

concrete wave



KARMA. POLICE
AND CONNECTIONS IN VANCOUVER



Adam Yates (left) and Kyle Wein make the drop above Vancouver, British Columbia, a city attempting to balance longboarding's potential with its occasional perils.
Photo: Jacob Lambert

VANCOUVER

COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND BEYOND

By MICHAEL BROOKE

Faithful readers of *Concrete Wave* will know that we've explored some pretty unusual topics in the magazine: Spirituality. Serendipity. Authority. In this issue, I wanted to give readers an opportunity to understand how much of our skate community is connected. But as you will soon see, it goes deeper than a sense of connection. It's where those connections take us.

Over the course of several months, the Vancouver longboarding community found itself in the media spotlight after three very serious longboard incidents happened in rapid succession. While there had been other such incidents in previous

years, these accidents happened within just three weeks, and they prompted a huge media and community focus on longboarding. Many newspaper reports appeared, and many people posted comments and opinions at various new sites. Longboarding even wound up on *The National* — Canada's major newscast watched by millions.

Longboarders worldwide follow what happens in other communities with a cautious eye. We're all connected. When a longboarder suffers a serious injury or the media decides to shine a spotlight on "the crazy longboarders," it impacts all of us.

The question that I found myself asking is how best to communicate the concept of unity within the world community. When longboarders use their connections, it helps to build a stronger community and it keeps things progressing. I felt the best way to illustrate this concept was to bring you a feature that connects many different people.

Usually I try to keep myself out of the stories in *CW*. But as fate, or karma, would have it, this time I am part of the story. So, let me take you on a journey. It winds through a number of people, places and ideas, but all are connected to the power of skateboarding, karma and community.

MANY PATHS, ONE WAVE

Back in the mid-1990s, I was a struggling photocopier salesman. I won't bore you with the details, but my life was vastly different than it is today. I was trying to sell photocopiers to book publishers, and it wasn't working. In truth, I just couldn't get excited about machines that put black marks on white paper. I was the worst salesperson on the team, and I was filled with a sense of dread at work — and dread is putting it mildly.

But I kept at it, trying to get something to happen. Eventually, I wound up getting a meeting with Nick Pitt, the co-owner of a place called Warwick Publishing. It was not easy to get the meeting, but I must have worn the poor guy down.

At our meeting, we politely bantered back and forth, and I explained the newest technology that my company had developed. But I soon realized that things were going pretty much nowhere and I would have zero chance of selling anything to Nick. But then I casually mentioned that I had a website. Back then, having your own website was still a pretty unusual thing.

"What's it about, this website of yours?" asked Nick.

I recall being fairly guarded in my answer.

"Ah, it's about skateboarding," I said. "But let me tell you more about what we can do for you with respect to *your* website."

The truth was that my \$5-a-month "Skategeezzer Homepage" wasn't much. It was a collection of people's experiences with skateboarding. But it existed, and it was at that moment that Nick said the words that would change my life.

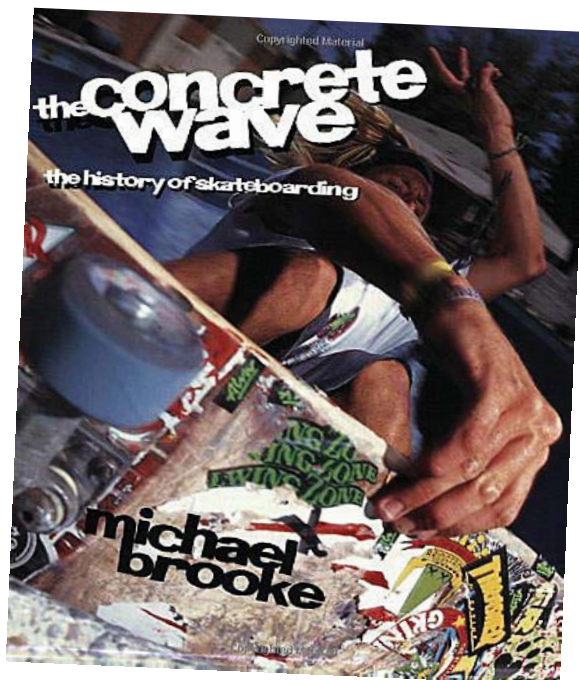
"That's interesting," he said. "We're thinking about doing a book on skateboarding. Why don't you put together an outline?"

Now *that* was something I could get excited about. I felt energized, and I immediately got to work. My plan was to write the first book on the history of skateboarding. Nick accepted the outline, and within a few weeks I had a contract in my hands. It was a surreal feeling. I had never written a book before — and yet I had somehow leaped over the hundreds of people trying to get published (commonly known as the "slush pile").

At this point you are probably thinking, "OK, that's cool. He ran a little website, happened to meet the right guy at the right time and found his bliss." But the truth is a little more complicated.

The Skategeezzer Homepage started up in 1995 through the efforts of my brother, who had taught himself how to do HTML. This was before Google and Facebook and spam. Connecting with fellow skaters via the flourishing Internet back then was truly magical.

There was one particular guy I had met online who ran something called SkateTrader. It was a fanzine, and it was published by Todd Huber.



Todd would later go on to create Skatelab — the world's greatest skate museum. At the time, however, it was the ads for longboards in Skate Trader that grabbed my attention. I did manage to find a longboard at a shop called Full Tilt. This was back in 1995. While I enjoyed the Foundation 48", I knew in my heart that I wanted more.

I contacted a few Canadian distributors to try to find out more information about longboarding. Both S&J Sales and Ultimate Distributors were very gracious with my requests. For a brief moment, I even dabbled in trying to sell longboards through a mail-order site called "Art of the Carve." Full disclosure: I sold ONE complete.

But as I started to do research for the book, I realized that I needed help. I got back in touch with the two distributors. S&J Sales were very helpful in giving me some much-needed updates on the current state of skate, and Norm MacDonald of Ultimate suggested that I meet up with his boss, Kevin Harris, who had started the company in 1984.

But Kevin was much more than a skateboard distributor; he was a skate legend. Kevin was a professional freestyler for Powell-Peralta, and his board graphic was truly inspiring — especially to Canadians. Back in the '80s, I'd been a freestyle fanatic. I think I went through at least five of Kevin's decks, and for my 22nd birthday, a friend created a hand-painted Kevin Harris sweater.

