



PROVINCE'S FIRST AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN JUDGE RETIRING

Thursday, Dec. 30, 2021



Credit: Jive Photographic Productions

The Hon. Judge Corrine Sparks, the first African Nova Scotian appointed to the Nova Scotia Judiciary and the first African Canadian woman to serve on the Bench, is hanging up her judicial robes.

After more than 34 years presiding on the Family Court, Judge Sparks will retire on Friday, Dec. 31.

Starting in 2022, she will begin serving as one of two commissioners responsible for adjudicating disputes over land ownership in historic African Nova Scotian communities. This work is part of the Land Titles Initiative the Province of Nova Scotia launched in 2017 to help residents get clear title to land in East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook/Lake Loon, Lincolnville and Sunnyville.

“Judge Corrine Sparks is a trailblazer, in every sense of the word,” said The Hon. Pamela S. Williams, Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts of Nova Scotia. “From being the first in her immediate family to attend university, to working in the province’s first all-female law firm, to her groundbreaking accomplishments on the Bench, Judge Sparks has helped build the foundation for a more equal and inclusive legal profession in Nova Scotia, and across the country.

“Family law is a particularly difficult area to work in, but Judge Sparks was a natural from the beginning. On behalf of her judicial colleagues, I thank her for her decades of service to Nova Scotians, and wish her all the best in her new role.”

Born and raised in the small community of Lake Loon, N.S., Judge Sparks attended Mount Saint Vincent University. She went on to complete her law degree at Dalhousie University, graduating in 1979. Her graduate thesis focused on the legal issues of compensation and relocation of the residents of Africville.

Judge Sparks practiced private law up until her appointment to the Family Court of Nova Scotia on March 30, 1987.

During her time on the Bench, Judge Sparks was instrumental in launching a judicial mentorship initiative with the Schulich School of Law to support African Nova Scotian and Indigenous lawyers interested in applying to become a judge.

Judge Sparks also helped organize judicial engagement sessions with the African Nova Scotian community in Cherry Brook in 2018 and Whitney Pier, Cape Breton, in 2019.

These sessions were designed to enhance the administration of justice by broadening the horizons and skills of judges in order to better appreciate the challenges facing African Nova Scotians, particularly in the context of the justice system, and enabling members of the African Nova Scotian community to gain a greater understanding of the legal system and the judiciary. This work led to the creation of the African Nova Scotian Access to Justice Judicial Committee, of which Judge Sparks is still a member.

A strong advocate for equal rights and education, Judge Sparks continues to be a well-respected figure amongst her peers and in her community. She is a well-known lecturer throughout the world, teaching with the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute.

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