

Tamara Leigh Gignac

MAY 29, 2015

GIGNAC, Tamara

Tamara-Leigh Gignac passed away peacefully on Friday, May 29, 2015, at Calgary's Peter Lougheed Centre, surrounded by her loving family and friends. Although saying goodbye to Tamara was heartbreaking, we were grateful that she passed away painlessly following her often excruciating 11 month struggle with cancer, a battle she fought bravely, fiercely and publically, inspiring many along the way.



Tamara was born on August 27, 1973 in Scarborough, ON, the youngest daughter of Paul and Margaret Gignac (Westnutt). She attended the University of Guelph and graduated from the University of Toronto with an honours degree in English before going on to study journalism at Ryerson University. It was there she met the love of her life, fellow journalism student Heath McCoy in 1997.

By 2000 Heath and Tamara were working as reporters for the Calgary Herald, with Tamara covering the technology beat for the business section. In September 17, 2001, Tamara and Heath were married in a small intimate ceremony at Toronto's Royal York Hotel before flying off for their dream honeymoon on the Greek island of Santorini. It was mere days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, which nearly kyboshed the wedding and trip altogether, but the couple somehow managed to pull off their plans, despite the drama. (There was rarely a dull moment with Tamara and Heath).

Tamara will be remembered by all who knew her as a passionate soul.

She was passionate about fitness and an avid runner. She was passionate about her career as a journalist, distinguishing herself as a great writer and reporter on many important stories throughout her 15 years in the news business, on both the Business and City desks. In her last few years at the Calgary Herald, Tamara had been working as a weekend assignment editor. She was trusted for her strong news judgement and many of the reporters on staff considered her a mentor.

She was passionate about her friends and family and so grateful to everybody who helped this past year, after her diagnosis. This included Team Tamara YYC, who organized an amazing fundraiser last September that mobilized the city, our Inglewood community, and friends and family from Ontario and Saskatchewan who traveled to lend a hand. She loved them all.

She was passionate about travel and she did so extensively in her life, through Australia, Europe, the Caribbean, California, New York City and Cuba, to name only a few places. One of the happiest moments in her life was climbing Peru's Inca Trail to ancient Machu Picchu with Heath. Plans were being made to climb Kilimanjaro when her disease cut that dream short. Before she passed, she was able to travel once more, feeling the sand between her toes in Mexico, in the last days of her life. She was so happy there, watching her children play on the beach under the sun.

She was endlessly proud of her two beautiful, creative children, Bronwyn, 7, and Finn, 4, who always brought her so much joy. As a mother she could not have been more dedicated and the thought of leaving her babies brought her great anguish.

She was passionate about Heath, her true love and best friend, with whom she shared the best and worst of times, as he cared for her in her final days.

In her last act as a journalist, Tamara touched a powerful chord with the open and honest way she shared her experience in battling cancer. Through the powerful essays she wrote, her postings on social media, and the deeply personal commercial she shot with the Alberta Cancer Foundation, which raised over \$90,000 to date, Tamara inspired many. The public was struck by the determination and fierceness she brought to her battle, all the while maintaining her positive outlook, dignity and glow. Tamara's smile and warmth would brighten hearts even in her darkest days.

She is survived by her husband, Heath; her children, Bronwyn and Finn; parents, Paul and Margaret Gignac; sisters, Joanne Falconer (Dave) and Paula Buckley (Bert); her nephews and nieces, Megan, Garret, Connor, J.D, and Mack. She will also be lovingly remembered by her in-laws, Terry and Wenda McCoy.

Thanks to her oncologist Dr. Jay Easaw and his team, who fought so hard to give her more time and to make her comfortable.

A Memorial Service for Tamara will take place at the Lantern Community Church in Inglewood, 1401- 10th Ave. SE, Calgary, AB on Sunday, June 14, at 3 p.m.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the family trust online at <http://teamtamarayyc.wix.com/teamtamarayyc>



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/gignac-tamara-leigh>

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