So it was something of a surreal feeling driving up to meet Kevin at his Peterborough, Ontario, office. We immediately got into things, and I fired a huge number of questions at him. He took it all in stride and graciously answered all my questions. It was apparent that doors to the skate industry that had previously been tightly shut were going to be opened through his

connections. You probably wouldn't be reading this magazine had it not been for his support with the book.

My book was originally going to be called *The Endless Wave*. That was soon changed to *The Concrete Wave*. It was released in the spring of 1999 and eventually sold more than 42,000 copies. It also turned into a 52-part TV series, and, of course, the magazine you now hold in your hands — all the result of one small statement uttered by a book publisher and the amazing support of a fellow freestyler. As I write these words, I am reminded of the "butterfly effect," the idea that sometimes the smallest actions can have huge, unpredictable consequences.

Over the years I've maintained a pretty close friendship with Kevin. We sometimes joke that the magazine he publishes, *Concrete*, will merge with mine to create *Concrete Concrete Wave*.

But the story doesn't end here. Not by a long shot.

MORE THAN COWBOYS AT THE RODEO

For the past two years, the Cloverdale Rodeo, held in a small town southeast of Vancouver, has hosted a major freestyle contest. Since *Concrete Wave* is the only magazine that covers freestyle, we've played a small part promoting the event. But the truth is that Kevin Harris has been a key force in getting things rolling. Working tirelessly next to him is the show's producer, Monty Little, but we'll save his story for another issue. The Rodeo has showcased some fine freestylers, but it also created what can only be described as another amazing connection.

Concrete Wave: So how did you wind up befriending a Mountie with a tattoo of your graphic on his arm?

Kevin Harris: I had seen this tattoo of my board graphic a few months before. Someone had sent me an Instagram photo. I had no idea who the guy was, but it was a great version. Jordan, one of the folks that works here at Ultimate, also found out about the tattoo and said, "Hey, we should do something for this guy."

Have other folks sent you photos of their Mountie tattoos?

I have gotten photos over the last number of years. I looked at it and thought it was awesome. Everyone has their own little bit of spin with the logo.

Did you have any other information about the tattoo?

We had no idea who the guy was or where he lived.

Did you try to do any follow-up?

About a month after Jordan had showed me the tattoo, I was looking into the possibility of trying to track [the guy] down. We wanted to get his email address and hook him up a board or something. It was kind of loose: "If anyone spots this guy, let me know."

So what happened at the Cloverdale freestyle contest back in May? You were the MC.

There was a break in the events. We had about a half-hour before the pro event started. It was a free-for-all session. It was one of those situations where I got off the mic. I looked over and I saw this RCMP officer come into the area. We were pretty packed in there.

What did you think at first?

I thought "Well, it's kind of weird, but I guess he's just checking it out." Then a few minutes later someone comes up to me and says, "That RCMP officer wants to talk to you." At this point, I was really wondering what was happening. I really wondered why this police officer needed to speak to me.

What was running through your mind?

I was thinking, "Did I speed to get here? Do we have a problem?" It's the typical skateboarder reaction. I recently got busted by the cops and security in downtown Vancouver during a legitimate demo. It was for Go Skateboarding Day.

So what happened next?

Well, he puts out his hand and says, "I just wanted to introduce myself. My name is Troy Derrick." He then rolls up his sleeve — and I realize it's the tattoo of my graphic that I'd seen on Instagram. It all just clicked. Then I immediately started to wonder about this whole situation. I mean, he's a freakin' RCMP officer and he has my graphic on his arm. I just figured "OK, he's an RCMP policeman and he likes the graphic, and that's why it's on his arm." It's the only thing going through my mind. But then things started to turn a bit frenzied. I am there with my board. He's there and soon everyone wants pictures.

I guess it was getting a little chaotic then?

Well, I'm trying to run a skate contest. I eventually got back on the mic, but I could see there's lots of activity going on around Troy. People are posing with him and sending up on Twitter and Facebook. Soon it turns out people are sending me these photos with Troy. They are coming from



Troy Derrick (left) with Kevin Harris. Photo: Hippie Mike

Europe and Australia. So I know it's spreading around like crazy.

We had another break and I went up to Troy. This time I took my wife, Audrey, and explained to her about the graphic on his arm. We're still at the introduction stage of things.

What really took things to the next level was the fact that my parents happened to be at the event. They were sitting in the bleachers and asked Troy if I could show his tattoo off to them.

What happened when you introduced Troy to your parents?

Again, in my mind I am thinking it's all pretty straightforward: He's RCMP, he likes the graphic and he's got a tattoo. But as soon as the introductions are finished, I realize there's way more to this than I think. He thanks my parents for putting me on the planet and exclaims, "This guy changed my life." Troy starts talking about how I did a demo in Prince George and how I spent time with him. Of course, I had no recollection of meeting him all those years ago.

Troy began to follow my career, and he knew that in Canada being a pro skater was extremely difficult. But somehow, Troy had picked up on the idea that I did what I wanted to do and had made a career in skateboarding.

How did this all impact his life?

Troy said that he wanted to be an RCMP officer, and that I gave him the inspiration to pursue

that dream. Troy told my parents that the reason he was in uniform was a result of my pro career. I was floored. I had no idea of the significance of the tattoo. It was truly an emotional moment. Troy had put the tattoo on his arm because of me, not just the graphic. I've always taken my career as a professional skateboarder seriously, and I've enjoyed meeting up with folks year after year at various demos. I knew that I've had some impact on people, but had no idea how deep this runs.

What's happened since the time you first met?

We've gotten together on a number of occasions. We've eaten together and we send funny texts to each other. It feels like I've known him for 30 years.

Why do you think it took this long for him and you to connect? I mean, you're practically in the same town.

I'm not sure. I think it's one of those things where Troy might not have felt comfortable tracking me down. I guess he didn't want to push things. But the way things worked out, it was the best possible outcome. Troy did not know I was in that building. He just so happened to be working security detail for the Cloverdale Rodeo Festival and spotted the sign for a freestyle contest.

You've spent a long time helping to build a skate community in Vancouver and Canada. You've got a distribution network, you have built skateparks and opened up a tremendous number of channels. What do you think you can do to help the longboard community?

Well, I may not come from the background of longboarding, but I come from the background of skateboarding. I want to be there to help no matter what aspect of skateboarding is represented. I want to step up to the plate and help in any way I can. We've had very productive meetings with the local community and I truly can understand that 13-year-old who is passionate about riding.

How does Troy Derrick factor into all of this?

This is the first time in skate history that you have a guy like him who represents the RCMP that definitely sees it from both angles. He understands the residents' side who are concerned about safety. But he also sees things from the longboarders' perspective. This is far different than the meetings we used to have in the '70s and '80s where it was so one-sided against skateboarding. The knee-jerk reaction is just to ban it and make it illegal.

