



ATHLETE STORIES

# A STORY ABOUT DETERMINATION

Dawn Richardson Wilson moved to Canada with her mother and siblings when she was only two years old. Coming from Ghana, settling into life in Edmonton was hard for all of them. But things took a turn for the worst when Dawn's mom suddenly died. Unfortunately, her father died in Ghana the same year.

Orphaned at only six years of age, she went to live with her older brother and his wife. As she grew up, Dawn found a community in sport. She played basketball, rugby, and ultimate, while also competing at track and field. Driven and determined to succeed, Dawn matured into an exceptional athlete.

During her first year in university, her high school coach reached out to tell her about an interesting opportunity. Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton was holding a recruitment camp. Dawn was intrigued enough to sign up and give it a try. Her speed and determination impressed the coaches enough to name her to development team.

Determined to make the senior team, Dawn journeyed three hours each way to train in Calgary. She threw herself into learning the new sport, weathering bumps, bruises, and crashes as she mastered bobsleigh. She carried a notebook with her to record the lessons and learn from her mistakes. Despite being significantly lighter than her teammates and competitors, she was driven to do what she had to do in order to make the team.

This resource teaches students to be determined. The messages to students are to never give up, to overcome hardship, and to stay focused on your goals and objectives.



# TEACHING VALUES THROUGH OLYMPIC STORIES

Olympic stories of triumph and disappointment can engage learners in discussions about important value issues. Through the stories and challenges of Olympic athletes, children and youth can explore and connect values to their lives, and perhaps begin to see their world in new and different ways.



## TEACHING GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Current curriculum theory emphasizes the importance of reinforcing values education messages through narratives, storytelling, art, posters, drama, and physical movement, activities based on the stories, events, ceremonies and symbols of the Olympic Games stories have school-wide relevance.

## THE OLYMPIC VALUES

The core Olympic Values are identified as Excellence, Respect and Friendship. The narratives which follow highlight these values. When you engage your learners with these narratives you will be expanding their moral and physical understanding and capabilities.

## PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

The following principles of learning are highlighted in order to engage students actively in the values education process:

1. Learning is an active and not a passive activity. Students need to be actively engaged in discussion, sharing their ideas in small groups and exploring differing points of view.
2. People learn in different ways. Some people learn best by reading; some people learn best by listening; some people learn best by moving around. The activities associated with these narratives' present different ways of learning.
3. Learning is both an individual and a cooperative activity. Young people need opportunities to work together as well as independently. They also need to practice cooperative behaviours in order to learn competitive behaviours.

## STAGES OF THE LEARNING SEQUENCE

Successful learning is built upon a carefully scaffolded series of steps that **connect** to students' prior understanding, actively **process** or practice new information, and finally **transform** their understandings into powerful demonstrations of learning.

Each values story is presented at three reading levels: Grades 2-3, Grades 4-5, and Grades 6 -7. The accompanying activities are sufficiently open-ended to address a diverse range of learning styles and proficiencies. They focus on six main facets of understanding:

Explaining, Interpreting, Applying, Taking Perspective, Empathizing, and Developing Self-Knowledge. These critical thinking skills are woven into all three stages of the learning sequence in order to promote deep understanding of the values and concepts.



## CONNECTING

### BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR NEW LEARNING

#### (All Grades)

An acrostic poem is a poem where certain letters from each line spell out a word. Usually, the first letter of each word spells out a vertical word.

Write the word “Determined” vertically on the class white board. Ask the students what they think it means to be determined. After a few answers, students work together to draft a class acrostic poem for the word “Determined”. Each line should use the first letter to start a word or short sentence that describes what being determined means.

Examples might be D-don't give up; E-expect the best from yourself; T-try to improve...

Do this activity as a class on the white board. Help the students generate ideas. Some of the older grades might try doing this in pairs or individually.

## PROCESSING

### USING STRATEGIES TO ACQUIRE AND USE KNOWLEDGE

#### (All Grades)

Ask the students to read the story silently on their own.  
Reread the story with the students.

