

IMPACT REPORT

2024-25

**Special
Olympics**
British Columbia





Adam Spokes (left) made an impact with fellow athletes Chase Caron (centre) and Marinka VanHage as 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games Athlete Ambassadors. Photo by Chuck Nisbett.

FINDING PRIDE, PURPOSE, AND BELONGING IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Meet Prince George athlete Adam Spokes

"By the time I was 16, I was beaten and tired. In the town I grew up in, while I was no longer bullied, neither was I connecting to anyone around me. ... It wasn't until my early 30s that a current, close friend convinced me to join Special Olympics. The rest is history.

"For over a dozen years, I have found a community, camaraderie, friends, and a place to belong. It also gave me things that are less tangible, like pride, purpose, responsibility, and most of all, knowing that others rely on you as much as you rely on them. There is no greater sorrow than to know that nothing is expected of you, and nothing ever will be.

"I participate in powerlifting, floor hockey, basketball, 10-pin bowling, snowshoeing, bocce, track and field, and soccer. I am also part of the Special Olympics BC Athlete Input Council. I aim to be not only a better person but to make others better too. To inspire and encourage those who want to become better than they are, and better than they ever expected to be.

"It boils down to something simple. I wish for others, of various disabilities, to not need to stare into the abyss. To feel worthless, unwanted, or simply other, like I was. To be considered unreliable, untrustworthy, or worse, not considered at all. This is what Special Olympics does – it teaches us to aspire. First to aspire to be better than we are in competition, and then to aspire to be better than we are, in life.

"I fear for what could have been me without Special Olympics in my life, and I fear for those still walking in the darkness. Hopefully, with Special Olympics, we can all shine a little brighter."

Letting athletes' brilliance shine

When athlete Chase Caron set out to design the medal ribbon for the 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games, she captured the spirit of the opportunity and the purpose of the Special Olympics community with her powerful theme: **"Let your brilliance shine."**

In Special Olympics BC's year-round sport, youth, and health programs and empowering competitions, athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities in 55 communities across the province gain the opportunity to shine and open hearts and minds to their abilities.

They build and share their skills with the support of the Special Olympics community that sees them for their abilities and boundless possibilities. In Special Olympics BC, athletes feel pride in their strengths, find friendships that empower them, and lead the way to a more inclusive world.

Chase's medal ribbon design shared what Special Olympics BC is all about, and what this community and these programs and experiences mean to so many: inclusion, pride, limitless opportunities and abilities, and celebration of the athletes' successes and of all the people who make these life-changing experiences possible.

We sincerely thank all of the donors, sponsors, volunteers, families, and champions of inclusion throughout our province – and of course, all of the athletes – who powered the Special Olympics BC community in the 2024-25 season and made it such a meaningful source of belonging, purpose, pride, and skill development.

We invite you to read the following stories that show a few of the many people and communities changed for the better by your support. We hope you will be inspired to tell others about the difference you make, and the meaningful opportunity to contribute to Special Olympics BC and change lives through the power and joy of sport.

Thank you for your powerful impact in building inclusion, equal opportunities, strengths, and community with Special Olympics BC.

Dan Howe
Special Olympics BC
President & CEO



Colin Yakashiro
SOBC Board of Directors
Chair



Donna Bilous
SOBC Leadership
Council Chair



Matthew Williams
SOBC Athlete Input
Council Chair



MISSION

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport.

VISION

Sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all across British Columbia

VALUES

- **Inclusion:** We foster inclusive communities.
- **Diversity:** We honour what is unique in each individual.
- **Empowerment:** We create opportunities to pursue full potential.
- **Respect:** We operate in an environment of cooperation, collaboration and dignity.
- **Excellence:** We elevate standards and performance.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE'S OATH

Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.



YOUR IMPACT IN 2024-25

2

age of
youngest
athlete

87


age of
oldest
athlete


48 (50 % ↑)

competitions
hosted across
B.C.

3,923 (24.9 % ↑)

generous donors



361 (105 % ↑)

Healthy Athletes
screenings delivered

31 (158 % ↑)

Schools offered Special Olympics
Unified® Sports

597 (2.0 % ↑)

brave participants took
the Polar Plunge® for
Special Olympics BC

286 (11 % ↑)

athletes participated in
leadership programs

3,493 (6.8 % ↑)

registered
athletes

2,296 (24.9 % ↑)

registered
volunteers

1

full season of a new
sport: floorball





Being part of a team is everything to me. I love hard work, I love dedication, I love every part of it. Special Olympics keeps you healthy, and very, very busy. This is what I love to do.”