That's not the answer, and Troy fully understands this. You need someone to speak up for the skate community and explain, "If you do this, this is what's going to happen. So please listen to my advice." Troy has a history and perspective that will benefit both sides.

How has he done at the meetings?

He's had a tremendously positive effect. Troy is well-spoken and is very educated about both sides. He grabs people's attention and convincingly explains the need to come up with solutions for the riders. Troy comes across as a problem solver, and the community has really picked up on this. His balanced approach has impressed many people. Troy really understands what it's like to be a skater because he is a skater. He's been chased out of skate spots, just like all of us.

Skaters are often stereotyped. What's your take on this?

I've been skateboarding since the 1970s. Many people who don't understand skateboarding have assumed I was involved with drugs or alcohol or was a criminal of some kind. I've been married to same woman for 30 years, I've never drunk a drop of alcohol and I've never done drugs, and I'm a professional skateboarder. I love putting these points across because it breaks down the stereotypes.

In all your experiences, does anything match this?

This is a pretty unique thing to happen. Everything came together so quickly. I am humbled and honored. I am 50, still doing demos, and just recently a woman came up to me and told me that she was inspired: "I'm going to pull my husband off the couch and get him skateboarding because if you can do it, he can too!"

PD WEIGHS IN

I met up with PD of Skull Skates, aka Peter Ducommun, when I started the research for *The Concrete Wave* book. In May 1999, PD was gracious enough to hold a book launch in his shop in Kitsilano, BC. PD has had a tremendous impact on skateboarding, and he's never wavered from his vision. He's also had a huge influence on Troy Derrick — but you'll learn more about that in a few pages.

Concrete Wave: What is your take on the growth of longboarding in Vancouver?

PD: Longboarding in Vancouver has taken hold on many levels since we first started selling Sims Taperkick longboards in our shop the '70s and continued selling Madrid longboards in the '80s and eventually began designing and producing our own Skull Skates longboards in the early '90s. The longboarding movement on the west coast of North America actually began in the '60s with clay wheels being added to water skis. The major change we have seen recently has been the development of more downhill techniques making their way into skaters' skill sets.

Bricin Lyons of Coast Longboarding has been a major force in organizing downhill events early on and has been a big influence on the worldwide racing scene and has worked hard to establish that area of longboarding. Our shop deals with all kinds of skaters, but as a longboard supplier we tend to focus on cruising, commuting and freeriding. We don't have a lot of patience for fake DH kooks that hang out on racing forums instead of paying dues and building abilities out in the tactile world.

What is your reaction to the stories about longboarding found in the various media?

Kids eat s--- going fast sometimes and find out that the real world can hurt and kill you. It's like a baby trying to sprint down the street without learning to crawl or walk first — ugly! When humans get hurt or die, the media jumps on it so they can grab your attention and sell you "energy" drinks and other crap you don't need. The media is not the problem; people seeing digital images and trying to replicate them without proper dedication and commitment to learning is more problematic than some cheese newspaper running stories about carnage.

What do you feel about the future of longboarding in Vancouver?

It will be fantastic, terrible and unlike anything we have ever experienced.

What is it about longboarding that has confounded many in the rest of the skate industry? At first many in the skate industry mocked longboarding; now they are striving to compete with longboard companies.

Money is a very strong motivator for most. We all have bills to pay. Kooks gotta live, too.

Do you think the longboard community has done a good job in responding to the criticisms from the public about longboarding?

Most people that longboard are not politicians. Our duty is to mentor and teach new people coming up now to act as public relations agents. If we educate within and build that way, we will achieve much more than responding to media hype. After five-and-a-half decades, is it possible that the media machine will embrace skateboarding culture? Unlikely.



PD shares the love the skateboarding with the next generation of skaters.
Photo: Mike McKinlay

STRIKER'S WORLD

Bricin "Striker" Lyons is a legend in both the Vancouver longboard community and the world longboarding community. He's larger than life and has an energy that few possess. Whether he's on the mic announcing contests or bombing hills barefoot, one thing is certain: Bricin Lyons pours his heart and soul into longboarding. I recall the day he contacted me and told me about his bus tours of the Sunshine Coast. I knew right there and then I wanted to publish his stories. We've been friends ever since.

Concrete Wave: How long have we known each other?

Bricin Lyons: I figure it must be at least 14 years. I found out about you from *International Longboarder Magazine*. I couldn't believe there was a magazine for longboarders. When I saw an ad in there from Highway Longboards that had a "12% grade" sign, it was amazing. It was Schnitzel [*Jody Willcock — Ed.*] who put the ad in. I tried to call the number, but it never worked.

Did you ever think the longboard community in Vancouver would grow to the size that it has?

No, not at all. I never thought it would ever grow this big. It was just something we did. I did feel there was something going on — there was energy. I realized I had to put a name on it, so I came up with the word Coast Longboarding. I never thought it would grow to a point where I don't know everybody in the scene.

What's the one thing that gives you the most satisfaction about building the scene in Vancouver?

I think the fact that something I put my energy into spread around the world. It amazes me to see how this idea grew.

What advice would you give people wishing to build their own longboard scene?

You gotta get a notebook first.

I mean BIG pieces of advice!

You have to reach out to people and bring them on board. You must have a vision — a plan. If you have something crazy in your brain, even if it's just a simple cruise, you gotta be stoked when you spread the mes-



sage. You gotta be out there. Sure, there's Facebook, but nothing beats being out there face to face. Plus, nothing beats the headache you get ripping tape with your teeth when you put up posters on poles.

What is your take on what's happening right now with the calls to ban longboarding? It's gotten a huge amount of media attention.

I've been on the news before, but for this latest round I am sitting back and staying out of things. Instead of getting involved as a spokesperson, I've put on safety clinics. In the last two years we've trained 28 Coast riders in first aid. Our goal is to have 100 trained. I think the local companies, Landyachtz and Rayne, are doing a great job of stepping up. They are helping younger riders get into longboarding by closing down roads.

How has longboarding changed your life?

Wow. It is my life. I mean, how many babies have been conceived at Danger Bay? Even my own kid was conceived at the Salt Spring Slasher. I'd never thought I'd be flying around the world announcing at all these events. Longboarding has had an incredible impact on my life. Who would have thought I'd become a writer? It's all thanks to longboarding.

