

August 28, 2008

City of Vancouver Honours Beijing Paralympic Torchbearers

The City of Vancouver held a special ceremony today to honour the nine distinguished citizens selected to represent Canada as torchbearers in the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Torch Relay. The tenth torchbearer, Mayor Sam Sullivan, is already in the Chinese capital.

The theme of the Beijing Paralympic Torch Relay is "Transcendence, Integration and Equality" and the total length of the route is 13,181 km. The lighting ceremony of the torch relay was held at Beijing's Temple of Heaven earlier today and a total of 850 torchbearers will take part in the nine-day event.

Among the Canadian torchbearers, Andrea Holmes, Bruce Gilmour, Shirley Olafsson and Duncan Campbell were chosen by a five-member community panel to represent the City of Vancouver. A total of 68 applicants or nominees were nominated based on their Olympic or Paralympic Games performances, their contributions to the cause of the Games, or their abilities to inspire and motivate fellow citizens.

At today's ceremony, Deputy Mayor Raymond Louie received a Paralympic torch, specially flown in from Beijing to officially mark Canada's participation in the event, from Consul General Yang Qiang of the People's Republic of China.

The Canadian torchbearers will fly to Beijing next week and participate in the relay which will be in 11 Chinese provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities.

Vancouver was originally selected as one of three international cities to host the first-ever International Paralympic Torch Relay. In June of this year, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 29th Games of the Olympiad (BOCOG) announced that the relay route had been modified and the international leg of the event was cancelled. BOCOG subsequently announced that 10 Canadians would participate in the Beijing torch relay, along with 10 torchbearers from London, England and 10 from Sochi, Russia.

The City of Vancouver, the Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) partnered to select the 10 Canadian Torch Bearers. Four were selected by the City of Vancouver, two by Whistler, and four by the CPC, which included Mayor Sullivan among its selected torchbearers.

Contact: Corporate Communications
604.873.6336

Biographies of Vancouver Torchbearers

Andrea Holmes

Andrea Holmes is a below-the-knee amputee who has turned her physical limitation into a powerful strength. She has been competing for Canada for 6 years, and represented our country at the Athens 2004 Paralympic Olympic Summer Games and at the Commonwealth Games, where she won a bronze medal in long jump. In 2006, Andrea made a transition from track and field to Alpine Skiing, and now trains daily in preparation for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games. In addition to being an amazing athlete, she is also a role model and inspiration to many through her public speaking as an RBC ambassador. Andrea motivates young and old to overcome any disabilities. Her goals are to ensure everyone in Canada knows about *Parasport*, and to ensure that no one with a disability misses out on the opportunity to experience the thrill of sports.

Bruce Gilmour

Bruce Gilmour represented BC at the Canadian National Summer Games as a middle and long distance runner. He was selected to the standing national track team for the New York 1984 Paralympic Summer Games, and serves as the first VP of the Canadian Blind Sports Association. Bruce is also an active member of the BC Blind Sport and Recreation Association (BCBSRA). Bruce lost his eyesight from an accident in his early 20s. His love of recreation and leisure activities led to a Bachelor Degree in Forestry and Geography and a successful career in the forestry industry. Bruce is very active in community service and sits on the 2010 Legacies Now Disability Advisory Committee to support inclusion and sustainability in the 2010 Winter Games.

Duncan Campbell

A Winnipeg native, Duncan Campbell is affectionately known as the "Quadfather" of Wheelchair Rugby (aka Murderball). Quad Rugby, which he invented in the late 1970s, is an action-packed, must-see sport that has raised the profile of wheelchair athletics throughout the world. Duncan was a recreation therapist at G. F. Strong Rehab Centre for approximately 16 years, and colleagues from his tenure there are especially proud of his contribution to the world of sport. In 2006, Duncan was honoured by the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association (CWSA) in the "Builder Category" for his role in the creation and evolution of the sport. He is a member of the Paralympic Hall of Fame, and the annual trophy awarded to the Wheelchair Rugby National Champions is now called the "Campbell Cup." Duncan humbly acknowledges that his role as athlete, coach and advocate for Wheelchair Rugby has changed his life and the lives of countless others. Duncan currently works with the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association.