#### How and Why List

Students draw a big “T” in their journals. On the top of the left side of the “T” they write HOW and on the top of the right of the “T” they write WHY. They then make a list of how Dawn showed determination on the left. On the right they write why she needed to show determination in that instance.

Discuss as a class the types of situations where determination is a good value to have.  
When does it help us?

## TRANSFORMING

### SHOWING UNDERSTANDING IN A NEW WAY

We need determination the most when we doubt ourselves. We can tell ourselves lies like “I’ll never be good at math” or “I can’t do sports”. Sometimes people say things to us that make us doubt ourselves. It’s during these times that we need a determination statement. Just like Dawn’s “I can do this” statement when she first tried bobsleigh.



# DAWN RICHARDSON WILSON

## BOBSLEIGH

Dawn Richardson Wilson moved to Canada with her mom and siblings when she was only two years old. Her dad had stayed in Ghana.

The cold Edmonton winters were hard to get used to. Everything was very different from her homeland. Then tragedy struck.

Suddenly, her mom died at home. Dawn was only six years old. That same year her father died in Ghana.

Left without parents, she went to live with her brother Emad. His wife Cecilia raised Dawn like her daughter. At first it felt strange to call Cecilia “mom”. Over time they built a strong bond.

Dawn was a shy and quiet girl. But in high school, she discovered sport. It was a great way to learn and make friends. She played on the school rugby, track, and basketball teams.

*“Being involved in sport is like having a second family.”*

Dawn was determined to succeed. She didn’t think she was very good at basketball. She didn’t want to let her teammates down, so she put in extra work before and after school. She was driven to be a good player.

Her high school coach told her about a bobsleigh try-out camp. Dawn didn’t know much about bobsleigh. She decided to give it a try.

An icy bobsleigh track can be very scary. The twisting track with its steep banked corners can be very dangerous. She was determined to give it her best shot.

*“I can do this,”* she thought. She launched down the track in a two-person sled. It was a fast and terrifying ride. The coaches liked her speed.

Her determination paid off. She made the Canadian development team. Her teammates soon became like family.

Dawn’s life as a bobsledder tested her determination. She had to travel three hours each way from Edmonton to Calgary to train with the team. At the time, she was still a teenager.

The crashes, bumps, and bruises didn’t discourage her. She just kept coming back for more. She wanted to apply what she learned to the next run. The coaches and other athletes thought she was gritty.

*“In sport, I’m hungry to learn. I always have a notebook in hand. I am always learning.”*

Dawn was lighter than most of the other bobsledders. Gaining speed was more difficult. That didn’t discourage her. She was focused on her goal of making the senior team.

In 2020, Dawn made the national senior team. Traveling with the team, she races the best sliders in the world. Racing the best athletes make her even more determined.

Dawn will know in January 2022 if she is named to the Olympic team. She would love to win a medal at her first Olympics! But she knows that it’s the journey that counts.

Dawn’s parents have been gone for a long time. She still wants to make them proud.

*“I feel like they are with me in everything I do. Sports is the way I can connect with that side. It makes me very happy.”*

Dawn is just 22 years old. This is just the start of a long career. She could be a world class bobsleigh athlete for many years to come. She is studying at university and hopes to join the RCMP.



# DAWN RICHARDSON WILSON

## BOBSLEIGH

Dawn Richardson Wilson was only two years old when she moved to Canada with her mother and three older siblings. Her father had stayed in Ghana.

The cold Edmonton winters were very different from her homeland. Settling into Canadian life was hard for the family. Then tragedy struck.

When Dawn was only six, her mother suddenly died in their Edmonton home. That same year her father died in Ghana.

Left without parents, she went to live with her brother Emad and his wife Cecilia. Cecilia raised Dawn like a daughter. At first it felt strange to call Cecilia “mom”, but over time they built a strong bond.

Growing up, Dawn was shy and quiet. As a high school student, she discovered sport was a great way to learn and make friends. She felt a sense of connection as she played on the school rugby, track, and basketball teams.

*“Being involved in sport is like having a second family. It allows me to be part of a community and grow from those around me.”*

Life had been hard, but Dawn was determined to succeed. She didn’t think she was very good at basketball. She didn’t want to let her teammates down, so she put in extra work before and after school. She was driven to improve her game.

