

## Great Spirit Award

Good evening, my name is Shirley Smallwood and I'll be conveying to you Gilles LeBlanc' words on his behalf. Mon nom est Shirley Smallwood, je serai le porte parole à M. LeBlanc. **Gilles' words;**

Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, (fellow PALS); chers invités;

I accept this award with enormous humility, for I am not worthy of such praise, nor am I comfortable with its accolades. Life oftentimes deals us a difficult hand, brutal by its force, stringent upon its sheer velocity and fury.

Je suis énormément fier d'être ici ce soir, capable de célébrer cet honneur avec vous. Je dois souligner nos chers bénévoles qui demeurent le bougie d'allumage de notre Société. Sans vous; nous ferions pitiés. Oeuvrant la majorité du temps dans l'ombre, vous nous êtes indispensables. Merci infiniment d'être là.

My dear friends, I stand here before you a mere shell of the man I once was; my voice barely audible; my strength a foregone attribute, my body (pause) *a mere memory*. As a proud man, this has certainly wrecked havoc on my internal psyche. However, I also stand before you, a man wiser by his choices, a man more in tune with the frailties of life, and on how life should be lived. Frivolous details matter no more. Trivial issues simply don't make the grade. *I have even learnt to be patient!* (smile)

ALS can attack my limbs; peel away my strength, silence my voice and even tug hard at my dignity;

**But at no time will it ever take my Spirit!**

As author John Feinstein, penned *The Caddy for Life* on behalf of Bruce Edwards, he wrote the following about Bruce's valiant fight with ALS:

*Courage is getting up in the morning every day to face a battle you know you can't win.*

While extremely grateful to be recognized with this Great Spirit Award, I am here tonight representing the young mother, her body ravaged by ALS, barely clinging to life, yet longing to make it through one more week, in order to be there for her daughter's ritual hug every morning; ladies and gentlemen (pause) **that's courage**. And I am here to represent the father who struggles to get to work every day and who forgoes his own needs for medication so his sons can play hockey; (pause) **that's courage**. Famous or not, as we struggle with this disease, we all simply yearn (pause) *for One More Day*.

This evening is meant to celebrate the fine cuisine of our South American friends, and we thank them for this. Nous voulons bel et bien remercier nos amis pour la bonne bouffe et le bon vin si splendide.

But more importantly, tonight's purpose is to embrace the Spirit of our fight, to unite and eradicate this deadly disease called .....ALS. In order to properly attend to the growing needs of our ALS clients in New Brunswick; we turn to you. On behalf of **all New Brunswick PALS**, thank you for being here and thank you for your support. Merci. God Bless you all.