

Special Olympics BC Summer Games athletes shone in Kamloops

Nearly 1,200 individuals with intellectual disabilities gave their all in 11 sports and inspired everyone watching at the [2017 Special Olympics BC Summer Games](#), held in Kamloops July 6 to 8. These were SOBC's largest Provincial Games to date and a thrilling display of the true power and joy of sport.

After earning their spots in the 2017 SOBC Games through 2016 Regional Qualifiers, the competitors from more than 50 communities throughout B.C. and the Yukon trained hard with their year-round Special Olympics programs in their hometowns to be ready to be at their best in Kamloops. They delivered outstanding performances in Canada's Tournament Capital, showing their abilities and determination, and helping change the way the world sees individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Supported by more than 350 volunteer coaches and mission staff, the athletes competed in the 11 SOBC summer sports: 5- and 10-pin bowling, athletics, basketball, bocce, golf, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, softball, and swimming. They experienced a very warm welcome from the Kamloops community, thanks in particular to the generous sponsors and the nearly 800 volunteers who helped make the Games possible.

"I want to thank Kamloops for having these Games," said SOBC – Richmond basketball player and SOBC Board of Directors member Vincent Li. "The venues were good and all the buses were really good. I noticed everyone was really excited for the Games and the volunteers were really enthusiastic. All the volunteers here in Kamloops were amazing, each and every one."

"We're so grateful to Kamloops and the 2017 SOBC Games Organizing Committee for creating a truly outstanding experience for our athletes," SOBC Vice President, Sport, Lois McNary said. "We know Kamloops volunteers are called upon frequently for events, but they truly rose to the occasion in support of Special Olympics and made our 2017 Provincial Games so empowering and exciting for all involved."

Competing in Provincial Games is a huge thrill in itself for the athletes, many of whom had their first opportunity ever to travel with a team, and thrived on the chances to challenge themselves to attain and exceed their athletic goals. In addition, top performers in Kamloops will qualify for spots on Team BC for the 2018 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and the 2018 National Bowling Championships in Prince Edward Island. Out east, the participants will compete to advance to the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi.

"I've been waiting over 20 years to get to Provincial Games for swimming, and I finally got here and I got my first gold medal! It felt awesome, like all of my hard work for the last year had paid off, and it just makes me want to work even more and even harder in practice to get here again!" said swimmer Emily Beauchamp of Special Olympics BC – Oceanside, now a Nanaimo resident. "Special Olympics is more than just an organization for people with intellectual disabilities, it's a huge part of our lives. ... A lot of the lessons we learn in Special Olympics help us in our daily life as well."

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About Special Olympics BC

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through the power of sport. Our vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities, and create inclusive communities all across British Columbia. In 57 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 4,600 athletes of all ages and abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 3,900 volunteers. For more information, please visit www.specialolympics.bc.ca. Find us on Facebook and Instagram @specialolympicsbc, Twitter @sobcsociety, and the Games hashtags #SOBCGames #Kamloops2017.

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