



The Law Society of
Upper Canada | Barreau
du Haut-Canada



THE SIX-MINUTE Family Law Lawyer 2016

Speaker Biographies

November 29, 2016

Bjorn Christianson, Q.C.

@Bjornqc

Bjorn (Barney, as he is known locally) Christianson is a partner in the firm of Thompson Dorfman Sweatman LLP and the managing partner of the Christianson TDS offices in Portage la Prairie, MacGregor and Gladstone, Manitoba - offices which have operated under the Christianson name since 1970. He was a litigator for the first 30 years of practice but his current practice is focused principally on transactional matters in the areas of Farm Real Estate, Corporate, Commercial, Estate Planning, and Municipal Law.

Bjorn is a Past President of the Central Bar Association, the Manitoba Branch of the Canadian Bar Association and the Law Society of Manitoba. He is a Life Bencher of the LSM, a member of its Discipline Committee, and the Society's *ad hoc* practice management advisor. Bjorn has served on Manitoba's Judicial Committee and Judicial Inquiry Board, and is a past Chair of Review Panels appointed under *The Mental Health Act*. He is an Honorary Life Member of the Law Societies of Alberta and Saskatchewan and an Honorary Member of the Minnesota State Bar Association.

Bjorn is a frequent presenter on practice management and office technology topics; some of the victims include the Law Society of Manitoba's CPLED and MCPD programs, the Law Society of Upper Canada's Solo and Small Firm Conference, the Lawyers Insurance Association of Nova Scotia, the American Bar Association TechShow, the Central and Western Manitoba Bar Associations and the CBA's Skilled Lawyer Series.

Erin K. Crawford is a lawyer at Grant & Sadvari who has practiced exclusively in the area of family law since her call to the Ontario bar in 2003.

Erin represents clients at in court and in mediation and arbitration. Erin formerly represented children in custody and access matters, as a member of the Office of the Children's Lawyer panel in Ontario.

Erin is a member of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts; The Advocates' Society; and is on the Executive of the Family Law section of the Ontario Bar Association, also holding the position of Editor of the OBA publication "Matrimonial Affairs". She is a presenter at the Mandatory Information Program, and acts as a mentor to young lawyers and law students at the OBA and through the University of Windsor Law School. Erin has presented at family law conferences and has appeared on Family Matters with Justice Harvey Brownstone, as a guest discussing financial issues in family law.

Curriculum Vitae

Philip M. Epstein, Q.C. LSM, Acc. F.M., Cert. F. Arb.

Senior Partner in the firm of **EPSTEIN, COLE LLP**, in Toronto. Mr. Epstein was the former Head of the Family Law Section of the Bar Admissions Course, 1983-1996; a Dispute Resolution Officer of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice; a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; Recipient of the 1998 Award of Excellence in Family Law from the Ontario Bar Association; Recipient of the 2012 Award of Excellence in Alternate Dispute Resolution from the Ontario Bar Association and the Law Society of Upper Canada Medal in 1999. Mr Epstein was a member of both the Child Support Guidelines Committee and the Spousal Support Advisory Guidelines Committee of the Federal Department of Justice. He is the Co-Author and Editor-In-Chief - *Separation Agreement Annotated*, Editor-in-Chief of the *Reports of Family Law* (Carswell) and the author of the National Family Law News Letter "*This Week in Family Law*" (eCarswell). Mr. Epstein is a Certified Family Arbitrator by the ADR Institute and an Accredited Family Mediator by the Ontario Association for Family Mediation. Mr. Epstein carries on a very active practice in Mediation/Arbitration and lectures extensively throughout Canada to Continuing Education Programmes and the National Judicial Institute.

