

Professional Profile

Wayne Robertson, Executive Director of the Law Foundation of BC

Wayne Robertson was born in Fort St. John, BC. He spent his childhood as a typical “army brat,” moving with his family every two years or so to various residences in Ontario, Manitoba, BC, and England. He attended 13 schools.

After graduating from high school in North Bay, Ontario, Wayne attended Carleton University in Ottawa, where he earned a BA in English and Psychology. His degree in Social Work (Community Development) is from the University of Calgary; his Law degree is from the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

In addition to typical student jobs, Wayne worked for five years on and off as a social worker. He also volunteered in the Social Welfare Department in Gambia, West Africa, where he helped establish a juvenile probation system.

He has been fortunate to have met a number of inspirational people who guided him over the years. One was a professor of Community Development; Ben Carniol, who also had a law degree, taught Wayne the value of interdisciplinary learning.

After law school, when Wayne and his wife compared all the cities in Canada, they decided Vancouver was the best place for them. Called to the Bar of

BC in 1983, he articulated at the firm of Corrigan, Bernadino, Dorman & Baker in East Vancouver, and spent the first two years of his career in North Vancouver at the North Shore Neighbourhood Legal Clinic with Don Jabour.



The work at the clinic was a true general practice, including Wills, estates, corporate/commercial law, real estate, and litigation. In 1985, he joined Lindsay Kenney, a downtown Vancouver firm, as a civil litigator. He became a partner of the firm in 1989.

In 1995 he moved to the Legal Services Society, first as Managing Lawyer of the Vancouver Family Law Clinic, then as Client Services Manager responsible for the branch offices of Legal Aid. He left the Legal Services Society to join the Law Foundation in January 2002.

In his career as a litigator, Wayne argued cases in all areas of law and all courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada. His primary focus has been family law; he is especially interested in child protection law. “The experience of solving problems for someone, or being successful at the end of a trial, is very satisfying,” he says. “Law offers a unique blend of intellectual and interpersonal challenges.”

Wayne very much enjoys all the work. His fellow staff members are professional, competent, and a pleasure to work with and learn from. He truly believes in the Law Foundation’s mandate of providing funding for legal aid, legal education, law libraries, law reform, and legal research.

The Board of Governors of the Law Foundation is comprised of 15 senior members of the legal profession and three senior community people. The Chair of the Foundation is Don Silversides, QC, of Prince Rupert. Governors bring perspectives from

different parts of the province and share a commitment to the work of the Foundation. The amount of volunteer time spent on Foundation activities is enormous.

As Executive Director of the Law Foundation, Wayne is involved in all aspects of the work. He has responsibility for the strategic planning and overall financial management of the Foundation and also has responsibility for a number of the projects and programs funded by the Foundation. In the past year, they have had a particular challenge in addressing the needs for legal information and advocacy services in the province as a result of the significant changes to legal aid. The Law Foundation has brought groups of advocates together for strategizing and training sessions.

An ongoing responsibility is continuing to renegotiate favourable interest rate agreements with the financial institutions to ensure the

funding base of the Foundation remains secure. With core-funding commitments of approximately \$12 million every year to 56 core-funded groups and approximately 40 projects as well, the stability of their funding, needless to say, is important. In the last year, Wayne and the Law Foundation have worked closely with The Notary Foundation and Wayne Braid, its Executive Officer. The two Foundations have a good relationship and have jointly funded a number of projects.

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Wayne has been involved in community activities throughout his career. Currently, he is involved with the Canadian Diabetes

Association, where he sits on the National Advocacy Council, and the North Shore Multicultural Society, as Vice Chair.

Some of his community service activities include 15 years on the Board (5 as Chair) of Canadian Crossroads International, a volunteer-sending non-governmental organization; 8 years (4 as Chair) on the Board of the Community Legal Assistance Society in Vancouver; 5 years on the Board of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation; and 12 years coaching girls soccer, boys soccer, baseball, and softball in North Vancouver. In 2001 – 2002, he participated in the Leadership Vancouver program.

When not at the office or involved in community work, Wayne enjoys golf, camping, and reading. On weekends, he referees soccer.

He believes in living each day to the fullest which, in his view, is best achieved through a healthy balance of work, family, community, and personal time. ▲