
FACTSHEET

February 1, 2010

Ministry of Ministry of Advanced Education
and Labour Market Development
Government of British Columbia

B.C. Creates Job Opportunities For Inner-city Youth

A made-in-B.C. program for at-risk and street involved youth is creating employment opportunities, reducing homelessness and expanding into new communities, including Toronto, Calgary and New Orleans. British Columbia's award-winning BladeRunners program began in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and over the past 15 years has helped over 3,000 youth find and keep jobs, continue educations and reconnect with family and community.

- BladeRunners began in 1994 when a small group of inner-city youth were given the opportunity to learn construction skills during the building of General Motors Place, future home of the Vancouver Canucks and the inspiration for the BladeRunners name.
- Youth worked at hundreds of job sites, including the Olympic Village (Vancouver), Nat Bailey Stadium and the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre.
- Youth participated in three trips to New Orleans, where they have been ambassadors for the program, sharing their success with community leaders in the Lower 9th Ward, the Make it Right Foundation and Cafe Reconcile, while volunteering their skills with the Crossroads Mission housing projects.
- While youth participants earn about \$15 an hour, providing many with their first paycheques and independence from social assistance, BladeRunners success depends on:
 - availability of 24/7 assistance, and up to 18 months on-the-job support
 - assistance to overcome homelessness – a challenge for over 90% of participants in the Vancouver program
 - and job placement through industry partners, with almost 90 per cent of participants getting a job and 80 per cent maintaining long-term employment, regular incomes and secure, stable housing.
- ACCESS (Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society) is the contracted program manager. With about two thirds of youth in the program coming from Aboriginal backgrounds, ACCESS has been a key partner supporting the growth of BladeRunners beyond construction trades. Other areas of employment include early childhood education, resident care attendant and building maintenance worker. New pilots in creative industries are expanding program participation to about 600 youth per year.
- BladeRunners, one of only 32 organizations recommended by Charities Intelligence Canada, has been recognized with the Washington, DC-based National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet award.

CONTACTS

Corinna Filion
Communications Director
Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
250-952-6508

VISUAL RESOURCES

- Photographs and a short video of the recent BladeRunners 15th Anniversary and funding announcement
- Photographs of BladeRunners at various job sites.

WEB RESOURCES

BladeRunners and Bell partner for new youth options
http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009ALMD0052-000711.pdf

B.C. Government commits \$14 million to expand BladeRunners program
http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009ALMD0042-000622.pdf

BladeRunners program web site: <http://bladerunners.info/>

MEDIA COVERAGE

Pouring the concrete of a better life, Vancouver Province, July 10, 2009

Eastside life hits natives hardest, Vancouver Province, October 7, 2009

<http://www.theprovince.com/Eastside+life+hits+natives+hardest/2074072/story.html>

Work program nurtures dreams, Surrey Now. February 5, 2008

- 30 -

For assistance or more information:

Seumas Gordon

Media Relations Officer

Ministry of Housing and Social Development

250 387-6490

Seumas.Gordon@gov.bc.ca