



## ON THE FRONT COVER

MIRIAM MAISONVILLE

By Margot J. Spence

*Some people see only the forest and others see only the trees. Miriam sees not only the forest and the trees, but each and every single pinecone from every possible angle!*

This is an apt description by a colleague of Miriam Maisonville, the incoming president of the B.C. Branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

Born in Vancouver as the youngest of five children, Miriam had no choice but to develop persuasive argumentative skills and sharp elbows early in life. When her siblings studied sciences, Miriam rebelled and chose the law. To support her studies, she worked at a car dealership that sold not just any type of car, but Ferrari, Rolls Royce and Lancia. If hobnobbing with celebrities and the very rich was not something that suited Miriam, she never let on.

After receiving her LL.B. from UBC in 1986, Miriam articulated and then practised with Howard Rubin, Q.C., in Vancouver. She developed an eclectic practice that included criminal defence, family, motor vehicle claims, patent, trademark and general commercial matters. Her passion and enthusiasm for criminal law and commercial crime work was honed in these early days while defending intricate wiretap and commercial fraud cases, opposing extradition and deportation applications and defending murder and drug conspiracy charges.

Miriam developed a reputation for intelligence, hard work, diligence and tenacity. Her colleagues, without exception, speak of her attention to detail and the intensity with which she agonizes over the order of witnesses, the structure of her argument and her summation to the jury.

This focus brought her early distinction as a defence lawyer in *R. v. Blanusa*, an immigration case before the Federal Court concerning the extradition of a client accused of murder; *R. v. Donaldson*, concerning allegations of conspiracy to manipulate the market price of shares; and *R. v. Stroniarz, Jobin et al.*, which involved conspiracy to murder.

In 1994, Miriam crossed the courtroom floor and joined the provincial Crown, taking on, among other things, the prosecution of complex fraud cases such as *R. v. Josephine Lau* and *R. v. Rocancourt and Reyes*, the latter attracting the attention of the local and international press. Today, Miriam continues to practise with the Commercial Crime Section, Criminal Appeals and Special Prosecutions, Ministry of Attorney General of British Columbia, appearing frequently before the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.

Complementing her advocacy skills, Miriam's wit and eloquence have led to her becoming a sought-after speaker at fundraising events and professional meetings. She participated in the Women Lawyers' Forum "10 Hot Tips From 10 Hot Mentors" and has presented at numerous CLE seminars. She supports and guides the next generation of advocates by judging moots and speaking competitions, including the Jessup and the 2003 International Independent Schools Public Speaking Championship.

One might find it hard to believe that this shy, stiletto-heeled frequenter of a popular Hornby Street coffee house is also a competitive swimming champion holding a Canadian national record in the 200-metre free-style relay. Today, she continues her early love of water sports by surfing on the west coast of Vancouver Island and in Hawaii. She claims that Indonesia is her next surfing destination. While Miriam will be the first to point out that her surfing will never progress beyond recreational fun, her tenacity and drive on the waves brings to mind the phrase "Eddie Would Go"—describing the fearless Eddie Aikau, the gifted Hawaiian pioneer of big wave surfing. Like Eddie, Miriam's dedication to the task at hand is inspirational.

Miriam traces her lineage to France and, one generation back, to Quebec. She attended École St-Sacrement, the first French-language primary school in Vancouver, and took part of her secondary schooling in Versoix, Switzerland. Between undergraduate years at UBC, she attended the Université de Tours, France.

Miriam embraces her genetic link to French culture also by having a passion for French wine, cheese and croissants. Her trim physique proves the French paradox: French women don't get fat. She speaks and writes French fluently. Her elegant and fashionable appearance reflects the style for which the French are renowned, although more than one colleague has commented on the persistence of her signature fringed "do" of 20 years. She is

a member of Le Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver and of the bilingual prosecutor group with the Ministry of Attorney General, and is past president of the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Colombie-Britannique.

Being an ardent student of the French language, Miriam continually strives to perfect accent, tense and presentation. Her contributions to the CBA include chairing its national Conférence des juristes d'expression française de common law. This summer, at the national council meeting in Quebec City, she proposed a resolution respecting the rights of minority-language speakers. She is thrilled that the resolution passed.

Miriam is an active member of the B.C. Branch of the Canadian Bar Association. In 2003–2004, she chaired the Vancouver Criminal Bar Section and served on the advisory committee to the Judicial Council of B.C. for the Provincial Court. Her appointment to the CBA, B.C. Provincial Council for the County of Vancouver commenced in 2004 and will culminate in her presidency this year.

I have known Miriam for over 25 years, from law school days, through the first years of practice and then later as we both matured as professionals in our chosen areas of law. Miriam is very supportive of her family, friends, colleagues and clients and true to her word. Although her day may seem to be filled with law and community, family is of primary importance; she is a devoted wife to her husband, Dave, and dedicated mother to her daughter, Chloe, and son, Nicholas. Miriam is a strong supporter of their endeavours, whether personally painting and decorating Dave's medical practice offices, coaching the Crofton House School Swim Club at six in the morning or volunteering for the Jericho Baseball Association. I have been witness to her frequent acts of kindness and expressions of empathy with others. Her altruistic nature extends to the legal community, where she has a sincere interest in promoting the interests of the profession and an inclusive and collegial bar.

With this appointment, the CBA will be enhanced by a proven leader who brings passion, tenacity and direction to the task of representing B.C. members of the CBA and supporting the legal profession as a whole.

