



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

Heather Taylor



Summary

Heather Taylor has a paddling career that spans 40 years. Heather was a Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival and Hong Kong Dragon Boat International Festival medalist many times between 1986-1993. Heather would be Canada's first IVF V1 500M Masters Women Gold medalist and compete with FCRC outtrigger canoeing teams at the international level for many years.

Early Career

Growing up in Nanaimo established a solid foundation for Heather's athletic success. Her parents and sisters encouraged each other to try their hardest and do their best by modelling hard work and determination. [01] White Raven Canoe & Kayak in War Canoes with Ruth Matson at the helm passing by their Departure Bay home would be an inspiration for the Taylor sisters. Heather would compete for Team BC representing Burnaby Canoe & Kayak club at the 1983 Western Canada Summer Games in Calgary. [02] Bill Cowie introduced Heather to marathon canoe at Burnaby Lake. "It runs in the family" aptly describes the success of the Taylor sisters. Having an Olympic Gold Medalist as a sibling may very well have been an inspiration for Heather. [03] Brenda Taylor won gold medals in the coxless fours and coxed eights at the 1990 and 1991 World Championships. [04] In her one and only appearance at the Olympic Games, Brenda Taylor won two gold medals. Her first gold came in the coxless fours with Kirsten Barnes, Jessica Monroe and Kay Worthington (who had replaced the injured Jennifer Walinga). The following day Brenda Taylor won a gold medal with the eights crew. Recognizing Walinga's contribution to the coxless fours team in the preparation and training in the years prior, a short while after Barcelona 1992, while standing in a parking lot, Brenda Taylor sacrificed one of her two Olympic gold medals and donated it to Walinga – recognizing the fact that the crew could not have won the gold medal without her. Brenda Taylor was inducted into the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame and Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 1994, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 2013 and Canadian Rowing Hall of Fame in 2017. [05]

Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

The majority of background on Heather in the 1980s and 1990s had been shared by FCRC Alumni Drew Mitchell in a 2020 interview. There is minimal documented history on Heather prior to the formation of the FCRC womens outrigger canoe program in the early 1990s. There are records that show the FCRC Womens Team would win the Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival from 1986-1993. They would continue onto win the Hong Kong Dragon Boat International Festival Races in 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993. [26] Heather raced with these FCRC Womens Teams from 1988-1997.

This Dragon Boat success would continue at the 2009 Dragon Boat World Championships in Prague, where Team Canada with BC paddlers Don Irvine, Annie Boulding, Pat Begonzii, Shannon Brenner, Andrea Kwon, and Heather would take 1st in the Senior Mixed 2000M and 200M events. [06]

The early 1990s saw an initiative to deliver a womens outrigger canoe program that would be competitive at the international level. FCRC had recruited 40+ women in 1993 to fill two Molokai Na Wahine crews with a Catalina Channel Crossing race as a precursor. [07] The 1993 Womens outrigger canoe program brought in paddlers including Heather Taylor, Cheryl Skribe, Andrea Dillon, Allie Johnstone, Kamini Jain, Jacinta Sheridan, Jackie Webber, and many more. The two FCRC Womens 1993 Molokai Na Wahine crews (12 paddlers per team) would finish 10 minutes apart in 10th and 13th place Open Fibreglass. [08] The 1994 womens outrigger canoe program focused on a single crew (12 paddlers per team). That FCRC Womens 1994 Molokai Na Wahine crew, with Cheryl Skribe and Andrea Dillon switching steering, would finish in 6th place Open Fibreglass, for the best ever Molokai Na Wahine showing for a Canadian womens crew, until the Jericho Women would have a 6th place finish overall (4th place Open - best ever for a Canadian team in either the Womens or Mens race) in 2003. [09]

A 1987 False Creek Womens crew with Heather would attend the 1987 Queen Liliuokalani Race along with Lotus the first time the change-out race was held. A 1990 FCRC Womens crew would finish in 7th place Open Fibreglass [10] and a 1991 FCRC Womens crew would finish in 15th place Open Fibreglass, [11] with Heather as part of these Molokai Na Wahine crews.