Jodi R. Fleishman

Jodi R. Fleishman is a partner at the law firm of Victor Ages Vallance LLP in Ottawa. Jodi attended Queen's University for her undergraduate degree and law school. She was called to the bar in 2002. Jodi practiced family law with the law firm of Niman Zemans Gelgoot LLP from 2003-2004 where she gained invaluable experience. She moved to Montreal in September, 2004 to complete a Masters of Law in family law at McGill University. Her thesis, which was successfully submitted in October, 2005, advocated for mandatory legal representation for children in custody and access disputes and child protection proceedings. In 2006 she moved to Ottawa and joined the firm of Lang Michener LLP as an associate where she practiced exclusively in family law until 2011. In September, 2011 she joined the firm of Victor Ages Vallance LLP as a partner. Jodi is very proud of a number of her published motion, trial and appeal decisions (including *Hickey v. Princ*, *Madott v. Macorig* and *Denofrio v. Denofrio*) which have dealt with high conflict custody and access matters and contentious support issues. She often appears before the Superior Court of Justice, Divisional Court and Ontario Court of Appeal. Jodi enjoys speaking at County of Carleton Law Association and Law Society of Upper Canada conferences and programs. In her spare time Jodi enjoys visiting her family in Markham and playing sports.

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Aaron Franks

EPSTEIN, COLE LLP

Aaron has a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) from the University of British Columbia. He graduated from the Joint M.B.A./LL.B Program at Osgoode Hall Law School and the Shulich School of Business in 1996 and was called to the bar in 1998. Since his call to the bar he has practiced exclusively in the areas of family law (and related areas) and in the defense of solicitor's negligence claims.

He is an Adjunct Professor (Family Law) at Osgoode Hall Law School, and he has been an Associate Editor of the Reports of Family Law since 2005. He was formerly an instructor with the Family Law Section of the Bar Admission Course, and he has been appointed as a Dispute Resolution Officer for the Superior Court of Justice in Toronto.

Aaron is a regular contributor/speaker at continuing legal education programs, and he has authored papers and chapters in several publications on family law issues.

Aaron practices at all levels of court in Ontario, and he is also retained in the private mediation and arbitration of disputes.

Aaron is listed in the Lexpert and Best Lawyers directories and is a Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

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Andrew J. Freedman, CPA, CA•IFA, CBV, ASA

Andrew Freedman, CPA, CA•IFA, CBV, ASA joined Duff & Phelps (formerly Cole & Partners) in 2010. He is a managing director in the Toronto office and part of the Dispute and Legal Management Consulting practice. Andrew has more than 25 years of experience in providing business valuation, litigation support and expert witness service to a variety of clients.

Andrew has served as an expert witness in business valuation, damage quantification and related matters. He is qualified as an expert and has testified before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench.

Andrew is the co-author of Financial Principles of Family Law, Carswell Legal Publications, 2001, associate editor to Carswell Legal Publications' Reports on Family Law and editor and contributor to Carswell Legal Publications' the Family Law Act of Ontario and the Family Law Reporter and Wilson On Children and the Law, both published by Butterworths. He is also a frequent author and speaker on valuation and income tax matters for professional journals and organizations, including the Canadian and American Bar Associations, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ontario Bar Admission School, the Canadian Tax Foundation, the National Judicial Institute, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario and other professional organizations.

Andrew is a Chartered Professional Accountant and Chartered Business Valuator (achieved highest mark in Canada) as well as a senior member of the American Society of Appraisers and member of the Arbitration and Mediation Institute of Ontario

Brian Galbraith



Brian Galbraith is a family law lawyer and mediator. He is a founding owner of the Mediation Centre of Simcoe County and has mediated hundreds of cases. As a lawyer, he has assisted hundreds of families to resolve all types of issues including those related to property division, support and parenting issues through court, Collaborative Practice and negotiations. Brian is the owner of Galbraith Family Law Professional Corporation, an eleven lawyer law firm with offices in two cities.

