

NATIONAL NEWS

Rotary Club of Victoria assists 'unofficial lifeguard' Jean-Marc Hoareau

In line with its mission which is to provide humanitarian service and to advance goodwill and peace in the community, the Rotary Club of Victoria has donated three surfboards to surfing instructor Jean-Marc Hoareau, as a sign of recognition for the heroic voluntary services he renders his community.

Better known as the 'unofficial lifeguard', Mr Hoareau is a common figure at the Anse Gaulette beach, at Baie Lazare where he keeps an eye on those who are in the water and even assists them when in distress.

In his latest heroic act a few months ago, Mr Hoareau saved a Russian tourist from drowning at the Anse Gaulette beach and it was that act that prompted the Rotary Club of Victoria to reward him.

When approached by the club, Mr Hoareau requested surfboards which he said will help him better carry out the job.

Mr Hoareau received his three Surf Power boards which have been imported from Mauritius at a cost of nearly R20,000 yesterday afternoon, during a short ceremony attended by members of the club, including former presidents Lambert Woodcock and Sunil Dhanjee, immediate past president Charlie Ng Ping Cheun and president elect Vijay Virasamy.

Overwhelmed, Mr Hoareau thanked the club for its support which he said will go towards better helping the community.

He explained that it is the ideal equipment since the surfboards are light and easy to handle in cases of emergency at sea.

The Rotary Club of Victoria falls under Rotary International which is an international service organisation whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian service and to advance goodwill and peace around the world.

It is a non-political and non-religious organisation open to all.

There are over 35,000 member clubs worldwide, with a membership of 1.2 million individuals, known as Rotarians.



Roland Duval

Jean-Marc Hoareau (centre) has received three surf boards to help him better carry out the job of 'unofficial lifeguard' (Photo: Joena Meme)

Six years around the world without using motorised transport

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Seychelles NATION brings you an exclusive interview with this amazing person who is doing what he thinks is right for the protection of environment.

***Seychelles NATION:* Please tell our readers who is Markus Pukonen?**

Markus Pukonen: I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada. I moved to the west coast of Canada and home for me is at Vancouver Island. A firefighter by profession, I chose this journey six years ago (in 2015). Now for six years I have not used motorised transportation. I am circumnavigating the planet in one continuous non-stop trip, without using any motorised equipment. I have not been in a car, on a bus, train, plane, or ferryboat since I began the adventure from the beaches of Toronto on July 13, 2015. I have not even taken an elevator!

***Seychelles NATION:* Could you please describe your journey?**

Markus Pukonen: In July 2015, I started my journey. I canoed through the great lakes of Canada, and then I switched to hand cycle to cover 800 km. I then pogo-sticked for 10 km through the city of Winnipeg and then I tricycled for 1600 km across Canada. It started to snow so I skied. I canoed across to get to Tofino where my sister and two nieces joined me for a bit. I rowed a small boat to the United States then I bicycled down the coast to San Francisco. I met a friend who invited me to sail the Pacific Ocean with him. From Hawaii, I borrowed a boat and sailed solo to Marshall Islands, then through Micronesia, Philippines to Hong Kong. It took me a year from San Francisco to Hong Kong. I gave the boat back to my friend in Hong Kong and bicycled through southern China, Vietnam. I then kayaked in the Mekong River. I had to leave the kayak and walk to town to get a bicycle. Then I bicycled through Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia. I again kayaked from south Malaysia to Indonesia and reverted back to cycling back through Myanmar, India and Nepal.

***Seychelles NATION:* What are the challenges you faced?**

Markus Pukonen: I have pogo-sticked through Winnipeg traffic, skied solo

through avalanche terrain in the Rockies, rafted into ice dams that threatened to take me into the icy depths of a river, sailed solo on a 9m boat over 8,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean, once not seeing land for over 20 days, and my small fishing boat sunk on the Mekong river and my bicycle was lost. I also got an infection on my foot in Vietnam where I thought I would lose my foot. I was in the middle of the ocean and had to make a concoction with all the herbs that I had like thyme, oregano etc and drank it every day and I also patched it on the wound. Thankfully now my foot is fine. The travel to Seychelles was quite challenging.

***Seychelles NATION:* Travelling alone must have been taxing for you. How did you cope?**

Markus Pukonen: I am always in touch with my sister and nieces. When I reached Rishikesh, in India, I was held up by the lockdown for seven months. I fell in love and my girlfriend moved back to Germany after five to six months. I bicycled around 3000km through India to Cochin where I bought this boat. I sailed for 40 days from India to Seychelles. My girlfriend, Steffi, was already in Seychelles waiting for me. I arrived in Seychelles on May 15 and visited the different islands. Our heart melted when we went to La Digue. We will leave this beautiful island in two weeks' time.

***Seychelles NATION:* From here what and where next?**

Markus Pukonen: We will be heading to Tanzania most likely Zanzibar. Then we will go around South Africa to St Helena, Brazil then back on mainland.



Markus Pukonen cycling in Laos (Photo credit: www.routesofchange.org)

***Seychelles NATION:* How do you sustain your trip?**

Markus Pukonen: I do lots of videos and I also pre-sold a book and pre-sold the film in return for support. My youtube vlog is also bringing some funds. Along the route I am seeking out local non-profit organisations that are committed to building a healthy planet for generations to come. Each will share this common goal of creating social or environmental change. I am raising support for them through my filmmaking and adventures. I would rather fail doing something I love than succeed at something I do not. People can also donate a penny per kilometre that I travel and follow @routesofchange on Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Patreon, and a live interactive map at www.routesofchange.org.

***Seychelles NATION:* What is your goal in doing such an adventure?**

Markus Pukonen: My goal is not one of setting records, although that is happening on my journey, but to inspire and create change in the world around me. I have been presenting at schools and public events throughout the expedition and is always open to speaking to more students and schools. One little step at a time is all it takes to overcome the greatest challenges and obstacles. With the pandemic, I'm not trying to change the world. We are all changing the world, it is time to act upon that fact. We need to stop and think about the development around us. Visiting all these countries, make me realise that we need to plant more and live simply.

***Seychelles NATION:* What is your message to humanity?**

Markus Pukonen: After going through some Asian countries, I was shocked with the amount of pollution. Coming from Canada, we have access to clean air, water and space and my message is to slow our development down and really think about the decisions we are making. There is a rapid development happening at all costs and people are forgetting what is really important for them in lives. Covid-19 was good at forcing people to slow down and to examine their life. I also realise that you do not need to be constantly busy in order to be productive. Personally, my biggest thing I want to do is grow food. It is the easiest way to be independent and it also creates true

security. The world is a friendly and beautiful place and there are friendly people everywhere. Definitely there is no need to be afraid to explore the world, if this is something that's calling you.

Vidya Gappy

Important dates and facts:

- July 13, 2021 marked six years since he started walking in Toronto
- Markus sailed solo for 40 days and 2000 miles from Cochin, India to Victoria, Seychelles, he arrived here on May 15 on his 27 foot (8.3 m) sailboat.
- Markus has travelled over 45,000km across 20 countries and the Pacific and Indian oceans



Pogo sticking 10km through Winnipeg (Photo: Markus Pukonen)