

EDUCATION UPDATE



BY ERIN MONAHAN, CPP
TLABC EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Erin has been Trial Lawyers Association of BC's Education Director since the summer of 2011 and is responsible for the association's program development and execution. She has organized events all over the province, as well as in Jamaica, Mexico, Hawaii, California and is working on Costa Rica for January 2019. Since joining TLABC, she has introduced a webcasting component for online viewers, a yearly webinar series, and expanded TLABC's material sales to include seminar video archives and webinar recordings. Most recently, the association has been awarded the ACLEA Award for Outstanding Achievement (2016 & 2017) as well as the NATLE CLE of the Year (2017).

"We don't do things with an I,
we do them with a we"

– THE HONOURABLE MOBINA JAFFER QC,
SENATOR FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

COLLEGIALITY. ETHICS. EDUCATION.

In an often-adversarial profession, the importance of these words may not always seem obvious. I remember when I first started working for TLABC and hearing that lawyers call their opposing council "my learned friend". Remember, I have no legal background so this was my first experience with law and that made an impact on me. To call the person whose job it is to prove you wrong and undo all of your hard work "your friend" is a powerful thing.

We live in world that is becoming more and more polarized, most especially in politics, and I am not just referring to our southern neighbors. Globally, we are starting to view those who differ in opinions as an enemy. This is a terrifying prospect as we split farther and farther apart. How are we to resolve conflicts when neither side is willing to find *common ground*?

Luckily, you are in a profession where collegiality not only is promoted, but supported and, speaking as a laywoman, this gives me hope. It confirms that there is still a powerful group of people out there that are not afraid to look beyond our differences. These are the people (*you are the people*) that can make real change.

We have just completed our very successful 13th annual Women Lawyers Retreat, where there is no better example of collegiality in the profession. I have written about this event in the past, so please bear with me while I do so again, as I could not write a column on this theme and not speak of it. The retreat *embodies* collegiality. We have lawyers from each side of the bar who spend the weekend finding *common ground*. ICBC Defense and Plaintiff counsel working together to support their colleagues. Judges and senior members of the bar mentoring newly called lawyers. 130 women in the legal profession for the same goal – collegiality and education.

Who better then to keynote this year's retreat with a focus on leadership but the Honourable Mobina Jaffer QC? As she addressed both the importance of women in politics, and finding a cause that you can devote yourself to with passion, she shared with the audience those who had a part in her success. Now just think of the doors she has opened for all those who followed her. On top of being the first Muslim senator and the first African-born senator, she was the first woman of South Asian descent to practice law *in Canada*. Think about that for a second... 40 years ago there were no women of South Asian decent practicing law in our country, and 17 years ago, there were no Muslim or African Born Canadians on the senate... *in a country that is supposed to be multicultural*. She did not just open doors; she bulldozed them down. She did this with courage and drive, and with a community of people who supported her. In her words, "We don't do things with an I, we do them with a we".

Here is my challenge to you. Be a part of the "we."

As our members continue to represent a profession where collegiality is valued, TLABC will continue to offer programs where collegiality can be found.

As Obama said, "Together we can". I still believe that to be true. ✓



The Hon. Mobina Jaffer QC, speaking at the recent Women Lawyers Retreat held in Whistler.