

Thunder in the City - from Terrace Bay

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The results of Kerry Robinson's molecular research have been heard all over the world. You can read about it at http://www.nserc.gc.ca/news/features/index_e.htm on the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada website.

Kerry was born in Buckingham, Quebec but moved, at the age of 4, to Terrace Bay where her father was a machinist in the pulp and paper industry. She did well in school and chose the undergraduate program at Lakehead University, where she was offered a scholarship. Her concentration was in both biology and chemistry and her long-range plans were to study naturopathic medicine.

Tragedy struck the Robinsons when Kerry's mom developed an aggressive form of breast cancer, diagnosed too late to be cured or put into remission. Kerry says that her mom was checked for the breast cancer genes and was found not to carry them, although there is a strong family history of breast cancer, including her maternal grandfather who also succumbed to breast cancer. Her mother's pain and suffering and eventual death led Kerry to an interest in the study of cancer on a molecular level. She enrolled in a 4th year cancer biology course at LU, including an honours project in the research lab at the Cancer Centre. Kerry explained that her project involved the effects of certain chemotherapy drugs and her work may have had implications for the treatment of colon cancer.

Following her 4th year graduation, Kerry decided to do a Master's of Science in Kinesiology at LU, continuing to expand her knowledge in the field of cancer research. Her mom passed away 5 years ago. Kerry's Master's thesis advisor was Dr. Robert Thayer of Genesis Genomics Inc. and Kerry continues to work for Dr. Bob and GGI, searching through mitochondrial DNA and its genome to test the hypothesis that there is a mitochondrial DNA configuration that portends imminent cancer cell formation. So far so good, at least with prostate cancer, as Kerry has discovered. Further research is underway for biomarkers for breast and



Kerry Robinson

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other cancers and Kerry is right there in the thick of it.

In between caring for her parents through illness, demanding studies, and engrossing work, Kerry says she has had little time to learn about herself. She had to think for a minute to tell me of any hobbies or outside interests ... but then ... it seems she has a lot of other interests, including gardening, cooking, cross country skiing and art. Kerry's grandmother was an artist who made sure to teach her grandchildren the joy of painting every weekend. Kerry plans to develop the right side of her brain with watercolour painting lessons and has started to outfit a studio in her home. In addition, Kerry has never lost her interest in natural remedies and has become qualified in Reiki and conducts colonics treatments at the Colon Therapy Clinic.

I asked Kerry if she planned to continue her education with doctoral studies. She said she has considered a PhD but, at this point, she is trying to find balance in her life... and she LOVES her job, gets to work in a field she is passionate about in Thunder Bay (which she also loves). From her lips to my pencil "it can't get any better than that". My hero!

Everyday Heroes is a Community initiative sponsored by Thunder Bay Ventures. Everywhere in the City there are people living, working, playing and contributing to the fabric of our community.

To nominate a hero contact heroes@thunderbayventures.com