



Hugh Town Memorial Builder Award Drew Mitchell 2020



NOMINATION SUMMARY

Drew Mitchell has a 40-year legacy of selfless volunteer effort to paddlesports in general and outrigger canoe racing in particular.

He has made contributions to support Canadian paddlers at the international, national, provincial, and club level.

He has been part of the Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club that was the source of paddlers for both False Creek Racing Canoe Club and Lotus Sports Club. He has been with False Creek Racing Canoe Club since its inception in 1985. He has made significant contributions to the FCRC dragon boat and outrigger canoe programs as a head coach for 15 years.

He served on the False Creek Executive for many years and was FCRC Chairman for 1996 and possibly at least one year before / after.

HISTORICAL: SIGNIFICANT / EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTIONS OVER TIME

The ascendancy of outrigger canoe racing in Canada started long before David Boulding of False Creek arranged to have Bud Hohl (SCORA) load the California Malia mould that had been in some fellows backyard for quite a while onto the Necky trailer to be towed to Sumas WA. Three factors came into play in the early 1980s that would set in motion the introduction of outrigger canoe racing programs in BC that would soon compete at the international level: 1) Canoe Kayak BC introduced a program in 1982 to support Olympic flat-water sprint canoe kayak racing; 2) **Drew Mitchell** was given responsibility for organizing Olympic flat-water sprint canoe kayak racing at various Canoe Kayak BC sites including Nanaimo, Penticton, Maple Ridge, and False Creek; 3) Anthony (Tony) Hall (future Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame) landed a position, coaching paddlers in British Columbia at Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club from 1983-1986 before returning to Nova Scotia to lead Orenda Canoe Club to a national championship in 1987.

Some of the paddlers during this era at Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club that would go on to medal at the Olympics, World Championships, Canada Games, and Pan Am Games included Hugh Fisher, Colin Shaw, Donald Irvine, Sheila Taylor, Peter Liljedahl, and **Drew Mitchell**. This core group would form the False Creek Racing Canoe Club in 1985 (formerly the False Creek Sprint Canoe Club being founded in 1981). There was another contingent of paddlers training at Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club at that time going by the name of the "Lotus Eaters". This was a collection of cross-country ski racers, kayakers and canoeists, triathletes, high level national athletes, and ex-Olympians that would form the Lotus Sports Club in 1986. [01]

The Olympic flat-water sprint canoe kayak racing program that **Drew** introduced in the early 1980s would lead to the development of Ridge Canoe & Kayak Club member and Canada Games / Pan Am Games medalist and future False Creek paddler Sean McBeath. [02]

In Canada, a racing class exists for the C-15 or WC or "War Canoe". There was a time when the sight of war canoes throughout the Okanagan in Peachland, Summerland, Penticton, Naramata, Kelowna, and Vernon was not uncommon. The sport attracted both men and women and continued full force from the 1920's until the outbreak of World War Two before its popularity waned. Part of the intent of the program that Canoe Kayak BC introduced in 1982 to support

Olympic flat-water sprint canoe kayak racing and championed by **Drew** was to restore flat-water sprint canoe kayak racing to areas where it had gone dormant. [03]

The introduction of dragon boat racing to Canada in 1986 on False Creek at Expo '86 was a pivotal moment for paddlesports in North America. Prior to Vancouver's first dragon boat festival in July 1986, Canadian paddlers had been limited to K1 / K2 / K3 / K4 (International Canoe Federation Sprint / Marathon sitting boats), C1 / C2 (Olympic Class Sprint / Marathon kneeling boats), and the C-15 or WC or "War Canoe" (unique to Canada). In 1986 teams from False Creek coached by **Drew Mitchell** / Hugh Fisher/ Don Irvine and the "Lotus Eaters" were drawn from athletes across various paddling backgrounds who were introduced through a demonstration dragon boat race during Expo '86 in Vancouver. The competition for the 20 seats in the mens / womens / mixed dragon boat crews in the late 1980s and early 1990s would generate a pool of male and female Canadian athletes that would provide the basis for outrigger canoe crews at several clubs. The inaugural Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival in 1986 was won by False Creek Racing Canoe Club mens team. FCRCC mens team would represent Canada at the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival International Races in 1986, 1988, and 1990. The FCRCC Womens Team would win the Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival from 1986 to 1993. They would continue onto win the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival International Races in 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993. [04]

