

SUCCESS STORIES

Mexicans in Canada

In recognition of their successful career paths and for serving as an example to the Mexican community in Canada, the Embassy of Mexico will permanently dedicate this space to those individuals who have excelled in areas such as arts, culture, education, sport, civic involvement or science....

Elena Rivera MacGregor (Designer)



"I wanted Mexicans to be a part of the Olympics"

To reach the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver this Mexican first had to beat 1500 other competitors, who are considered the best in their class in Canada.

She has been preparing to win first place since 2004, to showcase Mexican talent on the world stage via the massive media exposure that the Olympic Games offered.

And thanks to extensive television exposure, hundreds of millions of people in virtually every country around the world had the chance to admire her skill, raising the name of

Mexico up to the highest level, to first place overall, quite literally in the middle of the spotlight.

To achieve this feat, and unlike the athletes who participated in the Olympic games, she didn't win with skis, or a snowboard, or ice skates, she relied simply on one thing ... a paintbrush!

And this is how Mexican designer, Elena Rivera MacGregor, came to create the logo of the Winter Olympics, the same games that saw Canada break the record of the most gold medals won by one country.

And after 20 years of experience, she has also broken her own record by launching her design as the everlasting image of the Vancouver Olympics, an image that is printed on dozens of products such as plates, cups, pens and many supermarket souvenirs, as well as on hoodies, hats, gloves, T-shirts, bags, watches, etc., in every mall in Canada, far and wide, and so many more places, transcending national borders.

With modest contributions from fellow Mexican designer, Gonzalo Alatorre, Elena Rivera MacGregor successfully incorporated, with apparent ease and simplicity, elements of Inuit culture, an aboriginal population from the north of Canada – representing an Inukshuk sculpture, created with five stones – images taken from the Canadian landscape and the colours of the Olympic rings – placed in the shape of a human being.

One of the design challenges she faced was highlighting the host city of Vancouver visually, blending it into the story of the original emblem, while respecting the Olympic brand,

“The logo unites three elements or values that reflect how Canadians are perceived around the world: culture, community and friendship”, explains the founder of the *Rivera Design Group*.

The most valuable purpose of a logo, according to Canadian historian, Sam Carter, who taught her at *the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design* in Vancouver, is to preserve the culture of a country, seizing upon certain cultural elements and applying them to modern art.

And it is exactly this ability to capture the corporate vision that has attracted so many clients and companies over the course of her career as a designer of logos and brands.

Three years ago she wrote and illustrated the children's book, *An Inukshuk Adventure*, one of her 4-year old son's favourite books, which was published with the support of the *Walt Disney Company*. She has also received several design awards, including the Western Silver Award from *Neenah Paper* for the design of the letterhead of British Columbia's Children's Hospital Foundation and the CASE award for the design of the University of British Columbia's brochure.

But even more rewarding than the prizes, and the \$25,000 she received for the Olympic design, is that she gets to see her work everywhere she goes. “It is such a great feeling to see it on my fridge, on the clothing in my closet and even on my key ring”.

While her story caught the attention of the advertising section of celebrated filmmaker, George Lucas, that had been published by the NBC television network and in print media such as the *Wall Street Journal* or *People* magazine, Elena recounts with amusement that on one occasion she purchased a product with her logo on it, and when she remarked to the seller that she was the logo designer, not surprisingly, she didn't believe her!

Finally, and most importantly for her, this image, that is imprinted in her mind and the collective imagination of so many people, was created from the heart.

"I wanted Mexicans to be a part of the Olympics".

And she succeeded indeed.

In addition, this same image adorned the uniform, alongside Aztec motifs, of skier, Hubertus Von Hohenlohe, the oldest athlete and Mexico's only representative in the Vancouver Olympic Games, in the giant slalom competition.

***NOTE: If you know a Success Story about a Mexican resident in Canada or Canadian company in Mexico that you believe should be included in this space, please send your proposal to the Embassy of Mexico in Canada, by way of Counsellor Alberto Lozano, at e-mail: alozano@embamexcan.com**