–Brandon MacArthur, Special Olympics BC –
Abbotsford floorball athlete


INCLUSION AND BRAVERY AT THE 2025 SOBC SUMMER GAMES

The 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games provided a memorable display of the abilities of athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the power of inclusion, thanks to the empowering experience hosted by the Prince George community.

Over two days of competition, Special Olympics BC athletes from across the province achieved personal bests, podium placings, and countless moments of pride and inspiration across Prince George.

- **870** athletes with intellectual disabilities competed with determination
- Ranging in age from **13** to **73**
- **332** dedicated volunteer coaches and mission staff on the Regional teams from **46** communities across the province
- **1,347** medals awarded to proud athletes

Full results and inspiring stories and photos can be found at www.SOBCCGames.ca.

 Special Olympics has given me all kinds of opportunities to stay fit and stay healthy for the age that I am, and it provides me with good sportsmanship, connection with others, and chances for me to be able to be a role model for others. I'd like to give thanks to all the supporters who help all the athletes to be their very best, and to be included. There are so many barriers out there, but Special Olympics does provide the chance for athletes to be included here."

–Special Olympics BC – Kelowna athlete Ryan Courtemanche, gold medallist in golf at the 2025 SOBC Summer Games, former Prince George resident



Special Olympics BC
Summer Games
Prince George 2025



Host City

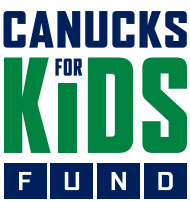


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Four Rivers



“It’s wonderful, it’s not just about the athletes, it’s about the families that get together across the community in the same hopes and wishes for their children and for the community. This inclusion thing is really alive tonight, and I think that is very exciting.”

–Shaun O’Leary, Special Olympics BC – Victoria athlete at the 2025 SOBC Games Opening Ceremony

BUILDING INCLUSIVE HEALTH IN B.C.

People with intellectual disabilities face challenges accessing health care and equal opportunities for healthy activity. As a result, they experience dramatically higher rates of serious health concerns than peers without intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics BC is committed to working with partners in our province and offering health programs to create a world where people with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunities and access to health care as people without intellectual disabilities, and in doing so, allow Special Olympics athletes to perform their best on and off the playing field.

Special Olympics BC's game-changing health programming includes:

- **Special Olympics Healthy Athletes** screenings offered around the province provide important health education and referrals for necessary care within a supportive setting
- **Health advocacy training programs** help empower athletes to lead the way to inclusive health
- Weekly physical activity programs in communities across the province, include **Club Fit** (fitness training) and **Fit Families & Friends** (summer program)



“With Special Olympics, I am more confident and I enjoy travelling, making new friends, and trying new things. With Special Olympics my life is fuller. I feel happy when I know I can do different sports every day.”

–Claire Lemaire, Health Messenger and Special Olympics BC – Creston athlete

41
communities
offered Club Fit

361
Healthy Athletes
screenings delivered

FUN AND SKILLS FOR KIDS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Many children with intellectual disabilities feel left behind or isolated in traditional sport and activity programs. In Special Olympics, they belong and thrive.

Special Olympics BC offers **Active Start** and **FUNDamentals** programs in communities around the province, where children and youth with intellectual disabilities ages two to 11 learn vital motor, sport, and social skills in a fun and welcoming environment.

Active Start and FUNDamentals programs are offered at low or no cost and have been specifically designed to meet the needs of children with intellectual disabilities and their families. Participants build essential skills that help them throughout their lives, and also are empowered to transition successfully into Special Olympics BC's sport and fitness programs to find lifelong healthy activity and community.

In 2024-25, 158 Special Olympics BC Active Start and FUNDamentals athletes-in-training thrived in their weekly programs in 15 communities across the province.



“Our son has found participating in traditional sport programs difficult. Special Olympics has given him an opportunity to have fun while developing important skills. He has become more confident, and his self esteem is getting higher.”

–Yuan Jiang, Special Olympics BC – Richmond parent



PRIDE AND ABILITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Special Olympics Team Canada members showed amazing skill, determination, and heart in their performances at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy, in March 2025.



Don't compare yourself to others. Just focus on yourself. That's what being in Special Olympics has taught me – don't focus on other people. They're going to do their own race, and I'm going to have to do my own."

–Special Olympics Team Canada 2025 snowshoeing athlete Danielle Pechet, Special Olympics BC – Vernon

After countless hours of dedicated training in their year-round Special Olympics programs in their hometowns, the B.C. members of the national team were fully prepared to shine and showcase their skills on the world stage.

