

NEWS RELEASE

Five New Inductees to be Honoured at the 2015 North Cowichan – Duncan Sports Wall of Fame Induction Ceremonies

(October 7, 2015, North Cowichan) – The North Cowichan-Duncan Sports Wall of Fame will have five new inductees in 2015. The inductees will be honoured at an induction ceremony on Saturday, November 14 at the Cowichan Golf and Country Club.

The 2015 Inductees include:

Melanie (Slade) Brancato - Athlete (Field Hockey)

A Canadian Olympic team member in the 1988 Seoul Games, a perennial all-star and captain with the University of British Columbia (UBC) field hockey team during the 1980s, Melanie was a three-time CIAU (CIS) championship tournament all-star, leading UBC to the national championship four times. Melanie was selected both as Canada West All-Star and All-Canadian three times. She was also twice selected as the University's outstanding female athlete of the year and was inducted into UBC's Sports Wall of Fame in 2006.

Cowichan Rugby Club – First Division XV 1996/1997 (Team)

The 1996-1997 Cowichan Rugby Club First XV (also known as the Piggies) etched their name into British Columbia Rugby history with their victory over Burnaby Lake 29 to 12 in the Rounsfell Cup. The Rounsfell Cup, emblematic of rugby success at the premier level in the province, has been in competition since 1922. The Cowichan victory was the first time that a team from outside Greater Vancouver or Victoria had won a Provincial title. To get to the Rounsfell Cup, the Piggies defeated James Bay 27 to 6 in the Vancouver Island Championships (Barnard Cup).

Neil Dirom – Athlete/Builder (Basketball)

In 1956, while playing for Cowichan High School, Neil was an all-star at the Vancouver Island High School Championships. The following year he went on to play for the Alberni Athletics and won the BC Senior "A" Men's Championship. In 1958, Neil secured a scholarship to Washington State University where he was a starting forward for coach Marv Harshman's Huskies for the next four years. In the 1960s Neil returned to play basketball for Alberni securing National Men's Senior "A" Canadian Championship titles from 1964 to 1966 and again in 1967. Neil joined the Canadian National team for the 1962-1963 seasons and played in the Puerto Rico Invitational, Pan American and World Games. The IGA Alberni Senior Men's National Championship Team was inducted into the BC Sports Wall of Fame in 1997.

Jane James – Builder (Para-Equestrian)

Jane was one of the driving forces behind the birth of therapeutic riding in Canada. In 1986, she founded the Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association and was a co-founding member of Para-Equestrian Canada. She has twice served as Chair of the Canadian Para-Equestrian Committee. She has also performed as Chef d'Equipe for the Canadian Para-Equestrian Team, most notably at the 1996 Atlanta, Athens 2004 and London 2012 Paralympic Games which included organizing and managing the Canadian team's attendance. Jane has been recognized with the 1996 "Black Tie Award for Excellence" in Outstanding Community Service in the Cowichan Valley, 1996 Coach of the Year – BC Disability Association, 2004 Coach of the Year from the Horse Council BC and in 2012 a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, a commemorative medal awarded in celebration of significant contributions and achievements by Canadians

Gerry Rees – Builder (Slo-Pitch)

Gerry coached and managed slo-pitch teams to unparalleled success including provincial titles in 1992, 1993 and 1997 and to a Canadian National Championship in 1994. His teams were noted for winning 106 wins in 111 games in 1990. The wins included high profile tournaments such as the Whistler 5000. Gerry was president of the local slo-pitch league for 16 years, umpired for over 30 and acted as Chief umpire for 12 years. Gerry was also an accomplished rugby player with the Cowichan Rugby Club first XV during the 1970s and 1980s.

A limited number of \$15 tickets to the 2015 Sports Wall of Fame Induction Ceremonies are available at the Cowichan Aquatic Centre (2653 James Street) and North Cowichan Municipal Hall (7030 Trans-Canada Highway).

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