Credentials and experience:

- Bachelor of Arts degree and Law degree - Queen's University
- Master in Laws – York University
- Practicing family law since 1990
- Past member of the Board of Directors of Ontario Association of Family Mediation
- Past member of the Board of Directors of Family Mediation Canada
- Founding President of Simcoe County Collaborative Law Association
- Founding President of Collaborative Practice Simcoe County
- President of the Family Law Lawyers' Association of Simcoe County
- Past Member IACP Public Relations Committee
- Past Member IACP Professional Development Committee
- Past Member IACP Practice Group Development Committee
- Member of IACP Research Committee
- President – Collaborative Practice Simcoe County
- Board of Directors – Ontario Collaborative Law Federation
- Co-Chair Ontario Collaborative Law Federation bi-annual conference
- Graduate of the IACP Leadership Academy
- Awarded the Founder's Medallion for his efforts to bring Collaborative Practice to Ontario, Canada

Brian has been a family law lawyer on many Collaborative Practice files and taught several Collaborative Practice courses both at the basic and advanced levels. Brian has presented at the IACP International Forum on several occasions. He has conducted trainings in various locations in Canada and the United States. Brian is married and the father of five children ranging in age from 3 to 25 years old. When not helping other families, he enjoys spending time with his own family doing a variety of activities including curling, white water canoeing, canoe camping, downhill skiing and living life on Lake Simcoe.



Matthew P. Gottlieb practices business litigation, including corporate and commercial disputes, insolvency and restructuring mandates, securities litigation and administrative law. He has appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada, the Ontario Court of Appeal, the Ontario courts, the Federal Court of Canada, the New Brunswick Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court of British Columbia, The Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ontario Securities Commission, and the Toronto Stock Exchange. He has acted as counsel in many major court proceedings, including those regarding Nortel, Target, First Leaside, Xplornet Communications and Pfizer and has significant experience in trials and court applications involving insolvency, securities, contractual, Internet and technology, and shareholder issues. Recognized as a leading litigation lawyer in Chambers Global: The World's Leading Lawyers for Business, Benchmark Canada, The Best Lawyers in Canada and The Canadian Legal Lexpert® Directory. Frequent instructor at many litigation related seminars held by The Law Society of Upper Canada, The Advocates' Society and other organizations.

George Karahotzitis, Thomson, Rogers



George is a partner with Thomson, Rogers and his practice is devoted to litigation with an emphasis on matrimonial litigation and matters involving commercial disputes. George has coauthored a number of articles for use in continuing legal education seminars and is a regular contributor speaker at continuing legal education seminars having spoken at seminars conducted by the Law Society of Upper Canada, the National Judicial Institute, Osgoode Professional Development and the Advocates' Society. George is the co-chair of the "Complex Issues" series of conferences held by Osgoode Professional Development related to complex issues in Family Law. George has the honour of having been selected by his peers to be published in the Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory 2015 as a leading practitioner in the field of family law, has been selected by his peers for inclusion in "*The Best Lawyers of Canada*" listing in the field of Family Law and is a Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

Meysa Maleki was called to the Ontario Bar in 2003. She began her family law career working for Harold Niman before moving to London, Ontario to work with Alfred Mamo. Meysa has also served as Senior Policy Advisor to Ontario's Deputy Premier and led the implementation of the Government's Domestic Violence Action Plan. Meysa returned to work at Niman Geglott and Associates LLP in 2014 where she restricts her practice to family law.

Meysa has co-authored and contributed to numerous legal educational articles and for several years assisted with the Annual Review of Family Law. She has also completed numerous programs about mediation, negotiation, and difficult conversations, including Harvard Law School's Negotiation and Leadership Program. Meysa completed an internship in family mediation at mediate393Inc. and with Dr. Barbara Fidler and was awarded the designation of accredited family law mediator (AccFM) by the Ontario Association for Family Mediation in 2013.

She has served as a roster mediator at mediate393Inc at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and a volunteer mediator at St. Stephen's Community House. She is a past Board Member of the Barbara Schlifer Commemorative Clinic.



Cynthia Mancía

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Cynthia is a graduate of the Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. Her studies in law school included a term in London, England. She was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1993 and has practiced family law in Toronto since that time. She regularly appears in the Ontario Court of Justice, Superior Court of Justice and Court of Appeal for Ontario. In 2015 she joined Chappell Partners LLP.

Cynthia has over 20 years of experience in dealing with all aspects of family law and has developed an expertise in complex jurisdictional issues, particularly in the area of child abduction and the application of the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction.

