

# Theresa Arsenault

> Class of '81

by Heather Conn



THERESA ARSENAULT, QC knew in the early 1980s that she wanted to do corporate law but considered Vernon, where she practised for four years, too small for that. So was Salmon Arm, where she had attended high school. Vancouver, where she did her UBC arts undergrad and law degrees (class of '81), was too big. This outdoor enthusiast was looking for that just-right place – like Goldilocks, she says by phone with a laugh.

In 1985, she found it: Kelowna. Arsenault joined friends at Harder, Pushor, Hannah (later Pushor Mitchell) as a solicitor. Within a year, she was made partner

and sat on the board of the local Chamber of Commerce – and she hadn't even hit 30!

Today, she acknowledges that a small town, more than a city, offers ample opportunities to rise quickly and take on more senior roles sooner. "I doubt I'd have been able to be on the board of the Board of Trade in Vancouver within one year."

Ah, the lifestyle...Nearby Big White resort lured this avid skier to the area. Arsenault has fulfilled her dream of living in a house on the water: in Westbank, on Okanagan Lake. Her commute to work takes less than 15 minutes and she rarely works weekends.

This married mother of two is still at Pushor Mitchell, grateful for the generalist's broad knowledge that a small-town practice has given her. This enables her to manage client relations efficiently within many legal areas for her firm of 34 lawyers. She also handles estate law and planning and considerable work for First Nations groups.

As for volunteering in small centres, "Everyone knows everyone," Arsenault says, and someone's performance sits more in the public eye, open for judgment. Yet she loves her firm's strong commitment to community service

and the resulting sociability. Her local leadership spans numerous volunteer roles, from director and vice-chair of the Kelowna General Hospital Foundation to member of the UBC Okanagan External Advisory Council.

In 2008, she received a Community Service Award from the BC branch of the Canadian Bar Association and, a year later, was appointed Queen's Counsel. Currently, she sits on the UBC Board of Governors. ■