That's what Special Olympics does – it's helped her know she can do it. It's a beautiful, amazing community, and I think every single person on our planet should come and experience one Special Olympics event in their lifetime."

–Debbie McManus, mother of Danielle Pechet and valued Special Olympics BC – Vernon volunteer

In total, Special Olympics Team Canada earned 116 medals – 39 gold, 35 silver, and 42 bronze. Special Olympics BC athletes contributed 29 medals to this total!



B.C. brought to Special Olympics Team Canada 2025:

22
ATHLETES

29
MEDALS

13
VOLUNTEER
COACHES
AND MISSION
STAFF

COUNTLESS
PERSONAL BESTS
AND MOMENTS OF
INSPIRATION

PLAY UNIFIED. LEARN UNIFIED. LIVE UNIFIED.

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to working with schools and districts across the province to build inclusive school communities. **Special Olympics BC Unified Sports®** programs are being offered in schools around the province to empower youth with and without intellectual disabilities to change the world through sports.

We know that training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. Special Olympics Unified Sports programs bring together students with and without intellectual disabilities to train and compete as teammates.



Teams practice and compete together, just like any other school team, and they open hearts and minds to the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities along the way. Students with and without intellectual disabilities make new friends, develop skills and self-esteem, and break down barriers through inclusive sport and learning experiences.

“There’s a lot of students that have never played a team sport, never had the opportunity to just have that experience with other peers and get to know other people,” says Megan Weeks, Special Olympics Unified Coach. “The kids have made inseparable friendships. We’ve hosted additional events because of the connections that they’ve made at Unified Sports, and it’s just really built a huge sense of community, which is invaluable.”



Special Olympics Unified Sports has just meant the world to my son. He loves being part of a team. He really enjoys just that sense of coming together, and he’s just been really, really happy doing it.

–Patricia Bruno, Special Olympics Unified Sports parent

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS EMPOWER

Through Special Olympics BC **Athlete Leadership programs**, athletes build their abilities and confidence to take on a range of leadership roles including public speaking, creating advocacy and media content, participating on Local Committees and Athlete Input Councils, and assisting as program volunteers.

Athlete Leadership programs are proven to have a lasting benefit to participants by increasing confidence and self-esteem, and a lasting benefit to Special Olympics as these athlete leaders provide invaluable feedback and insights.



Special Olympics BC – Surrey athlete Susan Wang is serving as one of only 10 Special Olympics Sargent Shriver Global Messengers worldwide for the 2024-27 term. In 2024-25, she shared her insights and leadership skills across our province, country, and planet. She served on the Special Olympics Canada Board of Directors and SOBC Athlete Input Council, spoke and advocated at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games, and competed and co-hosted the Opening Ceremony at the 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games.



Throughout my experiences with being an athlete leader, I have gained the confidence and knowledge to tackle new challenges such as graduating from university with a bachelor’s degree, getting my full license to drive, and working full time at an early childhood centre with infants.”

“Special Olympics has truly changed my life, and I don’t know where I would be today without this organization,” says Susan Wang, Special Olympics BC athlete and global leader. “Through participating in sports, I gained the confidence to take on athlete leadership and be a voice for change.”

–Susan Wang, Special Olympics BC – Surrey athlete

31

**schools offered
Special Olympics BC Unified Sports®**

286

**athletes participated in
leadership programs**

MAKING A SPLASH ACROSS B.C.

The 2025 Polar Plunge® for Special Olympics BC in partnership with the Law Enforcement Torch Run® shattered records, raising over \$350,000 to support SOBC’s empowering sport, youth, and health programs!

Plungers braved the cold waters from Castlegar to Langley, Kamloops to Chilliwack, and Abbotsford to Ridge Meadows – all to make a difference for Special Olympics BC athletes and programs.



Special Olympics is important because it teaches us valuable life skills gives us opportunities to be positive role models, and creates lifelong friendships. Special Olympics has helped shape who I am on and off the fields of play.

–Mathew Schmiing, Special Olympics BC – Vancouver athlete at the Vancouver Plunge



Event Partner ————— Community Partner



Media Sponsors —————



CHAMPIONING INCLUSION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Tim Hortons

Like Special Olympics, Tim Hortons is committed to changing lives through the power of inclusion. The Special Olympics donut fundraising campaign raises critical funds for Special Olympics programs across Canada. In 2025, the campaign raised a record-breaking \$1.3 million!



117
RESTAURANTS VISITED



Since 2018, Empire Family of Brands has partnered with Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters to fuel growth, belonging, and opportunity for Special Olympics athletes across Canada. In 2025, this impactful fundraising campaign raised \$1.64 million including at Safeway and Thrifty Foods stores in British Columbia!