In addition to a busy practice, Cynthia mentors many young lawyers and supports continuing legal education, including presenting at various events.



Martha McCarthy was called to the Bar in Ontario in 1991, winning the Silver Medal and the Family Law and Advocacy Prizes. She has practised family law since her call, first in a large Bay Street firm, then at a specialist boutique, and now with her own firm, which she founded in 2007.

Martha is often associated with her leadership in pro bono cases about sexual orientation equality, including as lead counsel in the gay marriage cases. She has over 25 years of courtroom experience involving all aspects of family law. She has particular expertise in alienation, high conflict custody disputes and severe domestic violence cases, all of which frequently involve complex, lengthy and difficult trials.

Martha has been instructing in trial advocacy for over fifteen years, both with The Advocates' Society and as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Toronto. She is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Family Lawyers. She is a Past President of The Advocates' Society and served on that board for 10 years. She has received numerous awards, including the Ontario Bar Association Award of Excellence in Family Law and the Law Society Medal for outstanding service within the legal profession.

Elizabeth McCarty is an in-house counsel at the Office of the Children's Lawyer, where she articulated and then returned as counsel after her call to the Bar in 1998. Elizabeth represents children in custody and access and child protection cases. She currently oversees the OCL's openness program and the adoption program. Elizabeth has written and presented on topics ranging from Custody and Access considerations for special needs children, Fresh Evidence on Appeals, and Openness and Adoption.

Daniel S. Melamed

Partner

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Daniel is a partner in our Family Law Group. Certified by the Law Society of Upper Canada as a Family Law Specialist, he is also fully qualified as a family law mediator and arbitrator.

In addition, he is Preferred Counsel to The Lawyers' Professional Indemnity Company, the insurance provider for lawyers in the Province of Ontario, and is retained as counsel to defend family lawyers where negligence is claimed.

In matters of property, he has been involved in the valuation of multinational, privately held corporations, stock options and senior executive pensions. In addition, Daniel has provided counsel regarding the forensic investigation of hidden offshore assets. His practice includes complex custody and access issues involving blended and extended families, including grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Curriculum Vitae of Jacqueline Mills

Ms. Mills attended Queen's University where she graduated with a B.A. (Hons.) Economics and subsequently an LLB. She was called to the Ontario Bar in April 1986. She articulated and then practised law at Lang Michener from 1986 to 1998, with a primary focus on family law. Upon leaving Lang Michener, she practised in partnership with A. Burke Doran, Q.C. at Doran & Mills from 1998 to 2007. She has been a sole practitioner, practising family law and solicitor's negligence since 2007.

Ms. Mills has been certified by the Law Society of Upper Canada as a specialist in family law since 1991. She has been recognized as a leading practitioner in Family Law by Lexpert since 1995 and she is a Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers. She was Chair of the Family Law Section of OBA and chaired the OBA Annual Institute program in family law twice.

She was an editor of Matrimonial Affairs, the Newsletter of the Family Law Section of the Ontario Bar Association, for 10 years. She has written and spoken at many CLE programs on diverse topics, including spousal support, interim motions, trial preparation, family law and criminal law, pensions, double-dipping and many other topics. She is currently writing a book on evidence in family law.



Joanna Radbord
Partner, Martha McCarthy & Company LLP

Joanna Radbord is a partner with Martha McCarthy & Company LLP. Her practice has focused on family law and constitutional litigation since her call to the Bar in 1999.

Joanna has been involved in the leading cases expanding legal recognition for LGBTTTQ families. In 2008, she was the recipient of the Canadian Bar Association Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Conference Hero Award for her contributions to LGBTTTQ communities.

Joanna worked on *M. v. H.*, a decision which sparked the recognition of same-sex relationships in dozens of federal and provincial statutes. She was co-counsel to the Ontario and Quebec same-sex couples who won the freedom to marry. Joanna was counsel to a lesbian father in *Forrester*, establishing that a parent's transsexuality is irrelevant to a child's best interests. Joanna also acted as counsel in *Rutherford*, wherein lesbian mothers won immediate recognition on their children's birth registrations, and intervened on behalf of the *Rutherford* families in *A.A. v. B.B. v. C.C.*, achieving legal recognition for a three-parent family.

