



Michelle Pockey

The first time I met Michelle Pockey, she was carrying her infant daughter, Noa, in a carrier into a gathering of women lawyers. She lit up the crowded room with a gleam of intelligence, grace and plentitude that I ascribed to her state as a new mother. I was mistaken. Michelle was a bright, clear light always, and she shone right up to her final hour, which came many years too soon, on a soft June evening, on the top floor of Lions Gate Hospital in a palliative care room with a transcendent view of the North Shore Mountains.

Michelle was an inspirational lawyer, advocate, friend, daughter, wife and mother.



Born in Toronto, Michelle was raised by Carole and Maurice Pockey along with her brother, Barry Pockey, in Oshawa, Ontario. She obtained a B.A. in 1990 at the University of Western Ontario, and an LL.B. in 1994 at the University of British Columbia. She went on to become a partner in Fasken Martineau's Global Energy, Global Mining, Aboriginal, and Corporate Social Responsibility practice groups garnering twenty years' experience as a litigation and business lawyer. She had nothing but praise for the support, love and care the lawyers and staff of Faskens provided to her and her family during this past year.

As a lawyer, Michelle helped natural resource and land development projects secure development, environmental and operational approvals, and, more importantly, critical social licence to operate well and wisely. She fostered successful collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses. A knowledgeable and persuasive advisor, Michelle ensured that her clients understood and addressed environmental and regulatory requirements and project risk, and had in place sound corporate plans, practices and strategies. She was a respected speaker and writer on a range of legal, social and environmental issues. She served as contributing editor and director for the *Environment Law Journal*, and also fulfilled roles for the Environmental Managers' Association of B.C., the Vancouver Bar Association and the Canadian Bar Association.

Michelle was known to be willing to do just about anything for her clients. Kevin O'Callaghan, one of her Fasken colleagues, describes Michelle as fearless in her practice and "in other areas as well". He recalled, "While working on a Water Board hearing for Alexco in the Yukon, Michelle and I were offered the opportunity to go into the mine itself. She and I dressed in what looked suspiciously like space suits to go into the depths of the earth in the Bellekeno Mine. We both looked ridiculous in our white overalls, orange safety vests, hard hats, and borrowed boots. Pictures were taken, but not widely shared, thankfully. We reached the bottom of the mine and pulled metal-laden rocks from the walls to take as souvenirs. It was at this point that Michelle turned and admitted to me that she was 'more than a bit claustrophobic'. When I asked if she realized that we were a kilometre underground, she gave me a hard look and in a strong voice said that it was something she had always wanted to do. And then added that, if it was alright with me, she'd done it now and would like to return to the surface by the most direct route and as fast as possible."

Michelle met her husband, Mike Mammone, an award-winning Vancouver architect, in December 2001 at a Christmas party at which, Mike says, they were the only two single people, and thus their fates were knotted.

They married on May 29, 2004. Michelle's passion for music found expression at her wedding, at which she sang "Freddie's Yen for Jen" by Kurt Elling with some of her trademark personal twists (along with a trio that included Vancouver pianist Bob Murphy) wearing her wedding dress, and white sneakers with "bride" written on the sides. Thus began a marriage that endured for just over 12 years, during which Mike claims to have never won an argument. Anyone who knew Michelle well can only commiserate, while also, with apologies to Mike, knowing that Michelle was very likely, most of the time, correct.

Mike and Michelle had two beautiful and beloved children. Their daughter Noa, 11, has dark hair and eyes along with her mother's drive and social awareness, and Nathan, 8, is a cheerful boy with blue eyes and blond hair. They both already demonstrate their mother's thoughtful liveliness.

As an advocate, Michelle worked tirelessly for the advancement of women in business, law and non-traditional sectors. She was a founder and national chair of the Professional Women's Network, an organization dedicated to women's education and business development, with over 1,200 members across Canada. She was also a founder of the Professional Aboriginal Women's Network in 2016. She was a member of the Women Presidents' Organization and the WEB Alliance of Women's Business Networks. In recognition of her efforts, Michelle was the recipient of many awards, including the 2016 Business in Vancouver Influential Women in Business Award; a 2016 Lexpert Zenith Award in recognition of leadership in advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and in the community; a 2014 Corporate LiveWire-Mining Lawyer of the Year Award; a 2013 Champion for Change Award presented by the Women Presidents' Organization and GroYourBiz; a 2013 BMO-Women Presidents' Association Community and Charitable Giving Award; a 2013 Influential Women in Diversity and HR Award; and a 2011 World of Difference Top 100 Award from the International Alliance for Women for her contributions to the economic empowerment of women.

