

Heather Raven: Chair *of the Law* Foundation *of BC*

A Senior Instructor at the Law School at the University of Victoria, Heather Raven was appointed to the 18-member Board of Governors of the Law Foundation of BC in 2000 and became its Chair in 2004.

The Law Foundation of BC receives interest on lawyers' pooled trust accounts. From this money, annual grants of approximately \$13 million are made to fund legal aid, legal education and research, law reform, and law libraries. The Foundation supports 56 organizations on a continuing basis and funds many projects each year. Heather has served on the following Law Foundation committees: Policy and Planning (Chair, 2002 – 2003), Funding Strategies, New Grants, Personnel, and Aboriginal Justice Initiatives and she was liaison governor for continuing- and large-project grantees.

Born in Flin Flon, Manitoba, Heather moved with her family to the Vancouver area when she was 6 months old. After a series of moves connected to her father's occupation, she attended high school in Toronto, but did not graduate. In a rush to join the working world, her early jobs included working in a car wash and flipping 'burgers in the first big Eaton's mall in North York.

"I still don't eat hamburgers very often," she laughs. "I just knocked around and did a pile of short-term jobs." Looking ahead to her future, Heather gained entry into UBC as a mature student. She worked at New Westminster Public Library, filling in for someone on maternity leave. "I was a hard-worker and the librarian really took a shine to me. One day, she took me aside to say she could see a career path for me as a librarian. That was in 1972."



Heather went on to work as a clerk at Simon Fraser University library and occasionally took courses at SFU and UBC. "I used to work for a janitorial service that cleaned that library, so it was nice to go back to Simon Fraser in a day job—with a career path." She became senior library clerk.

The university began making changes to the working conditions and policies governing library support staff. Some support staff began meeting to oppose the changes because they believed them detrimental to the largely female staff and because the changes were made without sufficient consultation.

Attempts at communication failed. Heather and her friend Reva were tasked with investigating the possibility of unionizing the library support staff. They "interviewed" a few unions but decided that giving up local autonomy to a union was not in the best interests of the staff. The 1972 Labour Code had recently been enacted in British Columbia and it became easier for small but independent unions to gain certification.

A small, independent, and feminist union, The Association of University and College Employees (AUCE), had been recently certified to represent some of the clerical support staff at UBC. It was decided the library support staff at SFU would apply to be certified to represent the SFU library support staff under the AUCE banner.

An organizing campaign was launched and an application for certification as AUCE, Local 2, was made to the Labour Relations Board. SFU opposed the application for certification on several grounds. At that time, AUCE's only income came from donations. The Labour Board decided to hold a hearing into the application for certification.

Reva and I managed to persuade lawyer Stuart Rush to act for AUCE at the hearing on a *pro bono* basis. One day, while sitting beside Stuart, at what turned out to be one of many hearings at the Labour Board, I knew what I wanted to do when I grew up—I wanted to be a lawyer.

“I studied for my undergraduate degree at UBC part-time, at night. It took me a few years to finish. I majored in history. I had started my studies in 1967 and graduated in 1982. When I applied to law school, I was in my middle 30s.”

When asked if she had a mentor, Heather said that UBC Professors Christopher and Rhoda Friedrichs were very good to her. And there were others along the way.

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“I’m Aboriginal. When I graduated law school, there weren’t many Aboriginal people in law school. Four of us graduated the same year, in 1985. We were Aboriginal persons and proud of our heritage, yet could not get jobs with private law firms that did Aboriginal work. We ended up at various places. Only one fellow—now a Judge—got a job with a law firm that did Aboriginal work.

“The other three of us ended up in government. I did my articles and filled in for someone on leave at Justice Canada for a total of 18 months. After that I did labour law in the Lower Mainland for five years before joining UVIC in 1992.”

Heather was the Director of Academic and Cultural Support at the Faculty of Law at UVic and taught courses in Aboriginal Law, Employment Law, Legal Mooting, and Legal Process from 1992 to June 2004. In July 2004, she became the Diversity Advisor to the Provost and a Senior Instructor on a half-time basis for both positions.

Heather says of UVic, “The population of BC is diverse and I see that diversity

in our own organization. We are working more and more toward diversifying our faculty and staff complement and courses, to reflect the realities of modern day British Columbia. The students are marvellous. We welcome and encourage students of all ages and stages and races. It’s really great.”

She was also responsible for recruitment and advising Aboriginal applicants, advising band and tribal council education officers and advising faculty on Aboriginal course content and instruction methods. The Notary Foundation of BC contributed \$100,000 toward the funding for establishing the Law Foundation Chair in Aboriginal Justice and Governance, currently held by Professor John Borrows. The Law Foundation of BC also contributed.

As Director of the Academic and Cultural Support Program, Heather designed and delivered a comprehensive academic support program for all students and a cultural support program for Aboriginal students. She served as community liaison with Aboriginal communities in British Columbia; coordinated university and faculty cultural activities, intercultural communications and intercultural seminars; and presented papers at workshops and conferences.

Among her many accomplishments, Heather is the first Aboriginal person ever to be appointed to the British Columbia Police Commission.

Her literary efforts include the following.

- *U’Mista Cultural Society, Field Study on Repatriation of Cultural Property*, with Catherine Bell and Robert Paterson, Protection and Repatriation of First Nation Cultural Heritage, a work in progress
- “Membership Codes” in L. Gilbert, *Entitlement to Indian Status and Membership Codes in Canada* (Toronto: Carswell, 1996)
- Book Review of *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada’s Pacific Coast Fisheries*, by Dianne Newell (1993), 7:2 Int. J. of Maritime History 202 (1993) ▲

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Grad Class

Heather Raven

In 1999, when Nunavut Territory was created, only one Inuit lawyer resided in the territory, the Premier of Nunavut, Paul Okalik.

Leaders in the Inuit, legal, government, and judicial communities established an informal working group to address the situation.

They approached all of Canada’s law schools, asking for proposals aimed at increasing the number of Inuit lawyers. The University of Victoria responded to the call and negotiations with the Territory and the Federal Department of Justice resulted in the establishment of a University of Victoria Faculty of Law class in Iqaluit.

In the Spring and Summer of 2001, 15 Inuit students were selected to begin their law. The program was designed to alternate study and work terms so the students were able to use their legal knowledge and skills for the benefit of Nunavut and its peoples from the very beginning of the program.

Legal scholars of national and international prominence have travelled to Iqaluit to teach the classes. The Inuit students have been required to take a full law program of studies and meet the same competency standards as their peers in the south.

As a member of the Admissions Committee and as an Instructor in the program, I am looking forward to attending the graduation ceremonies in Iqaluit on June 21, 2005. It’s been a tremendous opportunity for me to be a part of this program. I am sure the Inuit students taught me much more than I taught them. ▲