



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 27

5 December 2025

On the very first day of November 2025, people across this country, from coast to coast to coast, joined together to watch the 7th and last game of the World Series. 18.5 million viewers in Canada - a remarkable 45% of the population - tuned in to cheer on the Toronto Blue Jays. We connected with each other in our focused attention, in demonstrating our pride and support, in holding our collective breath in hope, and in sharing the heartbreak loss that came in the 11th inning. Baseball is not Canada's sport in a formal sense, but this fall the Blue Jays turned it into a sport for all of Canada. Together we celebrated the talent and capacity, togetherness and tenacity of a truly inspiring team.



Lessons and insights are no doubt being drawn from the Blue Jays in many corners and contexts in the aftermath of this year's World Series. For the Law Commission of Canada, this year's baseball season leaves a significant imprint. It offers a challenge to an image of law as something only experts can truly understand. And it draws attention to the long-term sustainability of any team whose members show up to play.

Right off the bat, let's notice how people became followers of the Blue Jays regardless of how well they understood the complicated rules of baseball. No in-depth prior expertise was required to

watch and cheer, ask questions when things got confusing, or develop an appreciation of the different kinds of pitches and the speed at which a fastball can travel. A very specialized vocabulary exists in baseball. There are many rules and multiple roles, and the complexity can feel somewhat overwhelming. Yet non-experts clearly count as valid and valuable fans. They can learn to distinguish strikes from balls (sometimes questioning the umpire's call!), to anticipate a double play, to participate in a 7th inning stretch, to acknowledge the elements of an extraordinary performance of a pitcher, and to celebrate the incredible accomplishment of a home run. True appreciation of the rules that structure the game of baseball is thus possible even without deep expertise or experience. Indeed, that appreciation is crucial to meaningful recognition of the hard work and striking success of the Blue Jays.

Law too comes with specialized vocabulary, many rules, and multiple roles. Appreciating its structures and systems can feel overwhelming. But, just as in baseball, specialized expertise and experience does not exclude more general understanding and appreciation. Perhaps actors in Canada's legal systems can be inspired by the Blue Jays to renew and reenergize their efforts to share law, to open paths to participation, to invite people to figure out the rules and follow the game. At a time when actors in law are wondering how to fight cynicism, to convey the importance of impartial decision-making, to value structures in place to ensure fairness and accountability, baseball might just show some of the ways and reasons people get all of this.

Beyond reminding us that a domain of expertise can be open to everyone, the Blue Jays illustrate what it takes to create and sustain a team. Their followers expressed collective hope and pride and joy this fall. As they did so, they celebrated the value of showing up, regular practice, playing together, supporting teammates, and believing in a long-term building project. The



fans clearly loved the team's wins, but the losses didn't diminish solid support. As the Law Commission continued its Listen and Learn encounters through November and into early December – in Toronto, in Sherbrooke, in Calgary – the similarities are palpable. Faculties of law are exploring initiatives in experience-based teaching and learning within and beyond classrooms; researchers are designing justice-related projects into which voices and experiences of youth are incorporated; community organizations are enriching the work of student volunteers in legal information clinics. We heard from appellate court judges grappling with principles and

precedents to respond to multifaceted problems, from law deans embracing the responsibility of leadership and innovation, and from lawyers providing guidance in a climate of uncertainty. In the world of law and justice, team players are showing up, learning from practice, investing in long-term growth and value, and inspiring each other and the people whose lives they might touch. They are contributing to the changing ways in which issues are examined, stories are shared, and responses are shaped.

The intertwining of law and baseball, while possibly surprising to some, is an illustration of how law intersects with so many other ways of knowing and acting in the world. The month of November for the Law Commission has been full of those intersections. At a conference organized by the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice, historians offered crucial contributions to a rich and critical discussion of the rule of law and democracy. At Downtown Legal Services in



Toronto, the walls are decorated with the work of young people encouraged to express their aspirations for justice through art. At an event at the School of Architecture at Toronto Metropolitan University, teams of law and architecture students presented projects that envision a new building in downtown Toronto for the Lincoln Alexander School of Law. History, art, and architecture: all join baseball as domains of human knowledge and energy that enrich and interact with law.

Invited to address the law and architecture students, I quoted Benjamin Cardozo, a famous American judge who told a class of law graduates a century ago that a lawyer "must be historian and prophet all at once". For the audience to which I was speaking, I suggested lawyers must also be architects. In closing, it seems right to add that lawyers have much to learn from baseball fans.

