



A VIEW FROM THE C ENTRE

By Patrick A. Williams*

On April 19, 2012, the British Columbia International Commercial Arbitration Centre (“the centre”) hosted a reception to celebrate the 25 years of its existence since it was formed in 1986. We welcomed the present arbitration and mediation panel members and special guests for a couple of hours of reminiscing, forming new relationships and celebrating old and existing relationships.

Original founding members who were able to attend included Peter Burns, Q.C., who was the dean of law at UBC in 1986; the Honourable Ed Chiasson, currently of our Court of Appeal; and Brian Smith, Q.C., who was Attorney General at the time. Bruce Pepper was unable to make it, and Michael Warren unfortunately is no longer with us. For those of us who were not part of the centre 25 years ago, the reception was indeed a delight; meeting these founders and listening to the stories with which they regaled us was a real treat. It was rather nice to hear someone say, “I haven’t seen you for so many years. Great to see you again. What are you doing with yourself these days?” In many ways it was reunion rather than a reception.

Brian Smith spoke of the first year, the difficulty getting the centre off the ground in time for the opening of Expo 86. The opulent offices were in the brand-new Canada Place. Getting the governments of the day on board and in time was a testament to the special expertise that a person of Brian’s competence and influence made absolutely necessary. Brian spoke of the incredible job that Bonita Thompson, Q.C., did during that tough stage.

Bonita was observed speaking to all that she encountered at the reception, providing us all with a different perspective on the initiation of the centre. Bonita was asked to give a talk on her experiences at the time. It was clear to all who heard her that 1986 had been a special time for those involved with the centre. Bonita told us of the history behind the centre’s logo. One nice bit of irony was a large plaque that had been located in the centre’s storage area. The board of the centre decided to have this rather cumbersome item delivered to the reception and placed upon an easel. Bonita was especially

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delighted to see it, as she pointed out where there had been a typo and Brian had insisted that the plaque be redone within 24 hours for the impending gala opening.

It is safe to say that at the 50-year celebration of the centre's existence, that plaque will be front and centre, along with the plaque that was presented April 19 to honour 25 years' existence and our founding directors.