Her high school coach told her about a bobsleigh try-out camp. She didn’t know much about bobsleigh, but decided to give it a try. The coaches were impressed with her speed.

An icy bobsleigh track can be very scary. Looking down at the twisting track with its steep banked corners, she was determined to give it her best shot.

*“I can do this,”* she thought as she launched down the track in a two-person sled. It was a fast and terrifying ride.

Her determination paid off. She accepted an offer to join the Canadian development team. Her teammates soon became like family. It was a chance to succeed at a new sport.

Dawn’s life as a bobsledder tested her determination. She had to travel three hours each way from Edmonton to Calgary to train with the team. At the time, she was still a teenager.

Competing against adult women was not easy. But the crashes, bumps, and bruises didn’t discourage her. She just kept coming back for more. She was keen to apply what she learned to the next run down the course. The coaches and other athletes thought she was gritty.

*“In sport, I’m hungry to learn, continue to grow. It never gets old. I always have a notebook in hand, and am always learning.”*

Dawn was lighter than most of the other bobsledders. This would make gaining speed more difficult. That didn’t discourage her. She was focused on her goal of making the senior team.

*“My motivation comes from knowing that even if at first I wasn’t the ideal body type for bobsled, I could push myself to surprise those who doubted me.”*

In 2020, Dawn made the national senior team. Traveling with the team, she races the best sliders in the world. These world class competitions make her even more determined to become better.

Dawn will know in January 2022 if she is named to the Canadian Olympic bobsleigh team. Winning a medal at her first Olympics would be amazing! But she knows that it’s the journey that is truly important.

Even though Dawn’s parents have been gone for a long time she feels connected to them through sport. She is determined to make them proud.

*“I feel like they are with me in everything I do. Sports is the way I can connect with that side. It’s something that makes me very happy.”*

Dawn is just 22 years old, and may remain a world class bobsleigh athlete for many years to come. She is studying at MacEwan University and hopes to join the RCMP.



# DAWN RICHARDSON WILSON

## BOBSLEIGH

Dawn Richardson Wilson was only two years old when she immigrated to Canada with her mother and three older siblings. Her father had stayed in Ghana.

The cold Edmonton winters were very different from her homeland, and there were many other adjustments to make. Settling into Canadian life was hard for the family. Then tragedy struck.

When Dawn was only six, her mother died in their Edmonton home. That same year her father died in Ghana. Orphaned, she went to live with her brother Emad and his wife Cecilia. Cecilia raised Dawn as her own daughter. At first it felt strange to call Cecilia “mom”, but over time, they built a strong bond.

Growing up in Edmonton, Dawn was shy and quiet. As a student at Ross Sheppard High School, she discovered sport was a great way to learn, grow, and feel part of a community. She began to feel a sense of connection as she played on the school rugby, track, and basketball teams.

*“Being involved in sport is like a second family. It allows me to be part of a community and grow from those around me.”*

In spite of many challenges as a young child, Dawn was determined to succeed. She didn’t think she was very good at basketball. Faced with a fear of letting down her teammates down, she put in extra work before and after school. She was determined to improve her game.

During her first year at university, her high school coach told her about a bobsleigh recruitment camp. She didn’t know much about bobsleigh and was very intrigued by the sport. Eager to give it a try, Dawn went to the tryout session.

An icy bobsleigh track can be very intimidating. Looking down at the twisting track with its steep banked corners, she became determined to give it her best shot. “I can do this,” she thought as she launched down the track in a two-person sled. There was a pilot, and she was the brakeman at the back of the sled. It was a fast and terrifying ride.

Her determination paid off and she accepted an offer to join the Canadian development team. She had found a new family and new opportunity to succeed at sport. The coaches were impressed with her speed.

Dawn’s life as a bobsledder required great determination and sacrifice. She travelled three hours each way from Edmonton to Calgary to train at Olympic Park.

She was barely out of her teens and learning to compete against adult women in a demanding sport like bobsleigh was not easy.

