



NOVICE DIARIST 2018  
DOLLY DEVI - Abreast At Alder Bay

This is the story of my journey through the devastation of breast cancer and my triumph in surviving and thriving in life after discovering dragon boating.

Being an interior designer, Bharata natyam (Indian classical dance) performer and a lover of water sports, I was longing to find something that would relate to all these interests and help me focus on my recovery. These were further reinforced by surviving this unexpected medical experience of going through surgery, chemo and radiation. After much thought, I signed up to join the wonderful paddlers of the Alder Bay dragon boat crew to benefit both my physical health and social well-being.

Being the only Indian woman on the team, I thought I would feel alone; however, I was wrong. After my first practice on the water in freezing cold weather with high winds and heavy rain, I realized that if I can make it through these unfavourable weather conditions, I could do anything especially being surrounded with fellow survivors. After paddling for 45 minutes, I was certain that dragon boating was something I wanted to continue doing.

In April, I became a member of the Alder Bay team. I and five other novice members were welcomed with open arms and we heard the inspirational stories of the team members. All of these amazing women offered love, support and encouragement.

May 5th - During the morning of the first 200 meter Spring Knockout regatta, I was a little nervous but also excited as I didn't know what to expect. I felt ready to get into the water to paddle alongside all these amazing strong paddlers as we raced alongside the other teams. It was so much fun to paddle through the beautiful waters of False Creek and Granville Island area.

May 26th – Women's Regatta. The best part of this Dragon Boat race was the flower ceremony which was both beautiful and emotional as all 10 breast cancer boats were rafted together. Everyone waved pink carnations and sang as tears ran down their face while embracing each other. We all tossed the carnations into the water in remembrance of the loved ones that we lost to breast cancer. It was a touching and remarkable moment.

June 24th – The Final Concord Pacific Dragon Boat Festival. When I arrived at the event, the tents were setup, and the paddlers from the international teams were ready to compete with each other. I felt pride and super grateful to be a part of this experience. As we marshalled for the race, we sang and danced and as I looked around and saw every single woman smiling, dancing, having fun and proud to be a dragon boater.

Through this experience, I was able to meet incredible teammates, wonderful coaches, and I got to take part in an inspiring and one-a-kind movement. Being an Abreast In A Boat dragon boater is something very special indeed and has opened many doors in my life. It has ultimately made a positive difference in my life.

Thanks to all of the great coaches who guided me to make this adventure possible. I feel so blessed and honoured to be part of this wonderful team. Despite all of the challenges that have been thrown my way, I am here to stay.

Paddles up!  
Dolly Devi.