

## Acceptance Speech at CLEA's Award Reception on February 9, 2016

Good evening. It is indeed an honour to accept this Public Legal Education Award this evening. Thank you. When I was younger my Dad wanted me to become a lawyer but I decided to become a teacher instead and pursued a career in education for many years in Trinidad before immigrating to Canada.

We first lived in Ottawa for a few years and then relocated to Winnipeg where all family including my Mom, Dad and two siblings lived. I did not have a job at the time and my sister suggested that with my education background, it might be a good idea to take the library course at Red River College. Although there was a long waiting list after taking the aptitude test and going through an interview I was selected to take the course. After graduation, I got a job at the Department of Education Library. I thoroughly enjoyed that job providing reference services to all of Manitoba's schools. At my retirement, my boss, Dr. John Tooth said: "I offered a job and the rest as they say is history".

While working at the library, I was asked by Stacy Nagle if I would consider letting my name stand to become a member of CLEA's Board of Directors. I thought about it and felt that would make my Dad happy. I would not be a lawyer but I would have some contact and be working directly with lawyers. I submitted an application and was elected as a Board member. Imagine my surprise when I attended an AGM a few years later and was asked, "Are you ready to take on the presidency?" "What?" I said "CLEA has two vice presidents". Well neither of them was able to take on that role and so I walked out of that meeting later that evening as the president of CLEA. Just a note here to say that I was the first non-lawyer to become president of this organization.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time both on the Board and the two times I served as president. I loved working on the human rights conferences we organized along with the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties and the Canadian and Manitoba Human Rights Commissions.

It was at one of those conferences, as president of CLEA in 1999 that I had the pleasure to present David Matas with the Manitoba Human Rights Achievement Award. I must say two things about David, he never passes anyone he knows without saying "hi" and if he promises to do something, you can be sure that no matter how busy he is he will get it done. Once, we were on the same flight to Toronto and he said, "Oh, you just reminded me of something I have to do. I will get that done ASAP". That's the kind of guy he is. Getting this award today along with David Matas for his work in Advocacy makes it even more exceptional.

The student conferences were also a lot of fun, making connections with teachers at the library who taught the Law course was also very special. Over the years, it was a pleasure to have

served on CLEA's Board through good times and through rough times. I remember when I had to travel to Ottawa to meet with the Federal Department of Justice to make a case for more funding for CLEA. It was a privilege to work with the Board members and with the past EDs, Alan Diduck and Barb Palace and the current ED, Mary Troszko and all the staff past and present.

I am sure that although my Dad's wish for me to become a lawyer did not materialize that he is looking down here right now and is happily smiling to know that I did get involved in some way with lawyers and with some public legal work.

In closing, I would like to thank my family who are all here and who have always supported and encouraged me in my endeavours. Thanks again to CLEA's Board of Directors for conferring this award to me today.