Frequent crashes, bumps, and bruises didn’t discourage Dawn. She just kept coming back for more, eager to apply what she learned to the next run down the course. She was soon respected as one of the grittiest athletes in the program.

*“In sport, I’m hungry to learn, continue to grow. It never gets old. I always have a notebook in hand, and am always learning.”*

As a young bobsledder Dawn was told she did not have the typical bobsleigh build. She weighed less than the average bobsledder. That fact did not discourage her from pursuing her goal of becoming a member of the senior team. Dawn let the world know she was up for the challenge. She posted a message on Instagram.

*“My motivation comes from knowing that initially I was not the ideal body type for bobsled. I continue to push my limits as well as exceed the expectations of those who doubted me.”*

In 2020, Dawn secured a spot on the national senior team. Traveling with the team throughout Europe, Asia, and North America she races the most competitive sliders in the world. These world class competitions have increased her determination to challenge herself and discover a new level of excellence.

If named to the Canadian Olympic bobsleigh team in January 2022, Dawn will compete in her first Olympic Games which take place in Beijing, China in February. Winning a medal at her first Olympics would be amazing! But Dawn knows that it’s the journey that is truly important.

Even though Dawn’s parents have been gone for a long time she feels connected to them through sport. She is determined to make them proud.

*“I feel like they are with me in everything I do. Sports is the way I can connect with that side. It’s something that makes me very happy.”*

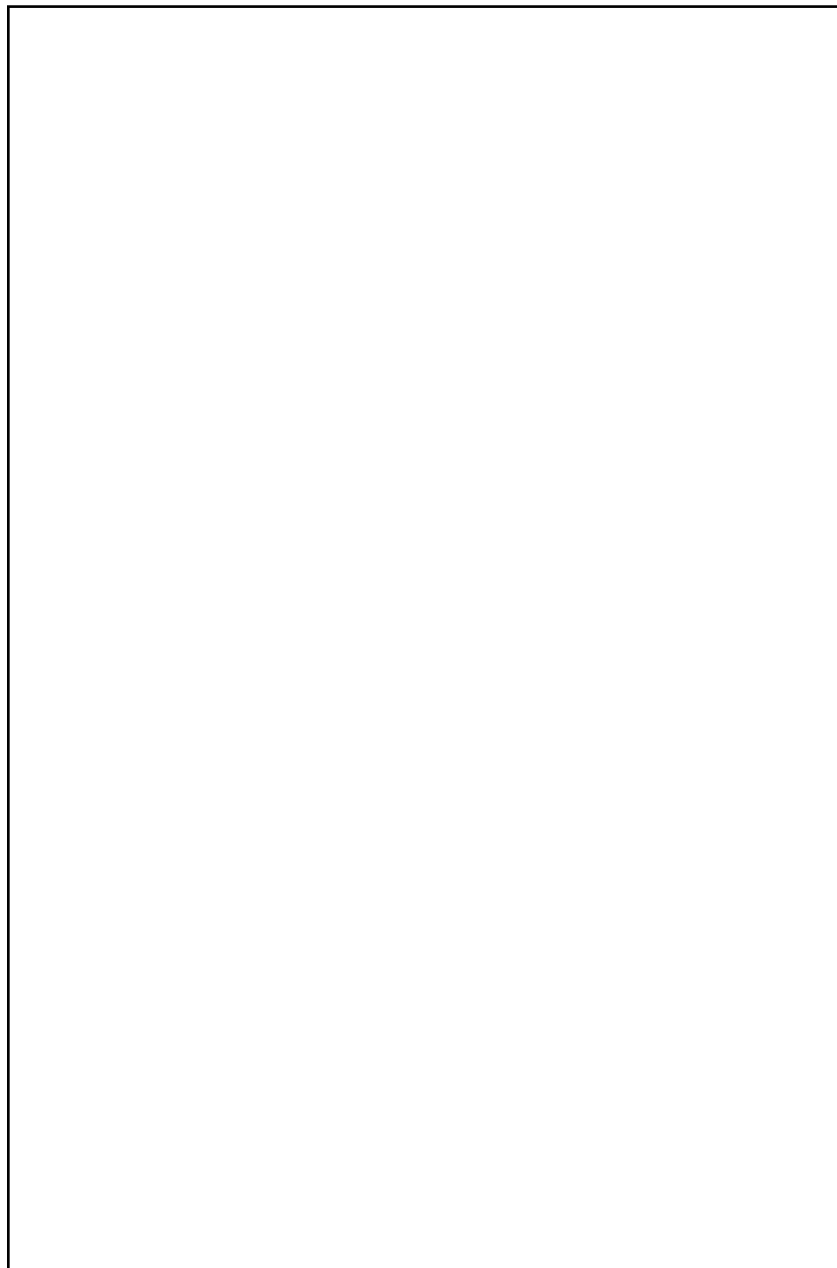
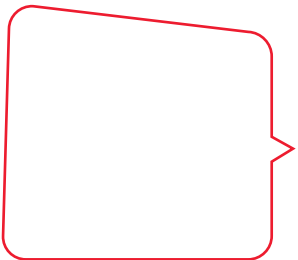
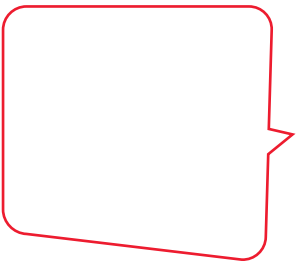
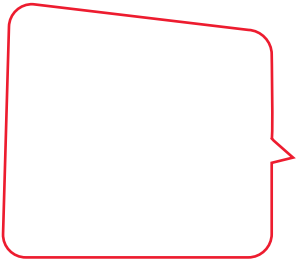
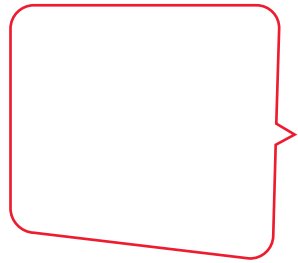
The average bobsleigh athlete peaks in their late twenties and early thirties. Dawn is just 22 years old, and may remain a world class bobsleigh athlete for many years to come. Dawn is a dedicated athlete and student. She is studying sociology and criminology at MacEwan University and hopes to eventually join the RCMP.



