

Confession of a Torch Relay Shuttle Host 1

Just like flames need oxygen to continue burning an Olympic Torch Relay needed Torch Bearers to continually propel it from one end of Canada to the other. Thousands upon thousands of them, from every corner of the country to feed the ever-moving convoy, to feed the machine.



Disabled Torch Bearers

The special needs of a disabled torch bearer seem to be extinguished as the flame is ignited. The Olympic Flame is the great equalizer.

CTV News Anchor

Lloyd Robertson from CTV news was on my bus. I think he was either runner number 24 or 25 on the very first day. I picked him up which was a bit of a novelty for me and everyone else on the shuttle. He was friendly affable and even took the time to memorize the names of the rest of the Torch Bearers. He is so Canadian. His voice is so low and distinctive that I got a real kick listening to him ask the others on the bus how they felt carrying the flame. There was a real camaraderie between everyone with lots of laughs, tears and great stories.

Once he learned that I was going across Canada with the flame he looked at me in the eye and said “Dave I bet I have a first for you

today that will never be repeated for your entire 106 days on the road”. Immediately before running he had been on the air hosting a national telecast from Victoria and as I was about to learn he had no time to get changed out of his on air suit before his segment of the relay. He smiled, rolled up the sleeves of the standard extra large white nylon torch bearer uniform jacket that he wore over his clothes and said “Of the 12,000 torch bearers that will be running in this, I’m sure I’ll be the only that wore cuff links” The entire bus broke out in laughter as he revealed a pair of shiny beautiful gold cuff links on the sleeves of his expensive finely pressed dress shirt.

The Kleenex Express

As a Shuttle Host one of my jobs is to keep the ride to where we drop the Torch Bearers off interesting, fun and meaningful. It is pretty standard for all the Shuttle hosts to go around the bus and ask for stories of how people got to this moment in time, or for them to share an Olympic moment with the rest of the Torch Bearers on the bus. It’s a team building exercise as well as a way for them to get to know each other a bit better. After all, in a few minutes they will be passing the torch to one another.

I call the particular bus in the picture the “Kleenex Express”. Five people were in tears by the time the exercise ended:

There was a woman who recently lost her mother and was running in her honor.

There was a woman who had survived cancer. She was still missing most of her hair. When I greeted her at the collection point at the beginning of the day she told me that she had been waiting for her whole life for this moment.

There was an older man who narrowly missed competing in the Olympics 50 years ago. When I let him off the bus at his spot, his eyes welled up with tears as he said to me “I finally got to take part in the Olympics”

There was a woman who had a car accident a year ago and only recently regained her ability to walk.

There was fifth person, a women that I guess just began crying from all of these stories.