Where can we read your pearls of wisdom?

cariboobrewing.com/category/strikers-tes-news

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Les Robertson of Rayne Longboards has been featured a number of times on TV, radio and newspapers discussing longboarding. He always remains self-assured under the glare of the media. He's been able to give the general public a balanced perspective on longboarding. We wanted to get his take on things. As expected, he pulled no punches.

Concrete Wave: The community of longboarders in Vancouver has certainly grown in the past number of years. What are some of the key things that stand out in your mind?

Les Robertson: I think for how well we are recognized by longboarders worldwide, the community itself is rather fractured. Not only are there divisions between the ages, there are divisions between groms and experienced riders. There are divisions between non-sponsored and sponsored skaters. There are people who were a big part of the scene who have left. Nobody has picked up where these guys left off. A number of local companies, including Landyachtz, Rayne and Predator, have had the fire lit under our butts with all the stuff that's been happening. When Mischa Chandler and I were talking two years ago about creating a shop that would eventually turn into Flatspot, we felt we needed an unbranded hub in Vancouver. Skateboarding is pretty egalitarian, but it can be hard for a seasoned rider to influence a kid who is just starting. Respect must be earned, and this can be challenging. Despite all this elevation of the scene, there still remains a lot of work to be done. Portland, for example, really has a handle on their community. They are very actively engaged. There's parents involved, and they've done great things like creating a regular sanctioned race circuit, along with regularly closing off roads for longboarding. We need to get back to these kinds of things in Vancouver.

Last year you were featured in an editorial in *Skate[Slate]* stating that "we are all criminals and that's OK." It seems to me you were trying to say that as a community we need to self-regulate. If you were to write the editorial now, is there anything you would change? Do you have a different perspective?

I wouldn't change anything, and I don't have a different perspective. If you are going in a tuck down a hill at or above the speed limit and not navigating the rules of the road (i.e. not obeying the stop signs), then that's your personal choice. We make those personal choices individually despite them having an impact on the community. In street skateboarding it's accepted that if

you're skating in a spot you're not supposed to be in, then you are a criminal. You do it at your own risk. Why has street skateboarding gotten over the fact that the cops might show up? Why is longboarding self-righteously trying to sanction things? Why is the community trying to hold the hands of the local government with sort of "Kumbayah" stuff? This is skateboarding! If you're 15, from an affluent family and your parents don't want you on the hill skating, then your parents should do something about it.

But we don't see parents doing anything about it, so that means that they are tacitly approving it. It becomes a bit like Darwinism. You either learn to skate really well and you avoid sketchy situations and people, or you will get eaten up. This has happened to people, and they don't skate anymore. If you wake up every day and you eat/drink/bleed skateboarding, then shut the f--- up already and quit your bleeding-heart BS about legality or not and go skate. If you have the ability and means to get out of the city, you're going to find more epic roads with less hassle. If you are a scaredy-pants or you don't believe in criminal longboarding and want to want to keep it legit, then be like Tad Drysdale. He goes to legal, sanctioned events only, and he's still better than most. Get on the program or off the program — but enough of this waffling.

Do you see future with someone like a Troy Derrick who is trying to bridge a gap between the skaters and local community?

I think the biggest needs of the Troys of this world are communication [about] safe skating so that we can have increased participation rates from a younger generation. If we can get kids who otherwise might wind up on a scooter onto longboards, then this is a worthwhile thing. These young kids need a safe, sanctioned place where they can ride — a dedicated longboard park. I think Troy bridges the gap.

But I don't think this question or my answer has anything to do with the ability or right to skate otherwise. Yes, we want good relations with our civic bodies, including closed roads because they are awesome. But it's a short life and no one gets out alive.

What was it like to be under the microscope of the media? Do you think they did a good job of capturing your message?

The last time I went through this was about a year or so ago. All the media wanted to do back then was criticize. It was very different this time. I think it was a blessing in disguise that so many accidents happened at one time. It sent all the

municipal governments into a spiral, not knowing what to do or how to react. That created an opportunity to talk about safety and participation in the sport rather than just banning or kicking us out of their office. We held a number of safety meetings with officials. My personal take was that the media were friendly and accepting. My experiences with most civic leaders has not been that way. But there a few that are more open-minded and forward-thinking. Some see the economic benefit of longboarding and are proactive. There are people scared to back out of their driveways, and those that are more understanding of the potential of longboarding.

How does the illegality of bombing down a hill impact someone who just wants to longboard from point A to point B?

It does have an impact. When we skate from our warehouse in West Vancouver (where it is illegal to skate) to the local beer store, it's about 600 yards. Our guys get a ticket per week. We are seeing mature folk who use a longboard to com-

mute start to question things. But what I'd like to see are the street skaters [coming] out. This will have an impact on them long-term, and they are blowing it.

What do you see as the future for longboarding in Vancouver?

We're going to see more people skating. It has been banned and will continue to be banned in West Vancouver, and yet the participation rates have only gotten bigger. We're going to see an ebb and flow of legal and illegal. In the short run we're going to see a few places closed, but we'll get more sanctioned events. We are also starting to see a gradual change in places like White Rock where it has been banned. They are starting to engage in some dialogue with the local longboarders. If you ban it, you lose control. What is happening in Vancouver lights a fire under other longboarding communities' butts. Organized skateboarding is as big an oxymoron as it comes, but we're organizing. People should be very afraid when disorganized people start organizing.





Max Gradmiller enjoys one of Vancouver's many places to cruise. Photo: Greg Nicholls

LANDYACHTZ CHARTS A POSITIVE PATH

Landyachtz has worked long and hard to build the scene in Vancouver. I remember meeting co-founders Tom Edstrand and Mike Perreten in 1999 at the Slam City Jam in Vancouver. They were one of the first companies to take an ad in *International Longboarder Magazine*. Just another amazing connection Landyachtz sales manager Ryan Theobald tells us more.

Concrete Wave: Did you ever expect things to reach national news?

Ryan Theobald: Yes and no. I expected longboarding to reach national news for its benefits to people and communities, not for people taking too many risks and putting themselves in danger.

How have you handled the attention from the local media?

We meet regularly when issues arise in the media, assess the situation and discuss how to respond, who should respond, when and where. We've designated a couple of really sharp young guys here in the office to be the go-to guys when things come up. They attend community meetings, respond to media outlets and spread our message at skate events.

What are some of the things you've done as a company to improve the situation between longboarders and the general public?