Shirley Olafsson

If Shirley Olafsson were still competing she would surely be a Paralympian. Hers is an inspirational story, as she was born with a club foot and extensive surgeries left her with one foot sized 5 1/2, the other sized 9 1/2. Nonetheless, she placed 10th in high jump at the London 1948 Summer Olympics, won the Canadian High Jump Championship in 1949, and placed 5th at the 1950 British Empire Games. In 1947, Shirley was inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the Vancouver Hedlunds Basketball Team (winner of the

Canadian Championship) and individually as a high jumper. Today, Shirley coaches youth track and field, basketball and curling. She plays tennis three times a week, and swims regularly. Shirley is a member of the Richmond Spirit of BC Community Committee, and helped organize the Beijing 2008 Summer Games Opening Ceremony event in Richmond.

Torchbearers Representing the Resort Municipality of Whistler

Brad Lennea

Brad Lennea has been skiing for Canada on the Para-Alpine Ski Team since 2002. Lennea has not only embraced the sport and competed at the highest level; he has become a true leader in his community. Lennea's accomplishments go well beyond his success in the gates. Lennea is committed to raising the profile of the Paralympic Games and specifically sit-skiing. He continues to help train individuals at the grass-roots and those on the BC Disabled Ski Team.

Sarah Tipler

Sarah Tipler has been a tireless Whistler volunteer from her home in Squamish. Tipler is a graduate of the Leadership Sea to Sky Forum. Tipler can also be found volunteering at VANOC events and working in the race office during the Rotary GS and BC Para-Alpine Championships. Sarah recently became an Alpine Level 1 Race Official, and is planning on volunteering as a race official for many years to come.

Torchbearers Selected by the Canadian Paralympic Committee

Peter Eriksson

Peter Eriksson is the coach of Paralympic multi-medallists such as Chantal Petitclerc and Jeffrey Adams as well as up-and-coming athletes. He has been to every Paralympic Summer Games as a coach since 1984, and the athletes he has trained have won 103 medals over that time. He is the author of books on wheelchair racing and athletes with a physical disability.

Eamonn Nolan

Eamonn Nolan is public school teacher who has tirelessly supported his wife Victoria, who will be representing Canada in rowing in Beijing. He drives his wife to every practice, training camp and regatta as well as to appointments with massagers, doctors and personal trainers. He has also created a fan website for the rowing team and publicizes the team's races and individual rowing accomplishments. He teaches all of his classes about people with disabilities and the Paralympic Movement.

Sian Blyth

Sian Blyth is the volunteer president of the Whistler Adaptive Sports Program, high performance director for the Disabled Skiers Association of BC, and program coordinator for BC Wheelchair Sports. She has moved the Whistler Adaptive Sports Program from a group of about 35 volunteers delivering 50 lessons annually to a registered non-profit organization with 120 volunteers and nine paid staff who deliver more than 1,000 lessons a year.

Mayor Sam Sullivan

Mayor Sam Sullivan was chosen for his work as a builder and leader in helping to make the perception of disability disappear and replacing it with the inclusion and equity. Sullivan broke his neck while skiing at the age of 19 and is a quadriplegic. He is the founder of six non-profit organizations that have improved the lives of thousands of North Americans with disabilities. After being elected to Vancouver City Council in 1993, Sullivan served as a City Councillor for 12 years and was elected Mayor in November of 2005.

Members of the Vancouver Community Panel:

- Maggie Ip: Retired Teacher, Educator; Former Vancouver City Councillor, Founding Chair & Vice Chair S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- David Jang: Regional Communications Manager CBC Vancouver
- Rob Sleath: Vice-Chair CNIB BC-Yukon, Division Board President Access for Sight Impaired Consumers, Chair TransLink's Access Transit User's Advisory Committee
- Paul Tubbe: President PhoenixRising Solutions: Universal Design, Accessibility, and Business Research/Design Consultants
- Kelly Smith: Paralympian, NavCan Air Traffic Controller, Sport Advocate