



c a n c e r c o n n e c t i o n s

A PhotoSensitive book

Images of hope and courage from across Canada

“But I am one of many / And we are strong”

Cancer

Connne

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2007, Vibrant Communities in Focus
2009, Inspiring Possibilities
2010, Field of Vision: PhotoSensitive and social change

Cover

Becky

Becky, a breast cancer survivor, with her daughter and her friends. “My cancer journey taught me how to live, love, and laugh through my family and friends supporting me,” she says.

Photographer
Michele Taras
London, Ontario

Foreword

Diane

Diane Courtney was diagnosed with breast cancer in December 2007 at the age of 44. She has undergone a lumpectomy, chemotherapy, and a mastectomy with reconstruction. With the support of her husband (photographer, Michael) and her community, she has strived to keep life as normal as possible for her children.

Photographer
Michael Courtney
Langley, British Columbia



John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd.



Foreword

The book you are holding in your hands comes from five years of thought and action. What began as a quiet family discussion in Mississauga, Ontario, blossomed—first into a photographic exhibit in Toronto, then into photo exhibits across the country. Along the way, we launched a website and, now, we bring it all together in this book of black-and-white photographs and stories, a celebration of cancer.

Celebrating cancer? It seems to be an oxymoron, and yet that is exactly what this book does: it reveals, it examines, it unfurls a tapestry of what cancer looks like, through the eyes of Canadians who have met it, up close and personal. And the revelation is uplifting and inspiring.

A few years ago, Toronto photographer Andrew Stawicki was watching a TV documentary on cancer with his family. His children prodded, “Daddy, why haven’t you done a project on cancer? It’s everywhere. You should be doing something!”

Andrew knew they had a point—his photography group, PhotoSensitive, had looked at many difficult issues, from the homeless in downtown Toronto to HIV/AIDS in Africa, but cancer? Where would he start? How could you do justice to something that touches so many people and takes on so many different forms?

But then, on a visit to an elementary school, one of the students asked Andrew what kinds of topics PhotoSensitive tackled. Andrew started by explaining that he believed black-and-white

photographs have a special power—to show the faces of people and reveal their stories. Then he blurted out, “Cancer, for instance. That’s a big topic. How many of you know someone with cancer?”

Every child in the classroom put up their hand.

Then they began calling out, “My mom had cancer ... My dad did ... my brother ... my little sister ... my grandpa ... my neighbour ... my hockey coach ... my cousin ... my teacher ...”

That sealed the deal for Andrew. If every child in a classroom knows someone with cancer—well, that is good reason to go forward. At first, it was going to be a project that the photographers at PhotoSensitive would take on. But that changed.

For previous PhotoSensitive projects, we turned to professional photographers for submissions, but because of Andrew’s experience with the school children, we decided *Cancer Connections* should be wide open. Anyone could submit a photograph showing their experience with cancer. First, a trickle, then a hundred, then thousands of images came in. Patients, families, friends, neighbours: everyone sent in pictures.

The goal was to have submissions from across the country. We worked with local Canadian Cancer Society offices to put the word out. They did an amazing job, soliciting pictures, booking speakers, suggesting the perfect locations for the outdoor shows, helping us in each city along the way. In the end, photo exhibits

were held in Toronto, Charlottetown, Montreal, Regina, Winnipeg, Saint John, Halifax, St. John's, Vancouver, Calgary, and finally, in Ottawa, where we held an incredible, *national* celebration.

Cancer Connections grew far bigger than we had ever envisioned.

Looking back, there were three reasons for that success. First, this was a show made by ordinary Canadians: anyone could send in a photo. Then, these ordinary Canadians sent us extraordinary pictures: they really captured the feeling of people going through cancer. And finally, we held all the exhibits outside, in public places where people would walk by and be caught up in it all. A businessman on his way to work, a student on her way to class, a family on its way to a soccer game. It was accessible to everyone. Beyond that, everyone wanted to share: share their stories, share in other people's stories.

As the project made its way across the country, hundreds of photographs found a home in the exhibits, from PEI to British Columbia. The photographers sent in short, personal stories with their pictures and those became captions. Sometimes the stories would expand into longer, in-depth interviews. Twelve of those are included in this book. And at the heart of it all are the photographs: startling, shocking, memorable, intimate. They will stay with you long after you turn the final page.