We've had prominent people in the company, like myself or co-owner Mike Perreten appear on live TV and radio interviews where we appeal to the public from a slightly different angle. We show the similarities longboarding has with cycling, snowboarding, surfing and skiing. We also make it clear that the last thing we want to have is people riding recklessly and taking big risks. [We've] organized a few skate sessions where kids could come out, skate in a closed course, talk to some of our pro riders and learn the keys to skating safe.

Within a scene there are always deep connections. Who would you consider are some of Vancouver's' biggest connectors (in the longboard scene), and what have they done to achieve this status?

Bricin is obviously one of the biggest connectors in the scene, but he's maintained a pretty solid focus on the racing and events side, less on the community-issues side, which is cool; I think it's key to have someone like him keeping the positive vibes going on the event side. Flatspot and Longboarder Labs have both stepped up to be big connectors, making sure the right companies and people know about issues in the community and

taking action to create a positive impression of longboarding to the public.

What are your thoughts about the future of the longboard scene in Vancouver?

I think there is a great future for the scene here in Vancouver. Longboarding continues to grow in popularity and continues to appeal to broader demographics.

I don't think there's a real future in people doing speed runs on the North Shore, and I don't think there should be. Ten years ago, when skating down the roads on the North Shore was gaining in popularity, it was a bunch of guys in their 20s. We knew how to skate safe on big, steep roads, understood traffic, what drivers were thinking when they saw us coming, how to avoid busy areas ... and we weren't doing speed runs, we were carving and slashing it up. Now the trend is for teens, who haven't been driving for nearly 10 years [as we had], to go and do speed runs. That's not safe and we don't condone it.

Do you have any further comments or thoughts?

We set out to get people on skateboards because they're fun, easy to ride, practical and have a positive impact on communities and people's lives. That's not going to change.

THE SHOPS DO THEIR PART

Vancouver now has two longboard-specific shops. Flatspot opened in 2012, and Longboarder Labs launched this past spring. You'll find a wide range of product and plenty of advice from the staff at both shops. Both have their own distinct vibe, and both responded to the communities' concern about longboarding.

Flatspot convened a safety meeting in early June to discuss the situation. It was well attended, and you can see their notes at their website. Their final comment on the meeting says it all: "If you see someone blowing it, take their axle nuts!" Also at the Flatspot website is a link to Mischa Chandler's *Skate Safe Manifesto*, which makes some great points.

Longboarder Labs was the brainchild of Rick Tetz, who opened up Vancouver's first skate shop, Cal Streets, in the 1970s. Tetz teamed up with Graham Peat to launch Longboarder Labs. Working with Landyachtz, they co-hosted the first "Khats Jam," a demo by the Eh Team and a safe riding session, as part of the Khatsahlano! Music Festival on Vancouver's historic Fourth Avenue in Kitsilano. More than 80,000 people show up for the festival.

This year, Landyachtz's Billy "Bones" Meiners, Ryan Theobald, Graham Collingwood, Sean Suchan, Liam McKenzie, Justen Ortiz, Mark Ollinger, Nick Breton and Wolf Coleman set up a series of banks and hills within the one-block fenced area of freshly paved street with a decent bit of downhill grade. Anyone, regardless of age or skill level, was invited to take part in the jam. At the Predator Helmets tent, Matt Todd and Dave Price showed riders how to keep their heads intact. Landyachtz provided safety gear and a selection of boards, and best of all, skilled and patient instruction to beginners, many of whom were young kids.

The Khats Jam event helped turn around the negative image of longboarding created here in Metro Vancouver over the last few months. It was a huge hit with the crowds and especially with the riders. Many of them ran the course for hours.

"The general public saw pros and beginners skating together and awing them with their abilities," Collingwood said.

Plans are already under way to grow the event for next year.



Photo: John Krieger



Khatsahlano! crowds. Photo: Rick Tetz



Longboarder Labs' Khats Jam drew lots of attention. Photo: Rick Tetz



Spectators lined the Khats Jam course. Photo: Rick Tetz

The final connection comes by way of Constable Troy Derrick. Troy is connected to both Kevin Harris and PD, and by extension, to me. When it came to naming this story, I knew exactly what to call it ... — Ed.

KARMA POLICE

By Troy Derrick

I am a proud First Nations person from the Gitksan Nation in British Columbia and a proud member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I will be a cop until I retire, but I will be a skater for life.

My father, Clarence Derrick, is a full-blooded Gitksan Hereditary Chief from the “Frog” Clan and my mother, Sharon Derrick (may she rest in peace) was adopted into the “Wolf” Clan. For most of my life, though, I denied being a First Nations person, based largely on experiences that are beyond words. If a part of you is called a piece of s--- enough times, after a while you start to believe it.

I guess what originally drew me to skateboarding was back in the winter of 1985, when I was about 9 years old, and I watched *Back to the Future*. I used to rewind the skateboarding scenes over and over, trying to understand the movements.

My family had humble beginnings, as there were eight of us living in a trailer, which made living and sleeping quarters tight. Seeing how we had no pavement and minimal smooth surfaces, skateboarding was a far-off dream. As a result, baseball became a huge part of my youth — so much so that I actually became pretty good at it.

After watching *Back to the Future* I would often lie in bed awake at night thinking about skateboarding and wonder how they moved, turned and jumped. I decided I would ask my parents for a skateboard and I would learn how to skate. I mentioned this to my brother Trent and he said, “You’re gonna kill yourself.” I’m sure my parents thought it was a trend and expected over time I would get over the idea of skateboarding.

When I was 10 years old, my mother nearly died of cancer and had to go through several treatments. Traveling to Vancouver was a regular thing, so during the summer of 1986, off we went to Vancouver, right during World Expo 86. When we got there, I had to go with my oldest brother, Trevor, who was not very stoked on chaperoning us, as he was 17 years old. I recall asking him to take us to Expo 86 to go on rides and check things out, particularly the skateboard event. As the crowds were so big, we never



Troy Derrick: “I will be a cop until I retire, but I will be a skater for life.” Photo: Kolby Harris

got the chance to see the event, but I do remember seeing some kids skating around, which only fueled my wonder and excitement.

I continued to ask for a skateboard. Seeing how we were now in town more often, one day, when we were at the local Northern Hardware store, I found a skateboard in the toy section. I knew nothing about skateboards — only that I

wanted one. I remember my mom saying, “Well, that looks like a good one. It has metal and solid wood.” To my surprise, my parents actually bought it for me! I stood on it in the store on the black rubber flooring and could barely balance, but I managed to push my way outside.

I was hooked after day one. I would tic-tac as much as I could.

