

About Us

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Almost 70 years on, we at Blaney McMurtry are who we've always been. A Bay Street firm with personality but without the trappings or the ego. An excellent, entrepreneurial, sincere firm populated by creative individuals who think out of the box. We're fun and grounded, passionate and tolerant, and feature a continuing history of eclectic personalities, a cast of characters who envisioned a diverse future when diverse wasn't cool, and traditions that respect our past without getting stuck in it.

We're bonded by our commitment to decency and service, focused on personal relationships, and as loyal to our clients, with whom we grow roots, as they are to us.

We're a Toronto firm, and Toronto's path has been our path: look around downtown and you'll see the myriad of developments on which our corporate, and real estate lawyers have been counsel. Strike a conversation about insurance industry lawyers and Blaney McMurtry, which acts for virtually every insurance company in Canada, comes up front and centre. Our commercial, employment and private client lawyers are in tune with the pulse of the city, its entrepreneurial spirit and those who call it home.

From the time Jim Blaney and Irwin Pasternak founded the firm at the corner of Richmond and Bay in 1954, our personality has been rooted in our collegiality and considerable ethno-cultural mix.

Maria Scarfo, our leader from 2013-2022, was one of few long-term female managing partners among Canada's top 30 firms. Her leadership continued the evolution of a cultural, ethical and gender-neutral blend that may be de rigueur today, but was rare in Toronto's legal community during the mid-twentieth century. Of the first 20 lawyers in the firm's early years, four were women, an unusually high proportion at the time.

In 2019, the Law Society of Ontario conferred an LLD on former Blaneys lawyer Delia Opekokew in recognition of her lifelong commitment to Indigenous advocacy. Delia was introduced to Blaneys by Bill McMurtry and their deep commitment to Indigenous issues laid the foundation for the firm's ongoing representation of First Nations in Canada. That commitment has culminated in many successful settlements on behalf of First Nation clients and continues with the ongoing modern treaty negotiations with Canada and Ontario on behalf of the

Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) represented by our partner, Robert Potts as the AOO's Principal Negotiator and Senior Legal Counsel.

The Ontario Bar Association's SOGIC Robert Muir Award of Excellence for Mentorship is named for the lawyer who practised commercial litigation at the firm for 19 years before his appointment to the Superior Court of Ontario as Canada's first openly gay Master.

Today, Blaney McMurtry continues its drive to diversity in the profession and the community with its continuing participation in Toronto Community Housing's Investing in Our Diversity Scholarships program. Co-founded by our late partner Bill McMurtry in 2001, with the Scadding Court Community Centre, the program, which provides financial assistance to university and college students who promote race relations, community safety and youth empowerment, has raised over \$1 million to fund 600+ scholarships.

The firm remains deeply involved in the program and continues to award two scholarships: the Blaney McMurtry Diversity Scholarship and the William R. McMurtry Memorial Anti-Racism Diversity Scholarship.

Perhaps, however, nothing epitomizes the firm's open-mindedness more than the day Bill McMurtry joined the firm in 1968. Flamboyant, larger-than-life, a Renaissance man equally passionate about law, art and sports, he thrived on prodding sacred cows, including fighting against racism and capital punishment, among other causes. From a prominent political family that included his brother Roy McMurtry, formerly Ontario's Solicitor General, Attorney General and Chief Justice, Bill was a key player in a number of local causes and his passion and commitment remain an inspiration to this day at Blaneys.

A trial lawyer for 47 years (38 at Blaneys) before his passing in 2007, Bill made our litigation department a force, particularly in the insurance industry, and was a pioneer in alternative dispute resolution. He was one of Canada's first serious practitioners of aboriginal law, representing the Assembly of First Nations during two constitutional conferences in the 1980s. A gifted athlete, Bill led the original inquiry into violence in hockey, which became the foundation to the push for speed and skill that governs the sport today. A founding director of TIFF, McMurtry was also active in the musical community, promoting such standouts as jazz singer Salome Bey.

In other firms, Jim Blaney and Bill McMurtry might have been oil and water. Unlike the charismatic, voluble McMurtry, Blaney was the consummate, quintessential, gentleman, a quiet salt of the earth type but with a wicked sense of humour: the firm's rock and deeply caring sounding board. What they were also, however, were people persons who shared a sense of decency, professionalism, fairness, and a strong belief that lawyers should have interests and lives apart from law.

With these bonding traits, they set a tone that inspires us and still permeates our firm to this day – a commitment to decency and excellent service, a focus on personal relationships and a deeply rooted loyalty to our clients.

