

The Honourable J. Michael MacDonald

Counsel



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Language(s) spoken: English

Bar Admission(s): Nova Scotia, 1979

Legal Assistant(s): [Leona Clements](#)

The Honourable J. Michael MacDonald joined Stewart McKelvey as Counsel in April of 2019 following a distinguished career on the Bench. Mr. MacDonald was appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in 1995 and the Associate Chief Justice three years later. He became the 22nd Chief Justice of Nova Scotia and the Chief Justice of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal in 2004. During his time sitting on both courts, he wrote approximately 500 decisions. A member of the Canadian Judicial Council for twenty years, he has chaired several of its committees, most recently the Judicial Conduct Committee.

As Chief Justice, in 2014, Michael led the creation of the Nova Scotia Access to Justice Coordinating Committee, a group of legal professionals working to make Nova Scotia a national leader in access to justice. During his tenure as Chief Justice, he promoted several judicial outreach initiatives to engage the Indigenous and African Nova Scotia communities. His efforts to foster inclusion on the Bench include creating a judicial mentorship initiative for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous lawyers. He also volunteered with Phoenix Youth to host justice day camps for young people from racialized communities. Michael's access to justice initiatives have been recognized by Cape Breton University and Mount Allison University with honorary doctorate of laws degrees. The Canadian Bar Association (Nova Scotia Branch) has renamed its annual access to justice award the "J. Michael MacDonald Access to Justice Award" to honour Michael's work in this area.

He has presented at, and participated in, numerous legal conferences in Canada, the United States, and Europe, and has assisted the judiciaries in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. He is a regular guest speaker at Dalhousie's Schulich School of Law and a recipient of the Queen's Golden, Diamond and Platinum Jubilee medals, along with the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Michael focuses his practice on alternative dispute resolution. He also volunteers with Phoenix Youth and presently chairs its board of directors.

Education & Career

Education

Dalhousie University, LLB, 1979

Mount Allison University, BA, 1976

Activities

Member, Canadian Bar Association

Chair, [Mass Casualty Commission](#)

Member, African Nova Scotia Access to Justice Judicial Committee

Advisor, Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute of Nova Scotia

Board Member, Phoenix Youth

Creator and Chair, Nova Scotia Access to Justice Coordinating Committee, 2014 - 2018

Chair, Canadian Judicial Council, Judicial Conduct Committee, 2014 - 2018

Chair, Nova Scotia Judicial Council, 2004 - 2019

Chair, Executive Office of the Nova Scotia Judiciary, 2004 - 2019

Previous Member, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society Council

Previous President, Cape Breton Barristers' Society

Previous Board member, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation

Guest Speaker, Dalhousie University Schulich School of Law

Accolades

Mount Allison University, Honourary Doctorate of Laws, 2024

Cape Breton University, Honourary Doctorate of Laws, 2018

Recipient, Queen's Golden Jubilee medal

Recipient, Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal

Recipient, Queen's Platinum Jubilee medal

Recipient, King Charles III Coronation medal

Honourary Member, International Society for the Reform of Criminal Law

Presentations

Co-Presenter, "Protecting your Workplace: Trauma Informed Investigations", Stewart McKelvey Labour & Employment

Webinar

May 22, 2024