Unfortunately, a short time later, through bad business deals, my parents had to file for bankruptcy. We lost everything and had to move into a town home/project-style housing in the bowl area of Prince George. Regardless of the financial loss in my family, I kept my skateboard and could at least do that.

By 13, I was into another baseball season. It was by far the hardest season I ever played — not from playing the game but from surviving the mental and social torment that came from my teammates. My coach was a corporal for the RCMP and would often come out to games and practices in his RCMP uniform, likely due to shift work. His son was also on my team, and he frequently taunted me, pushed me and directed continuous racial banter and jokes at me. His actions rubbed off on the other players and they began to say things, too.

First Nations person or not, I would never want anyone to have to feel the way I did for most of that season.

Who was I going to tell? I did mention it to my parents, but I don't think they knew the extent of the banter. I couldn't tell the coach. He was a cop, and even then all he would do was smirk and say, "That's enough," to his son in a sarcastic way.

That season I still managed to match up the home run king, pitch and play first base, and overall play very well. I was asked to try out for the "All Star" team, but I turned them down, as I was still very much hurt from the year.

In 1991, by the time age 14 rolled around, I was in a new school in inner-city Prince George called Duchess Park Secondary, which had about 900 students registered. The school was old and smelly, and the people were not what I was used to. I was nervous, as these were actual "city kids" in my eyes.

But in homeroom I met for the first time a skater my age, Mike Watson. I knew something was different about him, as he had a pair of Airwalks with lace guards, wore Skull Skates shirts and had an undercut hairstyle in a ponytail.

Mike was very open to the idea of a new guy interested in skating and just hanging out. He quickly invited me out with him, his buddies and some girls to a movie that weekend. We went to see a Jean-Claude Van Damme flick called *Lionheart*. Since I was a "country" kid, I had never been to a movie theater before, and never hung out with girls. I was nervous as hell.

One of Mike's buddies was a guy named Paul Lewis, who at the time had a 4-foot mini ramp in his back yard. We went over to his house, and I remember seeing two of the most graceful, smooth skaters I have ever seen rip it up: George Vincent, who was 17, and Paul Cramer, who was

18. I didn't have my skateboard with me, but they invited me to try out the ramp. I was nervous. However, because I had learned the tic-tac, I had some sense of balance, and within about 20 minutes I was dropping in and "rock and rolling."

The next day I brought my skateboard with me — and I realized it was not going to cut it on this ramp. Amazingly, though, the other guys immediately pulled all their resources together and built me a makeshift complete.

I was on top of the world. Not once did any of them ever make a question or comment on my being a First Nations person.

Through hanging out with these guys, I began to ask a lot of questions. The crew explained that I had just missed a skate demo at the local roller rink and that a pro skater named Kevin Harris had been there.

I began to really embrace skateboarding and my friends. All the parents of my new friends seemed to be the friendliest people I had ever met. They never judged and were always welcoming.

Not everyone was like them, though. One afternoon two guys approached me while I was riding. "What are you doing out here on a skateboard?" they asked. I didn't really understand what they meant, and I replied, "Going home." I still didn't understand what was going on until they said, "Hey, what's that say on that car door over there?" I turned to look and was immediately punched in the back of the head. Then they said, "You never look away from a fight, f---ing skater! Better hope we never see you out here again!" They threw the board at me and rode off.

That night the experience really resonated within me. I did a lot of soul-searching and questioned if I was different. Those guys didn't look much different than I did my whole life; they looked like my baseball team, my coaches and my brother and his friends. All I did was skateboard. I didn't feel any different as a person. So what was the problem? How could something that I connected with cause so much anger, and from people I didn't even know?

Eventually, I decided to quit baseball. After the years of jokes, teasing and minimal support from coaches and teammates in small-town baseball, it was an easy choice to make.

My parents were heartbroken that I had decided to stop playing baseball. However, they did recognize that with skateboarding I had a new interest, along with a regular group of friends. They understood that I had a new team now.

Over the years to come we endured football teams, hockey teams and other jock types calling us names, making jokes, chasing us and sometimes beating us up for no reason other than for

skateboarding. There was even a time that a gun was pointed at my head by a driver who had run me off the roadway.

My parents, being as supportive as they were, decided to start a skateboard shop. And the same year I stopped playing baseball, I met Kevin Harris when he came to Prince George.

We met in front of the Coast Inn of the North Hotel with my mom and my friend Uriah. I remembered Kevin's name from my buddies and I wanted to see him skate, so I asked if he would give it a try. The streets of the town were weathered and rough, and at that time the trend in skateboarding was small wheels, so that's what our boards had. Kevin did skate a bit, and I was impressed at how smooth he was, but he kept saying, "I don't know how you can skate these things." He was having trouble completing a routine, so he just gave us our skates back.

Shortly after, we met Kevin in Vancouver to go over how to place an order. It was there that I was first exposed to the iconic "Skull Mountie" graphics on his signature deck. I remember the image being stuck on the door as well as in Kevin's office and on the "Ultimate" logo. That particular image has been with me ever since. Even back then I felt the connection.

We also made a connection with PD's Hot Shop and Skull Skates. My friends and I were stoked, as we were able to carry Skull Skates at our shop.

Without knowing it, Kevin and PD became kind of local heroes to me. They forged an identity, uniform and team for our core group without us even knowing it. They were our coaches who led by example. We didn't have to know them personally to know they were what we aspired to be like.

Knowing that they existed outside of Prince George gave me something to look forward to and visit. They gave me the confidence that I didn't need a stereotypical team to "belong." I could make my own choices without conforming. The more people made fun or tried to pick fights with me, the more it fueled the idea that I was not them, would never be them, and would always make my own choices based on what I liked, not what society expected me to like. Self-identity as a youth was/is extremely important. I knew at a young age what I wanted to do and what I wasn't going to be. I began to learn that in this life, the more you know what you want, the less you let things upset you.

In 1995, by the time I was 18, I had experienced two surgeries on my knee and lost skating the way I knew it. I was forced to slow down to a near halt. I fell into a depression. To compensate I embraced the hip-hop lifestyle/culture of DJing, break dancing, graffiti art and MCing.

My sister Treena encouraged me to try something else and maybe get out of the slump I was in without skateboarding. Shortly after that I enrolled in Dubrulle French Culinary Arts School. By 1997 I had graduated and was working on the Gulf Islands for the next four years. I excelled in culinary arts and just plain understood the concept. In 2001 I moved to Vancouver, still skating as transportation almost everywhere. A chef named Sam had introduced me to a First Nations Culinary School at UBC, where I was eventually hired and worked as a part-time chef instructor and assistant.

