

2026 Benchers By-Election (September) District of the Okanagan

Candidate biographies and statements

The candidates were invited to submit biographical information and an election statement. The views expressed are those of the candidates and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Law Society.

Candidates are listed in order of their appearance on the ballot, as determined by drawing of lots, pursuant to [Rule 1-28](#).

Candidate information for District 6 – District of the Okanagan

- SARIS, Jessica
- KAUTZ, Darren



SARIS, Jessica

Called to the Bar: 2018

BC Prosecution Service, Ministry of Attorney General

Email: jessica.saris@gov.bc.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I am a Métis woman, who has experienced many careers before entering the legal profession, most notably as a mortgage broker and real estate agent. I was the first of my family to attend college, first obtaining a Management Certificate in Radio Broadcasting at BCIT before completing a Bachelor of Arts (BA) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, a Juris Doctor (JD) at the University of Ottawa, and a Master of Law (LLM) in Criminal Law and Procedure at York University. In addition, I have been accepted to the Master of Public Administration – Online (MPA) program at the University of Victoria starting September 2026.

I completed articles with the Legal Services Branch of the BC Ministry of Attorney General, mostly doing civil litigation, prior to joining the BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) in the Kelowna Crown Office. Presently, I'm with the Criminal Appeals and Special Prosecutions section of the BCPS where I specialize in commercial crime, regulatory, and oversight prosecutions throughout the province.

I previously sat on the board of directors of the Kelowna Métis Association as Vice President. For the past 4 years I have been a host to SD23 International School Students. I'm also a film and television actor.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I seek election as a Benchers of the Law Society of British Columbia in the 2026 elections. In my practice, community activities, and personal life, I am committed to fostering professionalism, inclusivity, kindness, and reconciliation. If elected, I will promote these values in the important work that the Law Society conducts on behalf of the bar and in the public interest.

I am running with no particular agenda beyond a desire to represent the Okanagan region with professionalism, integrity, and a passion for our profession. I believe that my experiences as a Métis person with previous board experience, as a working mother of a 6 year old, as a student who attended law school later in life after a successful and long career

in real estate, and as a current student pursuing an MPA degree, would be an asset to the role of Benchers and to the Law Society.

I am most interested in committee work that involves issues such as reconciliation, inclusion, access to justice, lawyer development, and discipline; however, I am also happy to contribute to any, and all, aspects of the affairs of the Law Society.

If elected, I will be an accessible Benchers, available to discuss difficult issues and circumstances, ethical problems, and any other matters of concern from lawyers and students. I will work hard with the values of professionalism, inclusivity, kindness, and reconciliation at the forefront of my contributions. I would consider it a great honour to serve the bar and the public as a Benchers.

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KAUTZ, Darren

Called to the Bar: 2008

FH&P Lawyers

Email: dkautz@fhplawyers.com

Website: www.fhplawyers.com

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I was born and raised in rural Alberta, attended Calgary for undergrad and law school and have enjoyed residing in the Okanagan since 2008. I have had the privilege of working in the Okanagan with all of its many wonders along with a very collegial bar and bench.

I am a partner at a mid-sized law firm in Kelowna and we have always worked hard for the residents of our community. My practice consists of civil and criminal litigation, and I have been actively pursuing new legal technologies to assist our firm and my practice.

I contribute articles to the TLABC Verdict and am a TLABC Member at Large.

Through my love of sport, I have been able to give back to my community by volunteering as a past president, board member and coach in hockey and baseball.

I have lectured at the Okanagan College criminology department which permits me to review interesting topics with the next generation of lawyers.

I have volunteered with Restorative Justice and sat on the BC Provincial Court Guidelines Board.

The Okanagan has many great outdoor activities and I try to enjoy all of them with my family through the different seasons.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I am seeking a Benchers position for the Okanagan District and would like to thank all of my colleagues for this opportunity.

I have been a practicing lawyer of the BC and Alberta bars for over 18 years and would be pleased to assist the members of the Okanagan in this ever-changing legal landscape.

As a litigator I have watched the many changes in the profession over the last few years. I

believe that my background with legal technology and participating on many volunteer boards would be an asset to my District. We face a potential Single Legal Regulator, AI and economic stressors that will change the way we practice. I believe that I can be the voice of my District to address these many concerns and ensure our profession can grow and integrate with our community.

As a Benchers I would strive to work with the Law Society and the members to assist both junior and senior counsel in the difficult and rewarding practice of law. My background, on the many volunteer boards I have directed and been involved with, will permit me to listen to and assist any of our members as well as the community at large.

I believe that we never stop learning and through open dialogue and working with all concerned parties I will do my best to assist the Law Society and the members in all future trials, tribulations and successes.

My firm has actively adopted technology and I believe this will be an area that will cause both great advancements as well as many problems. I can assist the Law Society and members in this new area by both advocating for and ensuring proper guardrails are established for technology in our industry.

I have been very active in my community, especially in sport, and have always been cognizant of how our community views lawyers and the profession. If I am elected, I believe that I can be a voice for our members, the community and our governing body.

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