



MICHELLE POCKEY

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN

BUSINESS AWARD



THE INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS

recognize British Columbia's most distinguished businesswomen from the private and public sectors: women who have risen through the ranks to become senior executives or entrepreneurs and have influenced and shaped policy at some of Canada's largest companies. Recipients are formidable business leaders in our community who are at the top of their game. In 2016, Michelle Pockey was selected as one of the winners.

The awards ceremony was held on International Women's Day, March 8, at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel.

What follows is Michelle's acceptance speech, which received a standing ovation and left the audience feeling empowered and inspired.



THANK YOU, WILL, for that very generous introduction. I am very touched that you, Will, and so many of our partners, Fasken colleagues, and clients stand here in support of me today. It can often be so difficult, when one is neck-deep in the daily grind within a large and sophisticated organization, that is home to many talented business leaders, to feel confident about one's place there, and the strength of one's voice. It is often difficult to know whether the

voice you take risks to share with others around you on topics of concern is really being heard, and how that voice is regarded, for we all care about and champion different issues of importance, and we each advocate to ensure that they are addressed.

From time to time, throughout my career, I have questioned the strength and importance of my voice both in and outside my firm, as everyone does. Today, your vibrant support of me here demonstrates the importance our firm places on the regard we have for each other, and on issues of social conscience and gender diversity. It speaks to the importance we place on championing gender diversity in particular. As you mentioned, Will, these are topics that have been of constant and prime importance to me throughout my career. Your support here and every day since I have had to leave our office, has been so overwhelming and so uplifting for me, particularly at this challenging time in my life. Thank you all so very much.

I extend my most heartfelt thanks also to Business in Vancouver media group, and to its panel of judges for selecting me as an award recipient, and to all of the sponsors of this event for also recognizing the importance of championing gender diversity by celebrating the incredible vision, achievements, and contributions of the other women with whom I am very privileged and humbled to

share this stage—women whom I have admired for some time as I have watched them work their particular brand of magic for the betterment of our community.

And, but for the hands-on championship from those who nominated and supported me for this recognition, I would not be in this position today. I was touched by the incredible nomination package that Lois Nahirney and Anne Giardini—two of the most formidable women I know—had submitted. It was astounding to see that they sought and received the names of approximately 75 business leaders in our community, men and women, who added their support to my nomination. To all of you, I thank you deeply.

Lois and Anne, dear friends, I am touched by your personal efforts on my behalf, and your constant mentorship and promotion of me. In addition, I am inspired by you both for the work you do on behalf of so many other women in our community. You are shining examples of a quality and style of leadership that is rare—so inclusive, so selfless, and so collaborative.

To my dear family: My daughter, Noa, and my son, Nathan, and my incredible husband, Mike, to my parents, Carole and Maurice Pockey, my mom-in law, Elizabeth, who are all here today, and to my dearest friends and business colleagues and mentors: It is hard to say in the

few fleeting minutes I have here how much I love you and what your love and support has meant to me throughout my career and particularly over the past 8 months, since having been abruptly plucked out of my career and made to walk down a completely different, uncharted path.

It is because of your show of love, your reach, and your strength, that I am, despite my health circumstances, in a place of peace, calm, happiness, acceptance, and strength. Without you, I cannot imagine how badly off I would be. Your love carries me through my toughest moments and brings me true joy. I know I am blessed for having you all in my life.



I HAVE SPENT several weeks thinking about what I would share with you today that might offer something of value for you to take away and reflect upon. I decided to offer some personal reflections, for what they are worth, on success in business and in leadership from my current vantage point; that is, of someone who has been taken by fate, or by the hand of God, out of career and professional life—as someone who is acutely aware every single moment of every day now that I could very well be taken out of life altogether, far earlier than I had planned or hoped.

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As Will mentioned, I have spent a good deal of time, both in my law practice and outside of it, seeking to build meaningful relationships and connections with others in our community. As many of you know, I have always been a very social person. I love meeting new people, finding our commonalities, sharing ideas, and harnessing the diversity and differences of opinion between us to come up with new, disruptive, and innovative ideas and solutions that benefit as many people as possible. That has always been in my nature and a passion for me. I find people and their ideas fascinating—well, most of the time!

But on careful self-reflection, I believe that the reason that deep interpersonal human connection has been such an imperative for me has nothing really to do with a need to have many friends (perhaps, despite what some of you may be thinking!). The reason this has been so important to me is that I have learned, in my personal life, in my 11 years of litigation practice during the front half of my career, and during the last 10 years of my business transactions practice in resource and community development, that in the absence of authentic, mutually respectful connections among people involved in business, it is often very difficult to achieve the personal and business goals for which we all strive.

We are here on this earthly plane, certainly in self-contained human bodies, but we are part of a much larger

collective compelled by the laws of physics—where the impact of what we do in the world can have a profound impact on many other people, for good or for bad, and sometimes for not. We live in our bodies and our individual minds, but we exist as a collective. This is our human condition and each of us, every day, is involved in the yin and yang, the effort to achieve a balance between how we exist as individuals, and how we fit into and find our rightful place in a larger collective.

