

Together Everyone Achieves More

Featuring Rick Hansen

Athlete Article



Rick Hansen was born on August 26, 1957 and grew up in small towns throughout British Columbia. At age 15, Rick lived in Williams Lake BC, and thought he had it all; he had just received athlete-of-the-year honours at his high school and was looking forward to trying out for the provincial volleyball team later that year. Then came a motor vehicle crash left Rick a paraplegic without a chance of ever walking again. Rick faced many challenges and struggles on his road to physical and emotional recovery after his injury.

Rick was determined to live a full life; he earned a degree in physical education from UBC, and continued to train and play sports. Rick did not just wake up one morning and decide to wheel around the world, but the physical challenge appealed to him.

He was inspired by what his friend Terry Fox had done to raise awareness for cancer and started to think beyond just the physical goal and how the journey could make a difference for people with disabilities. By making the journey, he could create awareness of the potential of people with disabilities, and raise money to help people with spinal cord injury through research, rehabilitation, as well as sports and recreation programs.

Rick knew it was all about commitment, setting a goal and working hard to make it happen. This was no small feat, travelling around the world in a wheelchair, crossing borders, climbing mountains, crossing deserts, wheeling down endless highways, and even tackling the Great Wall of China, was a daunting task. Rick began his journey on March 21st, 1985 and wheeled an incredible 40,000 kilometres around the world, a distance equal to the circumference of the earth. With his team, he travelled through thirty-four countries on four continents encountering rugged mountain ranges, scorching deserts, freezing snow, torrential rains and strong winds.

Rick spent 2 years, 2 months and 2 days on the road, had 126 flat tires, went through 94 pairs of gloves and wore out 160-wheelchair tires. To top it off he and the team were robbed four times!

On August 25, 1986, he reached Newfoundland and began his journey across Canada and home to Vancouver. Thousands of people lined the streets of Vancouver as Rick Hansen approached the home stretch ending the journey. The support he received from Canadians as he finished his tour was overwhelming and led to the formation of the Rick Hansen Man in Motion Foundation. The Foundation continues its excellent work today under Rick's leadership, motivating and inspiring people to help reach the goal of improved quality of life for people with a spinal cord injury.

His experiences have led him to write two books the first called "Rick Hansen Man In Motion", sharing the story of his epic journey around the world and his second book titled "Going the Distance – 7 Steps to Personal Change", that guides people in how to accomplish their dreams and make changes in their lives.

Rick is also interested in environmental issues, and volunteers some of his time as the Chair of the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society which is dedicated to conserving and restoring Fraser River sturgeon stocks. He is also involved as the Chair of the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund, which aims to restore salmon stocks in British Columbia.



Rick accomplished what many thought was impossible and continues his journey today. A sign at the end of his journey read: "The End Is Just the Beginning." He and his team at the Rick Hansen Man In Motion Foundation are committed to improving the quality of life of people with spinal cord injury. Rick believes in dreams and in overcoming obstacles and his accomplishments are proof that with courage and determination, anything is possible.

Rick is married to Amanda and they have three daughters. Besides fishing, he enjoys Pilates, tennis, kayaking and sit skiing.