remembering and learning, and determined commitment to justice. "Orange Shirt Day", while not an anniversary commemorating an event associated with one date in history, underscores the significance of memory, the importance of continuing to search for truth, and the possibilities of finding histories all around us. September 30th, Truth and Reconciliation Day, invites us all to look back, reach out, and face forward.