

Maria Christine Wilkie

Maria Christine Wilkie, beautiful, courageous and beloved, passed from this life in the loving embrace of her devoted husband, Kevin, surrounded by family, on April 15, two days before her 44th birthday.

Maria's remarkable life was tied together with threads of family and friendship. Maria understood people, deeply and compassionately. Her powers of observation, insight, curiosity, intelligence, and incredible sense of humour put her in a unique position of trust and respect in all her relationships, personal and professional. She acted with grace and elegance, not just in beauty but in the way she carried herself and treated others. She was extraordinary.

Maria was born at Port Arthur General Hospital in Thunder Bay, Ontario in 1973. She graduated from Hammarskjöld High School and later attended Lakehead University where – passionate about issues of social justice and equality – she pursued an education in political science. During her time there, she also served as News Editor and Journalist for the University's newspaper, *The Argus*, where she honed her journalistic instinct and made many lasting connections; she was then, and always, a strong advocate for women's rights. Following University, she worked for a year in Espanola, Ontario, as a Publications Editor for *E. B. Eddy Forest Products*. While Maria did not dislike Espanola as a place to live and work, neither did she love it. (Sorry, Espanola.) But in 1996, Maria moved to a place that would indeed become her spiritual home, Haida Gwaii, British Columbia – a place she treasured from day one. During her time in Haida Gwaii, Maria did it all. She was an administrative assistant for *TimberWest* in Sandspit, a communications consultant for *Breakthrough by Design* in Queen Charlotte City, and the sole owner/operator of the *Maria C. Wilkie Consulting Company*. During her time there (and beyond),

she helped raise ceremonial Haida poles, celebrate legendary birthdays, open a new hospital, and oversee the ceremony to bring back the name, Haida Gwaii. Above all, she loved the cooperative spirit on the islands, the natural beauty, the closeness of friends and neighbours. She took that love and spirit of community with her when she moved to Victoria five years later, taking a job in public relations for the *Victoria Symphony Orchestra*. From there, she brought her skills as a communicator and strategic leader to the Government of British Columbia. Maria shined in public service. She provided communications support to several organizations including the *Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services*, the *Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism*, and the *Provincial Emergency Program*, until joining the executive team at the *Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation*, where she led strategic planning and executive operations. She received numerous awards for her work in Public Service. More importantly, she was loved and respected by all who interacted with her – very literally, *all*.

Described as the best boss ever, members of her staff were devoted to her. In fact, one of her team members introduced Maria to Kevin, who would become the love of her life. Together, they travelled extensively and had a special affinity for Paris, Haida Gwaii, and New York. They shared a passion for food, shoes, hiking, good music, and the beautiful companionship of the beloved dogs in their lives. They parented Kevin's children, Kenzie and Marlon, into adulthood, a joy and a challenge of which Maria was most proud; she loved them more than anything. Maria lived her life in a way that produced few regrets – not being able to grow old with Kevin, who cherished her, was one of them.

Maria nurtured her family and friends, tending to each with love and wisdom. During the last few years, even while facing adversity, she learned to knit, play the ukulele beautifully,

and garden like a true green thumb. As leader of the Walk of Hope's *Team Wookie*, she raised more than \$15,000 for ovarian cancer research and inspired many to become educated about the cause. She loved hummingbirds – a special talisman – and she marvelled at the simple and complex wonders of the world. She debated all-comers about the causes close to her heart (and pretty much won every time.) She curated a "Sci-fi Room" as a secret gift for Kevin, and she brought his first book of short stories to life. She created community wherever she went, dispensing hope at every turn. And she was loved by all who knew her, loving fiercely and honestly in return. She lived a short life, true, but in short – Maria Christine Wilkie *lived*.

She will be missed forever and ever; she will be loved for even longer.

A Celebration of Maria's Life will take place on Friday, May 5th at 2:00 at McCall Gardens Sequoia Centre in Royal Oak, 4665 Falaise Drive, Victoria BC.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Ovarian Cancer Canada or the SPCA.

Condolences may be offered below.

McCall Gardens

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