



BLAKE WILLIAMS

7 from frozen ponds

Surrey Sport and Leisure Complex, 16555 Fraser Highway (Arenas)
December 1999

Using a similar approach to the artwork in the adjacent Aquatics Centre, *From Frozen Ponds* is a collage-like mural filling an entire wall. Focusing on the ice activities of today and days gone by, its central image features a twirling, smiling female hockey player spiralling down a staircase wall.

"For me, the defining moment when I realized how important [hockey] was to many Canadians was in the early hours of the morning as I walked down a Montreal street. It was about 3am and minus fifteen degrees. I came upon an outdoor rink where a sole skater was making large arcs in the ice and slapping pucks at the boards. Oblivious to me and the weather, he seemed to epitomize pure love of the game, removed from the world of big contracts and professional stardom." (excerpt from the artist statement)

The mural's cool greys, blues and purples suggest the colors created by natural light refracting through cold ice. The historical images chosen by Williams for the project evoke professional competition, and, in the artist's words, the "spirit, history and exhilaration of the game." Images culled from the B.C. Archives and the City of Vancouver Archives depict Lower Mainland residents skating on frozen Lost Lagoon, and a team portrait of the Vancouver Millionaires, one of the first, and most famous, professional hockey teams. Also included are images of historically significant players like Frank "Cyclone" Taylor, who led the Millionaires to their first Stanley Cup victory, and photographs of other competitive ice sports, including curling and figure skating. Images of women playing hockey emphasize the long, rich tradition of a sport often overshadowed by the male-dominated NHL; in fact, the game is now the fastest growing female sport in the country.

Vancouver-based artist Blake Williams is known for visual histories of communities. Queen Victoria Annex mural (1998), which he built with school children, is based on stories told by their parents and grandparents of childhood games. His 12 x 40 feet ceramic mural of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion Tour can be seen at General Motors Place. Most recently, Williams worked with 150 North Vancouver residents to produce 330 ceramic tiles for Valley Stories at the Lynn Valley recCentre.

City of Surrey Public and Community Art Collection

