



THE ORDER OF NOVA SCOTIA

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
HALIFAX

Appointments to the Order, 2021

His Honour the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, O.N.S., Q.C., Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and Chancellor of the Order of Nova Scotia, on the recommendation of the Advisory Council of the Order of Nova Scotia has been pleased to approve the appointment of the following individuals to be members of the Order of Nova Scotia:

Mr. Ronald BOURGEOIS
Cheticamp

Mr. Lee COHEN, Q.C.
Halifax

Mr. Saeed EL-DARAHALI
Dartmouth

Ms. Paula MARSHALL
Eskasoni First Nation Community

Mrs. Wanda ROBSON
North Sydney

Citations for each appointment are listed below.

Ronald Bourgeois, O.N.S.
Chéticamp

For more than forty years, Chéticamp native and multidisciplinary artist, Ronald Bourgeois has worked vigorously to promote Acadian music, language, culture and identity.

With an international influence and presence, more than seventy versions of his songs having been recorded by a diverse array of artists from Acadie, Québec, Louisiana and France. Most notably, Bourgeois' song "Viens avec moi" was featured on the Grammy nominated recording by Roddie Romero and the Hub City All Stars. He is one of the principal songwriters in modern Acadie.

Bourgeois' multidisciplinary approach has resulted in television, online and event production that has further ensured the vibrancy of Acadian culture. In addition to having produced more than 200 television programs, he was responsible for the closing show of the 2004 Congrès Mondial Acadien, the 1992 concert celebrating the 250th anniversary of Wedgeport and the Syphonie au Couer l'Acadie concert world broadcast in 1993 – along with five Grou Tyme festivals.

An avid volunteer, Bourgeois has served as Chair of the Lieutenant Governor's Masterworks Arts Award, Chair of the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council, the Nova Scotia Arts Council, and as Vice-President of the Fédération Culturelle Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, along with lengthy periods of service on the boards of other cultural organizations.

Through creating and promoting, Mr. Bourgeois has had an indelible influence on the development of not only the Acadian community, but also the promotion of Acadie in regional, national and international spheres. Through ongoing contributions to art and culture, he is an ambassador for the Acadian community and Nova Scotia as a whole.

Lee Cohen O.N.S., Q.C.
Halifax

Founder of the Halifax Refugee Clinic who later spearheaded the establishment of the New Brunswick Refugee Clinic, Mr. Cohen has spent his entire legal career seeking to eradicate the iniquities, injustices, and indignities of society by working to ensure the most vulnerable are provided with legal services.

Called to the bar in 1980, Mr. Cohen began his work with Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, shortly before completing his legal studies. He quickly found a passion for assisting those most in need of representation and advice. An ardent advocate for refugee claimants and immigrants, Cohen has worked tirelessly to help hundreds of individuals, and their families to realize the safety, liberty and opportunity as Canadian citizens. Through a variety of efforts, he has also done much to show the positive and enriching aspect new Canadians bring to Nova Scotia and Canada.

A leading expert on Canadian immigration and refugee law, Cohen's keen legal acumen has been honed over the past forty years. An able public speaker on the challenges faced by refugees and immigrants, he has done much to assist these communities, while also raising public awareness about issues of diversity, inclusion and the challenges of settling in a new country.

Equally devoted to instilling a sense of public service and the importance of defending the most vulnerable, Cohen created a network that mentors law students and lawyers who have a particular interest in social justice.

Cohen's service to the legal profession, Nova Scotia and Canada as a whole has been recognized with numerous honours and awards, however, it has most prominently been evidenced in the countless people he has aided in navigating the refugee and immigration system to become Canadian citizens.

Saeed El-Darahali, O.N.S.

Dartmouth

A passionate and driven innovator, Saeed El-Darahali has demonstrated a unique entrepreneurial acumen and sense of community development since his arrival in Canada at the age of 13.

