

2011 Calgary Festival Flower Festival

Dear Friends, Family, and Fellow Dragon Boaters,

Welcome to the 2011 Calgary Dragon Boat Festival's Breast Cancer Ceremony.



Dragon boating originated over 2000 years ago, but BREAST CANCER dragon boat racing began a mere 16 years ago in Vancouver. It began as an experiment to disprove the archaic medical advice of the time, which suggested a sedate lifestyle. From one breast cancer dragon boat team, 16 years ago, to hundreds of teams today, this amazing sport has united survivors worldwide.

The bond of cancer runs deep among us and we come together as a team united to heal our bodies, our hearts, our minds, and our souls.

Not only has this sport brought us together, it has given us a powerful voice.

Our message is simple - it's YOUR body, it's YOUR life. TAKE CONTROL. BE ACTIVE. BE STRONG. FIGHT! Life is worth the effort.

If you think something is wrong, do NOT ignore your instincts. Get checked out and demand answers.

I hope you enjoyed the Survivors' Challenge race as much as we just did. We have challenged each other to be stronger and fitter and now we challenge YOU.

Every woman on this dock has sat down in front of their doctor and felt the life drain from her body as she heard those sickening words "you have breast cancer".

Every woman on this dock has made the decision to pick herself up, dust herself off, and say "bring it on"!

Unfortunately, NOT every one of these women is here today.

As you might imagine, being a member of this team is never easy.

For each survivor you see on the dock, imagine one more, because, between the four crews that stand before you, that's how many teammates we have lost. Too many to even name.

I have personally seen women far stronger than me, who have fought tooth and nail, lose their fight.

I have seen women who I have come to love and admire, women who have inspired me, women who STILL inspire me, slowly succumb to this devastating disease.

I have been to the funerals of way too many beautiful, vibrant, young, strong women. Women who were not ready to die. Women whose families were not ready for them to die.

I am standing here today with all of you to honour our fallen sisters, friends, mothers, wives, and daughters. They fought with courage and strength and dignity. They left us with memories and pride and spirit. It is with the support of their amazing DRAGON spirit that we were lifted up out of the water and carried across the finish line today.

On behalf of my teammates, thank you, thank you, THANK YOU to the Calgary Dragon Boat Society for this weekend's festival, for helping to breathe life back into dragon boating in Calgary, and for giving us this platform to share our message.

This year, we are not tossing our flowers into the water. As we leave the dock and pass through the crowd, if a flower is offered, please accept it in loving honour of all who have crossed their final finish line.

Please enjoy with us this recording of 'The River' by Garth Brooks. Near the end of the song, and hopefully right on queue with the lyrics 'LIKE A BIRD UPON THE WIND', we will be releasing 22 doves. 22 to symbolize the spirits of an entire dragon boat crew on their final journey home.

Stay active, stay well, and, most of all, NEVER SURRENDER! Thank you.