Michelle was generous beyond measure. In an interview on *Rush* for Shaw TV when she was recognized as a Champion For Change, she spoke over and over about others and their work and vision, deflecting the host's attention from herself to "the village" of women and others who are leaders and emerging leaders in the broader community. You can see this interview online: < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ8Me_mAnzo >. More on this approach below, but also of note is the generosity that Michelle displayed in other ways as well. Her long-time assistant, Angie Coppersmith, emphasizes that Michelle always thought of everyone else. As an example,

not only did Michelle give Christmas gifts to her own assistant, but she also gave them to everyone at Faskens who had assisted her at any time in any way. And not only did she buy them a Christmas gift, but she also made them cookies (she had an amazing biscotti recipe).

Michelle was a connector and a collaborator. She claimed to “have always been a very social person” and to “love meeting new people, finding our commonalities, sharing ideas, and harnessing the diversity and differences of opinion between us to come up with new, disruptive, and innovative ideas and solutions that benefit as many people as possible. That has always been in my nature and a passion for me. I find people and their ideas fascinating—well, most of the time!”

Her colleague, Monique Orioux, notes that “when Michelle co-founded the Professional Women’s Network 20 years ago, she did so with the intention of helping women to connect easily, so that they could work together to successfully navigate the unique challenges faced by female professionals in advancing their careers. For many years, Michelle ran the PWN on her own, off the side of her desk—as she tended to say—all while building her law practice. Michelle’s desire and extraordinary ability to connect and collaborate with others is captured, perfectly, in the community that she built through PWN. Today, that community is 1,200 people strong.”

“I learned about the PWN when I arrived at Fasken,” recalls Monique. “Shortly after [I became] an associate, Michelle invited me to join as co-chair with Stephanie Sanger. Michelle enthusiastically told me about the numerous opportunities that it had presented her over the years, and that she wanted to see others have those same opportunities. Michelle passed us the reins and told us to take the network in any direction we saw fit. Her confidence in us was unwavering, her encouragement was endless, and she praised our accomplishments to many, rarely taking any credit for having created this extraordinary community. Ultimately, our success was Michelle’s success.”

“Michelle wanted to see everyone around her succeed. I know this was particularly the case for the associates here. Michelle’s door was always open. She created time for you, even when she had very little time to give. Michelle gave great feedback, whether or not it was solicited. If she thought that you deserved a recognition, she made that known and advocated for you. If Michelle had a contact she thought you should meet, she didn’t just tell you about her contact, she facilitated the connection. Michelle invited you to sit at the table. She encouraged you to speak up and voice your opinion, even if it differed from the voice of the majority, and she did so from an always honest and supportive place. Michelle created opportunities for

associates, whether we were aware of her effort to do so or not. Michelle championed many of us here.”

A gifted jazz singer and performer, Michelle was a director and vice-chair of the board of the Sarah McLachlan School of Music Society. She also used her considerable artistic skills making exquisite jewellery. Those of us fortunate to own Michelle Pockey handmade designs treasure them and the heart and artistry in each piece.

Michelle’s ability to make others shine was exceptional, and it transcended everything she did. Whether she was playing with her beloved children, mentoring a junior associate, helping colleagues network with one another, or hosting family and friends over a delicious, home-cooked meal, Michelle made people feel encouraged, empowered, and cared for. Even during the final ten months of her life, while battling the devastating effects of metastasized colorectal cancer, Michelle reached out to loved ones and supporters, inspiring courage and faith through a candid blog, in which she documented her medical trials and her indomitable spirit and sense of self.

Above all else, Michelle valued the precious time she spent with family and close friends. Her children were her greatest treasure and greatest joy, and she loved nothing more than raising them, together with Mike, their extended family, and the close-knit group of friends with whom they spent holidays and celebrated many milestones.

During her illness, Michelle often shared an affirmation that resonated with her. “Be the place that love shines through, because it is good for others, and it is very good for you.” In remembering her, Kevin O’Callaghan says that Michelle “had a way of thoughtfully challenging our status quo that made us look at things differently—resulting in changes that have made me better as a lawyer, and us better as a firm. That is her legacy to us and we were lucky to have her.”

The Minerva Foundation is seeking donations to a Michelle Pockey Leadership Award, created to recognize an exceptional female leader in our community. The award will give first priority to an Aboriginal woman, a single mother or a woman facing economic hardship; second priority will be given to a woman pursuing law, justice, Aboriginal or environmental studies. The award is intended to support tuition, housing or childcare in the pursuit of post-secondary education, which will help support recipients’ leadership and long-term career prospects. See online: < <https://theminervafoundation.com/involved/donate> > .

Anne Giardini, Q.C., with Kevin O’Callaghan and Monique Orioux