In 2002, when I was 26 years old, my mother was tragically taken away from us in a head-on collision. The other driver had a heart attack, crashing into the vehicle my mother, father and sister Terreane were in. A witness said my mother's last words were, "Is Clarence and Terreane OK?"

More than 300 people showed up for my mother's funeral, and I recalled the words she would often say to me: "People are always watching what you do," and "The people you hang around with will be the people you become."

In 2003 the culinary school moved to the heart of Surrey, BC's ghetto known as Whalley, at an Aboriginal Community Center. There I met my best friend, Ruby, who then became my spouse.

I taught there for nearly three years. I still lived in downtown Vancouver and commuted to work by skateboard and Skytrain. Across the street from the Aboriginal Center was a skate shop called Paul's Boutique. There I would buy skate shoes from time to time, and the occasional deck. One deck that I bought simply for graphics was a Rick Howard model by Girl Skateboards; the graphics had a Mountie and a map of Canada. (I liked the graphic because it had Prince George on the map; I still had no notion of becoming a Mountie.) At Paul's Boutique we of course discussed the similarity of the Kevin Harris graphics and how cool it would be to get a Harris deck. We also discussed how rad it would be to get the Harris graphics as a tattoo. I explained how for years I had thought about it but never had the money to make it happen, nor did I know any tattoo artists that I trusted.

As a chef instructor I often took each class very personally. I was always trying to encourage my students by saying, "You can do whatever you want in this country. You can change careers anytime."

In late 2004, a student in my class put his hand up and said, "Chef Troy ... what about you? Can you change and do whatever you want? Can you change careers?"

So I asked, "What do you think is the hardest

thing a First Nations person could do in this country?"

The student answered, "Why don't you try becoming a cop? We all hate them anyway."

I took that challenge to heart, and within two weeks I was at an info session at the Justice Institute in New Westminster, learning about what it takes to become a Mountie.

I knew nothing about being a cop. I had no friends who were cops and no family who were cops. The only thing I knew about cops is that they chased us for skating, pulled us over, searched us for no reason ... and that my baseball coach when I was a kid was a d---.

I did have a couple of good experiences with police, one when I was in a collision as a youth and the other when I was a child. I understood that I had a double issue with police. I was a First Nations person and a skater. I also understood that it's not the uniform or job that defines the man; the man does that himself.

A few years earlier my brother Trent and I were out in our shop vehicle, which had our shop name/logo on the side, when we were pulled over. When we asked why we were pulled over the cop said, "I don't need a reason to pull you over. Where'd Indians like you get a truck like this anyway?" He proceeded to have us step out of the vehicle, sit on the curb and search us and the vehicle.

I didn't understand why he treated us that way. It's not that I didn't respect the police as a necessary position in society; they sure did help out when I was in the car collision and were very friendly. But I wasn't aware that there was a "police style culture" — and I just didn't know where the attitude toward us as First Nations and as a skater was coming from. But it didn't feel very good.

When I applied for the RCMP, I didn't deny being a First Nations person, but I didn't acknowledge it either. I actually checked off the "other" section about my heritage when filling out the application. I did not want any special treatment — but more importantly to me at the time, I didn't want anyone to know I was a First Nations person.

My application went through, and in the spring of 2005 I went to the RCMP's "Depot" division in Regina, Saskatchewan, for basic training. Most people I knew were extremely surprised at the career choice I had made and wondered why I would do such a thing. And at times I felt as though I was on my baseball team again. But I stuck with it and made it through.

Policing is not what people stereotype it as. Policing is a necessity in all cultures in any society. What differentiates me is this: I look at it

as a job and that's it. My philosophy is, "Don't judge me by my job ... judge me by my work." I will not be a cop all my life. If and when I retire, I will stop being a cop and no longer enforce laws. As a chef I can always cook anytime. As a skater I can skate. I will not always be a cop. It is a limited time in this position, so I will do the best with this opportunity.

Some of the best people I know are cops. These people will put themselves in harm's way for me and I for them. There is no other group that I know personally like that who will do that unconditionally.

Over the years I continued with my collection of tattoos. I always planned on getting the Harris graphics even if I were not a Mountie.

In May 2013, I was requested to work at two separate events at the annual Cloverdale Rodeo in Surrey: the Kid Zone and an Aboriginal/First Nations Pavilion. As it turns out, in between those two areas, a skateboard competition called the World Freestyle Round-Up was going on. Kevin Harris was hosting the event, which was also supported by PD's Hot Shop.

Being a skater most of my life, I was naturally drawn to the event. The energy of the event felt much like how it was when I was a kid skating.

I was leaning over the railing when I ran into and met a local Surrey skate legend: "Hippie Mike," founder of Protest Skateboards. I asked Hippie Mike if I could try his skate. He of course was more than willing. So there I was, in full uniform, my duties for the moment forgotten, skating. I was trying old tricks, as much as I could do with the 30 extra pounds (of uniform).

Within a short time, people were all around, filming and taking pictures. It was foreign to me, as I am not the smoothest skater around (especially in full uniform), but I recognized I was in a position of my duties and a Mountie. The skate high dropped back down to reality.

People noticed I had tattoos and asked what they were. I pulled up my sleeve and they immediately recognized the Skull Skates logo on one arm and then the Harris graphics on the other. Hippie Mike was floored by the idea of a skating cop with tattoos like that and immediately called Kevin over.

I am not too sure what Kevin's initial thoughts were, but he said something like, "Cool — a Mountie with my graphics." I think he assumed that I'd gotten the tattoo simply because I was a Mountie.

Next thing I knew, Kevin was introducing me to his parents, who were in the stands. I didn't plan on saying anything when I met them, but suddenly the words just came pouring out.

"I'm not too sure if Kevin knows this, but he was a huge influence on my life," I said. "He gave me



Troy takes to the mini ramp at Ultimate Skateboard Distributors' shop in Richmond, BC. Photo: Kolby Harris

the confidence as skater and later on as a person to be who I wanted to be and make the choices I wanted to make. Between him and PD, they were able to be our mentors without even knowing it. They built us, formed us and gave me the drive to keep on going. I am who I am today, wearing this uniform, based largely on what skating has done for my life. Kevin was a part of that.

"I didn't get this tattoo because I am a Mountie and thought it was cool. I was going to get this tattoo anyway. It represents much more than me being a cop; it represents my life. You should be very proud that Kevin is who he is. You raised a great boy who turned out to be a great man. Thank you for supporting him even now by coming out to this event. Without parents like you there would be no Kevin, and there would be no RCMP for me. You remind me a lot of my parents, always cheering for the underdog and letting them make their own choices. Again, wholeheartedly, thank you for Kevin."