There are pictures of bare breasts—one tattooed with a sunflower; young children undergoing chemo; adults with hurting bodies and healing scars; faces full of fatigue, eyes full of hope. In each,

there is a sense of dignity, patience, and courage. When we asked people why they chose to reveal such personal moments of their cancer experience, the answers were as numerous as the photographs submitted.

One person said, "I *wanted* to reveal it. I have to share it so people can understand. So much of cancer is private. So much takes place behind closed doors. If you saw me on the street, you'd never guess I have cancer. These pictures show what we deal with and how we cope and what the face of cancer and the face of love looks like."

And from Keith Branscombe, a survivor of colon cancer, "Taking pictures of cancer did something for me. I took daily pictures of myself and then I shared them. And now, it's in the light of day. It's part of life. Everyone should see it and meet it and not be frightened by it. When I stood beside my photo at the Toronto exhibit, with other people and other people's photos, surrounded by so-called strangers, I realized: we are all connected. We *are* in this together and that feels comforting."

In the beginning we'd hoped, at the end we knew: *Cancer Connections* connected us as Canadians and as human beings, and as a cancer family.

Going through something as potentially devastating or frightening as cancer is a very private thing. And yet here were Canadians, from across the country, revealing themselves or someone they loved through pictures, telling their stories, sharing their pain

“I am going to live my life the way
I always have...”

Harry D. Ashley

and joy. This project gave people places and ways to spend time, see the images, find something that might help them.

As you look through this book, be prepared to be moved. *Cancer Connections* was—and is—an all-inclusive, no-holds-barred revelation of what cancer looks like, through the eyes of those who have experienced it first-hand. We Canadians, often teased for our tendency to shy away from the limelight, have exposed, in beautiful black-and-white portraits, our collective cancer soul—all of its painful scars and bare breasts and shockingly thin bodies and losses combined with faces full of hope and courage and determination and love.

Although the big exhibit photographs are put away, the spirit of *Cancer Connections* lives on, on the website and with this book. Today—and years from now—you can hold this book in your hands and, we hope, be inspired and comforted. If you’re told, or someone you know is told, “You have cancer,” this will give you strength. You can say, “Look at all the people who looked cancer straight in the eye!”

We dedicated *Cancer Connections* to our friend, writer June Callwood, who was a guiding light for PhotoSensitive. She was in Princess Margaret Hospital, fighting cancer, when we began *Cancer Connections*, and she told Andrew, “Go for it. It’s high time someone did something really inspired.” She believed in helping others and making connections and we think she would have been pleased with the scope and spirit of this project.

Through the contribution of countless “ordinary” Canadians, we have created an extraordinary canvas of cancer. *Cancer Connections* celebrates the human spirit and all it can accomplish even when dealing with—and perhaps often *because of*—great challenges, and the love that so often accompanies loss. At the Montreal exhibit, Andrew saw a woman weeping quietly, sitting alone on the grass. When she stopped crying and looked up and spotted him, he walked over and extended a hand, introducing himself.

“Thank you,” she said simply. “Thank you. I thought my mother had died but her photograph is here—a wonderful black-and-white portrait of my mother is *here*. She is still alive.”

Alive and with a story to tell.

PhotoSensitive
Toronto, 2011

A message from the Canadian Cancer Society

Over a period of two years, Canadians shared their cancer stories as *Cancer Connections* travelled across the country. In that short period of time, the exhibit grew from 300 images to the goal of 1,000 photos. Each image featured in the exhibit represents thousands of similar cancer stories.

As we set out on this partnership with PhotoSensitive, our hope was that *Cancer Connections* would encourage Canadians from coast to coast, in small and large communities alike, to have conversations about cancer. We believe that through sharing cancer stories, Canadians can learn more about cancer risk factors and what they can do to prevent the disease.

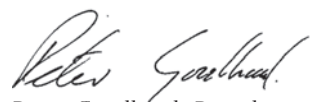
Cancer Connections has given Canadians a forum to share how this disease has changed their lives and has provided a unique, accessible way to bring people, communities, and the nation together.

