

## Ken Wyllie

Ken Wyllie says that being raised by his grandparents played a big part in why he is a lawyer today.

“My grandfather (Bert Ballard) was a magistrate in West Kootenay,” Ken says. “I grew up, watching him and I decided to do the same.”

Ken has been doing legal aid for more than 30 years, focusing on criminal defence cases during the past 10. His passion for legal aid began in New Zealand where he received his law degree at the University of Otago in 1975. Ken practiced in New Zealand until 1979 when he returned to BC and articulated with Don Niedermayer in Cranbrook. He was called to the BC Bar in 1981. Ken then formed Wyllie & Okros in Nelson until 2001 when David Okros retired. He practiced as Wyllie and Co. in Castlegar until 2011, merging his practice with McEwan Law with offices in Grand Forks, Castlegar and Trail.

Ken enjoys living in the Kootenays and feels strongly about the legal aid work he has done in the area.

“I believe that people and clients come out of the experience being able to manage and control what afflicts them,” he explains. “I believe that we do help. It’s quite an exciting, but demanding job. You are able to achieve some important things and I am fortunate to be able to do that.

“The demands of representing accused persons who often suffer from significant mental challenges or disabilities have become far greater in the face of funding cutbacks in both support services and legal aid,” he adds. “The ‘war on crime’ holds out simplistic mandatory jail sentences while at the same time eroding court services. To cast unrepresented persons into our court process will only burden and weaken our justice system. I believe that our society will be embarking on a dangerous and costly social experiment, that, in effect, will turn correctional facilities into criminal training centres. I am very concerned that we will only further marginalize and segregate the economically, socially and weaker members of society.”

Ken has served as a director of the Regional District of Central Kootenay. He has been a member of the Economic Advisory Committee to the Columbia Basin Trust and continues to serve as a trustee on the local water improvement district and Robson Memorial Church Society. Ken is president of the Kootenay Bar Association and is a former county representative for the CBA. The father of a step-daughter, daughter and two sons, he enjoys skiing, boating and travelling – he still visits his “second home” of New Zealand regularly.

So when is Ken going to look at slowing down?

“Retirement is a plan in progress,” he says with a small chuckle. “I’ve been doing it for so long, I don’t know how to stop.”