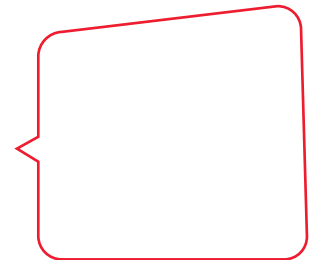
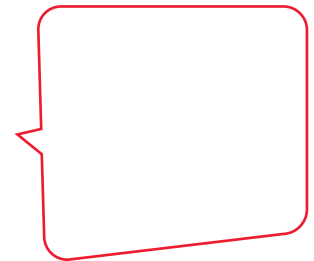
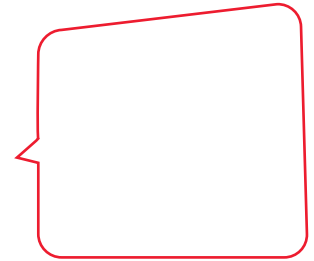
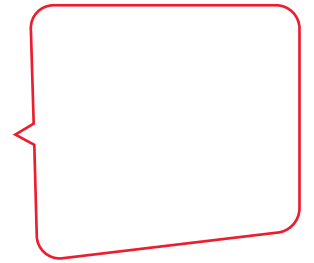
# WORD AND THOUGHT BUBBLES

Using the graphic organizer, students draw a picture of a situation where they doubted themselves. Maybe it was a time that other people said something that discouraged them or made them doubt themselves. On the left side of the picture, the students use word bubbles to state what others said or thought bubbles to express what they thought. On the right side of the picture, they use thought and word bubbles to say three to five determination statements.

## DISCOURAGEMENT



## DETERMINATION STATEMENTS



# EFFORTS AND CREATIVITY

The Canadian Olympic School Program wishes to thank and acknowledge the contributions of the following people. Without their efforts, and creativity, this project would not have been possible.

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SCHOOL PROGRAM