Heather has represented Team Canada at International Va'a Federation (IVF) World Sprints from 1994-2018. [12] At 1994 Samoa IVF World Sprints, where Jackie Webber would take Gold in V1 500M Open Women, Heather would take Gold in V1 500M Masters Women. [13] Team Canada Women with Heather would set IVF records taking Gold in V6 500M, V6 1000M, and V12 500M Masters Women. At 1996 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints, Heather would again take Gold in V1 500M Masters Women. [14] Team Canada Women with Heather would take Bronze in V6 500M, Silver in V6 1000M, and Silver in V12 500M Masters Women. At 1998 Fiji IVF World Sprints, Heather would advance to Finals in V1 500M Masters Women. Team Canada Women with Heather would take Bronze in V6 500M Masters Women and Bronze in V12 500M Open Women. [15] At 2010 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints, [17] Heather would advance to Finals in V1 500M Masters Women. [18] At 2012 Calgary IVF World Sprints, Heather would advance to Finals in V1 500M Sr Masters Women. [19] At 2018 Tahiti IVF World Sprints, Heather would take Bronze in V1 500M Masters 60 Women. [20]

Heather relocated to Vancouver Island sometime in 2007 where she paddled with Comox Valley Canoe Racing Club (CVCRC) since then. While at CVCRC, Heather raced with a FCRC / Comox crew that would take many 1st / 2nd / 3rd places at 2011 Hamilton Island Outrigger Cup Sprints / Distance events, [21] and then several 1st / 2nd / 3rd places at 2012 Vaka Eiva Sprints / Distance events, followed by several 1st / 2nd / 3rd places at 2013 Queen Lili'uokalani Race. [22] 2013 would also see Heather do a multi-day Hawaiian "Voyage" (Maui-Molokai-Lanai-Maui) arranged by Lynda Roberts and Uncle Kimikeo [23].

At the 2015 Catalina Channel Crossing, a BC crew racing as False Creek Racing Canoe Club with Audrey Tait, Chelsey Brooks Tidmarsh, Lorri Stewart, Marlies Ernst, Miranda McNamara, Patti Lawson, Shannon Brenner, Sula Baklava, and Heather would take 4th place Open Women Spec. [24]

Coach-Builder Achievements

Heather was involved with False Creek Racing Canoe Club from the outset as a founding member when it was formed in 1985 by Olympic Gold Medalist Hugh Fisher along with Don Irvine and Patrick Couling, with help from False Creek Community Centre Director Carol Sogawa. [25] Heather recruited many of the women who dominated dragon boat racing in 1980s/1990s.

In a Pacific Paddler magazine article from April 2015, there is mention of Heather and several other False Creek paddlers purchasing four Naia OC1s after 1994 Western Samoa IVF World Sprints for training purposes to build up the BC small-boat fleet. [26]

Heather was with FCRC Executive for many years from 1984-1988 as Outrigger Director and Womens Outrigger Coach. [27] A Vancouver Sun article from July 1998 discusses Heather as Head Coach for the FCRC Womens crews training for the 1994 Western Samoa, 1996 New Caledonia, and 1998 Fiji IVF World Sprints. [28]

The Yukon River Quest is the World's Longest Annual Paddling Race from Whitehorse to Dawson City Yukon, that runs on the weekend of the longest day of the year since 1999. [29] Heather had relocated to Nunavut from 1998-2006 and assisted with logistics for 10 BC women to participate in the 2006 event. Diane Shepherd, Marina McCready, Andrea Dillon, Kendall Macmillan, Judy Shandler, Joanne Aitken, Barbara Willson, Daphne Brockington, Pauline Adams, and Heather would race as False Creek Women to take 1st place in Womens Voyageur Canoe. [30]

Exemplary Achievements

Heather has been a Nurse Practitioner at Island Health since 2008 currently providing primary care services at the Whiteye family practice clinic. Heather travels to the Ditidaht First Nation to help improve access to primary care for the Ditidaht people. [31] In addition to her primary care practice, Heather does outreach work at the Warmland House shelter and the Open Door Youth Integrated Health Services program. Prior to providing care as a Nurse Practitioner, Heather worked in Vancouver as a street nurse in the Downtown Eastside and as an outpost nurse on Baffin Island. Heather's latest endeavour was a six-month Addiction Nurse Practitioner Fellowship with the BC Centre on Substance Use to further her work helping people with addictions, chronic pain and mental health issues. [32]

References

Note	Article	Link
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[04]	1994 BC Sports Hall of Fame (Brenda)	https://bcsportshall.com/honoured_member/1992-canadian-olympic-teams-bc-members/
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[07]	1993 Vancouver Sun FCRC Molokai Women's Crew - Page 55	https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/495128358/
[08]	1993 Molokai Na Wahine Results	http://nawahineokekai.com/results-history/1993.html
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[18]	2010 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/2010-new-caledonia.html
[19]	2012 Calgary IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/2012-canada.html
[20]	2018 Tahiti IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/2/5/3/8/25381158/results_day_5.pdf
[21]	2011 Hamilton Island Outrigger Cup	https://canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Hamilton-cup-results-2011.pdf
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