52
STORES VISITED



AN EVENING OF INSPIRATION

For 26 years, the Sports Celebrities Festival has brought the B.C. sports community together with Special Olympics athletes and supporters to celebrate the power of inclusion and the joy of sport. Thanks to the generosity of our incredible sponsors, donors, B.C. sports stars, volunteers, and supporters, the 2024 gala raised \$500,000 for Special Olympics BC’s transformative sport programs!



“Competing alongside my friends and fellow athletes makes me feel happy and proud. It is fun, I make new friends, I meet new coaches, and I get to travel to different places.”

–Ariel Taylor, Special Olympics BC – Coquitlam athlete, at the 2024 Sports Celebrities Festival

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Community Partners



“The best part of it all is they arrive at a practice and see the athletes chatting, sharing stories, knowing they are among friends ... a community within a community. That is what Special Olympics is all about.”

–Tina Taylor, Special Olympics BC – Coquitlam parent and coach

FULL-SPEED FUNDRAISING FOR ATHLETES

For 40 years, B.C.'s New Car Dealers have been making a life-changing impact through the Auction for Athletes. The 2025 auction raised over \$225,000 in support of Special Olympics BC's empowering year-round sport programs and the New Car Dealers Foundation of BC's automotive industry grants and scholarships. Thank you to all of the generous sponsors, donors, bidders, and supporters for driving this auction across the finish line!

Auction for Athletes

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Media Sponsor



The 2025 Special Olympics BC Awards included athlete winners from Special Olympics BC – Kimberley/Cranbrook: SOBC Spirit of Sport Award winner Samantha McLean and Athletic Achievement Award winner Jesse Jensen.



"I like being part of a valued group. I want to make myself, my family, and my country proud of me."

–Jesse Jensen represented Canada in alpine skiing at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games

ON PAR FOR EMPOWERING SUPPORT

Each year, the Special Olympics BC Classic fundraising golf tournament highlights the B.C. business community's commitment to empowering people with intellectual disabilities. The 2025 event made a big impact thanks to all the incredible sponsors, donors, golfers, and supporters who stepped up to the tee!



“At Special Olympics, we make friends from all over the province, become more independent, and are accepted for who we are. Your support makes a real difference, as it helps us reach our goals, feel included, and keeps us doing what we love.”

–Kelsey Thomson, Special Olympics BC – Richmond athlete



I can say without hesitation that Special Olympics BC has been a vital part of [my son's] growth physically, socially, and emotionally. It has taught him how to persevere. It has taught him friendship. It has taught him how to find joy in everyday moments.

–Grace Tamkee, Special Olympics BC – Richmond parent

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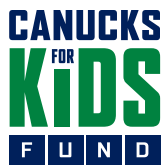
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HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES INSPIRE

The Special Olympics BC Hall of Fame recognizes significant, long-lasting contributions that individuals and groups have made to Special Olympics BC. Induction into the Hall of Fame honours the most outstanding of achievements and contributions, and is one of the highest honours bestowed within the Special Olympics BC organization. This year, two long-standing members of our community were inducted during the 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games Closing Ceremony.



PROVINCIAL BUILDER INDUCTEE



Though SOBC has recognized me for my contributions to this amazing organization, I have been given so many opportunities to grow as a coach, a person, and as a parent of an accomplished athlete. I hope my involvement and passion for Special Olympics BC has impacted those that matter most, and that is the athletes, coaches and volunteers of our organization. My goal is always to raise the profile of Special Olympics and the work they do and focus on abilities of our amazing athletes."

–Donna Bilous, Special Olympics BC – Abbotsford coach and parent

ATHLETE INDUCTEE

Special Olympics has taught me to believe in myself and others. This is an amazing organization – it allows us to participate in sport and competition and perhaps even travel to different parts of our province, country, and with hard work perhaps even the world. Along the way, we meet many people and form lifelong friendships."

–Erin Thom, Special Olympics BC – Kimberley/Cranbrook athlete



With Gratitude

Thank you to our valued donors whose contributions help enrich the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport.

\$1,000+ Donors

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- Toptable Group
- Vail Resorts
- Vancouver Golf Club
- Vancouver Police Department
- Vancouver Warriors
- Vancouver Whitecaps FC
- Vista Radio Ltd.
- Wheaton Precious Metals

“Special Olympics has changed my life big time! It is a neat opportunity for anyone who has disabilities, definitely. Come out and give it a try and you can win medals!”

