

Biography

Born in Ohsweken, Isaacs was a Mohawk from Six Nations reserve and one of the first aboriginal lawyers and judges in Ontario.

“His Honour was the epitome of a gentleman. A dignified, fair minded and conscientious public servant who, by example, was a valued mentor to many of us,” said assistant Crown attorney Michael Carnegie. “(He was) one of the most decent persons I have ever met.”

Isaacs, who was the son of Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame inductee Bill Isaacs, was an athletic youth who was recruited by famed coach John Metras to play basketball at the University of Western Ontario.

After earning his law degree at Osgoode Hall, he was called to the bar in 1968.

According to the Law Society of Upper Canada, Isaacs became a partner at the Hamilton firm of Millar, Alexander, Tokiwa and Isaacs, described as “a multi-ethnic firm whose successful real estate practice depended in part on its ability to attract clients of diverse communities.”

According to the Ministry of the Attorney General, Isaacs, who had acted as a lecturer and group leader for the Hamilton Law Association on the implementation of a unified family court in Hamilton-Wentworth, was appointed as a provincial court judge in Stratford in 1995.

Before his appointment he also provided legal advice to the native community, served on the board of directors of the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre and conducted legal workshops for court employees and members of the centre.

Woodstock court staff duty counsel Diane Abbott, who worked with Isaacs for roughly 15 years, admired Isaacs for several reasons.

“He was always very good to court staff,” she said. “I admired the way he made fullest use of the legislation to accomplish justice. I also admired that he was willing to make difficult and perhaps less than popular decisions that were never the less, the right decision.”

Isaacs, who retired in 2013, is survived by his partner Cherie Bissett, children Cheryl, Peter and Brad, as well as two grandchildren, Gaius and Olivia.

Source: “Retired Justice Peter Isaacs was one of the first aboriginal lawyers and judges in Ontario.” *Turtle Island News* <http://theturtleislandnews.com/index.php/2016/06/03/retired-justice-peter-isaacs-one-first-aboriginal-lawyers-judges-ontario/>