

Longboarding for Peace teaches the value of balance



By Nate Smelle

Rolling into town this past weekend as part of this year's Wheels, Water and Wings event, Longboarding for Peace set up shop at the Freedom Skate Park in downtown Bancroft to host a public workshop helping people find balance and harmony in their life through longboarding. Describing the initiative as "a movement forward," its founder Michael Brooke says the project is meant to empower people to get on their board and start making things happen in their communities.

"Most people are starting to realize that everything is all about balance," says Brooke.

"In order to move things forward one has to understand things from another person's shoes. The only way to do that is to teach balance. The main goal of Longboarding for Peace is to encourage people to do one act of peace, one act of kindness each day. Together our compassion has the power to move mountains."

By getting 50,000 people to commit at least one act of kindness every day, Brookes says he will be able to generate more than 20 million acts of kindness each year. As the publisher and editor of Untapped Magazine and Concrete Wave, Brooke carefully designs the two publications with the intention of making the world a better place.

"The entire reason I created Untapped Magazine is to awaken people's consciousness a little bit more. It's a really not meant for the people who already get it. It's for people who are thinking that maybe there is something else, something better out there for them. It's not political, it's strictly saying, I don't care who you vote for, just vote; I don't care what you ride, just ride; I don't care what you paint, just paint. Search for the things that help you find fulfillment and go after them."

Longboarding for Peace also works hard to get youth involved in the communities where they live. Acknowledging that 1.8 million eligible voters aged 18 to 24 didn't vote in the 2011 federal election, Brooke, says youth need to learn that their vote can make a difference. It's not a matter of telling them what to do, he says, it simply comes down to listening to them.

?The best way to engage youth is to hear their stories,? he says.

?Everyone needs to understand that we're all in this together. It doesn't require a whole lot of us to make something happen.?

Brooke says that if only 6,201 youth voters would have participated in the last election the outcome would have been completely different. Taking into consideration that there are more than 100,000 longboarders in Canada of voting age, he says the longboard vote could play a role in the next federal election on Oct. 19.

According to Brooke, the philosophy behind Longboarding for Peace is based more in social justice than it is politics. The organization currently offers support to the Red Cross, Just a Drop International Water-aid Charity, the Association in Defence of the Wrongfully Convicted and The Innocence Project.

Over the course of the next 30 years Brooke plans to continue harnessing the power of the longboard to teach people about balance, peace and justice. Expecting the organization to evolve as its numbers grow, he is enthusiastic about the future.

?The reason why the longboard works so well is because it is a perfect metaphor for balance,? says Brooke.

?If you go too far to the right on a skateboard or a longboard you wind up in a circle. Likewise if you go too far to the left you wind up in a circle. The only way to achieve balance and harmony is a little bit to the left and a little bit to the right... and that's how you find your flow.?

The Longboarding for Peace movement is always looking for new members who are ready to step up and make the world a better place. If you think you might be one of those people, contact mbrooke@interlog.com , or by phone at 416- 807-0805.