These inspirational black-and-white photographs connect us as individuals and communities in the common cause to fight back against cancer. Through these stories, we see the pain, the frustration, and the challenges that cancer brings, but also the courage, the resolve, the hope, and even the joy that people bring to cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society firmly believes that no one should face a cancer journey alone. Each year we connect with and support tens of thousands of cancer patients on their journeys.

We are only able to deliver such support through the dedication of our volunteers and staff and the generosity of our donors. They are making “cancer connections” each and every day.

On behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society’s volunteers and staff from coast to coast to coast, I thank all those who allowed their personal stories to be captured in *Cancer Connections*. I also want to congratulate the photographers for their skill in showing us cancer through a different lens. Collectively these images are a testimony to the power of photography to address social issues. Thank you to PhotoSensitive for your vision in creating this unique exhibit, and for raising awareness about cancer and how it affects the lives of Canadians. It has been a privilege to partner with you on this truly moving exhibit.



Peter Goodhand, President and CEO
Canadian Cancer Society



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

A message from JPMorgan Chase

As JPMorgan Chase has evolved into one of the world's largest and most influential global financial institutions, our firm's unwavering commitment to making a positive difference in the communities where we operate has remained constant.

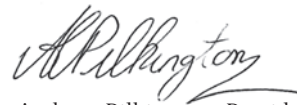
JPMorgan Chase's philanthropic goal is simple—be the catalyst to meaningful, positive, and sustainable change within communities across the globe. In 2009, JPMorgan Chase gave more than \$100 million through grants and sponsorships to thousands of not-for-profit organizations around the world. Our employees participate in *Relay For Life* events across the country and we support them through the Matching Gift and volunteer programs.

JPMorgan Chase believes in the fight against cancer. We don't see ourselves as merely a supporter of the cause, but rather a partner in this battle. Through thoughts, actions, words, and donations, JPMorgan Chase employees walk arm in arm with the focused objective of beating cancer.

We appreciate the tremendous effort that PhotoSensitive and the Canadian Cancer Society put into bringing *Cancer Connections* to life through photography. The awareness that *Cancer Connections* brought is instrumental in generating ongoing momentum around this cause. The photography and, more importantly, the stories that these images tell are beautiful and inspirational to all Canadians.

So many Canadians, including JPMorgan Chase employees, have to fight this disease every day. With more than 1,000 employees in Canada, JPMorgan Chase has a vested interest in bringing positive change within the communities where our employees live and work. We are fortunate to work with the Canadian Cancer Society and PhotoSensitive, and through our support of Cancer Connections, help to bring a poignant photographic exhibit of those affected by cancer and their families to cities across Canada and now in this book.

We wish the Canadian Cancer Society continued success in fighting cancer, enhancing the quality of life of those living with cancer, and celebrating survivors.



Andrew Pilkington, President and CEO
Chase Card Services Canada

CHASE 

British Columbia

“Many gifts came with my cancer. So much love came at me, so many opportunities.”

Nancy Baye

Photographer
Andy Clark
Vancouver

Nancy

When PhotoSensitive arranged for Nancy Baye to be photographed by Andy Clark for *Cancer Connections*, Nancy already knew how she wanted to be portrayed. “I wanted to be photographed breaking out of my hospital gown,” she says, “breaking free of the cancer-patient identity and unleashing my inner superhero.”

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, Nancy’s hospital gown also became the cape for her alter ego, the Cancer Crusader.

“After immersing myself in the cancer community, I witnessed the diversity and range of emotional and sociological issues behind cancer,” says Nancy. As a writer and performer, it wasn’t long before those observations drove her to pick up a pen. “These different snippets of stories would arrange themselves into a character that suddenly ‘showed up’ in my mind, a character with something to say.”

Nancy wrote monologues for the characters and they in turn were incorporated into performances that she used to open the door to the world of cancer. “This allowed for a multitude of stories and perspectives to be explored, more than could be done in a personal speech. It also provided a buffer to give the audience a sense of safety so they wouldn’t censor their responses.

“I wanted them to feel free to laugh as well as cry. The goal was to take them along on each character’s journey in a highly

experiential, visceral way. Through it all, I wanted to give voice to cancer patients, so that they might be better understood and seen in all their complexities. My hope was that the shows would enlighten and empower while they entertained.”