Joanna participated in drafting *Bill 137, Cy and Ruby's Act (Parental Recognition)*, 2015. When law reform efforts stalled, she commenced litigation on behalf of 9 LGBTQ families in *Grand v. Ontario*. In June 2016, Joanna successfully negotiated an interim settlement of the case, striking down the *Children's Law Reform Act* as unconstitutional to the extent it denies all children equal status based on their parents' sexual orientation, gender identity, family composition, or use of assisted reproduction. As required by the *Grand* settlement, the Attorney General introduced *Bill 28, The All Families Are Equal Act (Parentage and Related Registrations Statute Law Amendment)*, 2016. Joanna has been involved in extensive negotiation in relation to Bill 28, including a deputation before the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Joanna has also worked on numerous equality interventions. She represented the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund in the cases of *Withler*, which developed a new approach to the substantive equality guarantee of s. 15 of the *Charter*; *Boston*, addressing arguments of "double-dipping" in the context of spousal support; *D.B.S.* on retroactive child support; and *Rick*, on the necessity of full and fair financial disclosure in family law. She is currently co-counsel to The Advocates' Society in its intervention in *T.W.U. v. The Law Society of Upper Canada*, in support of the Law Society's decision not to discriminate in regulating access to a law license.

Joanna is a member of The Advocates' Society, the Canadian Bar Association, the Family Law Section of the Ontario Bar Association, the Legal Aid Ontario Family Law Advisory Committee, and sits on the Advisory Board of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI) and its journal.

Joanna was a McMurtry Visiting Clinical Fellow with Osgoode Hall Law School in 2015-2016 and is currently Adjunct Professor.



Linda R. Rothstein, LSM

Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

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Partner of Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP, one of Ontario's top litigation boutiques. Linda has a diverse practise encompassing many areas of civil and administrative litigation with particular expertise in class actions, commercial litigation, professional liability, public law and appeals. Linda was Commission Counsel to the Goudge Inquiry (2007–2008), lead counsel to the City of Toronto in the Computer Leasing Inquiry (2002–2005) and lead counsel to the Motherisk Hair Analysis Review (2015-2016). She is a Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers; Fellow and Board Member of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers; Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America; Chair, Law Foundation of Ontario Board of Trustees (2016); Member, Public Health Ontario Board of Directors (2014 – Present); Director, The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History (2015 - Present), Trustee, Harold G. Fox Education Fund (2013 - Present). She was Toronto Regional Bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada (2007-2015); Past President of The Advocates' Society (2005-2006); Co-author of Lawyers' Professional Liability 3rd ed. (LexisNexis Canada, 2013) and "Professional Liability" (ch. 9) in D. Lundy, G. MacKenzie and M. Newbury, Barristers & Solicitors in Practice, (Butterworths, 1998). Recipient of the prestigious Law Society Medal (2005), the Award of Distinction from the Toronto Lawyers' Association (2008), the Lexpert Zenith Award (2013), University of Toronto Distinguished Alumnus Award (2014) and one of the top 25 women in Litigation in Canada by Benchmark (2014). Repeatedly selected by the Best Lawyers in Canada in four litigation specialties: Bet-the-Company Litigation, Corporate and Commercial Litigation, Administrative and Public Law and Labour and Employment Law.

THE HONOURABLE MELANIE SAGER

Call to the Bar: 1995

**August 2015
to Presenter**

Appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice

**June 1995 to
August 2015**

Sole Practitioner practicing Family Law

Membership:

- Ontario Bar Association
- Member of the Education Committee of the 311 Jarvis Open Bar Education Program
- Member of the Family Lawyers Association
- Panel Lawyer for the Office of the Children's Lawyer
- Member of the AFCC
- Member of the Board of Directors of Scarborough Women's Centre

Presenter:

- Presented as a speaker on various topics for the 311 Jarvis Open Bar Education Program since 2004
- Presented as speaker at 47 Sheppard Education Program
- Presented as a speaker at the OBA Family Law Institute
- Presented as a speaker at CPD programs offered by the Law Society of Upper Canada

Justice Katherine van Rensburg

Justice Katherine van Rensburg was appointed to the Court of Appeal for Ontario in October 2013. Prior to her appointment to this court she had served on the Superior Court of Justice in the Central West Region since November 2006. As a trial judge, Justice van Rensburg was chambered in Brampton, and presided over criminal, family and civil law matters. She also served on the Divisional Court.

