

In Memoriam - Dianne Pothier

Dal Notice <DAL-NOTICE@LISTS.DAL.CA>

on behalf of

Dalhousie Notice <notice@DAL.CA>

Wed 1/4/2017 6:00 PM

To: DAL-NOTICE@LISTS.DAL.CA <DAL-NOTICE@LISTS.DAL.CA>

In Memoriam - Dianne Pothier

The Schulich School of Law extends its deepest sympathy and condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of [Professor Emerita Dianne Pothier](#) (1954–2017). “It is with sadness that we share the news of the death of our colleague and friend,” says Dean Camille Cameron.

Pothier graduated from Dalhousie Law School in 1982 having won almost every academic prize available, including the University Medal in Law. She clerked with Justice R.G. Brian Dickson of the Supreme Court of Canada, then served as Senior Advisory Counsel to the Chair of the Canada Labour Relations Board. “We are fortunate that Dianne agreed to join our law school in 1986,” says Dean Cameron.

Teaching and research contributions

As a faculty member, Pothier made leading contributions in her teaching and research to constitutional law, labour law, and public law. She was famed for her doctrinal precision. She redesigned both public and constitutional law and enhanced their substantive content immeasurably. “Our law school is recognized as one of the leading programs in these areas in the country, in no small part due to Dianne’s efforts,” says Professor Kim Brooks, a long-time colleague and friend.

Pothier built an enviable publication record. To give just one example, her article “Connecting Grounds of Discrimination to Real People’s Real Experiences” has been cited in almost every subsequent article on equality law. She combined compelling personal narrative and incisive legal analysis in ways that elucidate and challenge.

In addition to her contributions to constitutional law, labour law, and public law, Pothier was Canada’s leading legal scholar and activist on disability and the law. Her work on the concepts of equality, the duty to accommodate, and dis-citizenship has been drawn upon by scholars across the country and has had policy resonance in legislatures and courts.

Pothier also co-chaired a set of 16 presentations by emerging and established scholars on Critical Disability Theory. Those presentations became the basis for a collection of essays published by UBC Press and one of the first book-length contributions on the subject in Canada.

A model of the Weldon Tradition

A community activist, Pothier played cornerstone roles with many equality groups, including the DisAbled Women’s Network, the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund, the Canadian Disability Studies Association, the Equality Panel of the Court Challenges Program of Canada, and the Canadian Association for Community Living. Retirement from the Schulich School of Law in 2012 provided her with more time for that critical work.

Pothier modelled the Weldon Tradition of Unselfish Public Service: she was active in defending Bill C-14's limitation to those whose death is reasonably foreseeable; she argued publicly and in writing in favour of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society position on Trinity Western University; and she was fiercely committed to the work Dalhousie Legal Aid Service and Nova Scotia Legal Aid are undertaking on the Emerald Hall human rights complaint, which is focused on the lack of supportive housing for disabled persons and the right to live in the community on equal terms with others.

Pothier was recognized with the Frances Fish Women Lawyers' Achievement Award, the Canadian Bar Association President's Award, and our Bertha Wilson Honour Society. Ever and always connected to our law school, last term she taught classes in both the graduate seminar and public law and attended almost every faculty seminar and major lecture.

"We feel Dianne's loss keenly," says Dean Cameron. "In the coming days, there will be opportunities to remember her many contributions and to celebrate her exemplary life."

Please send condolences, remembrances, and stories to lawdean@dal.ca.