

Downing leads Canadians into spectacular opening ceremonies

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SHENZHEN, China (CIS) – The 26th Summer Universiade is now officially underway, as a capacity crowd of just over 25,000 spectators was on hand Friday night at the breathtaking Shenzhen Bay Sports Center for the opening ceremonies.

Swimmer MacKenzie Downing, a native of Whitehorse, Yukon, led the Canadian delegation into the open-air arena through the "The Gate of the World", a humongous LAD wall towards the "Youth Boulevard", and then onto the field level. Canada is one of 152 countries participating at the second largest multi-sport games in the world, which features over 12,000 athletes and officials.



Downing became the star attraction even before Canada entered the Center, as the vast majority of the Canadian contingent came prepared with cameras and wanted pictures taken with their flag-bearer. The University of Victoria alumna is appearing in her third Universiade games, having won three medals – including gold in the 100-metre butterfly – in her last appearance in 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Canada has sent its largest delegation in Summer Universiade history to Shenzhen, totaling 349 student-athletes, coaches and team officials.

"When we walked into the stadium I just felt this huge swell of pride and emotion, I'm so honoured to have this opportunity, and the experience was incredible," said Downing after the night's festivities had come to a close. "This is what you dream about as an athlete, to be at events of this magnitude, it really is amazing."

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