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C2CFit: A Perfect Fit for Kids to Get Fit

Jubilee Elementary is renowned for its unique phys-ed programs such as the Tribal Games and its achievements in sports and it's latest feat is quite remarkable. The Jubilee Jaguars C2CFit running team has just exercised its way across Canada – all while getting an interactive geography lesson at the same time! And it's the first school team in Canada to do so!

Lee Downer, a fitness consultant living in Toronto, is the founder of the C2CFit social fitness networking website. Downer decided to row his way (the equivalent distance) across Canada – a 10,529 km journey! He then added biking and other cardio exercises. So many friends and coworkers found out about what he was doing and wanted to join the challenge that he set up a website. The original site was set up in 2001; the new World Cross-Country Fitness Challenge site was launched in October 2008. There are now registered members from countries all around the world.

Participants (of all ages) are challenged to either run, walk, swim, bike, row, ski, roller blade, or wheelchair their way across the world *without leaving home*. Its purpose is to motivate people to become physically active and to stay that way for a long time by setting fun, interactive challenges for them – exercising across different

countries in the world. The best part is it's free and easy to set up. One can participate individually or as part of a team, like the Jubilee Jaguars did. What's more, a team can be made up of just a few – or many – people. The Jaguars loved the whole experience and are already onto their next challenge.

How does it work? Users simply



keep track of distances covered when they exercise. When they log onto their profile, be it personal or a team, they enter in the data. They can monitor their fitness levels, send messages to other members, challenge others to a distance race – such as reaching a specific province or city. The site uses a mapping system from Google Maps that tracks a team's, or individual's, progress. The geography/social studies lesson comes into

play when they reach a destination. A click on a pin takes them to a Wikipedia information page on that town/city/province they have reached or passed through – complete with virtual tours.

The program is ideal in that it's not about winning or losing, but just participating – with a destination as a motivator. You can go at your own pace and people of all ages have used the site to become fit, lose weight and network with others.

Lee Downer visited Jubilee on May 22nd to give a talk, followed by a Q&A with the children and a C2CFit walk in the gym. In phys-ed teacher Walter Makowski's words, "It was a blast last Friday."

In an age where childhood obesity is becoming epidemic, we need to motivate our children to become active and stay fit. Studies say that doctors now see heart disease developing in children, when in the past it was limited to adults. It's a challenge to find a fun activity that will work for everybody at all levels of fitness – and keep them interested.

The C2CFit program's combination of exercise and fun with geography, history, culture and technology satisfies the body and mind and is the perfect way for schools to breathe new life into phys-ed. Website address: www.c2cfit.com

Lynda Arthur