

2020 Presentation of the Honsberger Award – Gillian Hnatiw

The Toronto Lawyers Association Honsberger Award is presented annually to a Toronto area lawyer in recognition of a single unique accomplishment, or for ongoing contributions to the legal community and the community at large, that exemplify the TLA's three pillars: Knowledge, Community, and Advocacy. For our 20th Annual Gala, to be held on March 5th, 2020, we can think of no more worthy recipient than Gillian Hnatiw: a formidable advocate for women's civil rights and empowerment, as well as a compassionate representative for victims of violence, in the courtroom and in the community.

After obtaining her Honours BA from Queen's University, she earned her LLB at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law. As a law student, her interest in and dedication to issues of equality and empowerment emerged through her volunteer work with Downtown Legal Services, Women and the Law, and Pro Bono Students Canada. She also volunteered with organizations like MealTrans, Council Fire and the 519 Centre, in an effort to provide legal education and advice to some of the City's most vulnerable populations.

Today, Gillian is the Principal of Gillian Hnatiw & Co. in Toronto. Since her call to the bar in 2002, Gillian has built a broad civil litigation practice focused on health, employment, and administrative law, including professional regulation, professional negligence and human rights disputes. Most notably, she has emerged as one of the country's foremost practitioners in claims for sexual assault, abuse and exploitation. She has represented both plaintiff/claimants and defendants/respondents before all levels of court and before various administrative bodies including the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board. Among her more significant cases, Gillian was counsel at the Coroner's Inquests into the deaths of Ashley Smith and Katelynn Sampson, both of which examined systemic institutional failings that resulted in the deaths of vulnerable girls. Most recently, she has used her practice to push for new legal remedies for combatting tech-facilitated violence against women.

Gillian is the current Chair of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), which works to advance the substantive equality rights of women and girls through litigation, law reform, and education. She acted as pro bono counsel to LEAF in *R. v. Jarvis*, a voyeurism case which required the Supreme Court to define the meaning of "reasonable expectations of privacy" in the context of tech-facilitated violence, and *R. v. Boyle*, which examined the procedural rights of complainants to challenge rulings in sexual assault prosecutions. She has also acted *pro bono* in multiple interventions for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and regularly works behind the scenes to provide *pro bono* counsel to victims of sexual violence.

Gillian's advocacy is not restricted to the courtroom. She is sought after as a speaker and writer, and regularly shares her experience and passion with communities across the country. She has written on legal topics for publications, including *Canadian Lawyer* and *Chatelaine*, and regularly comments to mainstream media on issues affecting the equality and advancement of women. Her enthusiasm, knowledge, and experience have earned her the recognition and respect of her

peers and resulted in many tributes in addition to the one we wish to bestow. We can think of no better embodiment of the TLA pillars of Knowledge, Community and Advocacy than Gillian Hnatiw.