



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



MARY ELLEN TURPEL-LAFOND

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond was appointed B.C.'s first Representative for Children and Youth in November 2006. The Representative is an Independent Officer of the Legislature.

Ms Turpel-Lafond is on leave from the Saskatchewan Provincial Court, where she was the Administrative Judge for Saskatoon.

She was appointed to the bench in 1998, and was actively involved in projects relating to access to justice, judicial independence, and public outreach.

She has also worked as a criminal law judge in youth and adult courts, with an emphasis on developing partnerships to better serve the needs of young people in the justice system, particularly sexually exploited children and youth, and children and youth with disabilities, such as those who suffer from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Ms Turpel-Lafond was a tenured law professor at Dalhousie University Faculty of Law, and taught law at the University of Toronto, the University of Notre Dame and other universities. She has been a visiting professor at University of British Columbia and University of Victoria law schools.

She holds a doctorate of law from Harvard Law School, a master's degree in international law from Cambridge University, a law degree from Osgoode Hall, and a bachelor of arts degree from Carleton University. She also holds a certificate in the international and comparative law of human rights from the University of Strasbourg in France. The Representative received honorary doctorate degrees from Ontario's Brock University in 2010 and from B.C.'s Thompson Rivers University in 2009.

In 2007, the Indigenous Bar Association awarded her the distinction of 'Indigenous Peoples' Counsel'. As well, Time Magazine has twice bestowed honours upon Ms Turpel-Lafond, naming her one of the '100 Global Leaders of Tomorrow' in 1994, and one of the 'Top 20 Canadian Leaders for the 21st Century' in 1999.

In 2009, Ms Turpel-Lafond was awarded the Bill McFarland Award from the Parent Support Services Society of B.C. This award recognizes her outstanding commitment to the prevention of child abuse and her many efforts, as B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth and previously as a judge and a lawyer, through which she has made a lasting mark in child welfare.

In November 2010, Ms Turpel-Lafond was awarded the Perry Shawana Award for the leadership she has provided and her work as a champion for the voices and rights of children, as well as, her advocacy on their behalf and her outstanding commitment to their well-being. Also in November 2010, the Vancouver Sun recognized Ms Turpel-Lafond as one of B.C.'s top 100 most influential women.

In February 2011, the Trudeau Foundation named Ms Turpel-Lafond as one of their 10 new Trudeau Mentors. Trudeau Mentors are selected from the most eminent Canadian practitioners in all sectors of public life. Ms Turpel-Lafond will assist her assigned Scholar in research and work contributing to strong social-serving systems that support the vulnerable in society.

Ms Turpel-Lafond is the elected President of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, an alliance of provincial children's advocates from across the country who champion the voice and rights of children in their respective provinces and territories. She also serves on the Board of Directors of UNICEF Canada.

A member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, she is active in her First Nations community and published a book on the history of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation that was short-listed for a Saskatchewan Book Award.

Ms Turpel-Lafond, her husband George Lafond, their son and three daughters, (including twins), live in Victoria, B.C.