Nancy’s shows, including the *Support Group Monologue* and the *Adventures in Breast Cancer* trilogy, have appeared at theatres and fundraising events across Canada.

Having fought breast cancer three times, Nancy has drawn much from her own experiences to bring a truth to her characters. She has been cancer-free since 2004, but takes nothing for granted.

“I felt an ache in my hip recently and thought, ‘Oh, my God, it’s gone to the bone—I’ll be dead within a week,’” says Nancy. “Any little ache or pain has me worried, but doctors watch me closely and I am fine. Knock on wood.”

Apart from providing artistic inspiration, Nancy’s cancer experiences also provided other positives: “Many gifts came with my cancer. So much love came at me, so many opportunities, I just had to be willing to accept it all and not resist the journey. Cancer has matured me in many ways and it has also allowed me to take flight. I believe that cancer can bring out the superhero in us all.”







Previous

Maggie

John Johnson driving his young daughter Maggie on the eight-hour roundtrip required for her to receive her leukemia treatment.

Photographer
Karen McKinnon
Comox

Donald

"I am one face of cancer/I am one body scarred by cancer/I am one survivor of cancer/ But I am one of many/And we are strong." Donald Golob was diagnosed with stage 3-4 kidney cancer in 2005. After surgery, it came back twice but further surgery removed it. Donald says, "It looks like I just may make it."

Photographer
Tamara Roberts
North Vancouver

Rich

Inspired to action after his 26-year-old, non-smoking friend was diagnosed with throat and lung cancer, Rich Ralph set out to inline skate from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, B.C. Four months and 10,000 kilometres later, he completed his trip, raising awareness and \$60,000 from personal donations collected along the way.

Photographer
Kyler Storm
Vancouver



Dragon Divas

The “Cowichan Valley Dragon Divas” team is made up of over 40 members, all living with breast cancer.

Photographer
Paul Fletcher
Duncan



Julie

A self-portrait of the photographer lying on her mother's grave in Chilliwack, B.C. Jennifer's mother died of breast cancer in 2007 and Jennifer herself survived bone cancer as a child. She is lying with the operation scar on her left hip facing the sky.

Photographer
Jennifer Neal
Chilliwack



“Never lose sight of even the smallest things that bring you joy.”

Sandra Beuker

Scott

Scott Mitchell, a native of White Rock, B.C., died of cancer when he was only 23 years old. Photographer Laura Sumpter says, “His dad’s vest is a sad reminder that cancer chooses all ages. It does not discriminate.”

Photographer
Laura Sumpter
White Rock





Opposite

A Woman

Post-mastectomy, a woman contemplates the cast she made of her torso before surgery. The mask reflects how the surgery and her breast cancer make her feel like a circus freak. She opted out of reconstructive surgery to act as a role model for other breast cancer survivors. She has been cancer-free for 10 years.

Photographer

Jane Eaton Hamilton
Vancouver



Janelle

After being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006, starting chemotherapy and realizing she was going to lose her hair, Janelle Hughes sought alternatives to bandannas, hats, and wigs. She created Bald is Beautiful, custom head-dresses and airbrush artistry for women who have lost their hair to cancer. Sadly, Janelle passed away in spring 2008.

Photographer

Carmine Marinelli
Surrey

Rosanne

This self-portrait was shot as the photographer, Rosanne Patricia Currie, was undergoing chemotherapy in preparation for a stem cell transplant. She is still in recovery.

Photographer

Rosanne Currie
Victoria



Photographer
Daniel Sikorskyi
Victoria

Daniel

When Daniel Sikorskyi told his doctor that he was having trouble urinating and getting up to pee three or four times a night, he was given a prescription to help him retain urine. Later, Daniel told a chiropractor friend about his symptoms and she pushed him into going for an immediate checkup.

That doctor referred him to a urologist, whom Daniel saw a week later. “I think the urologist had a hunch,” says Daniel. “He booked me for a biopsy straight away—which was like having a staple gun shot up your ass. I wouldn’t wish that on anyone. After this whole experience I realized there was no room for embarrassment.”

A call from his doctor a few days later telling Daniel he had prostate cancer came as a complete shock. “I couldn’t believe it. I hadn’t turned 50 yet. It took a while to collect myself and think about it. Then I started researching.”

