

Georgia Manhard

Georgia Manhard's involvement in cross-country skiing began in 1976, in 100 Mile House, BC, when her children were introduced to the sport. From that time, developing the sport to provide better tools for coaches and opportunities for athletes became her passion and her life's work. In pursuit of this goal, she came to hold numerous positions in management and governance both in Cross Country BC and in the sport's National Office in Canmore. During a career that lasted almost 50 years, her many responsibilities were performed concurrently and always as a volunteer, working from the ranch where she lived.

Manhard's initial focus was on the creation of a broadly-based, cohesive and productive ski community in her home province. Serving as Chair/Acting Executive Director of CCBC from 1988 to 2015, her vision and leadership guided the Division through a phased development plan to establish a sophisticated network of prospering clubs throughout the province. Clubs were modelled to produce capacity in the critical areas of governance, infrastructure, coaching, athlete recruitment and development and event hosting.

Recognizing the value of collaboration within the broader ski community, Manhard added responsibilities with Cross Country Canada to her workload in 2001. There she was instrumental in developing her sport's Long Term Athlete Development Model and overhauling its National Coaching Certification Program - projects of monumental scope and of equal importance. She personally steered these projects from initial concept through research, writing, approval, publication and delivery to incremental roll-out and implementation across the country.

In 1997, when a proposal emerged to bring the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to Vancouver, Manhard added yet another major project to her portfolio. Beginning in 1998, she chaired a Cross-Country Working Group with the mission of advocacy and planning for the development of the Callaghan Valley as the venue for the Games' Nordic competitions. The possibility of a rich legacy for her sport was central to this effort. The competition and training facilities that exist today at Whistler Olympic Park are a tribute to the determination and influence of this group. They are a key component of Nordiq Canada's high performance system, as well as a highly-regarded host site for major international events.

In summary, Manhard played a crucial role in transforming cross-country skiing in Canada:

- In BC, her strategic planning, team-building and work ethic were critical to turning a relatively unstructured activity into a well-organized sport community with a robust framework.
- At the national level, she was the principle architect and production engine for the creation of a comprehensive, seamless and fully-aligned pathway for coach and athlete development that revolutionized these key components of the sport.
- And her leadership in bringing the Callaghan Valley legacy to fruition enriched Canada's stature as a cross-country skiing nation. Numerous high-level events – including the FIS 2023 World Junior/U23 Championships - have been hosted there in the years following 2010.

Without question, Manhard's selfless dedication as a volunteer, manager, innovator and subject matter expert has left an indelible and unprecedented mark on cross-country skiing in Canada, establishing a sound foundation for future progress and high performance success.

