



RUSS COURTNALL

Even though Russ Courtnall became a world-renowned hockey star, he never lost sight of his roots and, to this day, remains committed to the community that gave him his start. Russ was born in Duncan, British Columbia and he spent his early years in nearby Lake Cowichan, relocating with his family to Victoria. It was in Victoria that Russ and his brothers, Geoff and Bruce, began a pursuit of hockey, playing for the “Maple Buds” at the Victoria Memorial Arena and moving on to the Victoria Racquet Club, Minor Hockey and the Western Hockey League’s Victoria Cougars.

In 1983, Russ was drafted as the seventh overall pick in the first round for the Toronto Maple Leafs. In the same year, he was the Captain of the Canadian Team at the World Junior Championships, and went on as one of the chosen few to compete in the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo. Russ was traded in 1988 from Toronto to the Montreal Canadians and, in 1992, he moved south to play with the Dallas Stars. This was followed by two years with the Vancouver Canucks and, after a brief stop in New York with the Rangers, he finished his career in 1999 with the Los Angeles Kings. Since retiring, Russ, his wife Paris and their three children came home to Victoria in 2003 for a few years before returning back to LA, where they reside full time.

Mental health is something that’s close to Russ’s heart. Russ’s father, Archie, lost his life to suicide in 1978 – partly to blame was the lack of lifesaving psychiatric services in Victoria as well as the stigma that surrounded mental illness during this era. In memory of their father, Russ and his brothers hold semi-regular Courtnall Celebrity Classics, a star-studded fundraising event that aims to raise money for mental health while breaking down stigmas and creating conversations. Proceeds from the Classics (held in 2003, 2004 and 2011) have helped open the doors to the Archie Courtnall Centre, a Psychiatric Emergency Services Unit at Victoria’s Royal Jubilee Hospital, and purchase mental health care equipment and services for the hospital’s Patient Care Centre.

