



SPOTLIGHT ON family law

**GEORGIALEE
LANG**
PAC CONTRIBUTOR

**Tell us a little bit about your
practice or firm.**

I started my career at a major Vancouver blue-chip law firm and at 5 years I opened Georgiale Lang & Associates, a boutique family law firm with 3 to 5 associates. In 2010 I sold my firm and reinvented my sole practice, focusing on appellate litigation and arbitration.

NAME: Georgiale Lang, BA JD FCIArb

LAW FIRM & LOCATION: Georgiale Lang Attorney & Arbitrator, Vancouver

TLABC MEMBER SINCE: 2016

POST-SECONDARY DEGREE(S) & INSTITUTION(S):

Simon Fraser University BA Crim, University of British Columbia Juris Doctor

YEAR OF CALL IN BC: 1989

What led you to choose law as your profession?

My interest in the law was inspired by my undergraduate degree in Criminology and my own personal experience with the justice system when I was 19.

What is your concept of justice?

Justice to me means a fair hearing with an unbiased adjudicator who exercises his or her discretion with common sense and compassion.

You are an active PAC contributor and supporter of TLABC's advocacy work. Can you tell us why this is important to you and what motivates you to contribute?

I have been impressed by the passion and commitment I see in this organization and that is what compels me to be part of the team. I also love the mentoring aspect that is available to a senior lawyer, particularly through the family law listserve.

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- GEORGIALEE LANG

What is as important to you now as it was at the start of your career in law?

The understanding that lawyers are privileged to be able to assist those who are facing challenging circumstances and to whom much is given, much is expected.

From your perspective, what are the biggest issues facing family lawyers in BC today?

Issues range from "burn-out", because of the heightened emotions inherent in family law litigation, to the depressing knowledge that many Canadians cannot afford, and are not able to avail themselves of legal assistance.

Being asked to represent an individual or a family in a difficult legal matter is a great honour and a great responsibility, most certainly. When given this honour and accepting the obligation that comes with it, what should a lawyer strive to do upon meeting a client for the first time?

Listening and really hearing; providing support, but never sugar-coating the challenges of legal proceedings, both emotionally and financially.

How has your TLABC membership enhanced your practice?

I have met so many young family law lawyers that I would otherwise not have connected with. It gives me pleasure to see that the family law bar in British Columbia is not lacking for fresh, new talent.

What are among the most challenging aspects of the cases you take on regularly?

I do a fair amount of Hague Convention work which is always difficult; trying to recover an abducted child. In my appellate practice I have come to learn and tell clients, that your best shot at a successful outcome is at trial, and that is where your resources should be directed. Appeals are so much more difficult, particularly in family law.

To date, what are among the most rewarding aspects of your career and/or some of your favourite career moments or milestones?

I have argued three cases before the Supreme Court of Canada: Stein v. Stein 2008; Rick v. Brandsema 2009; and AG v. Bedford 2013, the prostitution case. Singing is my hobby as I studied opera for 10 years... I have been blessed to be able to sing at a number of bench and bar events, such as Chief Justice Finch's retirement dinner; the UBC anniversary dinner with Madam Justice McLachlin, and many others.

Which key aspects of life in the legal profession did law school not prepare you for in a practical way or perhaps not prepare you for at all?

I felt well-prepared, I was a mature student who had honed life skills before I started law school at age 32. A large part of success as a lawyer is the ability to connect with clients, to be able to establish trust and bring perspective.

With a viewpoint aided by retrospect, what do you regard as some of the most significant or important ways in which things have changed for lawyers and law clients when it comes to family matters? How about with respect to personal injury cases in general?

British Columbia is at the cutting edge of changes in the area of family law, so much so, that the federal government has recently amended the Divorce Act in a way that parallels the changes made in BC in 2013, including recognizing the effects of family violence; treating common law spouses the same as those who are legally married; dealing with the issue of parental and child mobility.

You have been an active member of the Trial Lawyers Association of BC since 2016. Is membership with a professional association something you consider vital to one's career right from the start or does it become more relevant later?

Belonging to a professional organization is key to developing a practice and enhancing one's professional reputation. The opportunities to speak, to write, to engage with colleagues are limitless.

Which mantra or quotation do you find particularly inspirational, or perhaps even helps guide you as you go about your day-to-day activities?

I love Abraham Lincoln's words: Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbor to compromise whenever you can. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

Describe an ideal non-work day in which you are living life exclusively on your terms.

It would definitely include 9 holes of golf with my husband; a choir practice; cooking a gourmet meal; and perhaps playing mah jong with good friends.

At this stage of your career – with the sum and strength of your experience as a lawyer – what do you know for certain about law?

I know that in Canada we are fortunate to have a well-trained bar and judges who are committed to the rule of law and for that we must be truly grateful.

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