Justice van Rensburg was an associate lawyer and then a partner at the Toronto law firm Smith Lyons LLP, and she became a partner in Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP with the merger of the two firms in 2001. She practised civil litigation and environmental law, having been certified by the Law Society of Upper Canada as a specialist in each.

Justice van Rensburg is a graduate of the University of Toronto (B.A.), Queen's University (LL.B.) and Cambridge University (LL.M.). She spent her articling year as law clerk for the Honourable Justice Wm. McIntyre at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Kristin Whitley B.A., L.L.B.

Kristin Whitley is a Partner at Epstein Cole. Kristin completed her Bachelors degree in Political Science and her LLB at Queen's University. She was called to the Bar in 2004 after articling at Epstein Cole.

She practices exclusively in all areas of family law, including negotiating and drafting marriage contracts and adoptions. Kristin represents clients in Court and in all forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution. She is also trained in Collaborative Family Law (levels 1 and 2).

Kristin has authored and researched various academic papers on a variety of family law issues including pensions, marriage contracts, the tax implications of divorce, support for adult children, parenting plans for young children, parental alienation, and property division. Kristin co-authored a chapter in a recent publication on property rights and obligations under the *Family Law Act*.

Kristin is committed to Continuing Legal Education, within Epstein Cole and in the legal community. Kristin taught the Family Law section of a Bar Admissions Preparation Course through the University of Toronto for several years. Kristin is a member of the Canadian Bar Association, a member of the Family Law and Estates and Trusts Sections of the Ontario Bar Association, a member of the Family Law Association and the AFCC. Kristin is also a member of Collaborative Practice Toronto

Kristin is a results driven advocate, but is, at all times, cognizant of the impact of separation and divorce on families.

CHERYL SUANN WILLIAMS

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Prior to becoming the Principal of Williams Family Lawyers in 2015, Cheryl worked in reputable boutique family law firms in downtown Toronto and Markham before joining partnership with Laura Fryer (as she then was) in Fryer & Williams prior to Her Honour's appointment to the Superior Court of Justice, Family Court Branch. Cheryl and the firm's associates are resolution-focused and strive to continue the high level of professionalism and service set by the firm's prior partners.

Cheryl commenced work in the legal field in 1992 and earned a law degree at Osgoode Hall Law School in 1998. She was called to the Ontario Bar in 2000 and is currently pursuing a Masters in Law (Alternative Dispute Resolution) degree at Osgoode Hall Law School. She is fully trained in Collaborative Law and has taken extensive mediation courses.

Cheryl's long association with family law commenced in 1996 through her involvement with the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic assisting victims of physical and sexual violence; an intensive study in family law during law school; and articles at the Ministry of the Attorney General, Office of the Children's Lawyer.

Cheryl has written for the Bar Admission Course on Divorce Law and family law publications. She has also written for and presented at Continuing Professional Development Programs for the Law Society of Upper Canada, Ontario Bar Association, Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario, and Canadian Association of Black Lawyers. She is a regular speaker at the Scarborough Women's Centre. Since 2004, she appears in an educational film on separation and divorce produced for the public across Ontario by the Superior Court of Justice for the Mandatory Information Program entitled "Moving Forward." She also presents at the Mandatory Information Program at Newmarket Court. She is a former Council Member of the Ontario Bar Association and the Executive of the Family Law Section of the Ontario Bar Association. She was also featured in the Ontario Bar Association's, "Why I Went to Law School" advertising campaign. Cheryl acts as a mentor for several young lawyers and students.

When not practising family law, Cheryl enjoys Latin and ballroom dancing, travelling and cooking.