

CASE STUDY



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JFK Law and CoCounsel: Amplifying human expertise with AI



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JFK Law LLP is a Canadian firm devoted to Aboriginal law, representing Indigenous communities across Canada. They offer strategic legal services in Aboriginal rights litigation, consultation and accommodation, complex negotiations, economic development, and specific claims resolution. Their work is rooted in advancing justice, self-governance, and sustainable growth for First Nations.

Monique Cotton, Director of Firm Vision & Operations, and Lisa Evenson, in a new role dedicated to e-discovery and legal technology, lead the firm's charge toward innovation, intent on equipping their colleagues with "the best pieces of technology that work for them and our clients." JFK Law was an early adopting firm for both Thomson Reuters® **CoCounsel** and AI-Assisted Research on **Westlaw Edge Canada with CoCounsel**, with the goal that the AI tools could enhance productivity while keeping human expertise at the forefront.

Cautious curiosity leads to tangible benefits

The team's embrace of AI began with a blend of excitement and trepidation.

"One of the objectives of the firm is to remain innovative and bring the most advanced legal technology and support to our clients that we can," Cotton states. Yet change — especially when it involves legal AI — isn't simple. Adopting new ways of working into daily routines can be a tall order, particularly with such novel technology.

However, the practical benefits soon became apparent. Cotton solicited feedback from the team regarding how they have successfully implemented CoCounsel into their work. Some common themes emerged: drafting and editing cycles have shortened and subtle errors surface more readily.

"Even if it doesn't give you exactly what you're looking for, it gives you a strong place to start," one associate observed, appreciating the time savings that benefit both the firm and its clients.

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CoCounsel helps clear the path to insights and action

For a paralegal and eDiscovery specialist at the firm, the promise of AI was measured against the realities of large-scale document work. She manages sprawling files and knew that any tool would have to earn its place in the process.

CoCounsel earned that spot, particularly in kickstarting chronologies and targeted issue-spotting. On one chronology project, she estimates that traditional methods would have required more than 150 hours of review and compilation. With assistance from CoCounsel, the total turnaround time was cut roughly in half — all while keeping human quality control at the forefront. Elsewhere, she used CoCounsel to compare similar agreements and quickly surface differences, a useful first pass that allowed her to provide expert analysis faster. "Understanding and using advancing technology is crucial for us to stay in the know — it helps us reduce billables to clients, opens us up to learn and grow within our roles."

Cotton herself finds value in using CoCounsel. For example, she describes asking CoCounsel to extract specific key pieces from large lease agreements, as their firm has several locations, each with different lease terms and particulars. "CoCounsel is really good at locating keywords and pulling specific information out, which greatly reduced the amount of time it took to review these lengthy documents."

Change management is a critical component to success

Change management was — and remains — a key factor in JFK Law's successful implementation of CoCounsel. Firm-wide adoption owed much to these thoughtful efforts, led by Cotton. "We made sure that there were lots of internal communication campaigns around the CoCounsel rollout to build up an excitement about it. We made training very accessible and facilitated group sharing of successful use cases," she recounts. Her advice: "You really have to continue to bring people in, push some more training opportunities out there, and give people opportunities as they're advancing their skills. When you have leadership in your firm adopting this technology and the expectation of it being used on their files, that then trickles through the organization." With successful change management, there isn't a single biller in the firm that hasn't logged into and used CoCounsel to some capacity.

AI accelerates the process, not the expertise

JFK Law does not view AI as a replacement for legal expertise. The technology gives the team a faster path to the right materials and a clearer starting point for analysis, while the lawyers and paralegals provide the nuance, context, and care that their clients expect.

Resistance, she notes, is to be expected, but “if you are a law firm and you are avoiding AI adoption and trying to put it off, you are doing a disservice to your legal teams and clients, because its value to improve legal workflows makes it inevitable.”

Cotton adds: “Technology is going to move forward whether you like it or not. At a certain point, the rift between what you are capable of providing to your clients versus what your competitors are able to provide is going to get wider and wider”. For peers unsure where to start, she suggests: “Getting an initial feel and understanding of where you and your firm are in your AI journey is key. There are great resources in Canada for understanding AI, such as the CBA’s paper on [“Use of AI in Legal Practice: An Overview”](#), as well as reviewing your local bar association resources. Once you do that, your willingness to learn it and adopt it in a greater way will increase.”

However, responsible AI use is paramount. Cotton notes that the team is to use CoCounsel — not open web applications like ChatGPT — for legal work. She notes that CoCounsel is legal-specific AI, and that Thomson Reuters has strict security standards and governance around AI that general applications do not offer.

JFK Law’s experience shows that AI, when approached thoughtfully — as a catalyst for legal efficiency, not a substitute for legal insight — can empower legal professionals, improve time management, and drive better outcomes, all while preserving the irreplaceable value of human knowledge. By adopting CoCounsel, JFK Law can continue to serve Indigenous communities, recognizing time savings and faster starting points all while keeping their expertise at the forefront.

“CoCounsel is very good at taking the first swing at things — whether it’s generating a first draft of a research memo, creating an initial chronology, or drafting a letter. It provides a valuable starting point that helps set the momentum up for us.”

Monique Cotton, Director of Firm Vision & Operations, JFK Law LLP

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