Determined to take control of his cancer, Daniel did extensive research, spending hours reading up on the subject. He went on a raw food diet, exercised regularly, had acupuncture, and kept a positive attitude. He also changed urologists, going to one recommended by another of his acupuncturist’s clients, who had also battled prostate cancer.

“Dr. Martin Gleave treated me like a human being who had a problem. He was there to help and he took me through the whole process, suggesting treatment but ultimately leaving the final decision up to me.”

After much deliberation, Daniel decided to have a radical prostatectomy, an operation that he felt was more likely to rid him of all of the cancer in one fell swoop. “It all went really well,” he recalls. “There was some pain involved and things to deal with, but there were no signs of it spreading, so I was happy with that.

“I feel better now than I did before the cancer. My thought processes have changed and become more positive. With cancer, people often wonder, ‘Why did it happen?’ I believe it happened to enlighten me.”

Daniel is now a fervent advocate for prostate cancer awareness and constantly reminds his friends to go for checkups. “They often tell me that they don’t like the idea of going for a rectal exam, so I tell them that I don’t like the idea of going to their funeral.”



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КВІТНЯ ТРАВНЯ

ПРЕМ'ЄРА
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КВАРТЕТ

Аліса

ФРЕЙНДЛІХ

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МАЙСТЕР
МАРГАРИТА
РОМАН ВІКТЮК



ВІЛІ
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Elly

Elly Ruge's adventure with breast cancer began in 2001. Operations and chemotherapy left her feeling both physically and emotionally scarred. She had a sunflower tattooed onto her new left breast and it has given her a positive attitude to live her life with boundless energy. She hopes to inspire others to see that their scars also can become works of art.

Photographer
Marcelle Ridley
Duncan

Vanessa

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, Vanessa became passionate about promoting breast health awareness for young women and the unique issues that face them. This photo appeared in the 2005 *Breast of Canada* fundraising calendar. Now moving on with her life, Vanessa no longer defines herself as having had cancer.

Photographer
Kimberly Mara
Surrey



Janet

Janet Winbourne, ethnobiologist and world traveller, is a two-time survivor—of cervical cancer in 2002 and breast cancer in 2006. This photo was taken after she'd had a partial mastectomy, lymph node removal, and six months of chemotherapy. The following day Janet started five weeks of radiation treatment.

Photographer
Sheri Jackson
Port Alberni



Kim

This photo was taken while Kim Tempest was going through chemotherapy for breast cancer. Additional images taken during her treatment will be included in her book, about fighting breast cancer with humour, entitled *My Right Tit*.

Photographer
Wendy D
Vancouver







Previous left

Jack

Photographer Alexis was inspired to take this photo in memory of her late husband, Jack Sullivan, who passed away in 1994, after a courageous fight with nasal pharyngeal carcinoma. Alexis says, "I wanted to say that he continues to be so real to us, he might still need his shoes."

Photographer
Alexis Yobbagy
Victoria

Previous right

Lisa

Lisa Matlock used tanning beds in her teens and was diagnosed with melanoma first at age 23, and then six years later when pregnant with her first child. She and her husband were devastated to learn that the cancer could pass to the baby, but thankfully Beckett was born perfectly healthy. Lisa's fight will never be over and she speaks out against the risks of UV exposure.

Photographer
Tanzyn Ambrose
Port Coquitlam

Sandra

The day of Sandra Beuker's final chemotherapy session for breast cancer. Russell, her husband and the photographer, says, "Her grace, strength, and beauty throughout her ordeal inspires me to this day." After chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation, Sandra is doing well. She says, "Never lose sight of even the smallest things that bring you joy."

Photographer
Russell Beuker
Richmond



Julie

Julie has Von Hippel-Lindau disease, a hereditary cancer-causing syndrome that results in her chronic renal cell carcinoma. Without huge medical advancements, her daughters face the same future.

Photographer
Kim Mallory
Abbotsford

Over

Cindy

After undergoing a mastectomy for breast cancer in 2006, Cindy Bury likened herself to a unicorn, empowering herself to face the battle that was before her. Three years later another lump was found on the same side. Cindy has opted for natural healing and refuses to let the disease get the better of her.

