

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: “ROSEMARY BROWN ARENA” AT 7789 18TH STREET

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council receive this report for information.

REPORT**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Burnaby City Council, at its Closed meeting held of 2021 April 26, approved the permanent name for the South Burnaby Arena as the “Rosemary Brown Arena” to honour Ms. Brown’s iconic achievements.

Construction of the Burnaby’s newest arena complex at 7789 18th Street is projected to be completed in 2022 spring.

2.0 POLICY

This dedication honours a Burnaby citizen who has made tremendous contributions to Burnaby, and supports the following goals, and sub-goals of the City’s Corporate Strategic Plan:

Goals

- An Inclusive Community
 - Celebrate diversity –
Create more opportunities for the community to celebrate diversity
 - Serve a diverse community –
Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
 - Enhance City workforce diversity –

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- Support a diversified City workforce by identifying barriers and implementing proactive strategies
- Create a sense of community –
Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging
- A Healthy Community
 - Healthy life –
Encourages opportunities for healthy living and well-being
 - Healthy environment –
Enhance our environmental health, resilience and sustainability
 - Lifelong learning –
Improve upon and develop programs and services that enable ongoing learning
 - Community involvement –
Encourage residents and businesses to give back to and invest in the community

3.0 BACKGROUND

Rosemary Brown (1930-2003) was a pioneer politician, community leader and human rights champion who used her voice to fight discrimination against women and people of colour. She served as a prominent Burnaby MLA from 1979 to 1986, and was the first Black woman elected to a provincial legislature in Canada.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, she came to Canada in 1951 to attend McGill University where she studied social work and received a Bachelor of Arts. In 1955, she moved to Vancouver to be with her husband, Bill Brown. She earned a Master of Social Work from the University of British Columbia, then worked as a social worker while the couple raised their three children.

She experienced racism and gender-based discrimination in Canada, and was inspired to challenge barriers and advocate for equality. In Vancouver, she joined the Voice of Women and helped found the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (BCAACP) in 1956. The BCAACP worked to address discrimination against Black people in housing and employment, and advocate for human rights legislation. In the 1960s, she was a founding member and Ombudsperson for the Vancouver Status of Women Council.

In 1972, she ran for office as a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP), winning a seat in the riding of Vancouver-Burrard and making history as the first Black woman elected to a Canadian provincial legislature. In 1975, she became the first woman to run for leader of a national political party when she ran for the leadership of the federal NDP, coming in second to Ed Broadbent.

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When the Vancouver-Burrard riding was dissolved in 1979, she ran in Burnaby and won a seat as MLA for Burnaby-Edmonds where she served until 1986.

As MLA, she was a champion of measures to improve women's working and social conditions, including legislation to prohibit gender-based discrimination. She also called for improved services for the elderly, the disadvantaged, people with disabilities, and immigrants.

After retiring from politics, she was appointed the Ruth Wyn Woodward Professor in Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby in 1987. For three years she worked as CEO for the advocacy group MATCH International Women's Fund, then remained an active member of the organization which promotes social and economic advancement of women in developing countries.

In 1993, she was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and served until 1996.

Rosemary Brown passed away on 2003 April 26. At her funeral, Joy MacPhail, leader of the BC NDP, said, "During her time in office, Rosemary created a committee to eliminate sexism in textbooks and educational curricula. She also introduced legislation that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status. Through her efforts, there was a marked increase in the number of women represented on boards, commissions and directorates."

During her lifetime, she received a total of 15 honorary doctorates from Canadian universities, and was appointed to the Order of BC (1995) and became an Officer of the Order of Canada (1996). In 2002, she received the Award for Outstanding Service to Humanity from the Canadian Labour Congress.

In 2004, the *Rosemary Brown Award for Women* was established in her memory, and is awarded annually to recognize a BC based woman or organization that promotes the values and ideals that she championed.

In 2009, Canada Post issued a commemorative stamp that depicts Brown standing in front of the BC Legislative Buildings.

In 2017, as part of Canada's 150, Brown was named as one of Canada's top 150, which recognized her as an outspoken pioneer for women of colour. Also in 2017, the City of Vancouver named a street after Brown: Rosemary Brown Lane runs between Burrard Street and Lagoon Drive. The street name was recommended to Council by the Civic Asset Naming Committee, as part of an initiative to "name currently unnamed civic assets to better reflect the diversity of individuals who have made significant contributions to Vancouver."

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Brown continues to be recognized for her work against racism and gender-based discrimination. She is profiled in the publication *Challenging Racist British Columbia: 150 Years and Counting*, which was published earlier this year, for her efforts to expand democratic rights.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Burnaby City Council approves naming the South Burnaby Arena the "Rosemary Brown Arena" in honour of her many important contributions to citizens of the City of Burnaby, and toward progressive social change globally, as detailed in this report.

This report is provided for public information.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor S. Dhaliwal
Chair

Mayor M. Hurley
Vice Chair

Copied to: Acting City Manager Director Corporate Services Director Public Safety and Community Services Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director Planning and Building
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