

Premier Gordon Campbell
Address at B.C. Sports Hall of Fame for Women's History Month
Unveiling 'Celebrating B.C. Women in Sports – Leaders and Legends'
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Check Against Delivery

Looking at the 31 women and teams that have been selected for this exhibit, you can't help but think about how each of these people has touched our lives.

Personal connections take place as you watch someone excelling. They shape our perceptions and our thoughts about where we can go and what we can accomplish.

One of the women is Irene MacDonald. When I was eight years old, Irene McDonald was at Empire Pool teaching me how to do a somersault off the one-metre board.

I never really got to do that very well, but Irene MacDonald was always encouraging you to find what your niche was, where you could excel and what you could do the best. I'm very pleased that she is being honoured today.

I can still remember when Karen Magnussen won the World Championships, and coming to the Coliseum and seeing not just the outpouring of affection for Karen, but the real thrill people felt that someone from our province – someone from the place where we live, where we're connected to – could be the best in the world at what she did.

Nancy Greene – the same thing: someone who was the best in the world at what she was doing. Each time we watch an Olympics and see our women and our men excel, it sends a story to us about what can happen and how it can work.

Today we're recognizing women leaders and legends in sports. The leadership shown by women in sports has touched us throughout our community. They set an example not just for young women, but for all of us.

It's critical to look at how we can encourage that and how we can reinforce the dedication, the commitment and the discipline women have shown.

Look at the Olympics, for example. In the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, 38.2 per cent of the athletes were women. Clearly, that's a long way from where they were in the past, but clearly it's a long way from where we want to get to.

I was in Williams Lake during the B.C. Winter Games when our women were playing for their gold in hockey. Everyone was thrilled that they won. If any of you don't think that put a lot of extra pressure on our men to win the gold, you've got another thing coming.

Women's hockey has grown 500 per cent worldwide in the last 10 years. (Just imagine how our economy would be if it grew 500 per cent in the last 10 years!)

That's because of the example women set. It's because women decided they wanted to participate: they loved the game, and they wanted to show people how they could perform.

That's the kind of leadership that we sometimes let go by. We don't want to do that – we want to recognize that and celebrate that.

Our Legacies Now program is part of the 2010 Winter Olympic Bid. It's based on the fact that each of you probably went through extra burdens and extra challenges because of lack of support.

We want to create more support. We want to make it easier not just for women but for everyone to participate in sport, because of what sport does for our health, lifestyle and quality of life. It teaches us habits and disciplines that we want to carry through life.

It's critical that we build for the future. Legacies Now is a \$5-million program, which I'm hoping we're going to be able to improve upon, but it's \$5 million today. We are going to be investing \$230,000 in grants over the next few months to provide additional support to local sports development organizations.

Today I'm pleased to announce the first three of those awards. The first award is to the YWCA and Olympians BC for the creation of a mentorship and athlete employment program. This is designed to help high-performance athletes through their transition from their playing career to a new career.

Past Olympians and Paralympians will be mentors to help current athletes with academic, career and personal development. I'm pleased to make an award for \$10,000 to the YWCA for that.

The second is an award to the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association to enhance the exposure and training opportunities for the 2003 Canadian Women's Winter Games Team, and to provide an ongoing program for over-18 female athletes. The team will play against top western Canadian women's teams in a tournament in Calgary this November.

It will also tour northern B.C., playing against under-22 women's provincial team or the senior women's Triple-A all-star teams across the North. I'm pleased to present a cheque for \$22,487 for that.

Finally, to the B.C. Wheelchair Sports Association, we're going to provide \$12,000 for four new wheelchairs, one each for wheelchair basketball, rugby, tennis and athletics teams.

These chairs are used in communities all over B.C. so that new participants to wheelchair sports can rent a chair for up to a year to try out a sport without the financial barrier of

having to purchase a sport-specific chair. I am very pleased to be presenting this cheque for \$12,000.

It is amazing to think what we can do when we work together and enable people to pursue their goals and their dreams. Our goal in celebrating B.C. women in sport is to recognize and celebrate women's accomplishments – to show that women can achieve whatever they desire as long as they have the support of the community.

Obviously, the women and the leaders we are recognizing today have been positive role models for young women in British Columbia for years.

It's important to our young women and girls to have these sorts of examples. We know that if a girl does not participate in sports or physical activity by the age of 10, there is only a 10 per cent chance that she'll participate when she's 25.

We know that girls and women who participate in physical activity programs report higher levels of self-esteem, improved physical health and lower levels of depression, stress, disturbed sleep and loneliness.

In British Columbia, we want our women in sport to know that we are behind them. We thank you for the contribution you have made and the leadership you have shown.

I would like to thank Promotions Plus for the work they have done to make sure we pay tribute to women athletes across British Columbia. I would like to thank the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame for this special presentation they are putting together to recognize women in sport.

Finally, I would like to thank the seven-member committee that was such an important part of selecting the 31 reward recipients from the dozens and dozens of women who were nominated. It is incredibly difficult to choose 31 from all the women who have been leaders in their communities, in their regions, in the province and in the country.

Saying thank you is a first step: Thank you to the legends, thank you to the leaders, thank you to all of you for being here today.

Thank you for the leadership you've shown in the past and thank you for the leadership you continue to show as we move forward to make British Columbia an even better place for everyone to live. Thank you.