Too long has it been an Us versus Them mentality. Being part of both worlds has often felt

like a gift and a curse. I have the opportunity to perhaps make a positive change. I feel obligated to do something even when sometimes I feel I can't go on. That Us versus Them mentality and the recent longboarder issues here in the Vancouver area are no different from skateboarding in years past. This has created a stigma over the last few decades where people expect a certain behavior, and of course people in society buy into that and join that group based on the reputation of that group and feed off of it.

All too often, we create our own little worlds that pit us against someone else because society has portrayed that to us. We then act that way without actually getting to know the other group — and we lose ourselves in the process. I've seen skaters behave differently when cops or any other authority show up, and I've seen cops behave differently when they put on the uniform.

But when we unthinkingly just play the role that is expected, we lose ourselves. If you keep pretending that you are something you are not, after a while you will forget that you are pre-

tending. You will never reach your true potential in a positive way.

I recall leaving my office after a shift in the early hours of the morning in my civilian clothes and starting to skate home. I didn't even get half a block away from my office when I was pulled over by one of my co-workers, who said, "Hey, what are you doing?" and called me over. When he realized it was me he said, "Oh, man, Troy ..." We both had a pretty good laugh, but I skated home with that old feeling of "WTF? I didn't even do anything!"

"He's a good guy — but he's a cop," or "He's a good guy but he looks like a street rat," are too simplistic, too stereotypical. Get over yourself. If you have nothing to hide or prove and you treat yourself and others with respect, then there shouldn't be a problem. You create your own animosity and negativity. You have to live with that, and if you don't recognize it, you will also have to die with that.

Skaters, cops and First Nations people are not much different. Take away the names and break it

down, and the rest of society treats us the same:

- All three groups make up a small percentage of society.
- When people see us they are either supportive or afraid of us.
- People are watching us all the time and are waiting for us to make a mistake.
- The media loves it when we mess up so they can sell it.
- Just because something is on the news doesn't make it accurate, as media is based on selling to the followers of a part of society that don't take the time to learn the facts.
- We are humans, not robots, and not just a bunch of dirty street thugs on drugs.
- We will make mistakes and may make the wrong choices at times.

Being a cop, a skater and First Nations person, I've noticed that all groups use some level of humor to get through their experiences as a group. Being involved with those social/cultural groups can only be understood if you have been there and done that. This experience developed my humor, which later on caused me to make racial jokes at my own expense as a sort of defense mechanism — basically, "Get myself before they get me." This worked well with the nonskater types from school and allowed me to laugh at myself. Little did I know that this self-defense mechanism was also a denial of myself as a First Nations person and created a lack of self-pride. Fortunately, skateboarding filled that void with acceptance from that culture without judgment.

In Canada, and especially in BC, we pride ourselves on being "diverse," yet the only thing I have seen lately is that we pride ourselves on not being American, and we don't necessarily embrace "diverse cultures" — be it skateboarding/longboarding, police, First Nations or any other culture for that matter. Keep in mind it takes more to be a Canadian citizen than just living here and embracing the freedoms you are blessed with.

Like the police, First Nations and all other cultures within Canada, skateboarding/longboarding is a culture as well. We are a country that prides itself on being open to other cultures and accommodating them even when it comes to some laws. People come here and expect that they can celebrate their own cultures without the confinement of laws that deprive them of that. But lately I see and hear discussion of formulating laws that try to deprive the citizens of Canada of the chance to celebrate their culture within the skateboarding/longboarding community. We are only going back-

ward with that thinking, and history is repeating itself based on historical Canadian laws that took away and outlawed the misunderstood culture within the First Nations community.

We allow churches, synagogues, monasteries, etc. for people to practice their culture in a safe manner. At this time safety is of course the issue for those that practice within the culture of longboarding. I have seen all walks of life express this concern. We as Canadians should support their lifestyle choice and not segregate them.

On the flip side, longboarders should accept that a few will never be on their side. They should seek out those that will support them, and should



respect the laws that are in place for their safety.

"You must be the change you want to see in this world," the saying goes. And as a police officer I sometimes see posters that say, "Make a difference in the community." But "Make" insinuates force and has a negative undertone. Therefore I don't want to make anyone or anything do anything. I would much rather *be* the difference in the community. You don't need to be a cop to do that.

I see skateboarding as a perfect representation of what a Canadian/person should be like: one who accepts all walks of life despite color, age, music choice, sexual orientation, gender, hair

color, religious background, political belief, size, poverty or riches, hygiene, clothing ... There are no rules on being the best and no definition on who is the best at it. Skateboarding is a feeling, and feels the best when you do it on any skill level. You don't need a team to play, but it makes a difference when you have others involved.

Without the confidence from skateboarding to at least try something new like being a cop, I would never have joined the RCMP. Through the RCMP I was able to embrace my First Nations heritage and learn who I am and to be proud of it. I have learned the truths and have an understanding of the history of this land called

Canada, and have since been able to make factual, nonjudgmental and enlightening presentations for the RCMP, schools and First Nations communities.

I had a less than 1% survival rate from my nation alone when I was born. I survived for some reason. My ancestors died. If I do nothing positive with my life, then they will have died for nothing. Today my nation numbers more than 5,000.

I've been asked, "How do you balance it all?" I simply live my life and embrace the fact that I am alive. I was given a gift and opportunity, and I let things happen and don't resist the direction my life is going. Resisting your life's path is doing what society expects you to do. Always do what you love, and money will be just a bonus.

Money comes, goes and flows. Sometimes you have a lot, sometimes not; that's why it's called currency. Time just goes and goes. Once it goes, it is gone. You only get one shot at it, so it's what you do with the time you have right now that is important.

With that said, thank you for taking the time to read this, as you will not get that time back. I can only hope that it has given you some positive direction and influence. Despite popular belief, nobody owes you anything. It is not what you own that shows your value but what you give. That will not be forgotten and shows your true value.

These days I owe a lot of my successes to my beautiful/brilliant spouse, Ruby, my amazing stepson, Clinton, and my incredible daughter, Mya, for always supporting me on the choices I have made. My parents and family have also had a huge part in who I am. Without their support — especially that of my mother — in the hardest of times, regardless of my life's choices, I'd be nothing. Without my father's work ethic, I wouldn't drive as hard. I can't ask for much more than that. **CW**