

Five years ago, members of Sudbury's Team Chiropractic Dragon Boat racing squad (affectionately known as Team Chiro) dreamed of competing at a world championship event. Instead of sitting around talking about it and how great it would be, the team implemented and executed a master plan. They knew making it to the top of the world in dragon boat racing was only going to be a reality if they took on the best. So the team started looking for the best teams in the province and where they would be racing. They then entered the events and put forth their challenge to the top teams. Win or lose, Team Chiro absorbed every bit of experience they could from the highly competitive races. Over the years, the team took it's fair share of licks and beatings at elite level competitions, but never once did they deviate from the plan or allow themselves to become swamped with self doubt. Each time out, they poured every last sap of energy into their strokes. Complete exhaustion was the reward, not necessarily a gold medal. They would scour the internet, looking for dragon boat races and great teams time and time again. Then, like giddy hunters on the opening of moose season, they gathered themselves up, drove to the destination, set themselves up in tents and met the best paddlers head on in calm or rough waters. Sticking to the plan has paid off for Team Chiro big time. Recently, the squad took gold at the Canadian National Dragon Boat Club Crew Championships in Calgary. The team, representing the Sudbury Canoe Club, won the premier 200-metre and 500-m races in the mixed division. The local team scorched the competition in the 200-m race with a blistering time of 48:16. In the 500-m event, Team Chiro zoomed over the finish line in 1:58.96. By sweeping the two races, Team Chiro

Team Chiro hunts world's best dragons earned the right to represent Canada at the 2008 Club Crew World Championships, which will be held in Penang, Malaysia in August 2008. The plan of seeking out and destroying elite paddlers has paid monstrous dividends. "Experience was the difference this year," said Mike MacFarlane, Team Chiro member. "We chased the best paddlers and teams all over Ontario. Most of the teams who are our competition now are national-quality teams. We're not afraid to find out where they are and paddle against them. Until recently, we didn't fair so well. This year...it came together and we pushed hard. Paddling against the best makes us better." Being Canadian champions doesn't satisfy the hunger rumbling deep in the bellies of Team Chiro members. "It's been a long time coming and we've had a lot of ups and downs," said MacFarlane. "We're ready for the world championships. We now intend to elevate ourselves again in Malaysia and let the whole world know we are there to earn a medal." Team Chemistry played a vital role in shaping Team Chiro into an awesome, win-obsessed unit. "When I ask for something...anything from this team, they deliver every time," said coach and member Jeff Walker. "If they get beat by another team, their resolve only gets stronger to beat them back. Everyone always digs in for the common goal and gives their all every time they get in the boat." Team Chiro represents the first boat, made up of entirely Sudbury paddlers, to go to worlds. "It's huge for the team to do this," said Stefano Biondi, Team Chiro member. "We've always had individuals from Sudbury go to world events, but I've always dreamed of having a whole team go to worlds and show people what we can do here in Sudbury. It feels great to be part of the team that achieved this...it's great for the whole city." Team Chiro

spends six days a week training, on and off the water, to be at a high level. They have also endured many pitfalls - such as heart-breaking losses and team members leaving - associated with high performance sport. The hardship only makes the people in the boat better. "What we get out of this is what we put into it...and it's a lot," said Biondi. "This team has persevered through a lot of hard times, but we still have managed to come out on top. Being part of this team has taught me valuable life lessons about not giving up and how to keep going no matter what happens." Team Chiro paddlers spend countless hours training and racing to be on the national stage. The lifestyle is taxing as members have families, high demanding careers and other social elements getting set aside in the pursuit for glory. Members work around their hectic schedules and the experience actually brings them closer together, which results in a stronger squad overall. "You get close to the people in the boat," said Leslie King, Team Chiro member. "We work hard for one another and respect one another. In Calgary, we were all huddled together for two days in a 10 by 12-foot tent in the rain. The team becomes another family...people you can always count on and come through for you."