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'Round the world motor-free

LISA VANDERVELDE
 Morning Star Staff

Circumnavigating the globe is an intense endeavour. How about doing it without the use of any sort of motor?

That is the challenge Toronto native Markus Pukonen has established, as he raises funds and awareness for local non-profit groups along the way through his registered non-profit society routesofchange.org.

Pukonen, now situated out of Tofino, left his family home in Toronto on July 13 and has canoed, biked, walked, run, recumbent biked, trimaraned, skied, kayaked, hand biked, rafted, skateboarded, danced and even pogosticked his way to Vernon.

When he is in a location for a break he does not accept rides, never hops on a bus, takes a ferry, or sneaks a cab ride.

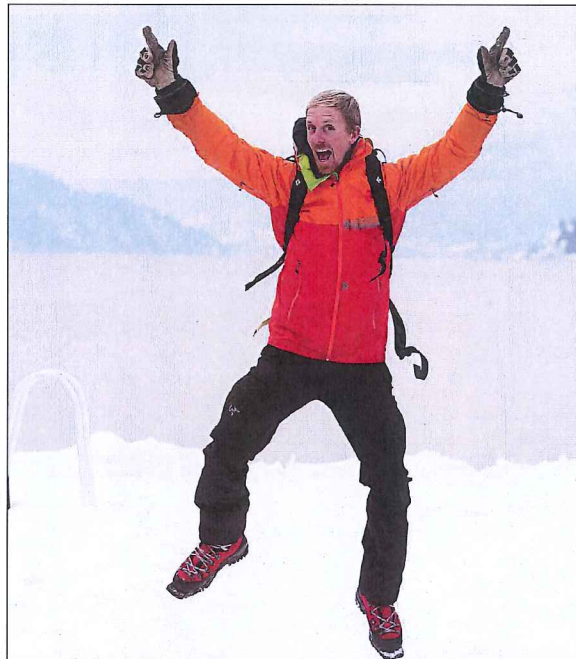
"It has been challenging along the way but that's what I love," said Pukonen, who was recently named one of Canada's Top Modern Day Explorers

by Canadian Geographic. "It's tough camping in minus-20 degrees but it makes all those creature comforts so much better after."

Pukonen is no stranger to adventure with his work for Ocean Adventure Rowing and Education taking him on three major expeditions in three years, including 73 days spent at sea rowing across the Atlantic Ocean, a three-month source to sea trip down the Mississippi River and the Canadian Wildlife Federation's Salish Sea Expedition; a circumnavigation of Vancouver Island in a rowboat.

He was inspired to take this journey after two major events changed his outlook on life: his father died of cancer and his niece was born.

"Just knowing that I have inspired one person to



LISA VANDERVELDE/MORNING STAR

Markus Pukonen enjoys a pit stop in Vernon while circumnavigating the Earth without the use of a motor.

make a positive change in their life is what I wanted," said Pukonen. "The simple

fact that people can see what I have accomplished without a motor, they will

see that little things can make a difference."

He doesn't have a time limit on his adventure but he thinks it will take him about five years to complete.

Pukonen, a graduate from Documentary Film Production at Capilano University, takes his time soaking up the scenery, building relationships with people, documenting his challenges and sharing the beauty of our world through his blog at routesofchange.org, routesofchange on facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

"I've been doing lots of school presentations and the inspiration goes both ways; the kids are inspired and I'm always inspired by them," he said.

Bringing awareness, raising funds and learning about local non-profit groups along his

route is a large part of why he is on this adventure.

During Pukonen's stop in Vernon, he has been learning about The Society for the Protection of Kalamalka Lake (SPRKL) as well as the Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative.

"I document the non-profit societies I meet along the way, sharing their stories and raising support by directing some of the attention I get because I'm doing this crazy adventure, to them," said Pukonen.

Vernon is a rest stop for him, as he visits with his sister-in-law, Marta Green of Vernon, who joined him with her skis at the Needles ferry for the trip to Vernon.

Pukonen has more family flying in to spend time with him at Silver Star, which he will be biking up to, before continuing his journey towards the coast where he plans to paddleboard or kayak to Vancouver Island.

Pukonen's route can be tracked at routesofchange.org, along with blog posts and photos from his adventure.

Board asks Ottawa to flex muscles on mussels

RICHARD ROLKE
 Morning Star Staff

Ottawa is being pressured to stop the potential invasion of mussels in the Okanagan.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has written a letter to several ministers in the new Liberal government about the risk of zebra and quagga mussels.

"We want to make them aware of the need for a significant investment (in prevention)," said Juliette Cunningham, an OBWB and Regional District of North Okanagan director.

Since the mussels have taken hold across the U.S. and throughout Manitoba, the OBWB has been concerned they will appear in Kalamalka, Okanagan and other lakes.

"We have to throw a lot of resources into preventing them from moving further west," said Cunningham.

The mussels are native to Europe and they have spread across North America since the 1980s.

These mussels clog water intake pipes, pumps and boat motors. They also deplete food sources for

fish and produce toxins that kill fish and birds and contaminate drinking water.

Among the action being sought from Ottawa is providing training and appropriate resources to border agents to ensure they can inspect and stop mussel-infested watercraft from entering Canada.

OBWB also wants full-time seasonal inspection stations at major provincial crossings in Banff and Jasper national parks to protect the Columbia and Fraser River systems and Pacific salmon.

There is also a call for the fed-

eral government to become more active in the Pacific Northwest Economic Region Invasive Species Working Group, which involves U.S. states.

"We can be effective if we combine our resources," said Cunningham.

Another recommendation is for Ottawa to provide funding to Ontario and Manitoba to contain existing infestations at source waters, while directing funds to Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. for a co-ordinated inspection plan for areas not infested.

"We applaud the government of Canada's stated commitment to provide much needed infrastructure improvement for Canadian communities," said Doug Findlater, OBWB chairperson, in the letter.

"While we support this investment, particularly in the area of water supply and quality improvement infrastructure, the cost of necessary future investments in retrofitting and maintenance can be greatly reduced by preventing the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels."

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