



Code 5 Fitness trainer and former cop Tricia Dong pumps a kettlebell outside her volunteer gig with the police downtown at Odd Squad Productions.

A workout with balls

Ex-cop offers heavy-duty fitness training

By TIA ABELL
for Metro Vancouver

Tricia Dong knows how to use lethal force. And she's got iron balls.

That may explain why the 34-year-old fitness trainer and former Vancouver police officer says some people have found her five-foot-four stature a little intimidating — especially in her “fit for duty” classes for police-hopefuls.

“If you can't handle my clinics, if you can't handle the way I talk, you won't be able to handle (police) training,” she says with a shrug, adding that people on the

“Vitamin M diet” — meaning McDonalds — need not apply.

“You don't want to be the last one up the hill. You don't want to be the weak link.”

Dong, who founded Code 5 Fitness a year and a half ago, teaches boot camp-style classes for police and firefighter applicants and professionals as well as for regular folk.

She says she gets her “street cred” by walking the walk.

“I've seen trainers who are grossly out of shape.”

Not her. A member of the VPD judo club, she runs, cycles and does Polynesian and salsa dancing. And she's one of the few in B.C. to train with kettlebells, which look like cannon balls with handles and are used to train

core strength through movement.

Dong hadn't planned to become a trainer — fitness was just a lifelong hobby. As a teen she dreamed of photojournalism. She studied communications and psychology at Simon Fraser University, but switched to criminology after a friend was killed by a drunk driver in 1992.

She graduated in 1996 and joined the police force in 1997. Four years later, she left.

“I loved the job, but it's a very in-the-box kind of job and I found things that didn't hold for my personality.”

She turned to journalism and earned her certificate from Langara College in 2003. She also taught marathon running clinics and subbed for a YWCA Po-

lice Fitness Training Program instructor, which was a class she'd taken as an applicant eight years ago. When the instructor left, Dong took over the program.

In September last year, the Ryan Lee Bootcamp conference in Connecticut helped her refine her niche in the market.

“What was so obvious was that there were so many trainers, you had to distinguish yourself. Mine was in law enforcement.”

Does she miss police work or journalism?

“I get more satisfaction helping people reach their goals as a coach and trainer,” she says.

“Just say that she can give you a workout with balls.”

For more info, visit www.code5fitness.com.