There are no records of **Drew** serving on the CORA Board as CORA was founded in 1992 and there are no CORA AGM Minutes prior to 2002 when Brent Bagnall was CORA Chairman, and **Drew** had relocated to Penticton by 2000. **Drew** did serve on the False Creek Executive for many years and was FCRCC Chairman for 1996 and possibly at least one year before / after. [05]

CURRENT: SIGNIFICANT / EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTIONS THIS YEAR

Drew has had minimal involvement with outrigger canoeing since relocating to Penticton BC in 2000. **Drew** is the Director of Physical Literacy for the Sport for Life Society and works as a consultant focused on the development of physical literacy at the community level and promoting the Canadian Sport for Life Movement. **Drew** has worked extensively in the sport system as an educator and developer of programs for the past 19 years. He managed Sport Technical and Performance Services for viaSport BC and was the Manager of Science & Medicine programs for SportMedBC where he worked with over 50 different sports at the local, provincial and national level. He is also a past member of the Canadian National Canoeing Team and the former Health & Lifestyle Coordinator at the Downtown Vancouver YMCA. **Drew** has been involved in sport and fitness for over 40 years as an athlete, coach, administrator, volunteer, developer and manager. [06]

The unplanned effort to collect CORA outrigger canoeing history was a spin-off from the CORA Canoe Registry initiative. **Drew** agreed to sit for an interview that resulted in a vast set of material on False Creek that became the "*The False Creek Story*". He then took it upon himself to conduct research to confirm events / times / places / individuals and diligently proof-read several drafts until the content was factually correct and politically correct.

SPECIFIC: SIGNIFICANT / EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO ADVANCEMENT OF THE SPORT

In the mid-1980s (pre-Expo '86), a number of False Creek and Lotus paddlers trained together at False Creek for international outrigger canoe races. Over the course of several interviews with Lotus, there arose a question as to what canoes False Creek and Lotus paddlers were using to train in for California / Hawaii races. There was a line of thought that False Creek had an OC6 before the Canadian Malias were manufactured. Discussions with **Drew Mitchell** indicate that he and Hugh Fisher modified a rowing hull with struts and an ama to provide a 6-person outrigger canoe in the early to mid-1980s.

By 1989, False Creek had acquired a number of Canadian Malia canoes from the California Malia mould that had been delivered by Lotus to Ron Kaschula of Calmar Fiberglass. Shortly after 1988, a group of top sprint canoeing paddlers including Kamini Jain, Paul Dever, Dan O'Donovan, and Jackie Webber, relocated from the Calgary Canoe Club to Vancouver to join the False Creek Racing Canoe Club. FCRCC had a number of paddlers with racing and coaching

