

# THE TRADITION CONTINUES

## MEET THE CANADIAN DISABILITY HALL OF FAME 2021 INDUCTEES

*This year's Hall of Fame inductees continue a great tradition of athletic excellence, advocacy and leadership.*



### VIVIAN BERKELEY *Athlete*

WHEN Vivian Berkeley was first introduced to lawn bowling in 1989, she had no idea what to expect.

“I thought it was pins on the grass and that you just roll the ball to hit them like you would with bowling indoors,” she chuckles. “As it turns out, it was really more like curling on grass.”

From such an inauspicious beginning, Berkeley went on to become the most successful international lawn bowler in Canadian history.

“I got interested in lawn bowling after someone asked me if I would like to try to learn it and I thought, sure! I started being interested in it from the first night. I was not thinking about competing at that time, but once a week I bowled, and I just kept getting better at it. As soon as someone mentioned we would be going to nationals next year, that really got my interest. I wanted to compete.

My coach asked me when I went to my first nationals, where do you really want to go? What do you want to do? We discussed it, and the last thing I said to him was, ‘Well, I want the world's gold of course.’ He said, ‘You're sure of that now?’ I said, ‘Yes,’ so, we worked from there.”

It is a truly remarkable story, not the least because Berkeley has been blind since her birth in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia 80 years ago. She was educated at the Halifax School for the Blind and in 1968 moved to Kitchener, Ontario, where she served as Director of Public Relations for the Canadian Council of the Blind, worked

as a darkroom technician in the radiology department of the local hospital, and later volunteered as an elementary school teacher's aide. She was always deeply involved in her community, contributing to many committees and service groups with her main objective being to improve the safety, mobility, and well-being of the blind and visually impaired.

When Berkeley first stepped onto a lawn bowling green, she recalls a fear of hitting someone with the bowl. “Thankfully, I have never done that, but it does happen,” she says. “If one of those lands on your foot, it can hurt!” But, with the help of a coach who served as her eyes, describing the environment, Berkeley quickly learned proper technique and developed the skills required to compete at the top of her sport. “He would tell me whether or not I was online or if maybe I was a little to the right or a little to the left. Then you learn to bring your arm back, straight back, so that you do not go offline, and toss the bowl right ahead.

That is how I was taught to lawn bowl, but you always have to have someone with you.”

Berkeley retired from competitive play in 2015, after winning the World Blind Lawn Bowling Championship, not once, but twice, a silver medal at the 1996 Paralympic Games and a bronze medal at the 2002 Commonwealth Games. Indeed, over her 21-year career, Berkeley accumulated 60 medals in total and played a major role in building the sport for the blind and visually impaired in Canada and abroad, serving as a fundraiser and coach. She says one of the



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greatest thrills of her life was carrying the Paralympic torch.

To what does she credit her success as an athlete? “I feel that year-round physical training and mental preparation are the keys to success,” she says. “To reach your goals you must be prepared to be persistent and dedicated to your sport. An athlete must be able to accept winning as well as defeat and meet new challenges head on. To succeed in any sport this philosophy should be applied daily.”

What does Berkeley think about being inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame? “It is a great honour. When I got off the phone [from being notified of my induction], I was wondering if it was really true because I was so overwhelmed. I certainly hope that others will follow and get involved with lawn bowling because of what I have done,” she says. “I would like to leave a trail so that other people learn from my experiences and the things that I hopefully taught or did.”

### **FRANK FOLINO** *Achiever*

**F**RANK FOLINO has been an enduring leader and advocate for the Deaf community. Born Deaf himself, he is widely recognized for his pivotal role in advocating for individuals who use Sign language. Until recently, for eight years (2013-2021), he served as President of the Canadian Association of the Deaf-Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC), which works to promote and protect the rights, needs and concerns of people who use American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ). One of Frank’s major advocacy goals was to have the Canadian government grant legal recognition of our country’s national Sign languages through legislation that is accessible, equitable and sustainable for Deaf individuals across Canada.

That goal was achieved in 2019, when the landmark Accessible Canada Act (Bill 81) was passed by Parliament. The recognition of Sign languages in Bill 81 includes not only ASL and LSQ, but all Indigenous Sign languages as well. It is considered a game changer for people who are Deaf due to the centuries long struggle to have Sign languages recognized by our broader society.

While many people in the Deaf and disability com-



munities worked very hard to achieve this goal over a long period of time, there is a consensus that the work of Frank Folino was crucial to its success. Despite many setbacks and resistance, he refused to take ‘no’ for an answer, and according to Jim Roots of the Canadian Association for the Deaf, to Frank “belongs the credit for this tremendous achievement.”

