



# District of Maple Ridge & City of Pitt Meadows News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2012 #12-08

For further information, contact  
Petra Frederick  
Recreation Access Coordinator,  
Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Parks and Leisure Services  
Tel: 604-467-7355  
Email: [pfrederick@mapleridge.ca](mailto:pfrederick@mapleridge.ca)

## Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Celebrate Rick Hansen 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay

**Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows, BC:** 2012 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Man in Motion World Tour that Rick Hansen completed in 1987. As part of the Anniversary Relay, Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows will be celebrating local heroes at events on May 16 and 17.

For two years Rick Hansen wheeled in a wheelchair through 34 countries on four continents. The Anniversary Relay recreates Rick's original route as a global invitation to join in his journey towards a cure for spinal cord injuries and create a more inclusive society, as well as inspiring a new generation to dream, to take action, and to continue changing the world.

On May 16 and 17, 2012, Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows will participate as 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Communities, recognizing local heroes in the community who are making a difference in the lives of others. Two local medal bearers will carry the Rick Hansen Medal as part of its cross-Canada journey and stop at local community celebrations. The two medal bearers, Nathan Bragg and Gordon Kirkland, were selected as part of a community survey with the input of the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility Issues (MACAI) serving as the final jury for nominations.

Greg Turnbull, past chair of MACAI and one of the organizers of the community celebration events for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay, noted, "I am very proud that we have been selected as the sites for two community celebrations. Nathan and Gordon are great citizens, great volunteers and amazing examples of how we all need to focus on how many people in our communities, working together, are making a difference."

The celebration in Maple Ridge will be held on May 16 in Memorial Peace Park from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The medal arrives at 6:00 pm, carried by 18-year-old Maple Ridge Secondary School student Nathan Bragg, the BC Wheelchair Basketball Society's 2010 Junior Athlete of the Year. The event will include live music, displays and a brief ceremony as the medal arrives on the bandstand.

The next day, Thursday, May 17, the medal will travel from Maple Ridge to Pitt Meadows and be part of a special celebration at Spirit Square in Pitt Meadows from 11:45 am to 1:15 pm. Live music, a barbeque and other events will serve as a backdrop for the medal ceremony, featuring Medal Bearer and Pitt Meadows resident Gordon Kirkland, a successful humour writer and novelist and advocate for accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Turnbull added, "This event is an incredible opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our communities and the people who have been strong advocates for Rick's vision on how they live their lives. MACAI is an example of how accessibility and inclusion is now part of the way we do business in our communities, and what has happened to make them more inclusive and accessible since the Man in Motion World Tour ended in 1987."

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Attachments: Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay - Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows route maps (5)

**BIO**  
**GORDON KIRKLAND**

Rick Hansen 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay Medal Bearer (Pitt Meadows)  
Humour Writer, Novelist, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Gordon Kirkland suffered a spinal cord injury in 1990, which, he claims, was the result of a golfing accident. His car was rear-ended while he was on the way to play golf, and he points out that it radically changed his handicap. The injury was exacerbated when his car was again rear-ended in 1992, and again in 1994. After three times, he says he was almost afraid to drive in 1996 because it seemed even numbered years were out to get him.

Gordon started writing full time in 1994, returning to his comedy roots, which originated from performances as a comedian in coffee-houses and clubs in southern Ontario in the early 1970's. He also wrote a syndicated humor column, which ran in several newspapers in Canada and the United States from 1994 until 2007.

Gordon has written nine books, including seven collections of short humorous essays and two novels. Three of his collections have received the Stephen Leacock Award of Merit for Humour. Gordon also gives a great deal of time back to the writing community, assisting emerging writers as his way of paying it forward from those who helped him get his start. He has presented workshops and keynote addresses at writers' conferences, festivals and university programs throughout Canada and the United States.

Gordon has made it his mission to show that a spinal cord injury has no impact on one's sense of humour. In fact, he often speaks to organizations about the power of humour to help cope with life-changing events and stress. He is a former member of the board of the British Columbia Paraplegic Association, and has been an outspoken campaigner for improvements to accessibility and services for persons with disabilities in both Canada and the United States.

Gordon moved to Pitt Meadows a few years after Rick Hansen completed the original Man in Motion World Tour, and over that time he has been a dedicated and active member of the community. He has been selected as a Medal Bearer in the Rick Hansen 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay as part of a community survey with the input of the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility Issues (MACAI) serving as the final jury for the nominations.

Gordon will carry the medal from Spirit Square in Pitt Meadows at 1:00 pm on Thursday, May 17, 2012, as part of the community celebration.



## BIO

### NATHAN BRAGG

Rick Hansen 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay Medal Bearer (Maple Ridge)

2010 BC Wheelchair Basketball Society Junior Athlete of the Year, Maple Ridge Secondary School Student, Aspiring Member of 2015 Canada Winter Games Team

Nathan Bragg is an 18-year-old student of Maple Ridge Secondary School diagnosed with cerebral palsy who has approached life with an intensity that inspires everyone in his community and embodies the goals of the Rick Hansen 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay.

Nathan has attended BC Easter Seals Camps since he was six years old. In 2011, he paid it forward by helping to organize and be part of 'KKBL Happy Campers' at the annual 24 Hour Relay, raising \$1,300 so that 11 campers can participate in the Easter Seals Camps that he has enjoyed in his childhood. Nathan has been an Easter Seals Ambassador as well as a dedicated fundraiser.

In 2010, Nathan was named Junior Athlete of the Year by the BC Wheelchair Basketball Society. He has played the sport for eight years and has a goal of being part of the BC Team at the Canada Games in 2013. In addition to his participation as a player, Nathan also coaches a kid/youth wheelchair basketball team called the Langley Gold Rush. Nathan is also a member of the BC Provincial wheelchair rugby team. Nathan's dedication to wheelchair basketball was inspired by a wheelchair sports demonstration team's visit to his elementary school and he hasn't looked back since. He has set goals of making the 2015 Canada Winter games team and playing in Division I of the provincial league.

A quote from an article in the local newspaper from 2011 sums up Nathan's view on life, "I really think playing wheelchair basketball helped me learn about my disability, and how it doesn't have to hold me back."

Nathan will bring the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Relay Medal into Memorial Peace Park, and up to the Bandstand, as part of the end of day celebration event at 6:00 pm on May 16, 2012.