Those business and community leaders I have admired and whom I have tried to emulate, seem to have found a way, most of the time, to strike this balance. And when that balance is achieved, magic and miracles happen.

We are at a major crossroads in our global history. Never before have we been more connected globally through technology and through our current urgent collective understanding of the global risks we all face—climate change, global resource scarcity, food security, lack of adequate and efficacious health care and access to it, increasing occurrences of serious disease, environmental compromise, random acts of terrorism, and wars. And, often instead of recognizing how we can come together, and how our rich diversity of experience and opinion can lead to elegant solutions for these problems, we are focused on the self first, or we are incapacitated by fear or indifference.

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In the last 7 years of my practice particularly, I spent a good deal of time negotiating project agreements and partnering arrangements between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal parties. I became acutely aware of how positioning and jockeying around differences of opinion, rather than first focusing on our commonalities, could derail a potential deal at significant cost to both parties and could thwart real opportunities to move forward positively on these issues. I spent a great deal of time lamenting about this and working to find a way to shift the focus at the beginning of the negotiations to our common goals, to our shared human condition, and to our shared desires. Often, that approach would encourage people to trust one another, to open up to one another about what really matters to them, and then, together, we could creatively determine what could be done to address those concerns and move forward for mutual benefit. I found great joy and satisfaction in that approach because I achieved success in my endeavours and because everyone around the negotiating table often received much of what they needed too. The feeling of elation I had emerging from those tables, with new friends, new ideas, and new models for living was beyond intense for me on a personal level, and that feeling was often shared by others around the table.



I FIRST LEARNED how sick I was 8 months ago, and I immediately chose to leave my office and delegate my practice to my partners. Right from the beginning, I was absolutely astounded at the outpouring of support from all directions. I was especially touched by the support I received immediately from several different Aboriginal communities with whom I had been involved in project negotiations. As a collective, they sent me healing prayers, offers of sweat lodges and healing circles, deliveries of sweet grasses and traditional medicines, offers of love and support—all from people who had been sitting across the negotiating table from me in a business environment. This same outpouring of pure love and support, unhindered by any sensibility of difference between us, was offered to me, and has continued to be offered to me daily by hundreds of people in our business community, including many, many people I have never met before.

I can't believe what I have experienced. This widespread outpouring of support and community are what I truly believe have helped me overcome my fears around this disease, and have gotten me through colon surgery, chemotherapy, and whole-liver surgical radiation—an aggressive procedure which I had only two weeks ago. I

attribute this unwavering love and support to my generally excellent performance, despite my circumstances. Each time I visit with any one of my doctors and others on my health care team, I manage to impress them both physically and mentally.

I hold a deep belief—a deep knowledge really—that in large part, I have been able to push forward, to feel joy and positivity in every day and to cherish my life, my family, and the amazing opportunity I have to live joyfully because I have been very fortunate to have the support of and deep connections with many people around me.

We solve community problems, organizational problems, we overcome personal challenges, and we have the opportunity to solve difficult global risks to our very survival when we focus on each other first and ourselves second. We win personally when we do this. When we do this, whether in our personal lives or in business, magic and miracles can happen.

I truly believe, and have strongly believed since my diagnosis, without wavering, that despite the odds I have for surviving this, and despite the lack of any known cure for what I have, that my time here on Earth is not over. I believe that I will survive this miserable disease. I will survive it through the power of positive connection, and energy and love which I have been so very fortunate to receive.

And yet, in the same breath, I can tell you that I am well aware that I may be wrong. And I am at complete peace with that, if that is to be my fate, because I have had a wonderful life filled with joy, connectivity, and love.

I have learned to live in the moment and make the most of the time that I have. The time we have is now. The past is behind us and the future does not yet exist. All we ever have is today. We have today to look into the eyes of everyone we are with each and every day—in our homes, in our offices, in the boardroom, in our communities, and to find the commonality in the strength that binds us together as a collective to find elegant solutions to our human problems and challenges. We cannot solve big problems on our own. We need each other. We are successful when we reach out to each other, when we collaborate, and when we share our commonalities and our differences, all under a looking glass that is understood to be magnificent rather than divisive.

My ask of all of you is that you look at each and every person around the table with whom you share lunch today. See each and every person there. Go back to your offices each and every day and do the same thing there. Shed your focus on the differences. Start instead, with your commonalities. Work from there. Consider that you are inextricably connected to each and every other person around you and that your success, personally, in business, and as a

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business leader depends upon your ability to deepen and maintain authentic connections with other people. Find ways to build community and work from there.

In closing, I want to share an affirmation with you that was shared with me through the generosity of dear friend, and which resonates deeply with me. It goes like this:

Be the place that love shines through, because it is good for others, and it is very good for you.



WHILE I TRULY believe I am going to be good on this planet for several more years, the truth is that I don't really know for sure. And you know what?—neither do any of you.

Whether I am here physically or not, my sincere hope is that I will be understood and ultimately remembered as a place where love shone through—in business and in my personal life. For business is personal. Business is personal, and so it should be.

My deep thanks for this honour. This has been overwhelming for me, and I am grateful for all that each of you has given me by joining me and the other amazing women who are honoured here today.

THANK YOU.