“Until this point, there had been no legal framework in Canada related to Sign language recognition,” says Frank, adding that while the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does state in Section 14 that Deaf individuals have

a right to interpreting services for court proceedings, it only relates to that specific example. “What about a legal framework that recognizes Sign language from birth,” he says.

Frank continues, “Originally, we wanted [Sign languages] to be recognized as official languages in Canada, however that presented a number of challenges. In the Charter, Section 16, it says formal languages of Canada are both English and French, so being that the Constitution is in place, it would have required an amendment in order to recognize Sign language as an official language. That will come in the future. Right now, what we have currently within the Accessible Canada Act is an opportunity. The door was opened and that will lead to further improvements.”

Frank adds, “I was invited to meet with the Governor General for the Royal Assent, so I was there June 20th, 2019 at the celebration where it became law.”

Currently, Frank serves the World Federation of the Deaf as a Board member, taking his advocacy efforts to the international level.

“International human rights is a passion of mine,” shares Frank. “I have focused my efforts on the World Federation of the Deaf and that is a tremendous responsibility that I’ve undertaken. We are representing the world and not just Canada as a country...I advocate to the United Nations from an international level, and we’re advocating for other countries.”

Being inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame is the latest of numerous accolades that have come Frank’s way because of his advocacy work. How did he feel upon learning he is a 2021 inductee?

“I was wowed. I was in awe. What a tremendous honour. I didn’t even have the words at that moment to express how I felt,” shares Frank. “It is inspiring and an honour to be recognized for my work and the investments that I have put towards advocacy, working towards the greater good to open doors [and create] opportunity for Deaf children so that when they become adults, they will have a better quality of life.”

## THE HONOURABLE CARLA QUALTROUGH

*Builder*



**V**ISUALLY IMPAIRED since birth, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough has reached the height of success in both politics and sports. After making significant contributions as a human rights lawyer, she was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Delta, BC in 2015. As federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Qualtrough has worked tirelessly to address inequality and champion diversity. Her political leadership was instrumental in ensuring the adoption of the Accessible Canada Act, which is helping to create a barrier-free nation by proactively identifying, removing and preventing obstacles to accessibility in areas under federal jurisdiction. More recently, she turned her attention to other issues of systemic discrimination faced by people with disabilities in Canada. She is the driving force behind the promised Canada Disability Benefit, the first program of its kind in the world, which is designed to end poverty by topping up existing income supports.

“By every measure her legislative agenda is building the framework for the next stage of the disability movement, an era when disabled people can go about their daily business without having to deal with economic, physical, communication, or attitudinal barriers,” said Al Etmanski, who co-founded the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network, a non-profit organization that helps families secure the future for loved ones with disabilities.

Etmanski also recalls powerful words once spoken by Qualtrough. “We are not an afterthought,” she once said. “We are citizens deserving of the same rights, and having the same responsibilities, as any other citizen.”

As an athlete, she won three Paralympic and four

World Championship medals in swimming and is an inductee in the Canadian Paralympic Hall of Fame. Passionate about the power of sport and physical activity to change lives, Qualtrough is passionate about serving her community, our country and the international community through volunteerism in sport. As an example, Qualtrough has been generous and giving of her time with the International Paralympic Committee and the Toronto 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. She has been President of the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Chair of the Sport Dispute Resolution

Centre of Canada. As well, she was on the Board of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and was Vice-Chair of the Delta (British Columbia) Gymnastics Society.

“I know that enriching the lives of persons with a disability has always been very much at the heart of Ms. Qualtrough’s life and work,” said Don McKenzie, Chair of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. “Whether it was inspiring young Canadians with disabilities through her Paralympian performances, helping to shape sport policy to reflect the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities, fighting for people’s human rights as a lawyer or helping to shape federal legislation to create more equitable access to the workforce as a Parliamentarian, Ms. Qualtrough’s positive impact on persons with disabilities has been significant and profound.”

Among many awards for her work, she has been named one of Canada’s Most Influential Women in Sport numerous times and received a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

“The things that Qualtrough has accomplished have not been for personal recognition or to fill her mantle with awards and certificates,” said Neil Belanger, Executive Director of the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society. “Her work has been to demonstrate to Canada and the world the significant impact persons living with disability make in all our communities and across all sectors and that equality, accessible and inclusive communities, and adequate support are not just words or lofty ideas, but a right of us all.”