President and CEO of SimplyCast Interactive Marketing Ltd, Mr. El-Darahali leads a Nova Scotia based all-in-one engagement company that provides solutions for engagement, communication, marketing, and emergency management. While serving as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, during the 1998 Swissair 111 disaster, he began to develop the idea for an interactive multi-channel communications software organization; the result of this was the establishment of SimplyCast.

A strong proponent of diversity and inclusion, El-Darahali has done much to promote the hiring of those with little experience, such as young graduates, as well as those who frequently face barriers such as new Canadians, persons with disabilities and individuals from marginalized communities.

El-Darahali has also mentored numerous Nova Scotia youth, serving as an outstanding example of the success and contribution that one can make without leaving the province. His commitment to youth employment has extended to advising on the smooth transition from university to a successful professional career.

Beyond his entrepreneurial contributions, El-Darahali serves as a member of the Board of the National Research Council of Canada, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, and the Black Business Initiative. He has previously been involved with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Canada Youth Business Foundation, Digital Nova Scotia and One Nova Scotia Coalition.

Through his diverse contributions, El-Darahali has had a significant influence on Nova Scotia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing and community development.

Paula Marshall, O.N.S.
Eskasoni First Nation Community

Ardent promoter and defender of Mi'kmaq rights, Paula Marshall has spent the last thirty years demonstrating her unfailing commitment to ensuring that Mi'kmaq people are treated fairly and respectfully within the justice system.

As an innovator and leader in Indigenous restorative justice practices, Marshall's expertise is recognized locally, provincially and nationally. An early promoter of the adoption of culturally appropriate and effective ways to serve youth in the criminal justice system, Marshall worked for the Mi'kmaq Young Offender's Project in 1995 and would play a key role in developing the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network in 2002. Through her efforts, hundreds of individuals have been assisted in navigating the justice system.

Consistently and creatively demonstrating a dedication to addressing injustices through reform, dialogue and innovation, Marshall has played a significant role in the improvement of the justice system. Marshall initiated the Mi'kmaq Venture Project in 2009. This experiential youth development program seeks to facilitate cultural pride, family and healing, with the goal of keeping youth out of the criminal justice system.

Generous with her time and willingness to share her organizational experience, successes and challenges, Marshall is a much sought-after speaker and advisor. In the academic realm, she has directed a number of university-based research projects on subjects ranging from family violence and police practices to missing and murdered women.

Marshall has sought to engage with Nova Scotians at all levels to become active supporters of Mi'kmaw rights to equality before the law. Through her dedication and commitment to justice, she has brought honour and prestige to the Mi'kmaw nation, and all Nova Scotians.

Wanda Robson, O.N.S.
North Sydney

Human rights advocate, author and public speaker, Wanda Robson has been central to highlighting the role played and contributions made by her late sister, Viola Desmond. Robson's work has directly resulted in educating Canadians about the country's history of anti-Black racism and the segregationist policies that were once commonplace.

Robson's campaign to raise awareness and redress the injustice suffered by Viola Desmond when she was arrested for sitting in the whites only section of a New Glasgow theatre in 1946, has resulted in a number of unprecedented achievements; the approval of the first posthumous free pardon ever granted by the Crown in Nova Scotia's history, the inclusion of her sister's effigy on the 10 dollar bill, and the publication of several books.

Her public service has included three terms on the Nova Scotia Advisory Council for the Status of Women, and serving in many leadership roles for Guides Canada over a twenty-five year period. Robson's forward-looking approach, and desire to educate people of all ages about social injustice, has done much to build upon the legacy of her sister.

In 2004, at the age of 77 she became one of the oldest people to graduate from Cape Breton University and has demonstrated throughout her lifetime a passion for learning and community service. A much sought-after panelist and speaker, Robson routinely proves that age is no barrier to bringing about positive change.

A pillar of the African-Nova Scotian community, Robson's warm manner, eagerness to share her life's experiences and dedication to building a more equitable society has enriched the lives of all Nova Scotians and Canadians.