experience at the international level including Hugh Fisher, Don Irvine, and **Drew Mitchell**. FCRC now had a base of paddlers with sprint and marathon training and racing experience at the national and international level including Kamini Jain, Heather Taylor, Hugh Fisher, Don Irvine, and many of the paddlers who had competed in multiple Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival International Races. The Mens outrigger canoe program had been a Provincial Program drawing from paddlers across the BC Lower Mainland. The Womens outrigger canoe program was a Club Program from the outset. Don Irvine was leading program management. Hugh Fisher was leading testing and time trials. **Drew Mitchell** was leading physio training. The early 1990s saw an initiative to deliver a womens outrigger canoe program coached by **Drew Mitchell** that would be competitive at the international level. A 1990 FCRC Womens crew would finish in 7th place Open Fibreglass. A 1991 FCRC Womens crew would finish in 15th place Open Fibreglass. FCRC had recruited 40+ women in 1993 to fill two Molokai Na Wahine crews with a Catalina Channel Crossing race as a precursor. The 1993 womens outrigger canoe program brought in paddlers including Cheryl Scribe, Andrea Dillon, Allie Johnstone, Kamini Jain, Heather Taylor, Jacinta Sheridan, Jackie Webber, and many more. There is a Vancouver Sun article from August 21, 1993 that covers the FCRC Womens 1993 Molokai Na Wahine crews. 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. 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 Scribe 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 in 2001 with their 6th Place finish overall (4th Place Open - best ever for a Canadian team in either the Womens or Mens race). [07] [08] [09]

According to an eyewitness account by David Boulding (False Creek alumni), one day in the early 1990s, the women from False Creek flipped their Malia canoe off of Stanley Park and some nearly died of hypothermia. The Canadian Malias were designed for calmer water and when overturned they rode low in the water. **Drew Mitchell**, David Boulding, Hugh Fisher, Don Irvine, and several others had input into a new canoe design. The Canadian Class Racer (CCR) was designed with more flotation, a bumpy front nose to hold the covers, and more strength in the seats, for a stiffer boat with more flotation in the rear.

Drew has contributed to the expansion of outrigger canoe clubs and racing to the Interior / Okanagan through his mentorship of former False Creek paddlers. Brent Bagnall had participated in dragon boat with crews coached by **Drew Mitchell** in the early 1990s. Brent was a stimulus in getting outrigger going in Penticton with introduction of the Duel in The Desert Iron race and the Length of the Lake Ultra-Distance (100KM) event. **Drew Mitchell** and Brent Bagnall organized the very first Length of the Lake Ultra-Distance event sometime between 1996 to 1999. [10]

HUGH TOWN MEMORIAL BUILDER AWARD



The purpose of the **Hugh Town Memorial Builder Award** is to recognize volunteers who have made significant and exemplary contributions to the Outrigger Canoe Racing Discipline of Canadian Outrigger Racing Association (CORA) within Canada in the Builder Category.

<https://canadianoutrigger.ca/community-2/the-hugh-a-town-memorial-builder-award/>

Prior to the 2019 CORA AGM there was no formal policy / process for administering and bestowing this award upon an individual. An outcome of the 2019 CORA AGM was approval of a policy / process to administer and potentially bestow this award upon a member each year.

<https://canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Hugh-Town-Memorial-Builder-Award-Policy.pdf>

The CORA Board reviewed nominations received for the 2020 season and recognized **Drew Mitchell**, formerly of False Creek Racing Canoe Club, as the 2020 recipient of the **Hugh Town Memorial Builder Award**.

REFERENCES

#	Note	Link
01	1982 Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club	http://cfly.ca/canoe/Burnaby.htm
02	2005 Ridge Canoe & Kayak Club	http://cfly.ca/canoe/Ridge.htm
03	2012 War Canoes On Okanagan Lake	https://www.castanet.net/news/Penticton/78908/War-canoes-to-race-again
04	1986 Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival International Races	http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/ubcreports/UBC Reports 1986 07 10.pdf
05	1996 FCRC AGM Minutes	https://www.todayinbc.com/sports/paddlers-take-freshwater-plunge/
06	2020 Senior Director of Physical Literacy for the Sport for Life Society	https://sportforlife.ca/dvteam/drew-mitchell/
07	1993 Molokai Na Wahine - Vancouver Sun	https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/495128358/
08	1993 Molokai Na Wahine	http://nawahineokekai.com/results-history/1993.html
09	1994 Molokai Na Wahine	http://nawahineokekai.com/results-history/1994.html
10	2006 Length Of The Lake Ultra-Distance	http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2006/lotl.html