



Two judges discover a Kamloops connection ... after 40 years

Forty years after they attended elementary school together, Judges Lorianna Bennett and Lynett Jung met again as Provincial Court judges. Both had attended George Slater Elementary School in Kamloops in the 1980s, but they only realized their childhood connection when a friend pointed it out.

Both judges grew up in Kamloops. Judge Bennett attended George Slater Elementary for Grades 1 through 7. Judge Jung went there for Grades 6 and 7, after her family moved to a small farm in the area.

Their families knew each other, but their paths diverged after elementary school. Their high school years didn't overlap, and they lost track of each other although both eventually became lawyers. Along the way, both married and changed their surnames.

After studying political science at Carleton University in Ottawa, Judge Jung graduated from law school at Queen's University in Kingston in 1992. She was called to the BC bar in 1993 and initially had a general legal practice that included family and civil litigation. She became Crown counsel in the Fraser Region in 1997 and was appointed deputy director of Legal Resources, Learning and Development at the BC Prosecution Service in 2017.

Judge Bennett attended Thompson Rivers University, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Biology in 1994, followed by law school at the University of Alberta, where she graduated in 1997. She practised law in Kamloops for 23 years - primarily family and civil litigation - until her appointment as a judge.

Judge Bennett was appointed to the Provincial Court in May 2021. When Judge Jung was appointed in November 2022, neither realized they'd known each other as children until a friend pointed it out. As they shared childhood memories with eNews, the judges discovered they'd shared some interests and activities as well - possibly early indicators of a future judicial career?

Both served on the George Slater student council. Judge Bennett was vice-president in Grade 6 and president in Grade 7. When asked about her time in elementary school, she unearthed a hand-written election speech that ended poetically: "so if you want a terrific and non-forgettable year, don't crawl ... just vote Lorianna Paul for your vice-president." She was nevertheless elected and went on to serve on her secondary school student council.

Judge Jung was also president of the George Slater student council and then president of her junior high and senior secondary schools as well.

In addition to their work in student government, both judges began volunteering at a young age and continued throughout their lives. Judge Jung recalls especially enjoying helping with Special Olympics in high school.

The school band was another shared activity. Judge Jung played flute in the band. She recalls a band trip to compete in a music festival in Abbotsford as an elementary school highlight, saying, “Unfortunately, we didn’t realize how lucky we were to have a real orchestra conductor as our band teacher. We weren’t the best behaved class. I can’t play anything on the flute now, but I did enjoy my time in the George Slater band.”

Judge Bennett has played the piano since she was six years old. In grades 6 and 7 she joined the school band and learned to play the clarinet as well. She remembers taking Royal Conservatory Exams and competing in festivals every year either in clarinet or piano.

Judge Jung was also active in school theatre productions and in the local 4H club during her senior elementary and secondary school years. Fittingly for a future litigator, she particularly enjoyed the 4H public speaking competitions.

Although she’s never considered herself an athlete, Judge Bennett recalls enjoying sports in elementary school – particularly when she could prove a point. In Grade 7 she was one of a handful of girls who played intramural floor hockey on a mixed team and was delighted to be the top scorer on the team. She also recalls running until it felt as if her lungs would burst in long distance races in zone track meets followed by the euphoria of being first to cross the finish line. Despite her elementary school successes, she says she didn’t participate much in sports after that, but proving a point was a useful skill for a litigator.

Both judges agree that Kamloops was a wonderful place to grow up. It offered opportunities for sports, cultural activities, and easy access to provincial and national parks. But was there something special that prepared people from Kamloops for careers in law and as judges?

Considering that the BC Provincial Court has at least a dozen judges with Kamloops roots - including Associate Chief Judge Paul Dohm, former Associate Chief Judge Nancy Phillips, Judges Andrea Davis, Dannielle Dunn, Stella Frame, Ronald Lamperson, Robin McQuillan, Raymond Phillips, Satinder Sidhu, Michelle Stanford, Linda Thomas, and Alexander Wolf – you might think so!

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