

## Media Release

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### CANADIAN HEROINES CONTEST 2007

Next time the CBC launches a quest for *The Greatest Canadian*, historian Merna Forster hopes that there will be more women on the list of contenders. To help spread the word about great Canadian women and kick-off Women's History Month in Canada, Forster has launched the Canadian Heroines Contest through her website [heroines.ca](http://heroines.ca). Read on for all the details!

#### THE CONTEST:

To celebrate Women's History Month 2007, we are asking Canadians to show us their favorite Canadian heroine in Canadian history in the medium of their choice: short video, sound recording including song, photograph, painting, sculpture, collage, etc. Show us who your favorite Canadian heroine is in a creative way and you could win a great prize! Plus have your entry featured on [heroines.ca](http://heroines.ca).

The FIRST PRIZE WINNERS for each of Age Groups A and B will receive \$100 and a copy of the bestselling book *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces* by historian Merna Forster. The FIRST RUNNERS-UP for each age category will receive \$50 and a copy of the book *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces*.

The rules are simple! Your heroine MUST BE:

1. a girl or woman you admire
2. Canadian-born or have accomplished something significant in

You MUST be:

1. 12-16 years of age (Age Group A), or 17 and over (Age Group B)
2. living in Canada

All entries need to be received by November 30, 2007.

Please send your submissions to: Contest, [heroines.ca](http://heroines.ca), 2041 Newton St., Victoria, BC V8R 2R7. Or, depending on the medium of your submission, you can email it to [mail@heroines.ca](mailto:mail@heroines.ca) with the subject line "Contest Entry 2007". Winners will be announced in December 2007.

For complete contest rules and regulations visit [heroines.ca](http://heroines.ca) and follow the links, or go directly to <http://www.heroines.ca/features/contestrules2007.html>.

## BACKGROUND

in the fall of 2004 Canadians across the country selected Don Cherry as one of the top ten contenders for *The Greatest Canadian*—and don't name a single woman. The widespread amazement at the few women that even made the top fifty brought a lot of attention to Forster and her book *100 Canadian Heroines*, which was released in October 2004 by Dundurn Press. The newbie author managed to attract the support of Canada's first and only female prime minister, who agreed to write a foreword for the book. According to Kim Campbell, "The term "weaker sex" should make one's blood boil after reading this book."

Many media outlets contacted the author to find out about the women that Canadians could have considered in the search for *The Greatest Canadian*. Forster told them about women like Dr. Leonora King, the first Canadian doctor to serve in China. And what about scientist Margaret Newton, whose work led to the creation of rust-resistant grains? And Marie de la Tour, the heroine of Acadia?

Who remembers Margaret Marshall Saunders, who wrote the first Canadian bestseller: an autobiography of a dog. Forster asked who knew that a Canadian sang at Queen Victoria's funeral? That the funniest woman in the world was Canadian? That the Anna best known for her association with the King of Siam settled in Canada and became a notable suffragist? Even well-informed journalists like television broadcaster Valerie Pringle wrote, "How is it possible that I hadn't heard of most of these women and what they had done?"

Forster's work continues to attract fans, like the noted feminist Penni Mitchell who wrote about the book this spring: "A book of encyclopedic biographical references, *Heroines* is fresh and informative, even to the seasoned feminist reader. I'd never heard of half of these women before--what a shame! This is a book of rich achievements, but more, it is a storytelling book about great characters." In 2005 Saskatchewan's Lynda Haverstock awarded Forster the Lieutenant Governor's Celebration of the Arts Pin in recognition of her talent as a writer and storyteller. Ms. Forster hopes that the enthusiasm for her book and presentation will eventually result in a better appreciation of the contributions of women to Canadian history.

Merna Forster currently works full-time at the University of Victoria, but in her "spare time" adds content to her educational website about women in Canadian history. She has also been able to squeeze in some presentations to women's groups and school classes, as well as Girl Guides and Brownies.

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