

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 18, 2012

## **Sixteen ill and injured military personnel from across Canada and Great Britain to take part in a winter multi activity program in Vancouver and Whistler.**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – On January 22<sup>nd</sup> eight Canadian and eight British service personnel will arrive in Whistler to participate in an 8 day program that introduces them to a range of adaptive winter sports and recreational activities. The program was designed and planned by UK based, Larnie Ball, ‘Bridging the Gap Adventures’ and Canadian based, Sian Blyth, ‘You Can Event Management’. The program has been created for ill and injured military personnel from the organizations ‘Battle Back’ in the UK and ‘Soldier On’ in Canada.

Battle Back is a program managed by the Ministry of Defense in Great Britain to identify, facilitate and encourage adaptive Adventurous Training (AT) and sport opportunities for wounded Service personnel to aid their rehabilitation and return to an active life.

Soldier On is managed by the Canadian Forces Personnel and Family Support Services (CFPFSS). It provides resources and opportunities for serving and retired Canadian Forces personnel with a permanent or chronic illness or injury to actively participate in physical, recreational or sporting activities.

The first half of the program will take place in Whistler and includes four days of cross-country skiing and biathlon, alpine skiing, a snow mobile adventure and a dog sledging tour. Provincial and national team athletes with a disability will be on-hand to provide encouragement and advice. The program concludes in Vancouver where participants will have the opportunity to play sledge hockey with local BC athletes and compete in an inter nation friendly match. They will wrap up the program with an introduction to wheelchair curling led by some of Canada’s Paralympic wheelchair curling gold medalists.

“Members of the Battle Back program have been to Canada on two previous occasions in the past and it’s always a pleasure to work with our sister program, Soldier On. We are confident that opportunity to enjoy the range of sports activities on offer, alongside our brothers in arms, will have a very positive impact on the physical, psychological and social recovery of all participants” explained Maj (Retd) Martin Colclough who will lead the Battle Back group. “From a personal perspective I can’t think of a better way to celebrate make the fact that Soldier On helped inspire the Battle Back programme.

“Soldier On is thrilled about this opportunity to build (renew) our relationship with UK Battle Back while jointly exposing Canadian Forces injured/ill members to numerous winter sporting activities.”, said MWO David Southall who is leading the Soldier On group on this trip.

“Given that 2012 is a Paralympic year, with its origins firmly rooted in military history, the prospect of beginning 2012 with a military sports event is particularly poignant. “said Colclough. “There are a number of events scheduled for 2012 in the UK and we are looking forward to being able to host, with the assistance from Larnie Ball and Sian Blyth, a major summer sports event in the summer.”

“We are excited about the prospect of not only introducing these participants to the magnificent outdoor playground of Whistler and Vancouver, but also the world-class accessible facilities that provide the ideal environment for us to offer persons with a disability the chance to enjoy the large array of exciting winter adapted sports on offer,” said Larnie Ball and Sian Blyth, the program’s designers “An inspiring learning setting, coupled with strategic planning, facilitation and friendly inter country competition, presents a challenging yet fun environment for wounded and injured military personnel to try new experiences and prove to themselves what they are capable of achieving.”

**Media are invited to join the activities and interview participants at the following times:**

January 27 <sup>th</sup> and January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Nordic/biathlon, Whistler Olympic Park – 10 – 3pm
January 29 <sup>th</sup>	Alpine skiing/boarding, Whistler Mountain – 10 – 3pm
January 30 <sup>th</sup>	Sledge hockey in Surrey - 11.30 – 1.30pm
	Wheelchair curling in Vancouver, 3.30 – 5.30pm

Media unable to attend in person should contact Sian Blyth (604 202 7364) [sianblyth@shaw.ca](mailto:sianblyth@shaw.ca) to request telephone interviews and photographs.

**About Sian Blyth, You Can Event Management**

'YOU CAN!' is short for 'you can do it', based on the philosophy of 'Be the best you can be'. 'YOU CAN!' was established in January 2011 to create exceptional personal, team and diversity awareness development experiences through the use of customized sporting and recreational activities for people of all abilities. The company was founded by Vancouver local Sian Blyth, who has over sixteen years experience providing persons with a disability the opportunity to participate and excel in sport in Canada and Great Britain. 'YOU CAN!' recognizes the critical role of activity in the physical and psychological rehabilitation of persons disabled through injury, as well as the importance of changing public perceptions of disability. Its programs can be customized for disabled or able-bodied participants and are designed to develop personal skills, raise awareness of an individual’s abilities and promote a healthy well-balanced lifestyle.

**About Larnie Ball, Lifestyle Coach & Adaptive Sports and Adventure Specialist**

Bridging The Gap (UK) was founded by Larnie Ball in June 2009, who is a qualified Coach and NLP Practitioner. Larnie works with individuals and companies to leverage performance and enhance their opportunities through coaching and/or adaptive sports and adventures (such as skiing in North America, scuba diving in Egypt and touring the Amazon and Galapagos Islands). Larnie’s 17 years career experience in the disability field has provided her with specialist knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the unique challenges and obstacles that are faced by individuals with disabilities or health issues in the workplace and whilst at leisure. Larnie firmly believes that each and every individual has the potential to achieve more and deserves to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life, no matter what their current abilities are.

**Media Contacts**

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