



Benjamin Slinn, 27, says that skateboarders have a strong sense of community because of the amount of time and effort they put in collectively. The struggles and successes they go through give them a common ground to relate.

## A COMMUNITY ON OUR OWN

Words and Photos by Bryan Eneas

The struggle of the rural skateboarder is a story that often goes untold. Skateboarding is often seen as something that goes hand in hand with street or urban culture, but there is a large community in Canada of people who skateboard in what most city boys would call the country. A Community On Our Own is a project that will tell the untold stories of the people who don't have the luxury of gorgeous marble plazas, perfect fourteen stair handrails, and the sprawl of the urban metropolis.

Day in and day out during the spring and summer months in Canada many people who skate have to make due with what their communities have given them. Many skaters can relate to the struggle of getting a park built in their communities, and some have little more than a mini ramp built in the middle of no where to ride every day.

Most small communities have nothing more than a hockey rink or a community center to keep the youth entertained. Skate parks are brought into many communities to give an other more affordable option to those who cannot afford the outrageous costs of hockey equipment and association fees that are an accepted part of hockey culture.

Most communities will without question construct a high cost and high maintenance arena or community center, yet when it comes to building a skate park a long and drawn out process is started of the community against the skateboarders. "A skate park will become a hot zone for youth indulging in drugs and alcohol," or "My child may hurt him / herself at the skate park," are two of the most common arguments against building a skate park.

Well, it's reality check time. Your child is just as likely to fall and break their arm on the ice as they are on a concrete surface. Another injury factor that is just coming to light is the concussion issue in contact sports. Football and hockey most

recently, have had a lot of issues looking into how head injuries acquired during play have a lasting effect on player's lives.

This is not to say that skateboarding is a totally safe activity, it is to point out the fact that these organized sporting events are just as likely to hurt your child as falling off a skateboard.

Drugs and alcohol are readily available anywhere, your child is probably just as likely to find them through friends on the hockey team as they are through friends at a skate park.

Skateboarding teaches many of the same values as most other organized sporting activities. Things like a strong sense of community, determination, commitment, and a drive to constantly improve are common qualities across many skaters around the world. The most important lesson that can be taken out of skateboarding, is no matter how many times you fall, you should get right back up and not let the trick / obstacle beat you down. A lot of sports will not teach you this value. You may learn how to deal with or take a loss, but you may never learn how to properly recover from it.

Skateboarding teaches real life values while connecting people with others who share a common interest. Because of this common interest, many long-term friendships are made by people who may otherwise never meet or have anything else to relate to.

The sense of community among skateboarders is almost unmatched by any other recreational activity / hobby / lifestyle. Across this great country there are many communities that may never receive exposure because they aren't Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto. With A Community On Our Own, I hope to raise awareness around communities where the spotlight may never shine in the limelight of the skateboard world.



Scott Seymour, 29, does a backside air on the "taco" at the skate park in Belleville, Ontario.



Liam Just, Connor Stone, and Matt Adams, prepare to play a game of S.K.A.T.E in Belleville, Ontario.



This mini ramp is located in Rossmore, Ontario, which is a tiny community located just southeast of Belleville.



Sam Proctor , Blunt stall in Rossmore, Ontario.



Jonah Melnyk tightens his trucks while skating through a broken forearm.



Scott Seymour, Logan Burness, Jonah Melnyk, and Noah Scott watch their fellow skaters at the Belleville skate park.



Liam Just, 17, enters the Sky is the Limit skate park loacted in Trenton, Ontario for another day of work. Just splits most of his free time between the Belleville and Trenton skateparks.

For a gallery of images, and more information about A Community on Our Own, take a look at <http://www.bryaneneas.com>