

# Spirit burns bright in Calgary

Calgarians still carry a torch for the Olympic experience 22 years after city hosted Winter Games

## Point of View

The arrival of the sacred Olympic flame in Calgary tomorrow is bound to rekindle a lot of memories — and emotions.

No one who was here when Calgary hosted the XV Olympic Winter Games will forget the passion and excitement that gripped the city during 16 glorious days in February 22 years ago.

Calgary was a much smaller place in 1988, but there was scarcely a soul in the population of 650,000 who didn't get involved.

Festivities for the return of the flame have already begun and tomorrow, there will be a big celebration to greet the arrival of the Torch Relay at Olympic Plaza — setting of the 1988 medal ceremonies and focal point for the revelry that overtook the city.

Tuesday, Calgarians can meet some of the

athletes who won glory at past Winter Games when the relay visits the Olympic Oval.

Wednesday, WinSport Canada welcomes the flame at Canada Olympic Park, where Eddie the Eagle soared off the ski jumps and Calgarians were held spellbound by bobsleigh, luge and freestyle skiing action.

This city is rightly proud of the effort that went into staging the first Olympic Games that not only paid for itself financially, but left a sporting legacy for future generations of athletes that could see Canada reaping bigger rewards in Vancouver next month.

The legacy lives on in the above venues, the Saddledome and Canmore Nordic Centre and transformed

Calgary into a hub for training and research designed to improve athletic competitiveness.

But most memorable of all was the spirit.

Western hospitality shone as bright as the massive Olympic flame that burned atop the Calgary Tower while thousands of Calgarians worked and celebrated.

It all might not have been possible without the efforts of an army of 10,000 volunteers, some of whom toiled for years to make the Games a success.

They were only 16 days, but they gave the world a look at our city's can-do, roll-up-your-sleeves energy and relentless spirit.

The flame's return is a great mid-winter tonic for a city that is now recovering (as it was back then) from a punishing economic recession.

Some 22 years down the road, Calgary remains a place of limitless possibilities, as witnessed by a new Conference Board of Canada study giving it top marks among Canadian cities for its attractiveness to newcomers.

When the flame departs westward, many of us will cast an envious eye and an encouraging nod toward Vancouver, which will soon get a taste of the experience that transformed the city by the Bow those 22 years ago.

— Roy Clancy

