

Sandra Smail, QC

From her very first case as a young articling student, Sandra Smail, QC, knew that she wanted to do legal aid.

“I was pretty happy with how my first case turned out,” Sandra recalls. “I think I was happier than my client was as I drove back to Kimberley.”

Sandra obtained her LLB at the University of British Columbia in 1976 and then studied family law at the London School of Economics for one year. She was called to the BC Bar in 1979 and started her legal career at Robert Mayne & Co in Kimberley, staying there for two years. Sandra then practised with John Van Steinburg in Kimberley from 1981 to 2001. Since then, she has been a sole practitioner in Kimberley, taking many family legal aid cases in the Kootenay region.

“I feel a responsibility to do this,” she says. “I do it because I think that as a lawyer, you should be helping the legal community and the community as a whole.”

When she’s not helping families and children in need, the mother of one 25-year-old son is the acting Vice Chair of the Rocky Mountain Board of Education, is a lifetime member of the BC School of Trustees Association and is active in local and federal politics – she was an NDP candidate in the past.

“I also like camping and reading – mostly mystery novels,” she says. “I love Agatha Christie and Debby Holt right now.”

How does she feel about being recognized for this award?

“Well, I do feel honoured to get this award,” she says. “It’s nice to get recognized for all of those legal aid cases over the years.”

“And there have been a lot,” she adds with a laugh.