



SCHOOL PROGRAM

# ATHLETE STORIES

Clara Hughes —  
Healthy Choices // Grade 4-5

## About Clara

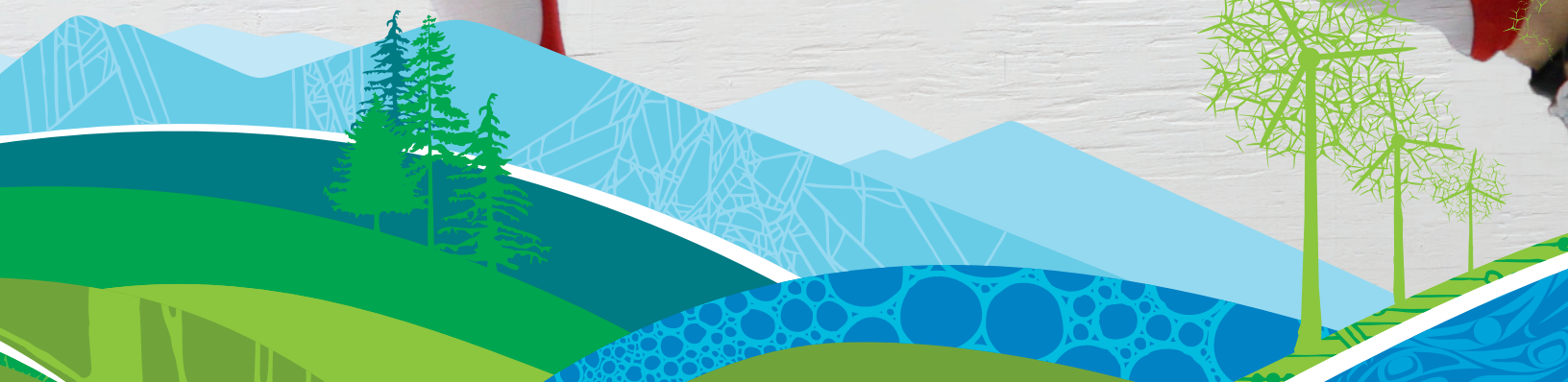
**BORN** September 27, 1972

**BIRTHPLACE** Winnipeg, MB

**SPORT** Cycling – Road and Speed  
Skating - Long Track

**OLYMPIC GAMES** London 2012,  
Vancouver 2010, Turin 2006, Salt  
Lake City 2002, Sydney 2000,  
Atlanta 1996

**FAVOURITE HOBBY** Bird watching



# Clara Hughes — Healthy Choices

Clara Hughes takes a deep, long, hungry breath. She has just captured yet another Olympic medal. Clara won bronze in the grueling 5000-metre speed skating race. The cool air of the Richmond Olympic Oval fills her lungs. This is her last Olympic race. The Canadian crowd goes crazy. Clara is one of our most successful Winter and Summer Olympians. She skates her victory lap around the Richmond Olympic Oval and smiles. Clara remembers all the decisions that have led her to this moment.

"When I was younger I made a number of bad decisions. I smoked. I drank. I ran away from home a few times. I certainly didn't try hard in school. It's amazing that I made it as an athlete."

One day, her life changed. She remembers sitting on her floor. She is watching speed skating legend Gaetan Boucher on the TV.

"I was 16. This looked so cool. He was gliding around the ice and going really fast. Somehow, I knew right away that I wanted to do that. My mother called the local club in Winnipeg. Within a couple of days I started turning my life around."

Clara started working out instead of hanging out. She started paying attention in school. She became a straight-A student. She gave up the bad habits. Making good decisions isn't always easy, but once she made the decision to turn things around she stuck with it. She grabbed the opportunities when they came. Even though she loved speed skating, she actually first found success in cycling.

"I met a great coach, Mirek Mazur. He saw my potential as a cyclist. He pushed me even harder than I push myself. I decided to listen to him. He was tough but he was right and I started to get better and better."

Clara went to the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta as a cyclist. She won two bronze medals in road racing. But she still felt the call of her first sporting love, so after the 2000 Olympic Games she decided to test herself as a winter Olympian. Her sport of choice was, of course, speed skating.

"That had been my dream since I first watched speed skating on TV. I had told my mother years before I was going to be

an Olympic speedskater and I was determined to make it."

Clara did more than just make it. She won a bronze medal in the 5,000 metres. She had only been training for a few months! Four years later, in Turin, she won a gold medal in that same race. She always remembered her own childhood and after that victory Clara made headlines for an inspirational act of giving.

"The morning of my race I watched a documentary on the group 'Right to Play' and their work in Uganda."

Right to Play is an organization that uses sport to help children in underdeveloped nations. It donates sporting equipment, for example, and sends ambassadors such as Clara around the world to help kids learn about sport.

"The children lived with war, poverty and violence, yet they were so happy when they were engaged in sport and play. I thought if these kids can do this, so can I during my Olympic race that same evening."

Clara tired halfway through that race. Her legs ached, but she remembered those kids for inspiration. "I had written 'joy' on my hand with a pen to remind me of those shining eyes from Uganda that I saw on my TV. I looked at this temporary tattoo as a reminder of what I was capable of. After winning, Clara felt she needed to say thanks to those children. Millions watched her gold medal press conference. Clara announced that she was donating \$10,000 to Right to Play.

"I wanted to give back. I wanted more children of the world to know, quite simply, what it is like to be a kid and to the joy I get as an athlete."

That joy has carried through her life as an athlete and a person. Clara is now as a Member of the Order of Canada, one of Canada's highest honours. She was Canada's flag bearer for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. She continues to raise awareness for charity. She does her best to help children. Clara grabs a Canadian flag. She skates a final lap around the oval.

"Success has given me a voice. I tell people all the time that you just never know where your decisions may lead. Each and every one of us has a part in making the lives of those around us better just by our own actions."



# Clara Hughes — Healthy Choices



1. Clara admitted that she made some bad choices growing up. She turned her life around by making more positive choices that lead to her success. Working in small groups or with a friend, identify some of the choices that have helped Clara Hughes attain success.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm more choices:



# Clara Hughes — Healthy Choices



2. From your list, create a Public Service Announcement encouraging the importance of making healthy choices (ex. not to smoke, being active every day, choosing homework over television). The Public Service Announcement may be a poster, pamphlet, slideshow, commercial or song displaying the importance of making healthy choices for your school. Work in pairs or small groups and present your Public Service Announcement to the class.

Here are some suggestions for your Public Service Announcement:

- What to do when bullying occurs
- Importance of making healthy food and nutrition choices
- Choosing physical activity over sedentary activity
- Importance of avoiding alcohol, cigarettes, drugs
- Dealing with peer pressure
- Playing fairly in games and activities when the opportunity might arise

Brainstorm Box:



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