



Dealing with loss, abandonment, and addiction, Pierre Richard has begun to find solutions with the help of a few good friends. Now, Richard plans to move away from Belleville to put those problems to rest.

# Everything I've Had I've Lost

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"Although the view is nice, I still want to get out of here."



Richard begins a new game of chess by analysing the starting moves. He sees chess as a metaphor for his life.

Pierre Richard had been sitting on the couch staring at the chessboard for nearly an hour, and the final moves of the game were unfolding. One move after another, Richard's king was checked into the far corner with no other pieces to prevent the inevitable checkmate.

Richard has lived in Belleville for five years but had more stories from different parts of the world than could be told during a game of chess. Richard is a slim built fellow in his mid-40s, most likely from relying on help of Belleville's food banks and welfare cheques. On a good day, he has a contagious smile, but on a bad day, his beard would go unshaved and his weatherworn face seems to be more apparent.

Having grown up listening to the Grateful Dead, a band that started in California around 1965, Richard is a true blue hippy. Around age six to seven, Richard spoke of playing behind the band's stage while, just metres away a concert was going on.

For seven years, he planted trees in B.C. which was one of his favourite jobs. He told stories of being given acid at five years old and at a similar time, being a child actor in a commercial for McDonald's.

Richard had many experiences that would marvel many. However, for the last several years, he has been fighting depression and addiction from many different substances. The cause was something much worse.

Over the years, he settled down and married in Brockville, Ont. where he had a daughter. For how long this time of peace, lasted he would not say but some bad moves were made and drugs were used. He got divorced and has not seen his daughter in nearly 18 years. The last time he saw her, she was three years old.

When he moved to Belleville, many of his family heirlooms, old photographs, and those items that remind people of a different time, were left at a friend's place. Then another tragedy struck. His friend was put into rehab for alcoholism. Everything he had was sold, given away, or thrown into the trash. However, a few days ago he found a picture of her, one of the moments that had survived moving.

"It brought me to tears," explained Richard. Recently, he stopped taking an anti-depressant medication and is actually more content with these forgotten emotions.

It had seemed like checkmate, but life is not a

game and the pieces can always be reset. Now, after all the strife, Richard is turning things around and has ambitions of moving out of cities and into the country. Where yet, he is still unsure.

In his current residence he is constantly hassled by the horrid characters of his past few years. Some come to borrow, some to sell drugs but he knows who they are and their habits. He knows himself and how to fix the problem.

Richard gave me a summary of his life in a sentence while simultaneously giving advice. "The only thing you need in life is acceptance, and the only fear is rejection. I have neither."

Pierre Richard's story is only one of many, of course. We are all raised slightly differently. Drugs, divorce, and abandonment are experiences many people in Canada face.

Statistics Canada wrote in a graph of perceived mental health by age and sex that in 2013 nearly 21,000,000 people in Canada face a mental health issue. On top of that another report on substance abuse showed that about one in three Canadians met the criteria of mental or substance use disorders.

Depression is classified as a period of two weeks or more with depressed mood and a loss of interest in normal activities. The StatsCan description for substance abuse and dependence is a failure to fulfil major roles at work, school or home and continued use, despite persistent physical or psychological problems.

Richard's history fits that statistic like a glove. One of the reasons he had a divorce was because of substance addiction. Later on, depression and back problems followed to the persistent physical or psychological problems.

In Belleville, the report seems to be synonymous with an event Richard spoke of. During a meeting with the health and social service workers, Richard was told that help could only be provided on a monthly basis due to overscheduling.

Pierre Richard has decided to take action into his own hands. One way has been to move and he has created a two-year plan to leave Belleville and maybe even Canada behind.



One of Richard's go-to method for relieving stress and anxiety is the use of marijuana.



Richard uses coffee, pot and cigarettes to relieve cravings for even worse substances.

Photo Gallery:

<http://www.andrzejphototerrence.com/everything-ive-had-ive-lost/>