



Judge fulfills a life-long dream

Updated: August 2024

An incident in childhood launched a life-long ambition for Judge Roger Cutler. When the judge was 12 years old, he was enjoying his first ever hockey tournament when it was cancelled part way through, after the Zamboni driver crashed into the boards. For some reason, this awakened in the young player a strong desire to drive a Zamboni himself. But perhaps this wasn't so strange - most Canadians who've watched the Zamboni glide regally around a rink have probably shared that wish.

When he was a young boy, Judge Cutler's idol was Ken Dryden, the Montreal Canadiens' Hall of Fame goalie with a law degree. Although Judge Cutler didn't make the NHL, he did graduate from McGill Law School (Mr. Dryden's alma mater) and was called to the bar in 1985. His areas of practice were primarily constitutional and criminal law. In 2013, he was appointed a Provincial Court Judge and was assigned to sit primarily in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, where his responsibilities include sitting in First Nations Court.

Judge Cutler says, "My greatest honour as a judge is presiding in First Nations Court. Participating with the Elders and many others to help offenders, victims, and the community find a positive path forward is extremely rewarding and gratifying. First Nations Court has enhanced our justice system and the reconciliation process".

The Court incorporates restorative justice features and Indigenous practices focusing on healing and reparation. Sentencing hearings in First Nations Court often involve many participants. Offenders generally sit in a circle with the judge, lawyers, elders, and perhaps victims and support people. During COVID, the Duncan courthouse didn't have a room large enough to permit physically distanced First Nations Court proceedings, so the Court operated temporarily with participants connecting by telephone.

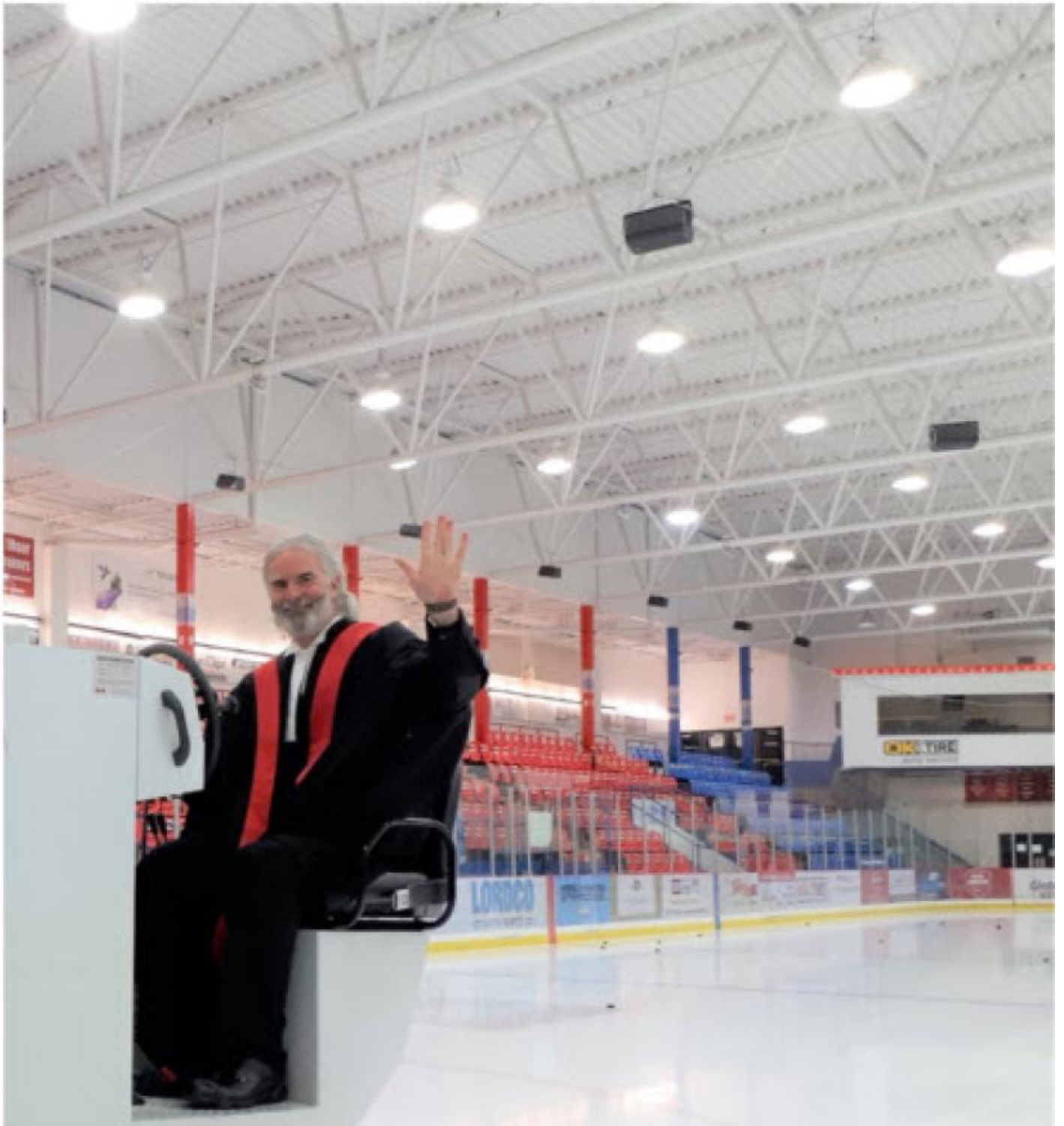
However, as First Nations Court focuses on healing the individual and the community through personal interaction amongst all participants, the Provincial Court worked strenuously with government to find an alternate location where in-person hearings could be held safely during the pandemic. As in other court locations where existing facilities were too small to permit adequate social distancing, a team of Court and government facilities personnel worked with health consultants to find appropriate facilities, often a challenging task, and then modify them with safety measures.



We were very fortunate to find a large room at the Cowichan Community Centre. The Heritage Room is located beside the Centre's indoor hockey rink. The rink can be seen through the room's windows, although the drapes are kept firmly closed during court proceedings. Nevertheless, the hum of the Zamboni and pucks hitting the boards can still be heard while court is in session, leading to some amusement, in a very Canadian way.



During a court break, compassionate Community Centre personnel who were aware of Judge Cutler's childhood experience asked if he wanted to drive the Zamboni. Of course, he accepted, and his smile shows his delight in a childhood dream come true!



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