

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RICHMOND'S ISABELLE CHEN IS GOING TO THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP — AND SHE'S ALREADY CHANGING THE GAME AT HOME

The 17-year-old wrestler, youth leader, and City of Richmond award recipient earned her spot on Canada's national team at the 2026 Canadian World Team Trials — and is asking her community for support to get there



RICHMOND, BC — In late May, Isabelle Chen traveled to Montreal and came home as a Canadian World Team Trials gold medalist. The 17-year-old freestyle wrestler, competing in the 49 kg U17 Cadet category, earned her place on Canada's national team and will head to the 2026 World Championship in Azerbaijan at the end of July.

Representing Canada at the world level runs in the family. Her father, Chef Alex Chen, competed at the Bocuse d'Or in Lyon, France in 2013 — the most prestigious culinary competition in the world — and finished in the top 10. In 2025, he returned to Lyon as a jury member, representing Canada on the international stage once again. This summer, it is Isabelle's turn.

For those who know Isabelle, the result was not a surprise. What she has accomplished on the mat is only part of her story.

A LEADER ON AND OFF THE MAT

In 2024, Isabelle recognized a simple problem: she didn't have enough training partners or mat time. Rather than accept that as a limitation, she started a wrestling team at Hugh Boyd Secondary School. She was the only female wrestler on the roster — and she was named team captain.

That was just the beginning. In the 2025–2026 season, Isabelle and her teammates from Bhullar Wrestling Club grew the program beyond Hugh Boyd, expanding to four additional high schools across Richmond. What started as one girl looking for more mat time has become a movement. And she is not done — Isabelle is now setting her sights on bringing wrestling into Richmond’s elementary schools, building a foundation for the next generation of athletes before they even reach high school.



That instinct — to create opportunity rather than wait for it — runs through everything she does. Isabelle is a member of Canada’s Generation 2026 Youth Leadership Council, where she works to promote equity and representation in sport. She mentors younger wrestlers, advocates for girls’ access to athletic spaces, and leads by example both on and off the mat.



In April 2026, the City of Richmond recognized her contributions with the U-ROC Youth Leadership Award — an honour that reflects not just what she has achieved, but the kind of person she is choosing to be.

top: Isabelle (bottom) and her high school wrestling team in 2024;
bottom: Isabelle and her Richmond wrestling team in 2026

Her message to young girls is clear: every girl deserves access, opportunity, and a sense of belonging — on and off the mat. No one should have to wait for permission to step into the arena. Isabelle doesn’t just say it. She proves it.

“Every girl deserves access, opportunity, and a sense of belonging on and off the mat. My goal is to make sure no one feels like they have to wait for permission to step into the arena.”

— ISABELLE CHEN, 2026 CANADIAN WORLD TEAM TRIALS
GOLD MEDALIST

REPRESENTING CANADA THIS SUMMER

This July, Isabelle will join Canada’s national team at the 2026 World Championship in Azerbaijan. In preparation, she has mandatory training camps to attend — high-performance sessions that are critical to arriving at the international stage ready to compete.

Like many amateur athletes in Canada, earning a spot on the national team does not come with financial support to match the cost of getting there. Travel, accommodation, training, and competition fees add up quickly. Isabelle is working to raise \$10,000 to cover her expenses for training camps and the World Championship — and she is asking her community to help.



Isabelle received the U-ROC Youth Leadership award from the City of Richmond

HOW TO SUPPORT ISABELLE

There are two ways to get behind Isabelle as she prepares to represent Canada on the world stage: **Donate directly** — Contributions of any size go directly toward Isabelle's training camp and World Championship costs. Her goal is to raise \$10,000.

Donate: <https://gofund.me/e89acf8aa>

Become a sponsor — Businesses and organizations are invited to partner with Isabelle as an official sponsor. Sponsors will have their logo displayed on her team apparel at the World Championship in Azerbaijan, placing their brand alongside a Richmond athlete competing for Canada.

Sponsorship inquiries: werchens@gmail.com

Isabelle has put in the work. She has earned her place. Now she is asking Richmond to rally behind her — not just for what she will do in Azerbaijan, but for what she is already doing here at home.

ABOUT ISABELLE CHEN



Isabelle Chen is a 17-year-old competitive freestyle wrestler from Richmond, British Columbia, competing in the 49 kg U17 Cadet category. She is the 2026 Canadian World Team Trials Gold Medalist and will represent Canada at the 2026 World Championship in Azerbaijan in late July 2026.

In 2024, Isabelle founded the wrestling program at Hugh Boyd Secondary School — serving as its only female wrestler and team captain. By 2025–2026, she and her Bhullar Wrestling Club teammates had expanded the program to four additional Richmond high schools. She is currently working to bring wrestling into Richmond

elementary schools. Isabelle is also a member of Canada's Generation 2026 Youth Leadership Council and the recipient of the 2026 U-ROC Youth Leadership Award from the City of Richmond. She is a committed advocate for equity and access in women's sport.

Her fundraising goal is \$10,000 to cover training camp and World Championship expenses.

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