

MEDIA RELEASE

"I WANT THE RECORD TO SPEAK FOR ITSELF"

Nova Scotia woman appeals findings following a 27-year relationship and a contested family trial

Court of Appeal file CA No. 551567 | May Ocean v. Cathy Elizabeth Bennett

HALIFAX, N.S. — August 18, 2026 — My name is May Ocean. For 27 years, Cathy Bennett and I shared a life. When that relationship ended in January 2021, I could not have imagined that more than five years later I would be representing myself in the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal, challenging findings that I believe do not accurately reflect important parts of the evidence or what happened to me.

HER MOTHER WAS DOWN, AND SO SHE STOOD UP TO PROTECT HER



May Ocean

Halifax, Canada

There is something about my case that I have not spoken about enough.

My adult daughter came to court.

She came forward to give evidence in a proceeding that had enormous consequences for her mother. And as I prepare my appeal, I have been thinking deeply about why that matters—not only to me, but to other women and to the daughters who are watching what happens to us.

ADSUM MEANS: "I AM HERE."

After my 27-year relationship ended, there was a period when I stayed at Adsum House.

Adsum House is an emergency shelter. I will never be ashamed of saying that.

But it is important to understand what that means—and what it does not mean.

Adsum was founded for women who had nowhere to live. Its work has long centred on homelessness, housing insecurity, poverty, and the many circumstances that can leave a woman without a safe and secure home. Adsum itself has noted that senior women are among those who can experience homelessness for the first time later in life. The name Adsum means, in essence, "I am here." I was one of those women who needed somewhere to be. I was approaching an age when rebuilding a financial life becomes extraordinarily difficult. My long relationship had ended. I was not yet receiving SSI. Age, Sexism, and Intersectional Oppression. The women and their families were not safe.



https://www.change.org/p/stop-weaponizing-of-the-legal-system-make-coercive-control-illegal-in-canada-like-uk/u/35147272?recently_edited=true

[Stop Weaponizing of the Legal System — Make Coercive-Control Illegal in Canada like UK](#)

I represented myself through an exceptionally complex family trial involving thousands of pages of material, competing allegations of family violence and coercive control, disputed relationship documents, property and support claims, police evidence and numerous witnesses. I am now asking the Court of Appeal to examine whether consequential findings were affected by material misapprehension or omission of evidence, procedural unfairness, inadequate reasons, or other reviewable error.

“I want to be absolutely clear about the criminal allegations: I maintain that I was not guilty of the charges against me. I did not plead guilty, and there was no adjudication or finding of guilt. I continued to assert my innocence. The Provincial Court record shows that the Crown offered no evidence and the Information was dismissed for want of prosecution.”

The peace-bond record also requires precision. I have challenged the trial decision’s shorthand description that “the criminal charge” was resolved “by way of peace bond,” when there are two distinct types—a criminal peace bond and a common law peace bond.

The criminal Information contained two allegations: an alleged assault said to have occurred between February 28 and July 1, 2020, and a separate alleged threat on January 2, 2021. The peace-bond arrangements and the criminal disposition must not be collapsed into a suggestion that either allegation was admitted or proven.

My position is that the record concerning the two peace bonds must be distinguished accurately, rather than reduced to a single generic reference.

My sworn evidence also explained why I agreed to the common law peace bond.

While at trial, I became concerned that dismissal of the charges would leave my loved ones without the protection that was then in place. From my perspective, the common law peace bond offered protection for me and my loved ones.

My understanding, based on the legal advice I received at the time, was that the common law peace bond was fundamentally different from an admission or finding of criminal guilt: it was an undertaking directed toward keeping the peace. In the midst of trial, Judge Perry Borden explained on June 17, 2021 that, after the common law peace bond was entered, the Crown then offered no evidence, and the criminal charges were dismissed for want of prosecution.

Despite the distinctions between the two types of peace bonds having been set out in my affidavit evidence and addressed in the trial evidence, including evidence concerning the police investigation and criminal disposition, Justice Chiasson’s published Decision states simply that ‘the criminal charge against Ms. Ocean was resolved by way of peace bond.’

I am challenging that description because I believe it can lead members of the public to assume a criminal peace bond whereby there is an admission or finding that I had abused Cathy. It did not.

The Decision is publicly available, and I believe that abbreviated description continues to harm my reputation on an ongoing basis.

This distinction is personal as well as legal. Findings about violence are not merely words in a judgment. They affect my character, reputation, financial security and how the final years of a 27-year relationship are understood. I dispute the allegations of family violence made against me and am challenging aspects of the resulting findings through the appellate process.

Another central concern is late-produced RCMP material. I sought police records before trial and an Order for Production was eventually made. The ordered material had not arrived when an RCMP witness first testified during the October 2024 portion of trial. Later production included an October 26, 2010 General Occurrence Report that became relevant to witness evidence. For me, the practical question is simple: how does a person representing herself effectively question witnesses and present her case when potentially important police material arrives only after part of the trial has already taken place?

The appeal also concerns disputed 2003 and 2004 relationship documents. I denied signing the alleged documents and alleged forgery. I say they must be examined against the complete contemporaneous record, including professionally prepared 2004 estate-planning documents and the parties' subsequent long period of cohabitation. I do not contend that the estate documents alone prove forgery.

“I am not asking journalists or the public to decide my appeal. I am asking people to look at the actual record. I want the important evidence, the late-produced material, the criminal disposition and the disputed documents described accurately. Then the Court of Appeal can do its work.”

PUBLIC-INTEREST SIGNIFICANCE

The case raises broader questions about access to justice for self-represented litigants confronting exceptionally large records, transcript costs, late-produced evidence, police disclosure and consequential credibility findings. Ocean seeks appellate relief only to the extent supported by the court record.

CHANGE.ORG PUBLIC UPDATE

For May Ocean's personal account and ongoing public context, see: [Change.org — specific update](#)

MEDIA MATERIALS AVAILABLE: Public/media backgrounder; public court decision; appeal materials as appropriate; relevant court orders; professional transcripts as available; and source documents concerning the criminal disposition.

Important reporting note: This release states May Ocean's position and describes contested allegations and appellate arguments. It should not be read as establishing wrongdoing by the trial judge, police, the respondent, counsel or any witness. Journalists should distinguish allegations, trial findings, criminal dispositions and appellate arguments, and independently verify the court record and any applicable publication restriction.