



# GILSIG

Divorce & Family Law Mediation  
Communication & Accessibility Services

Marla B. Gilsig, Barrister and Solicitor

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Marla Gilsig is an accredited family law mediator with extensive experience assisting clients with communication disabilities and barriers.

## **AREAS OF PRACTICE**

### **Divorce & Family Law Mediation**

- Accredited Family Law Mediator, Law Society of BC
- Advanced Family Law Mediation Level III, CLEBC
- Parenting Responsibility and Property Division Practicum, Mediate BC

### **Communication & Accessibility Services for Lawyers and Organizations**

- Toolkit for serving clients or consumers with communications disabilities or barriers.  
Toolkit includes:
  - Education & Training
  - External Investigations (Assessment & Audits)
  - Investigative Coaching
  - Policy Review & Development

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Called to the bar in British Columbia in 1979, Marla has provided legal services to clients in the Lower Mainland in practice areas including:

- Accessibility law and education (including professional associations)
- Family law
- Employment law
- Human rights
- Wills, trusts and probate
- Criminal Law

## **ACCESSIBILITY LAW EXPERIENCE**

### **Legal Committee, West Coast LEAF (2006-2010)**

- Managed equality rights litigation that impacted on women especially women who are Aboriginal, disabled or living in poverty.
- Worked on precedent setting family law and disability law case, *Rick v. Brandsema*, 2009 SCC 10 where the Supreme Court of Canada set aside a separation agreement as unconscionable on the grounds that the husband had exploited the wife's mental instability at the time the agreement was executed (her disability).



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### **Vancouver City Council**

#### **Member of Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (1999-2002)**

- Redesigned system for how the municipality and the police process complaints by passengers about either taxicab companies or taxicab drivers, especially those licensed to carry passengers with physical disabilities. Made recommendations for amendments to the municipal by-laws and provincial motor vehicle legislation and for changes to the provincial government's training and licensing program for taxicab drivers.
- Worked with City Council and employees regarding matters that might impact on people with disabilities functioning within the municipality.

### **Learning Disabilities Association of Vancouver**

#### **Director and Chair of Legal Committee (1999-2002)**

- Prepared opinions and advised on cases involving students with disabilities including assisting in the case of *British Columbia (Ministry of Education) and School District No. 44 v. Moore* (2010) B.C. J. No. 2097, BCCA a case currently on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

### **Disabled Women's Network Canada**

#### **Legal Committee (1994-2000)**

- The Committee mandate is to intervene in cases involving the rights of Canadians with disabilities.
- Prepared legal research and opinions in support of the litigation in *Auton (Guardian ad litem of) v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, 2004 SCC 78, in which Supreme Court of Canada held that British Columbia's failure to fund controversial intensive therapy for autistic children did not violate the equality rights provision of section 7 or section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

### **Canadian Disabilities Rights Council**

#### **Legal Committee (1988-1992)**

- The Committee mandate is to intervene in judicial reviews and administrative cases involving the rights of persons with a disability.
- Assisted with case preparation, solicitors' opinions and advice in cases in a wide range of areas of law including preparing the argument in *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, (1977) 3 S.C.R. 624, where the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the failure of the BC Medical Services Plan and hospitals to provide sign language interpretation where necessary for effective communication violates Charters s. 15(1) rights of the deaf person.
- Wrote submissions to government regarding issues of concern to Canadians with disabilities.



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***The Canadian Human Rights Reporter***

**Freelance Writer and Executive Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief (1993 – 1996)**

- Wrote summaries of Canadian human rights decisions

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

**Law Society of British Columbia**

- Member and participant in two taskforces on Lawyers with Disabilities

**Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch**

- Chair and Legislative Liaison, Solo and Small Firms Section (2007-present)
- Member, Provincial Council (2007-present)
- Executive Member, National Section, Solo and Small Firms Conference (2007-present)
- Member, Family Law, ADR & Human Rights Sections (2007-present)
- Mentoring Program, Women Lawyers Forum (2006-2008)
- Submissions to Standing Committee on Equity (2005-2006)
- Branch Liaison to Judiciary on Disability Issues (2000-2001)
- Member of Court Services Committee (1997-2001)

**Mediate BC**

- Member

**Family Mediation Canada**

- Member

**Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Vancouver**

- President and Director (2000-2003)
- Director and Member of Health Care Services Committee (1995-1997)

**Langara College**

- Advisory Committee Member to Faculty of Realtime Reporting (1998- 2002)

**The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association**

- Member (1985-Present)
- Served at the National and Provincial Level as Chair of Legal Committee.
- Published articles on law and disability issues in quarterly magazine.
- Presented seminars on employment and human rights law.
- Made a video of a mock trial of an accused charged with impaired driving who has communication disabilities.

**Pacific Otolaryngology Foundation**

- Director and Member of Fund Raising Committee (1991 – 1995)
- Worked with a team of otolaryngologists who were studying professionals dealing with voice strain or hearing loss, including lawyers, judges and teachers.



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**EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Laws, University of Victoria, 1978  
Called to the British Columbia Bar, Law Society of British Columbia, 1979  
Professional Legal Training Examinations, Law Society of BC, 2007

**PUBLICATIONS and LECTURES**

*Providing Legal Services to Clients with Communication Disabilities/Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia/CLE-TV/October 25, 2011 and March 30, 2012/Accredited by the LSBC and the LSUC*

*The Best of the 2009 Pacific Legal Technology Conference /The Canadian Bar Association Website/Publications/Conferences/General Knowledge Newsletter/General Practice, Solo and Small Firm/2009 December*

*Equity and Diversity in the Profession, The Canadian Bar Association British Columbia Branch Website/Bar Talk Online/Archives/2009 June*

*The Law Society of British Columbia Offers B.C. Lawyers Two Online Courses: The Small Firm Practice and Building Your Practice/The Canadian Bar Association Website/Publications/Conferences/General Knowledge Newsletter/General Practice, Solo and Small Firm/2008 February*

*Featured in Advocating for Equal Opportunities/The Law Society of British Columbia Website/Publications & Forms/Newsletters/Benchers' Bulletin/2007 No. 5 December*

*Equal Access to the Canadian Justice System for Persons who are Hard of Hearing or Deafened*, written for The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, published by Department of Justice, 1996 revised 2002

(Note: The Law Society of British Columbia in its 2001 *Report on Lawyers with Disabilities* states that this Paper is one of the earliest writings in Canadian literature on law and disabilities)

*Equal Access to the Canadian Justice System for Participants with Communication Challenges*, unpublished paper written for the Equity Committee of the Judges of the British Columbia Provincial Court, 1999

*Courting Real Time, A Review of Current and Developing Methods of Print-based Interpretation Services of Deafened Adults*, The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, 1996