



Purpose:

To provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in the challenging sport of scuba diving

Background Information

In 2001, 3.2 million Canadians aged 15 to 64 were living with a disability. Of these, more than 250,000 suffered from some form of mobility impairment. This is our target population.

Currently there is no other scuba diving organization in Canada training people with disabilities how to scuba dive in a safe and professional way. With its advanced curriculum for training people with disabilities and in-house certified Handicapped Scuba Association course director (instructor trainer), Freedom at Depth is the premier institute in Canada for training people with disabilities.

Objectives:

- To **improve the health and fitness** of people with disabilities by challenging their physical abilities and endurance;
- To **improve the quality of life** of people with disabilities by providing opportunities to actively participate in a mainstream sport;
- To **“level the playing field”** between people with disabilities and their able bodied peers by facilitating access to a sport that they, and others, thought was not possible;
- To **motivate** people with disabilities into pursuing other life challenges (education, employment, travel, sports) by allowing them to achieve at a sport that many people cannot;
- To **profile the abilities** and potential of people with disabilities to mainstream society.

Context:

Scuba diving can give people with physical disabilities an opportunity to participate in an active sport with able-bodied peers. For people with disabilities, succeeding at this seemingly impossible challenge results in improved self-confidence. In addition, scuba diving provides people with something new to look forward to – whether it’s a trip to an exotic destination or discovering a new part of their local environment. Their attitude changes and they begin to see opportunities in other areas of their life as well.



When able-bodied divers see a person with a disability scuba diving – an activity they thought impossible for people with disabilities their attitudes begin to change - they begin to look beyond the disability and see the person as a whole individual. If a person with a disability can scuba dive, what else can they do?

Taken together, these two factors have the potential to remove barriers and increase the integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society – sport, education and the workforce.

Finally, some disabled people may wish to try scuba diving for the simple excitement and fun of the activity.

Freedom at Depth – Creating the Opportunity



Freedom at Depth trains people with disabilities across Canada to scuba dive through provision of courses tailored to the unique requirements of the individual students.

Freedom at Depth has developed broad knowledge of disability issues and has extensive direct experience in delivering successful training.

Goals:

- Train students with disabilities
- Provide local and international diving opportunities for FADC trained divers
- Provide continuing education courses such as advanced diver, night diver...
- Promote the benefits of scuba diving to people with disabilities across Canada
- Develop a network of divers with disabilities and others interested in scuba for people with disabilities

Approach:

1. Identification of Students - People from across Canada are eligible to participate. Clients will be identified through the following:
 - Referrals from rehabilitation centres and other disability organizations such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association
 - Word of mouth
 - Students who have taken the course
2. Cost:
 - Able-bodied student divers are taught in classes of 6 to 8 at an average cost of \$250.00 per person. Teaching people with disabilities requires a stricter student

to instructor ratio and more time. (For example, teaching people with severe disabilities requires one instructor and one assistant per student) For this reason the cost of teaching people with disabilities is significantly higher than that of teaching able-bodied divers. Notwithstanding this increased cost, it is the intention of Freedom at Depth Canada (FADC) to charge students with a disability the same amount as would be charged a non-disabled student for a mainstream scuba diving certification course. The additional costs incurred as a result of the lower student/teacher ratio will be covered by FADC. The course fee will be waived if it constitutes an unreasonable burden for a potential student.

3. Travel and Accommodation:

- Students are responsible for all travel and accommodation expenses.

4. Course Curriculum:

- The course will be based on either the HSA or PADI curriculum depending on which is more suitable for the student.
- Course location: The academic portion of the course will take place in a classroom setting. The pool portion will take place at a wheelchair accessible pool. The open water certification will take place at suitably acceptable open water sites locally, for summer courses, and in appropriate warm water locations for winter certifications.

Pre course requirements:

- A valid dive medical certificate must be provided prior to acceptance into the program. If required, the foundation will provide students with the name of a doctor knowledgeable about diving with a disability.
- Mask protective boots, bathing suit, and snorkel

Conclusion

Freedom at Depth Canada is committed to excellence in training. Scuba diving is an exciting, challenging sport for anyone – for people with disabilities, scuba diving allows them an opportunity to explore their personal limits and to set new and higher goals in all areas of their lives.



Freedom at Depth Canada Founder Profiles

Hubert Chrétien – Executive Director



Mr. Chrétien first experienced the wonders of scuba diving at the age of 11, over 30 years ago. Mr. Chrétien has taught scuba diving to people with disabilities for more than 18 years. In this time he has taught men and women with various types of disabilities: paraplegics, quadriplegics, persons with muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, traumatic brain injury and others. Many of his students have gone on to become very active divers engaging in such activities as night diving, deep diving, wall diving and even ice diving. His students have explored the Red Sea, Australia's Barrier Reef, Indonesia and multiple locations in Canada and the Caribbean. Hubert Chrétien is a member of the Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA); the first and only international scuba accreditation agency for people with disabilities. As Canada's sole HSA Course Director Mr. Chrétien is the only person in Canada qualified to train scuba instructors in the instruction of people with disabilities. As part of his HSA Scuba Instructor curriculum he teaches diving techniques, basic physiology, psychology of disability, access and general disability awareness issues.

Daryl Rock - President



Mr. Rock is an avid traveler and enthusiastic scuba diver. He has traveled extensively in North America, Europe, the South Pacific and Asia, enjoying the sites and cultures of dozens of countries. He recognizes the physical, mental and emotional benefits of an active lifestyle for everyone and, understanding the increased challenges facing people with disabilities, is committed to promoting integration through scuba diving. Joining the federal public service after completing his MA in Public Administration in 1988, Mr. Rock has held a series of increasingly senior positions in various departments. Mr. Rock is currently the Director of Strategic Programs at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a federal government research-funding agency. Since 1985 Mr. Rock has worked as a volunteer at the local, provincial and national levels with many organizations including the Canadian Paraplegic Association and the Rick Hansen Foundation. In addition to his work with Freedom at Depth Canada (FADC), Mr. Rock is currently the voluntary president the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, a research foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life of persons with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries. Recently, Mr. Rock published, "Making a Difference" a book profiling the accomplishments of 25 great Canadians. In 1993 Mr. Rock was awarded the Governor General Canada 125 medal in recognition of his volunteerism and other community contributions. In 1983 Mr. Rock experienced a spinal cord injury and has used a wheelchair ever since.

Board of Directors

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