



# Metchosin Muse

A N O N - P R O F I T C O M M U N I T Y P U B L I C A T I O N

## A Community Mourns



Moralea Milne: Community Leader

Brian Domney

Sc'ianew's Ric Milette's voice boomed out over the Village Green, in the finest style of a Northwest Coast traditional gathering, welcoming those who came to honour the memory of Moralea Milne, whose life tragically ended in a crash in Surrey on July 28.

Ric encouraged all those present to "be medicine to each other" at this time of grief. Then, after Mayor John Ranns outlined the way the afternoon would progress, Chief Russ Chipps spoke. It was a fitting way for the Celebration of Life for Moralea Milne to begin – she worked hard to strengthen the relationship between the District of Metchosin and the Sc'ianew First Nation and that work and resulting relationship will be an important legacy of this remarkable woman.

Speakers representing various aspects of Moralea's life addressed the gathering, including Mayor Ranns, representing our local government; MLA Mitzi Dean, on behalf of Premier John Horgan and herself;

Andy MacKinnon, who spoke to her contribution to the environment, including her role with the Talk and Walk series and the Bioblitz; and Chris Pratt, on behalf of the Metchosin Foundation. There then followed poignant "open mic" recollections by family and friends. You will find tributes to her in this issue of the *Muse* as well as social media.

The Celebration was attended by hundreds from far and wide along with many from Metchosin, East Sooke and the southern Island. It was an opportunity to share stories and thoughts about Moralea – important when trying to comprehend the incomprehensible.

For many, however, it will be a long time before her passing will be accepted. She has left an indelible mark on Metchosin, and whether attending a Talk and Walk or a BioBlitz, examining the finances of the District, admiring the resurgence of native plants in our parks, or looking to share a tug from a bottle of Fireball after that brief dip in the Strait on January 1, many of us will be reminded of Moralea Milne.

## Celebrating Moralea Milne

By Gala Milne

There is no easy way to prepare for death. My dad's tumour showed up so big and so strong it would take on life the same way he did: with an undeniable presence and a casual confidence in every move. John and Moralea were true equals and an undeniable pair. Putting myself in her shoes now, I struggle to understand how my mom managed through her husband's untimely death with such resilience. Something in her blood perhaps, coupled with our crass and only semi-helpful family motto which goes something like, "Suck it up, buttercup." And suck it up she did. In the years following, Moralea flourished in building community around her passion of protecting the flora and fauna native to Metchosin. On Sunday mornings she would be out of the house bright and early, rain, shine, sleet or hail to meet with a saintly group of volunteers and friends to protect Devonian Park from the devilish encroachment of invasive broom and gorse. Once a month she would be giddy to have found an expert on bats or a scholar on seaweed to host the Talk and Walk series. Moralea

continued to inspire when she helped bring together the annual Metchosin BioBlitz: a full day dedicated to documenting the diversity of local species from slugs to fritillaries, sea blush to camas. A legacy lives in her patiently captured photos and the delight she took in sharing these well-researched natural wonders with us.

In Metchosin she found joy in years of writing for the *Muse*, purchasing paintings from talented local artists,

Metchosin Day (she actually enjoyed that) and learning to be as good on Council as she was with identifying mosses.

So compelling are Moralea's latest years as an advocate for the natural world that it's almost easy to forget the many lives she lived before now. Moralea Milne was born the eldest of four kids to a lineage of hard working coal miners in the small town of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. From a young age she blazed her own trail. Once she was

kicked out of high school for wearing the wrong coloured socks. Old friends regale people with stories of Moralea capturing wild snakes and racoons from the forest behind their house and bringing them home as new family pets. At 17 she decided to hitchhike across Canada to the West Coast and

asked her mom simply to drop her off on the highway one afternoon. In the 70s she moved to a desolate farm in the Okanagan with no electricity and raised her kids on a school of hard knocks. At 36 she was a single mom to three and moved us all to the Island where she decided to try something new and spent the next 15 years running three successful retail businesses. In her 50s she returned to school,

**“Moralea flourished in building community around her passion of protecting the flora and fauna native to Metchosin.”**

Gala Milne

handing out hot dogs to hungry kids at the firehall for Halloween, dinner with the ladies, summer swims to the island and back at Matheson Lake, leading new friends up Camas Hill, assisting neighbours to put conservation covenants on the land, selling old power tools at the Mighty Garage Sale, entering pies at Metchosin Day (just kidding, I tricked her into doing that), handing out mint jelly at



Moralea in her element, capturing a Phantom orchid with her camera at Ross Durranee. Photo by Brian Domney

undertaking a degree in Restoration of Natural Systems. At 58 she entered politics with three successful elections as a Metchosin Councillor, putting forward powerful amendments for the decriminalization of cannabis and working with Beecher Bay First Nation to move forward reconciliation between the Metchosin and Beecher Bay governments.

I can't say this is easy to write. To attempt to bring justice to the life of such a great woman. To honour my smart and sassy mom who brought only goodness into this world. A staunch feminist who cared as much about fashion as she did for protecting Garry oak meadows. An idol to her children to whom she showed nothing but love and generosity. The undisputed leader of our very spread out family. Every sentence gives me grief. I am devastated for the

remaining chapters of her life unfulfilled. I am heartbroken for her new partner and their wild dreams now bereft. Utterly miserable that she will no longer be at the other end of a phone call. And of course I am grounded in knowing that she lived the way she did with no regrets.

Moralea leaves us with knowledge that a person can be trusted to do right in public office, to protect fragile ecosystems, to advocate for what's just, to reconcile, to care, to engage, to take risks, to fail, to learn, to teach, to love, to move forward and to be good to ourselves and each other.

Moralea, you are missed with such gravity.

*Thank you to everyone in Metchosin who gathered to organize and celebrate the life of Moralea Milne who passed away tragically on July 28, 2018. Please drive with care.*