

In *TRUTH BE TOLD*, Beverley McLachlin quotes Joseph Campbell's work on the hero's journey: "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

McLachlin's journey through life and law is a remarkable journey, one that does not appear planned, although every step taken, in the author's retrospect, was clearly preparation for the next. McLachlin has *practised* in the deepest sense of that word. She has lived her life thoughtfully, with dedication and discipline, a deep caring and love. Whether her topic is herself as student, finding her place in the world, discovering love, parenthood, growing and grieving, life and death, how to become a good judge, even how to retire, in the chapter "Towards the Finish Line," McLachlin contemplates each of the uncharted twists and turns that drive her own journey from its small beginnings in Pincher Creek, reading every book in the public library, to her Judge's chambers at the Supreme Court overlooking the Parliamentary buildings, and beyond.

What ultimately emerges for the reader who participates in this journey is a profound sense of gratitude. For if there is one common denominator to all the choices that have presented themselves to her, it is the resoundingly affirmative "yes" with which she has taken up the challenge.

From leaving home, ("Dragging my trunk behind me, I walked to the door, banged the knocker, and waited for what would happen next,"), to today's Citizen McLachlin, "wife, mother, friend, ordinary person. A person who had her day but is still, with the support of those around her, carrying on...Every day is a new day. You never know what will happen".

Early in the work, McLachlin recounts her exchange with Rory, her first love, first husband, and an anchor in her life, McLachlin recounts how she agonized over the choice of whether or not to study law, and had approached the decision-making process by compiling a list of pros and cons. Later, discovering that it was the law's grounding in human behaviour that ultimately tipped the balance against the lengthy list of cons, she commented to Rory that she was really liking the law.

"I knew you would," he said. Why couldn't he have just said instead of McLachlin having to go through the agony of deciding?"

"Because you have to do the agony."

Again and again, McLachlin gives us the agony. She also gives us the benefit of a transparent decision-making process, or the steps to come out of her periods of despair. And because of the humanity of her agony, there is deep human comfort to be taken from all of this.

The moments of human pain come, for example, after the birth of Angus, when McLachlin appreciates that, notwithstanding a strong marriage, a child she loves, and a fulfilling profession, that something isn't right, a feeling of emptiness and exhaustion, and a realization that she needs to work. We see her putting in place the practical steps that enable her to get right back at it. Another is recognizing that the faith that was always there for her mother abandoned that good Christian woman in her hours of greatest spiritual need; and the dying time of Rory, at age 47, leaving her "sagging with sadness" and lurching from task to task using sheer willpower to be there for husband and child.

What is philosophically at the core of her being and process is a sense of *service* to others, participation in the human project, using one of the great driving forces of her life – the law:

The law is more than the embodiment of one person's will; it is the collective wisdom of countless sage people over great stretches of time. It secures us and allows us to move forward in peace and harmony. In an age of unravelling, it offers stability and a principled way to face the problems that surround us. It is, quite simply, our best hope for the future.

Although a self-professed "very private person", McLachlin has given us an intimate tour of a deeply personal journey. Read closely, it is a blueprint for how to live a life, generally – how to make decisions, approach deeply human problems with a view to human solutions that make a human difference. TRUTH BE TOLD is about far more than the law, not to minimize the law and, in particular, her work as Chief Justice on the Supreme Court of Canada, as the "centrepiece" of that life. For a lay person, a non-lawyer, or indeed for this lawyer, what is likely to be remembered after the particular cases over which she presided and which advanced the state of humanity all those years on the Supreme Court of Canada, are those pivotal human moments, choices, and sufferings.

Thank you, Beverley McLauchlin, for the courage it must have taken to write this memoir. It must have been hugely difficult to live through it, the first time, It cannot have been

easy to revisit. But it is a great gift you have given to the citizens of Canada and to all persons at whatever stage of their life, legal, or other journeys. I, personally, am enormously grateful.

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Review by Darlene Madott

www.DarleneMadott.com

madott@dmfamilylaw.net