Photographer
Arlene Simpson
Langley







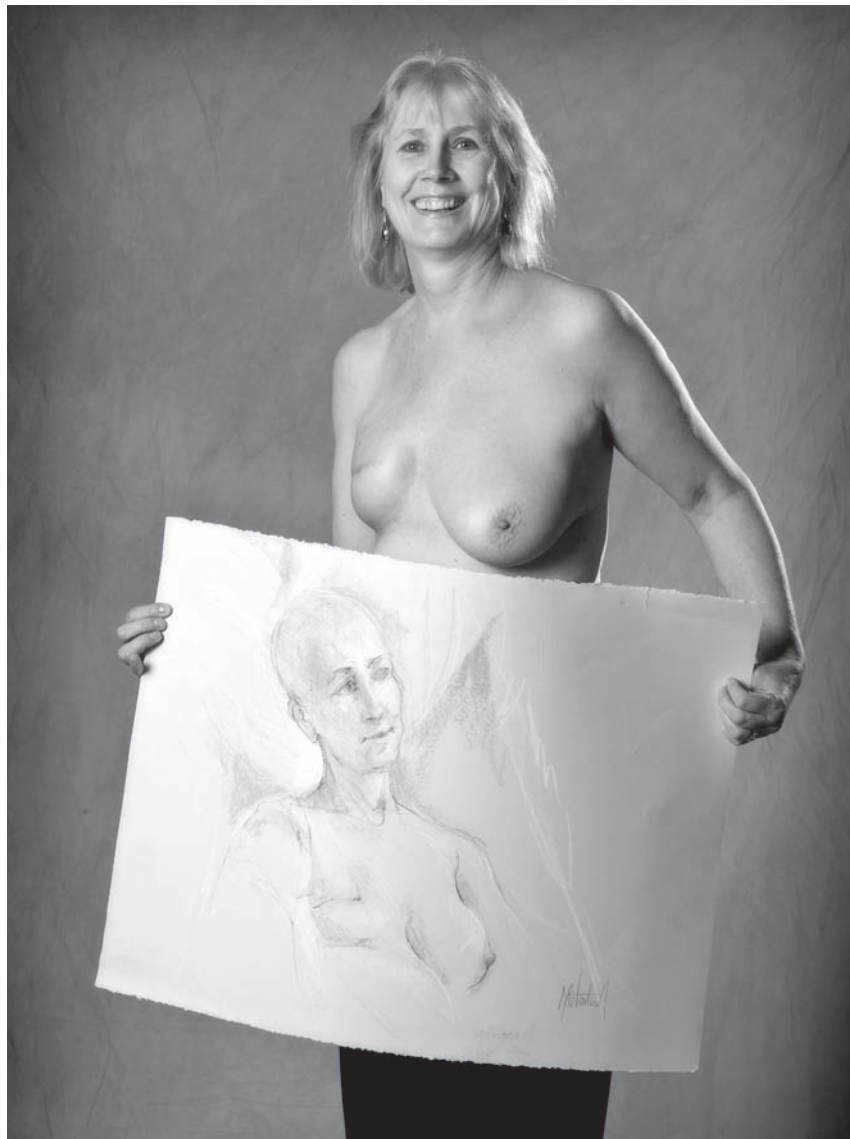


Opposite

Carolyn

Carolyn discovered she had breast cancer after tests for a bleeding nipple. Following a lumpectomy and auxiliary node dissection, she underwent chemotherapy, finishing March 2, 2010. Carolyn says, "The goal was just to get to the end of the chemo—now that I'm there and I start to feel better, as I look ahead, the lingering question is, will I survive this?"

Photographer
Wendy D
Vancouver



Madeleine

Ten years ago, while Madeleine De Little was battling breast cancer, her friend, artist Suzanne Northcott, offered to chronicle her cancer journey. Now a 10-year survivor, Madeleine is undergoing breast reconstruction. She says, "Now I understand that we never lose our beauty. It just becomes transformed."

Photographer
Michael Courtney
Fort Langley



Leah

Leah has survived breast cancer twice; she battled cancer while pregnant and recovered from open-heart surgery. She considers herself not merely a survivor, but a thriver, like so many of the courageous women she has met on her journey. Leah is a founding member of the Young and the Breastless group and volunteers for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Photographer
Kimberly Mara
Vancouver