

About the Author

In his teens, Jade Bell was a handsome, popular, 6' 3" athlete, an A-student, musician, poet and potential filmmaker. Unfortunately, Jade also had a dark side. He actively indulged in alcohol and drugs.

One night in 1997 when he had just turned 23, Jade went to a friend's house where, intoxicated with alcohol, he mixed a concoction of cocaine and heroin and shot it into his arm. He collapsed and was rushed to the hospital, where he lay in a coma for two months. When he awoke he was absolutely normal at first, but then he once again slipped into unconsciousness. The next time Jade woke up, his entire body was damaged by acute muscle disorder. He could no longer speak – worse still, he was also blind.

In this new, dark and desperate world, the unconditional love and inspiration of his father, Tyler Bell, taught him the true strength of the human spirit. One day something just clicked, and Jade decided he had something valuable to share with kids who face the temptation of using drugs – something that few other people still living could offer.

With help from his dedicated caregivers, Jade began touring schools in Vancouver and Alberta and, more recently, in Western Quebec. He speaks to high school students – more than 100,000 over the past few years – about the horrors of drug use and the effects of an overdose. He shows a video clip, *The Wrath of the Dragon*, that reveals the seamy side of the Vancouver youth drug scene and talks about the wasted life waiting for those who consider or continue doing drugs. Then he plays a brief speech he created that took him two months to write.

Jade says that before this tragic experience he had an “invincible, nothing-can-hurt-me” attitude as a teen. Today, many

a hardened or troubled youth with that same bad attitude has broken down in tears at the sight of Jade's uncontrollable body, beautiful blue, unseeing eyes and the power of his story. Though it's strange to think of his plight as a “gift,” it's one that Jade bears courageously and gracefully with a knowing smile.

In 2002 he was presented with the Coast Foundation's Courage To Come Back Award in the chemical dependency category.

Jade lives independently in Vancouver, BC. In-between his school tours, Jade spends his time responding to the flood of emails from students and teachers that inevitably follow his visits. He composes poetry and song lyrics to support his campaign. His website, <www.jadebell.ca>, features poems, a photograph gallery and current tour news.

Jade Bell is truly one of Canada's contemporary heroes.

—written by David Newing