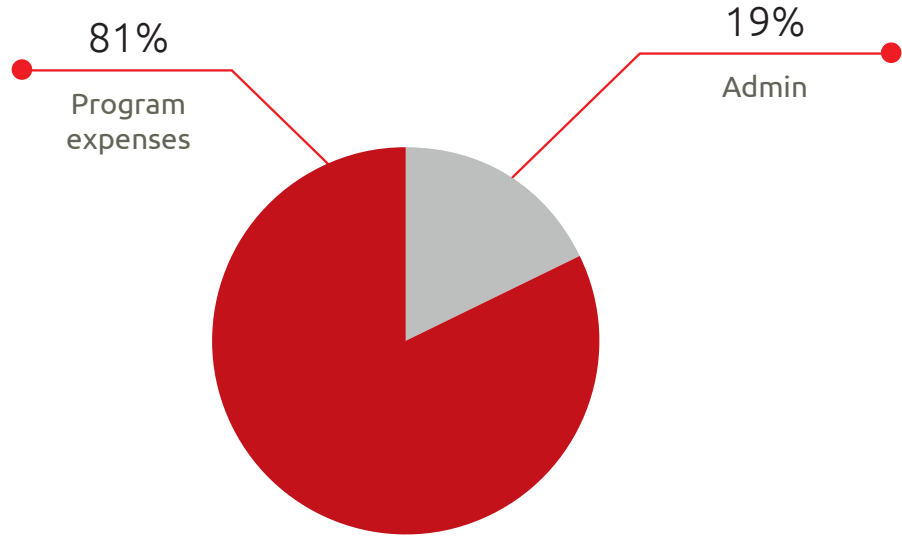
–Ron Greenhorn, Special Olympics BC – Nanaimo alpine skier. In 2025, Ron competed in the World Games for the first time after 34 years as a Special Olympics athlete.



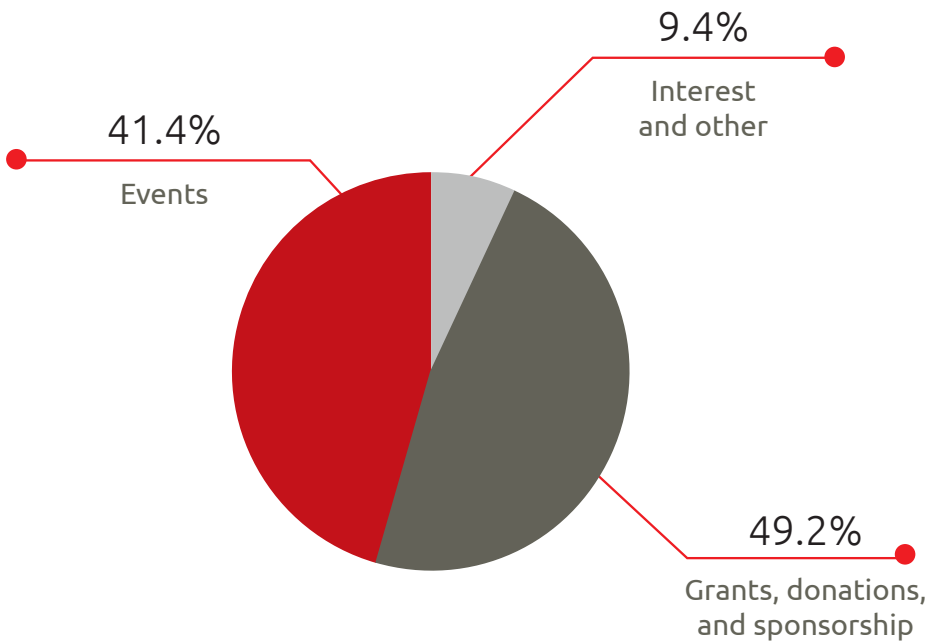
Financial Summary

The generous support of Special Olympics BC’s sponsors and donors is critical to our athletes, our year-round programs, and our empowering competitions. In 2024-25, Special Olympics BC’s valued sponsors and donors contributed **\$3.36 million** to make a difference for athletes with intellectual disabilities and the programs and opportunities that matter so much to them.

Expenses



Revenue







"I am driven to do my best to support and inspire the athletes every day as I know how much effort they have put into getting to Games, plus how hard they are working to be their best. Seeing the growth and camaraderie develop between the athletes and the excitement of the athletes to train hard, learn new skills, and represent their country is absolutely the best part of Special Olympics Team Canada."

—David Wilkinson, valued Special Olympics BC – Kelowna coach and father of athlete Tony and fellow coach Ty

***Special
Olympics***
British Columbia



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